

**STP and HSST Completion of Training
Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances
Policy 2020**

Contents page

1	Scope	3
2	Principles	4
3	Extensions of training	5
4	Deferral of training	6
5	Step off training	7
6	Career break	8
7	Process	9
Appendix 1 Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances Guidance for trainees		11
Appendix 2 Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances Application form		18

1. Scope

This policy applies to all trainees on the Scientist Training Programme (STP) and Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The policy provides a process through which trainees can apply for changes to their training programme, if exceptional extenuating circumstances arise. This could include

- additional time to complete the training
- deferral of training
- step off training
- career break

The policy does not apply to statutory absence relating to maternity, paternity, parental or adoption leave. These circumstances are not considered to be exceptional. Management should be between the employer, local commissioner and the University. The National School of Healthcare Science (the School) should be notified of the agreed plan and timelines and is available to advise on any possible impact on training and completion, where required.

With regards to the academic programme, trainees must follow the relevant University processes for exceptional circumstances, as this policy does not apply to that part of the programme.

Also not covered by the policy is the final exit examinations for either programme. The Objective Structured Final Assessment (OSFA) for STP and the Independent Assessment of Professional Skills (IAPS) for HSST. Processes for the OSFA and IAPS are available on the School's website

- [OSFA](#)
- [IAPS](#)

Finally, the policy does not cover any necessary reasonable adjustments if trainees have a pre diagnosed disability or existing long-term medical condition. This should be reported to the School at application stage, on enrolment, or as soon as possible thereafter. It will then be recorded and any appropriate arrangements for support, put in place at a local level.

Any decisions made will be agreed with the relevant education providers (employer and university where appropriate) and the organisations commissioning or contributing financially to the programme.

2. Principles

This policy is built around the following principles

1. All trainees on the STP and HSST are required to complete a variety of activities within their workplace and university. Both must be within the agreed timescale in accordance with their relevant curriculum and assessment strategy for their training. Trainees must provide evidence that they have achieved the required standards for these activities, in order to receive a Certificate of Completion from the School.
2. If there is a significant incident or set of circumstances, usually not of the trainee's own making, which results in them not being able to complete all of the required activities, the School is able to recommend and approve changes, with the aim of supporting the trainee, to achieve a positive outcome in their training.
3. All recommendations for changes to the training as defined in this policy, are subject to agreement with both the host employer and the local commissioner funding the training. Occasionally, this may also require agreement with the university depending on the circumstances.
4. No trainee should gain an unfair advantage over other trainees, by using the exceptional extenuating circumstance process.
5. This policy ensures that the standards of the School awards are safeguarded, for the benefit of current and prospective trainees, employers and service users/patients.

3. Extensions of training

- 3.1 When circumstances beyond the trainee's control have a negative impact on their ability to complete their training, they may apply for an extension of time. If approved, the School will usually recommend additional time to complete the required activities of the programme without penalty.
- 3.2 Extensions may apply in one or more of the following circumstances
- i. When exceptional extenuating circumstances prevent a trainee from completing all the required training activities, including recording them on the e-portfolio.
 - ii. When exceptional extenuating circumstances can be shown to have affected a trainee's performance in activities already undertaken within the training.
- 3.3 Applications for extension will **not** usually be approved, if they arise from matters within the trainee's control, such as
- i. failure of a trainee to organise their time appropriately
 - ii. a trainee's own negligence or carelessness
 - iii. circumstances for which trainees have had ample opportunity to plan
 - iv. circumstances which were not disclosed at the appropriate time (unless the trainee was unable to do so due to circumstance e.g. impaired mental capacity)
 - v. any failure of computer-related equipment

Circumstances that are most likely to be considered are outlined in Appendix 1.

- 3.4 If an application is unsuccessful, any activities already completed and submitted will be treated as the final submission. If that occurs a trainee will then be subject to the standard processes that apply, to an incomplete submission.
- 3.5 Applications can normally be submitted at any point during the final year, but no later than one month before the agreed completion date. In exceptional cases an application may be accepted later or earlier, if there is a clear reason why e.g. a recent and unforeseen event. New applications received after the published completion deadline will not be considered. In all cases it is the trainee's responsibility to submit the form by the specified deadline.

- 3.6 STP trainees should refer to the School's 'STP Requirements for Completion' policy for details of completion timescales. HSST trainees should refer to the School's website for their completion requirements.
- [STP completion](#)
 - [HSST completion](#)
- 3.7 If a trainee's application is successful, the School will inform them of their new deadline for completion. The panel's recommendation of an extension may be up to a maximum of 3 months. Longer periods will only be given in cases of prolonged sickness or other unavoidable absence. Trainees may then complete any remaining activities at any time during the extension period.
- 3.8 An extension of time may not automatically include additional funding and will be dependent on individual circumstances.

4. Deferral of training

- 4.1 A deferral of training is a period of time when a trainee is out of training. Their training status is maintained but all training activities are suspended. Deferrals will be permitted for up to 12 months. Longer periods may be supported but trainees would need to reapply and provide current, compelling evidence of the need for further time out of training.
- 4.2 Deferral requires commitment of an agreed return date from the trainee, as well as support from the employing department. This requires an updated training plan. Liaison with the University provider will also be necessary to ensure an appropriate plan is in place for the academic programme.
- 4.3 Deferral of training will only usually be granted on statutory grounds relating to chronic ill health incurred during the training, where the trainee is deemed unfit to train for a prolonged period. This is a minimum of 6 weeks or more.

- 4.4 This usually only applies when the condition is newly diagnosed and has not been previously experienced prior to the start of training. However, if a condition was identified during the selection process for the programme it can also be considered.
- 4.5 A deferral of training request requires a medical assessment of the condition. This can be a GP or consultant report and/or an occupational health review by the employer.
- 4.6 In the case of a deferral, a trainee may maintain employment status with their employer, but they would not be expected to participate in any service support or training activities, including the academic programme. If employment status is maintained, the trainee should be managed via the employer's relevant sickness policies.
- 4.7 Training will not normally be funded during an agreed period of deferral.
- 4.8 A deferral can be requested at any point during the programme.

5. Step off training

- 5.1 Step off training is a period of time out of training, where training status is maintained, but all training activities are suspended.
- 5.2 A trainee maintains their employment status and may continue with clinical/service activities but is not actively training.
- 5.3 An application to step off requires a commitment from the trainee of an agreed return date. Support from the employing department and updated training plans will also be required. Liaison with the University provider will also be necessary to ensure an appropriate plan is in place for the academic programme.
- 5.4 Step off is usually permitted when there are significant non-health related issues. For example, a training department's capacity to train or a significant restructure, which

renders the programme non deliverable and cannot be resolved within 3 to 6 months. If this continues long term, then the transfer of training policy may be applied.

- 5.5 If the step off period is longer than 12 months, then ongoing participation in the training would need to be reviewed to consider if/how knowledge and skills can be maintained.
- 5.6 During the step off period the trainee would not be funded by the organisation commissioning the training. Financial support would come from the employing organisation.

6. Career break

- 6.1 Career break relates to trainees who, for personal reasons, request time out from their training programme **and** employment. Their training status is not maintained during this time.
- 6.2 Career breaks will only usually be granted when there has been a significant change in personal circumstance and there is clear reasoning for the request. Reasons should be unforeseen and/or unavoidable and supported with evidence.
- 6.3 Requests to return to the programme must be submitted in writing.
- 6.4 A trainee would be expected to return to the programme within an agreed amount of time. This would usually be no longer than 12 months in order to maintain currency of skills and knowledge.
- 6.5 A trainee would be permitted only one career break during their training period.
- 6.6 A career break would not normally be granted until a trainee has been on the programme for a minimum of 6 months. It would also not be allowed in the final year of training.

- 6.7 A career break application must be supported by the employing department and the University, whose policies should also be followed to confirm the break.
- 6.8 Career breaks will be unfunded.

7. Process

- 7.1 To submit an Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EEC) application, trainees must complete form EEC1 (see Appendix 2) in full and provide relevant evidence.
- 7.2 All EEC applications must be signed by the relevant Training Officer/Supervisor and can also be accompanied by a statement, or evidence, confirming support for the request. An extension of time may have financial implications, so the relevant commissioner for the training will be notified of the application before a decision is made. The School together with the local commissioner, will make the decision of whether to grant an extension or not. Trainees or their training department should contact the local commissioner before they apply to find out what, if any, financial options may be available.
- 7.3 All medical evidence must be provided by a professional who has specialist knowledge of the circumstance. For example, this could be a GP or consultant report and/or report from Occupational Health via the employer.
- 7.4 Applications for an extension of time can be submitted at any point during the final year but no later than 1 month before the agreed completion date.
- 7.5 Applications for deferral and step off can be submitted at any point during the training to which the request is relevant, but no later than 6 months before the agreed completion date.
- 7.6 Applications for a career break cannot be submitted during the first 6 months of the programme, and no later than 12 months before the agreed completion date.

- 7.7 All applications must be supported by appropriate evidence, including a proposed revised training plan demonstrating how the programme will be managed. The plan should indicate the length of change requested. See Appendix 1 for further details.
- 7.8 It may be necessary to apply whilst waiting for supporting evidence to become available. If this is the case, the application must still be submitted by the appropriate time. The evidence must then be submitted as soon as it becomes available. The application will not be sent for review/decision until all appropriate evidence has been received.
- 7.9 All applications are considered by the School's Training Management Panel (TMP). The panel are required to decide on each application within 5 working days of its meeting. It is the responsibility of the panel to ensure that any approved application is appropriate and that sufficient, relevant evidence has been provided.
- 7.10 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the panel to notify trainees of their decision.
- 7.11 Trainees are not usually permitted to submit a claim for the same reason more than once. If a further application is necessary, a trainee must outline what additional factors have affected their ability to complete the training, since the first application was submitted and approved.
- 7.12 Trainees have the right to appeal against an outcome within 10 working days of being notified of the decision. The appeal will be considered by the Head of School and the HEE Post Graduate Dean with responsibility for Healthcare Science, or their nominated representative(s), whose decision will be final.

Appendix 1

Exceptional extenuating circumstances guidance for trainees

What are Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EECs)?

We know that there can be circumstances out of a trainee's control, for example a bereavement or hospitalisation. When this happens the EEC process may allow trainees to make changes to their training to support completion of the programme.

What does the EEC option cover?

The EEC option covers items such as

- hospitalisation
- mental or physical illness (usually in excess of 3 months)
- bereavement
- unexpected carer responsibilities
- sudden return home (abroad) following a family emergency
- training delivery/capacity or quality issues within the host department

Examples and details of what evidence can be provided are available on page 14.

What does the EEC option not cover?

The EEC option does not cover

- a trainee's failure to organise their time appropriately
- circumstances for which trainees have had ample opportunity to plan
- technical failures of computers/equipment
- negligence or carelessness on the part of the trainee
- circumstances not disclosed at the appropriate time (unless you were unable to do so e.g. due to hospitalisation)
- maternity/ paternity, parental or adoption leave

What should trainees do to request a change to their training due to EEC?

Step 1

- Trainees should download the EEC1 form and complete ALL the required information.
- The form should be submitted by email to nshcs@hee.nhs.uk The supporting evidence can be submitted with the EEC1 form, if it can be scanned. If not, it should be sent to the National School of Healthcare Science, Health Education West Midlands, St Chad's Court, 213 Hagley Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 9RG.
- Trainees should highlight in the application how the circumstances have impacted on their ability to work and complete the training activities.
- The application must be signed by the relevant Training Officer/Supervisor to demonstrate support for the request, on behalf of the employer.
- The application must be accompanied by a proposed revised training plan, to identify how the change will be managed.

Step 2

- The application will be considered by the School's Training Management Panel.

Step 3

Trainees will receive a decision by email within five working days of the Training Management Panel meeting. There are three possible outcomes

Approved

If the application is granted, trainees will usually be given an appropriate amount of additional time (which the panel will decide) within which to complete the training without penalty. If a trainee is granted a deferral, step off or career break, an alternative timeline for return and completion of training will be identified.

Declined

If the application has not been successful, trainees may be able to resubmit if there is additional or further evidence to support the request. If the application is not upheld, trainees will continue to be subject to the original required deadlines for the programme.

Further evidence required

If it is requested, trainees must submit further professional evidence within 10 working days of receiving the outcome. Instructions on how to do this will be provided in an email.

Timescales

Typically, for extensions of time, it is expected that the Training Management Panel will consider applications for trainees in their final year of training where the following timescales apply

- Extenuating Circumstances Applications (EEC1) and evidence submitted to the School at least 5 working days prior to the panel review (this does not include the day of the panel)
- Panel review held – meetings are usually held on a monthly basis (see Table 1 below)

It is important that trainees submit their applications in a timely manner to ensure sufficient support can be put in place for the required changes, and to ensure that any requests that are declined have sufficient time to complete the programme within the original deadlines.

Table 1 - Training management panel meeting and application submission dates 2020

Date of EEC panel	Latest submission date	Likely outcome date
Wednesday 5th February	Wednesday 29th January	Wednesday 12th February
Wednesday 11th March	Wednesday 4th March	Wednesday 18th March
Wednesday 8th April	Wednesday 1st April	Wednesday 15th April
Wednesday 6th May	Wednesday 29th April	Wednesday 13th May
Wednesday 10th June	Wednesday 3rd June	Wednesday 17th June
Wednesday 8th July	Wednesday 1st July	Wednesday 15th July
Wednesday 12th August	Wednesday 5th August	Wednesday 19th August
Wednesday 9th September	Wednesday 2nd September	Wednesday 16th September
Wednesday 7th October	Wednesday 30th September	Wednesday 14th October

Wednesday 4th November	Wednesday 28th October	Wednesday 11th November
Wednesday 2nd December	Wednesday 25th November	Wednesday 9th December

The trainee, the training department, commissioner, and where relevant the University, will be informed of the panel's decision within 5 working days following the Training Management Panel.

Examples of circumstances and the types of evidence that may be required

- **Hospitalisation** - supported by medical evidence/doctor's note or occupational health report.
- **Mental or physical illness** - supported by medical evidence/doctor's note or occupational health report, counsellor or person of Religious authority and supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer.
- **Bereavement** - supported by a death certificate or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority.
- **Unexpected carer responsibilities** - supported by medical evidence/benefit entitlements or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority.
- **Sudden return home (abroad) following family emergency** - supported by medical evidence, if applicable, or supporting statement from a Supervisor, Training Officer, Counsellor or person of Religious authority if relevant, evidence of flights and time away from training.
- **Training delivery** - supported by evidence of levels of supervision, planning and support available to the trainee or any other documentation relating to the training that would demonstrate potential barriers to completion. For this circumstance the views of the Training Officer and/or Head of Department would be relevant.

EEC examples

Hospitalisation

Trainee A was involved in a car accident and was in hospital. The trainee was absent from the workplace for some time and was unable to study. Because of this, the trainee could not complete all the required training activities. The trainee applied for an EEC for extension of time and attached a letter from their doctor, as well as medical certificates, as proof of their circumstances.

Mental or physical illness

Trainee B recently suffered from severe depression and anxiety. This meant the trainee has not been able to concentrate on work and hasn't been able to complete all required training activities. The trainee has applied for an EEC for extension of time and attached a doctor's note confirming the situation.

Trainee C has been seriously ill for the past twelve weeks. This has meant that the trainee has not been able to complete all required training activities. When the trainee returned to work and study, they filled out an EEC application for extension of time and attached a doctor's note stating how long they had been ill.

Bereavement

Trainee D has suffered the death of their father. They have been deeply affected by this loss and it has affected their ability to work and study and complete all required training activities. Trainee D applied for an EEC for extension of time and attached their father's death certificate as evidence.

Unexpected carer responsibilities

Trainee E has been affected by the recent news that their mother has cancer. The trainee has become the sole carer for their mother and has found this both emotionally and physically draining. They are also suffering from a lack of concentration and the ability to prioritise their work effectively. The trainee feels that they have not been able to give as much effort, to complete as many of the required training activities as they would have liked. The trainee has submitted an EEC for extension of time with medical evidence of their mother's condition, as well as a supporting statement from their supervisor and now awaits a panel decision.

Sudden return home (abroad) following family emergency

Trainee F has received news that their father has fallen very ill. The trainee suddenly needs to return to their home country to care for him and the rest of the family. The trainee applied for an EEC for additional time and attached a medical letter confirming their father's condition. The trainee also attached a copy of the flight tickets, as evidence of the times that they were out of the country.

Training delivery/capacity or quality issues within the host department

Trainee G has been unable to meet regularly with their training officer for the past 3 months due to urgent and compelling clinical commitments. No suitable individual has been able to provide alternative support. The projected training plan is insufficient and does not enable the trainee to fulfil all the required assessment activities of the programme, for one of the modules. The trainee filled out an EEC application for extension of time with evidence of the areas, as yet not covered, together with details of the training and supervision plans available from the department.

Deferral

Trainee H has experienced new and debilitating symptoms of anxiety which resulted in a prolonged absence from training. Medical advisors suggest that the trainee is not fit to train and may need a period of recovery before attempting to return. The trainee, with support from their employer, submitted an EEC to request a deferral for 6 months, with details of the medical diagnosis and prognosis to confirm the recovery period required.

Step off

Since Trainee I started the programme, there has been some large scale, service reconfiguration which involved their department. Several staff have left or been redeployed and there is insufficient support for the training. Trainee I have a substantive post with the department and considers that the department is not currently able to train. The trainee has submitted an EEC application to request a step off for 6 months, whilst the department completes the restructure. The trainee has provided written evidence of the situation from the employer, with a revised training plan and commitment to recommence the programme once the structure has been stabilised.

Trainee J has been asked to lead and support the development and implementation of a new, high profile clinical service, which will have a significant impact on their training time. The new service is critical to improving patient care and outcomes, and the employer has indicated that this must be the departments priority for the next 6 months. Their involvement in the development of the service will be an excellent experience for their learning, so there is a clear rationale that this will benefit their training in the long term. Trainee J has made an application to step off the programme for 6 months, with full written support from the department.

Career break

Trainee K's partner has recently been offered a fixed term employment opportunity in Australia. The couple have 2 children between them. Keen to support their partner and not break up the family, Trainee K has made an application for EEC to take a career break. They have included written confirmation of the offer of employment as evidence. Trainee K also seeks support from their employer and the University and confirms in writing their commitment to return to training following the end of their partners employment contract.

Appendix 2

National School of Healthcare Science

Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EEC) application form

You should complete and submit this form if you feel that personal, medical, or problems outside your control have negatively affected, or will affect, your ability to complete the required training activities within the timescales agreed for the programme.

This form, together with any evidence trainees wish to be considered, must be submitted a minimum of 5 working days prior to the training management panel being held.

If you require assistance in completing this form or further advice about this process, please contact any of the following sources of advice

- Your Training Officer/supervisor or Head of Department
- The National School of Healthcare Science nshcs@hee.nhs.uk or 0121 695 2523

Personal details	
Name:	Email address:
Training programme:	Specialism:
Department & employer:	Training officer/supervisor name:
Year of entry: Anticipated year of completion:	Training officer/supervisor email:
Period and length of time your training has been affected by your circumstances length of extension you are applying for and type of change requested:	
From:	To:
Total length of time:	
Total length of extension requested:	

Type of change requested (tick which one applies)

Extension of training time

Deferral of training

Step off training

Career break

Reasons for your application and the evidence provided to support it (tick those that apply) including evidence that the application is supported by the employer

Hospitalisation

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

**Mental or physical
Illness**

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

Bereavement

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

**Unexpected carer
responsibilities**

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

Sudden return home

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

Training delivery

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

Other (specify)

Evidence (please enclose any relevant documents):

Minimum evidence required to submit the application

Training plan <input type="checkbox"/>	Evidence (please enclose you proposed revised training plan)
Support from employer <input type="checkbox"/>	Application must be signed by Training Officer/Supervisor or other representative from the employer (please enclose any relevant documents):
Funding (if applicable e.g. extension of time) <input type="checkbox"/>	If funding implications for the request, evidence that the relevant local commissioner has been made aware of the application and advised on funding available

Describe your extenuating circumstances, how they have affected your ability to complete the required training activities and what outcome you are requesting from the training management panel

Declaration

The information which I have provided regarding my extenuating circumstances is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I give my consent for this information to be disclosed to the relevant training management panel and members of the National School of Healthcare Science who are responsible for considering my case. I also understand that this claim for extenuating circumstances will be kept on my trainee record and may be referred to at any subsequent meetings relating to my training.

Note that fraudulent claims for extenuating circumstances are taken extremely seriously by the National School of Healthcare Science and could result in your removal from the training programme.

Signed: (Trainee)	Date:
Signed: (Training Officer/Supervisor)	Date: