

STP Exit Survey Review: 2020 completers



Summary of findings



Overall, trainees' satisfaction with the STP is high



There is a need to raise awareness of some of the School's key functions

The most prevalent request was for a greater degree of quality assurance to take place. Trainees who raised concerns were often not aware of who they could report concerns to or were sceptical that their grievances would have an effect. Given that quality assurance of training providers is a core part of the School's work, we could make trainees more aware of our role.



Communications from the School need to be slicker and more targeted

Trainees raised concerns that there are too many emails and that because the emails are so long it is difficult to keep up-to-date about what is the most recent information. The Monthly Memo was recognised as a new feature that was helping to reduce the volume of email traffic.

Trainees also requested more specialism specific communications, praising the communications during the Coronavirus pandemic.



Development of guidance for Training Officers

Trainees would like more guidance for training officers/training departments on how to create more structure for the STP. Trainees often felt that their training was very much facilitated by them. Developing further guidance for Training Officers would also help create improve consistency across all training providers.

Overview of respondents



211

trainees responded
to the survey

Trainees by specialism

Life Sciences	
Clinical Biochemistry	25
Clinical Immunology	2
Clinical Microbiology	6
Genomic Counselling	6
Genomics	20
Haematology and Transfusion Science	5
Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics	2
Histopathology	2
Reproductive Science	7

Physiological Sciences	
Audiology	11
Cardiac Science	29
Critical Care Science	2
Gastrointestinal Physiology	4
Neurophysiology	6
Respiratory and Sleep Science	3
Vascular Science	4

Physical and Informatics Sciences	
Clinical Bioinformatics - Genomics	8
Clinical Bioinformatics – Health informatics	1
Clinical Bioinformatics - Physical Sciences	4
Clinical Engineering	5
Clinical Measurement and Development	2
Clinical Pharmaceutical Science	4
Imaging - Ionising Radiation	10
Imaging - Non-Ionising Radiation	2
Medical Physics - Undefined	1
Radiation Safety Physics	9
Radiotherapy Physics	24
Rehabilitation Engineering	7

Trainees entry

Q2: What region are you based in?

Region	Number of trainees
East of England	15
East Midlands	9
Kent	4
London	41
Sub London (Surrey, Hampshire, West Sussex)	9
North East	2
North West	29
Oxford and Thames Valley	3
South West	25
Wessex	6
West Midlands	25
Yorkshire and Humber	24
Wales	8
Scotland	7
Northern Ireland	3

Q3: Did you enter the STP as a direct entry or in-service candidate?

Entry status	Number of trainees
Direct entry	186
In-service entry	25

Trainees experience of the programme

Q4: How important to your application to the STP were the following factors?

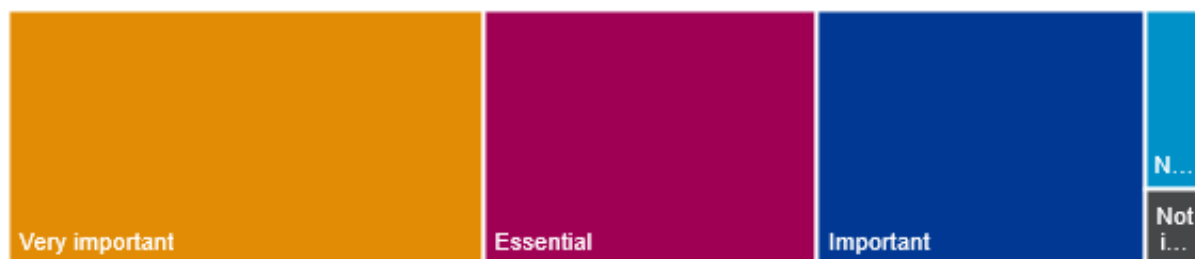
■ Essential ■ Very important ■ Important ■ Neutral ■ Not important ■ Irrelevant



Training salary



Opportunity to work in the NHS





Opportunity to gain registration as a clinical scientist



Quality of the training programme



Blend of work-based and academic learning





Opportunity to gain another qualification



Encouraged to apply



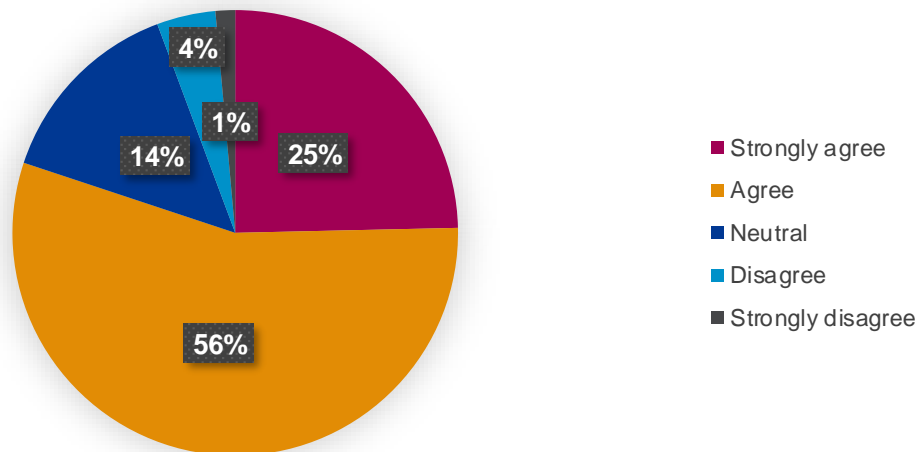
Interested in a career in healthcare science



Q5: I have enjoyed my experience of the STP

Total agree: 81%

Total disagree: 5%



Lots of trainees felt that their workload was stressful and intense at times. A small number of trainees felt that the amount of time spent demonstrating competencies detracted from what they saw as more valuable learning on projects. One of the main concerns raised was the inconsistency between training providers.

“I thoroughly enjoyed the training programme - it was a great balance of on the job training and academic learning, which I feel has prepared me very well to work as a registered genetic counsellor. I would highly recommend (and have recommended) it to anyone seeking a career in healthcare.”

“The STP has been hard work but I found the challenges interesting and felt I had a variety of opportunities open to me as a result of the program.”

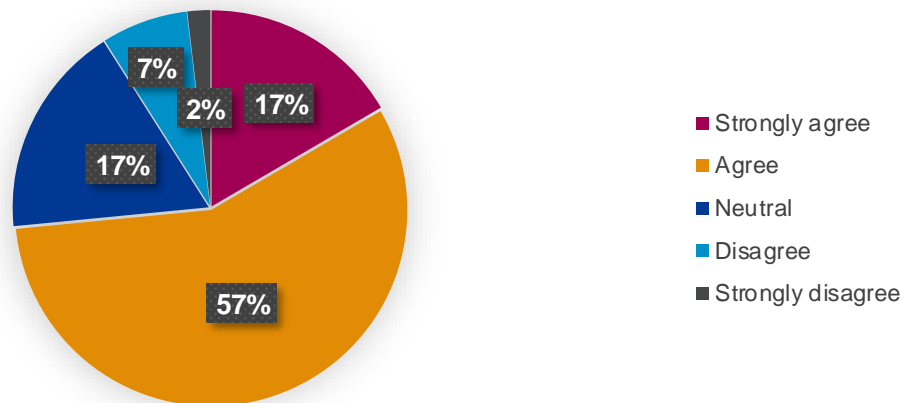
“I feel very privileged to have been successful in joining the STP but is a very tough programme.”

“Mixed. The programme has often been a stressful experience and I feel that aspects of the programme could be arranged better to mitigate this. But has also given valuable opportunities and experience.”

Q6: The STP has met my expectations

Total agree: 74%

Total disagree: 9%



The majority of trainees who answered positively commented that the programme gave them a clear path to advance their career in clinical science and provided many opportunities that they would not have had without the STP programme.

Some trainees felt that the oversight of training providers was not robust enough and that they were unaware of whether the training they received was at the level it should be.

“Ups and downs - I thought the programme would be better organised and have better communication between the different aspects of training throughout.”

“I found there to be a very steep learning curve and was grateful of the support of my peers. I was somewhat disappointed with the knowledge and understanding in my department of the requirements and expectations of the STP however this improved over time.”

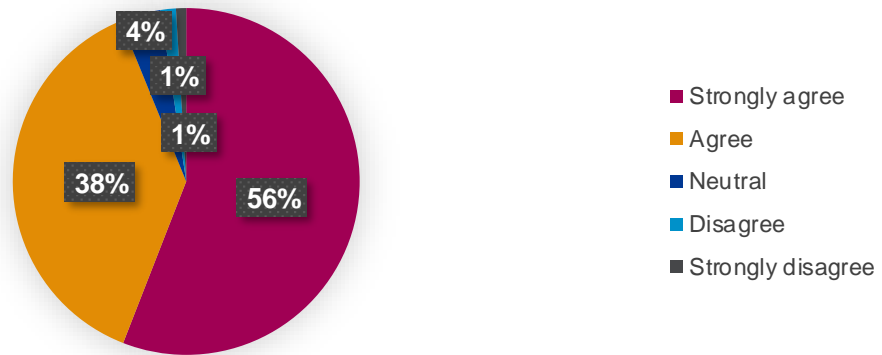
“The programme was more intense than expected, top-heavy academic learning each year and pressured deadlines. More learning opportunities than expected through training budget and time allocated for elective etc which made for a richer experience.”

“Quality of training in the host departments should be better monitored for each individual specialism. Realise that it is difficult to make it perfectly equal across the board but opportunities in each department are currently starkly different.”

Q7: I am pleased I took part in the STP

Total agree: 94%

Total disagree: 2%



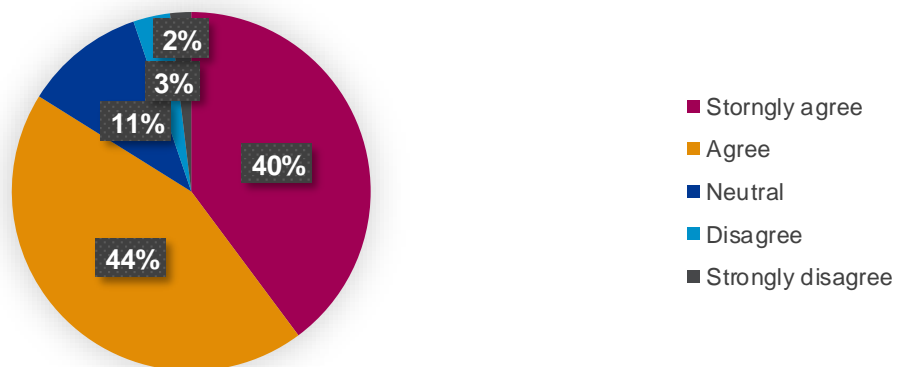
“Although the process was not smooth, I am glad I have completed the MSc and will eventually get HCPC registration.”

“It is an excellent method of career progression.”

Q8: I would recommend the STP to friends and/or colleagues

Total agree: 84%

Total disagree: 5%

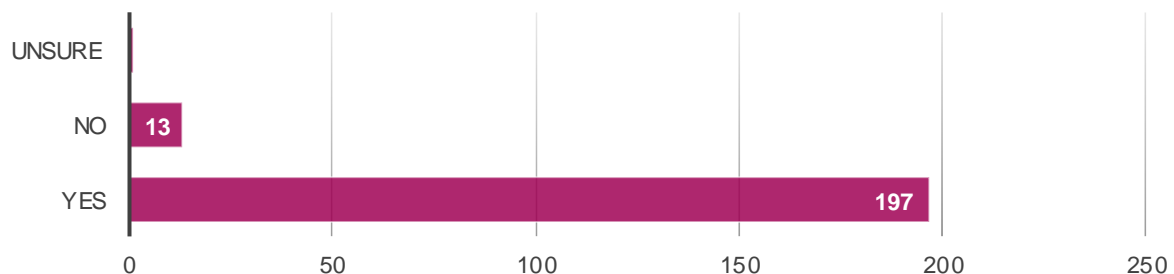


“I think it is a fantastic programme to develop the skills to make a valuable contribution to healthcare.”

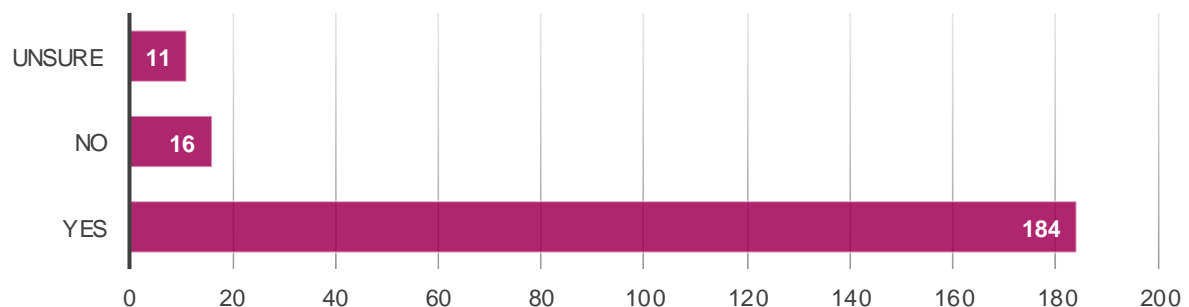
“Overall good concept, one of the most attractive aspects about the STP is that you can earn a living, gain qualifications and it is a guaranteed streamlined route to get a secure job in healthcare.”

Support from training centres

Q9: I received an induction at my Trust at the start of my training



Q10: Did you know who to contact if you needed advice regarding your employment?



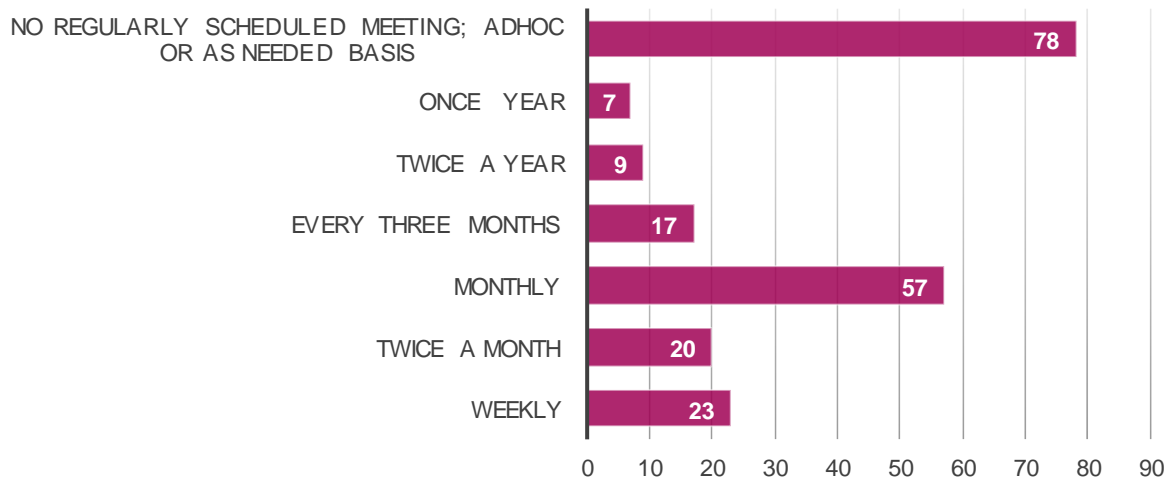
The vast majority of trainees knew who their main contact for employment matters was during their time on the programme.

Several of the comments addressed concerns over the lack of support trainees were given by the NSHCS.

One trainee commented on the lack of information between receiving the place on the STP and the official start date. A couple of trainees commented that few people seemed to be aware of the STP.

“I contacted my proposed line manager prior to starting the programme via email with a number of questions, which remained unanswered.”

Q11: How often did you meet with your training officer?



Just over a third of trainees met with their training officer on an AdHoc basis when required. Several trainees commented that regardless of the frequency of scheduled meetings, they were able to contact their training officer and arrange informal catch-ups or additional meetings if required or seek advice via email.

Comments indicate that most trainees appear to have been satisfied with their training officer's availability. Numerous trainees commented that the frequency of their contact depended upon the stage they were at in the programme.

"Whilst I had more formal meetings every few months, my TO was available to catch up on a weekly basis if required. Subsequently, the frequency depended on my needs which varied at different times throughout the programme."

"This is an average, fortnightly first year, less frequent in second and third year."

"This varied throughout the programme, where I met more or less depending on my needs."

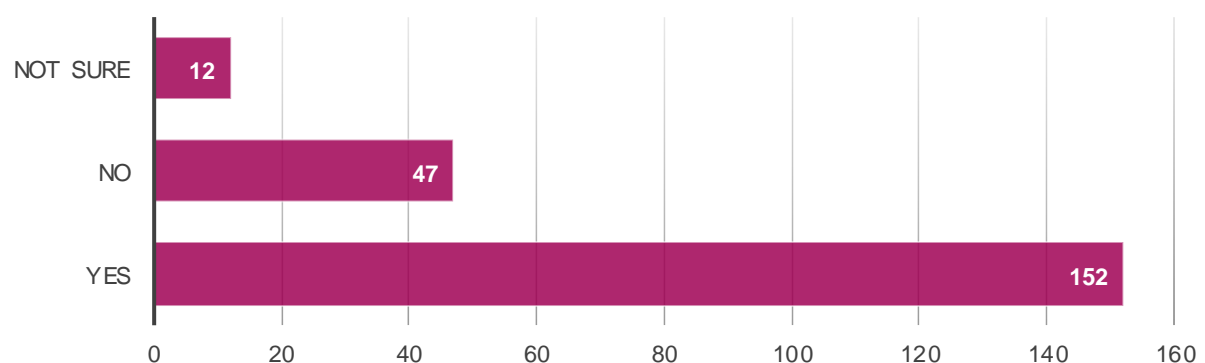
"The frequency of meetings with my training officer varied greatly over the course. Initially meetings were ad hoc and infrequent. This improved over the course of my training and by year 3 I had regular monthly meetings with my TO."

Q12: Did you and your training officer have a training plan for your time on the STP?

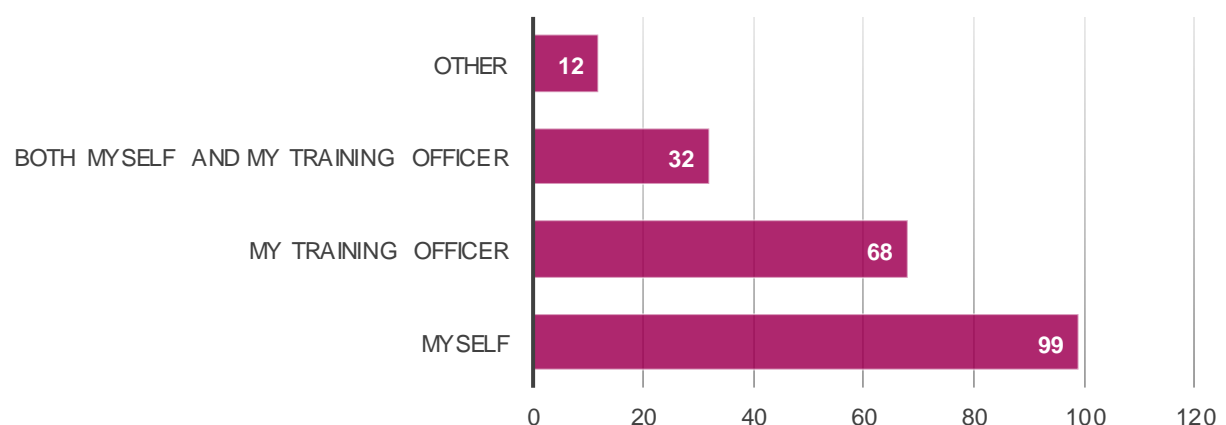
Over 70 per cent of trainees had a training plan for their time on the STP.

The comments also indicate that there is a variation in the detail of training plans produced for STP trainees with the rotations often being more thoroughly planned than the specialisms.

“During rotation - yes. Not so much during specialism.”



Q13: Who was usually responsible for the organisation of your rotations?

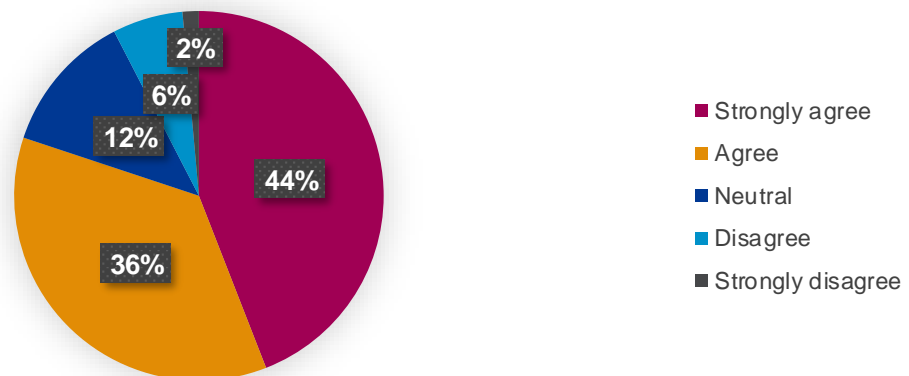


For trainees who responded 'other', the feedback indicates that many had their rotations organised by another member of staff who was not their allocated training officer training provider, such as; a supervisor, training co-ordinator or manager.

Q14: Overall, I received adequate support from my Training Officer throughout the STP

Total agree: 80%

Total disagree: 8%



Overwhelmingly trainees felt that they had received adequate support from their training officer throughout the STP. Many trainees commented on how positive the experience was due to the support from the training officer.

As with question 5, one of the main concerns raised was the inconsistency between training providers. A small minority of trainees felt that their training officer did not fully understand the role of a training officer and did not provide an adequate level of support.

“I feel as though my learning experience at my Trust was vastly different to that of my peers based in other hospitals. I think more needs to be done to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities and receives the same standard of work-based teaching, as ultimately that is where we spend the majority of our time on the course.”

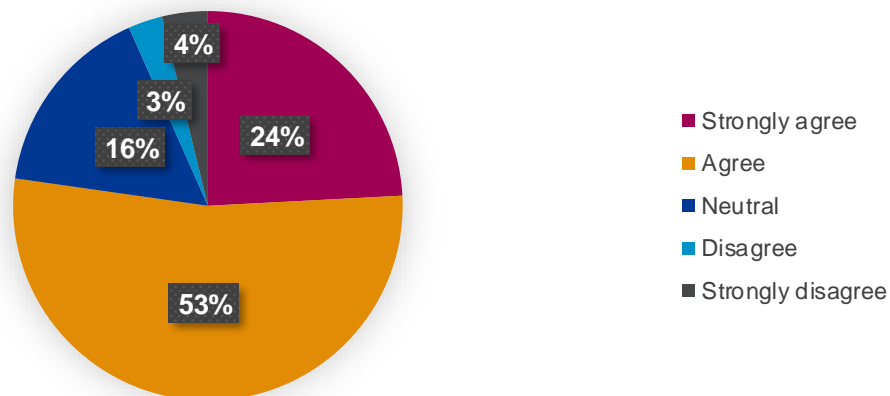
“My training officer was not at all familiar with the STP and knew less about the program than I did; as a result I was massively under supported and had no resources or help for the majority of my training period. My training officer did not (despite encouragement) attend any "train the trainer" events or any other training, and therefore was not able to advise me on the best ways to complete competencies or assessments. This has been a major issue throughout my training.”

Academic aspect of the programme

Q15: The academic component complemented my work-based training

Total agree: 77%

Total disagree: 7%



Overall, almost 80 per cent of trainees valued the academic aspect of the STP. It is worth noting that the percentage of disagreement has fallen from previous years (16 per cent in 2019 completers exit survey).

Many trainees that offered additional comments felt that the quality of their university course was excellent and fed into their work-based training well.

For trainees who did not have a positive experience of this aspect of their training, many felt there was a huge disconnect between the academic and work-based components and that the MSc content was not organised with the curriculum in mind. This trend is consistent with previous years exit surveys.

“The timings of the academic modules don't always coincide with the training and this can be sometimes disruptive. However, the content of the teaching is complementary and very well delivered.”

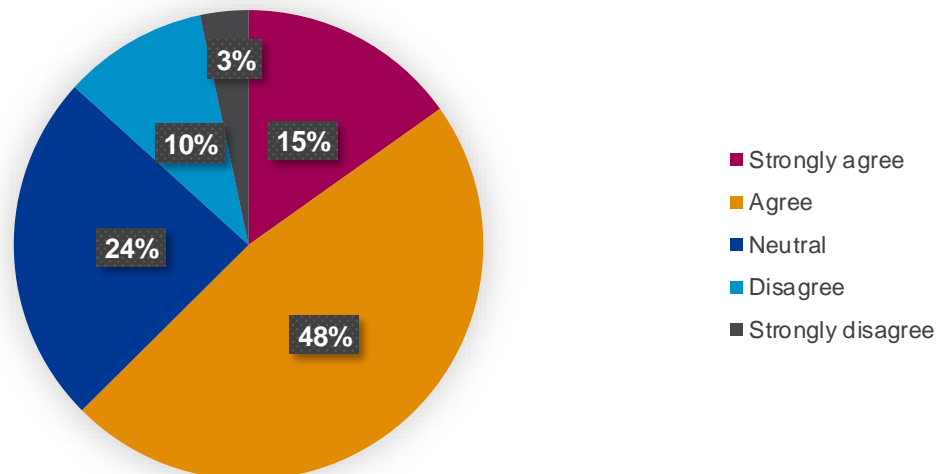
“Some lectures were much better quality than others. It would have been more useful to do them alongside or training as things made more sense when in context.”

“There was no continuity between academic and work-based training.”

Q16: I had regular / sufficient contact with my university tutor(s)

Total agree: 63%

Total disagree: 13%

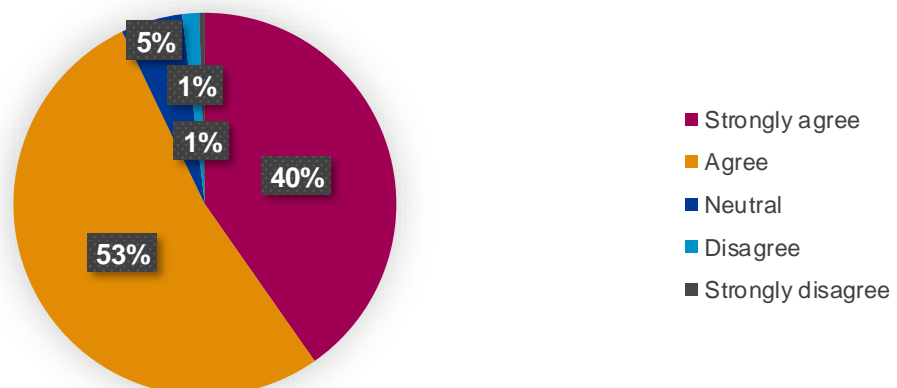


Over 60 per cent of trainees still felt satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their university tutor with many remarking that they were able to get in touch with them when needed and that they typically received quick and helpful responses, even when they were a distant learner.

Q17: I understood the requirements for the MSc elements of my training

Total agree: 93%

Total disagree: 2%

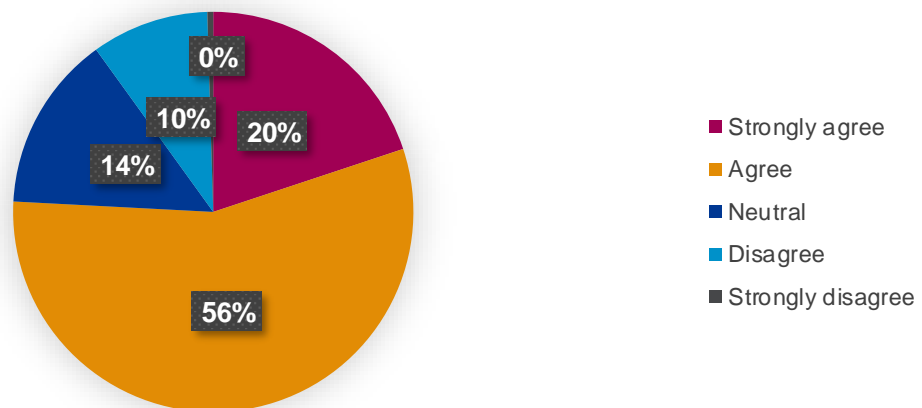


Over 90 per cent of trainees understood the demands of their master's course with an outline of requirements being received at the beginning.

Q18: I was able to balance the work-based training with the university coursework

Total agree: 76%

Total disagree: 10%



Three quarters of trainees felt that they were able to balance their training and academic study, an overwhelming number of the comments put this down to the flexibility and support from the training department. There is some discrepancy around trainee study days across the different hospital trusts, trainees that were not allowed regular study days found the balance harder to achieve.

Trainees did highlight that the balance became more difficult to manage during exam periods.

“Some periods were particularly heavy, and others particularly light, though on the whole I was able to balance this.”

“This required careful planning and a strong work ethic but was achievable.”

“I found this quite difficult, particularly during exam periods.”

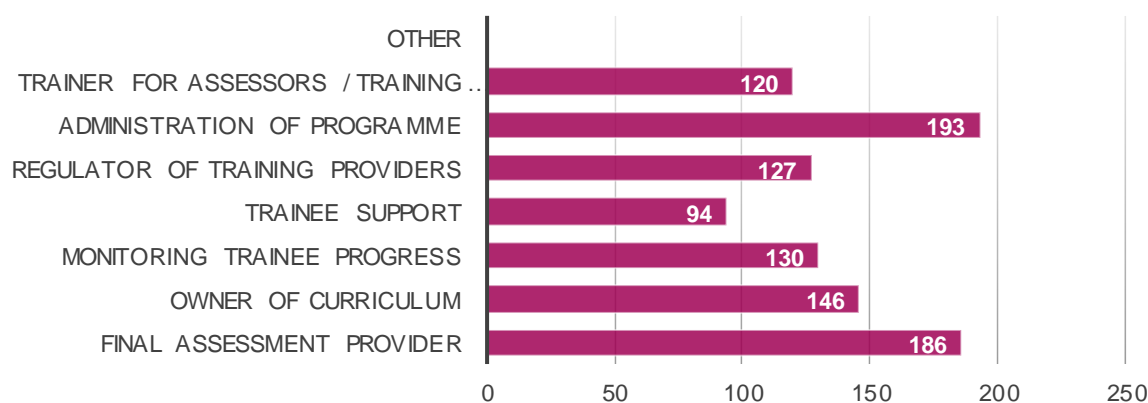
“I was able to do this but at times I felt that the university requirements were badly timed.”

“This was incredibly difficult and more time allocated to study days in the workplace are required. I was given half a day study day per week.”

“Challenging as was not allowed study days.”

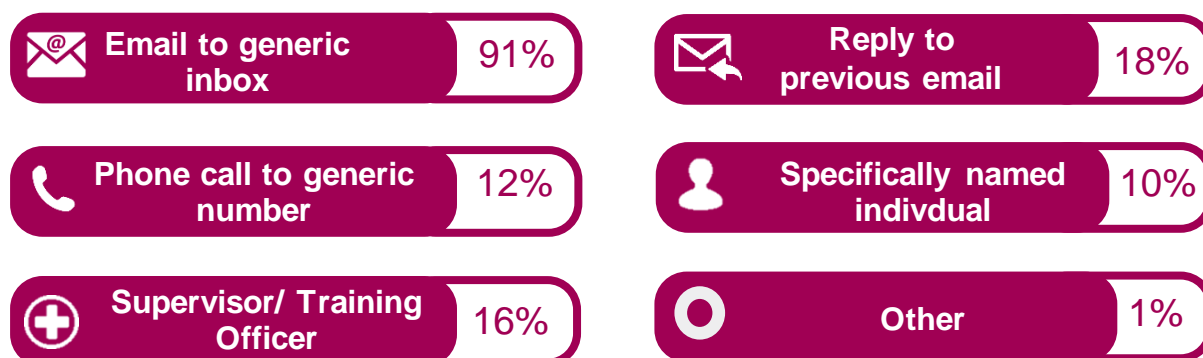
Support from the School

Q19: What did you understand the role of the School to be during your training period?



Trainees undoubtedly associate the School with assessments, the curriculum and the functional structure of the STP; this is perhaps expected given the high visibility of the School during the key points of recruitment, induction and assessment at through the IACC.

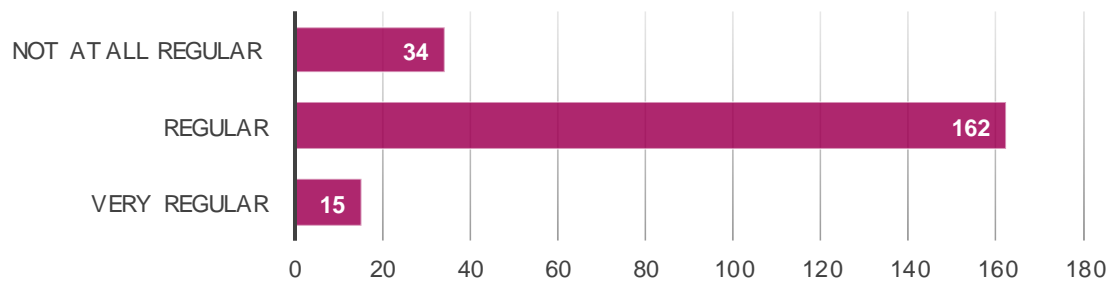
Q20: If I needed to, I contacted the School via:



The most popular method of contact with the School was via the generic email address.

Among trainees who selected 'other', some had no need to contact the School. Others contacted their trainee representatives who raised issues on their behalf.

Q21: How regular were communications from the School?



Over 90 per cent of trainees thought that communications from the School were regular or very regular. Numerous trainees positively commented on the frequency and approach to communications during the Coronavirus pandemic. Several trainees commented on the effectiveness of the Monthly Memo as a port of call for important changes made to the programme.

A number of trainees would appreciate more specialism specific communication from the School going forward.

“Very regular as a whole but if I had any specific questions or concerns. I might have to e-mail twice before getting a reply.”

“Communication frequency during coronavirus was excellent. Prior to this, communications were okay. In all cases, I felt that specialism-specific communications were very few and far between.”

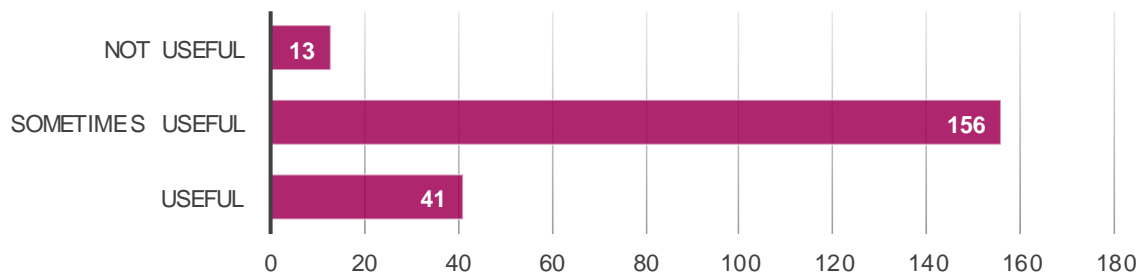
“Appreciated support and updates during Coronavirus, e.g. webinars to explain changes to completion.”

“I thought that the communications particularly around the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic were good with regularly updates provided. Before this, I think the standard monthly update newsletter was sufficient to keep me in the loop on any important changes.”

“This changed more recently with the monthly memo and end stage of studies but prior to this, contact with the NSHCS was rare and AdHoc.”

“I received the monthly newsletter from the school, but these are often very generic. Any specific communications were quite irregular.”

Q22: How useful were communications from the School?



Trainees had a variety of comments regarding how useful they found communications from the School. Lots of trainees that provided comments thought the communications during the Coronavirus pandemic were useful.

As with the previous question, some trainees felt that emails they received often repeated information they already had or were not applicable to them and their specialism.

Several trainees gave negative comments on the frequency and length of emails.

“Communications throughout the programme were very generalised. Specialism and cohort-specific communication was useful during COVID.”

“Covid comms has been extremely good.”

“Especially during covid. I think the NSHCS responded well with updating the information and the seminars in the way they did.”

“Communication from the national school has been outstanding, especially during the CoViD-19 pandemic, thank you.”

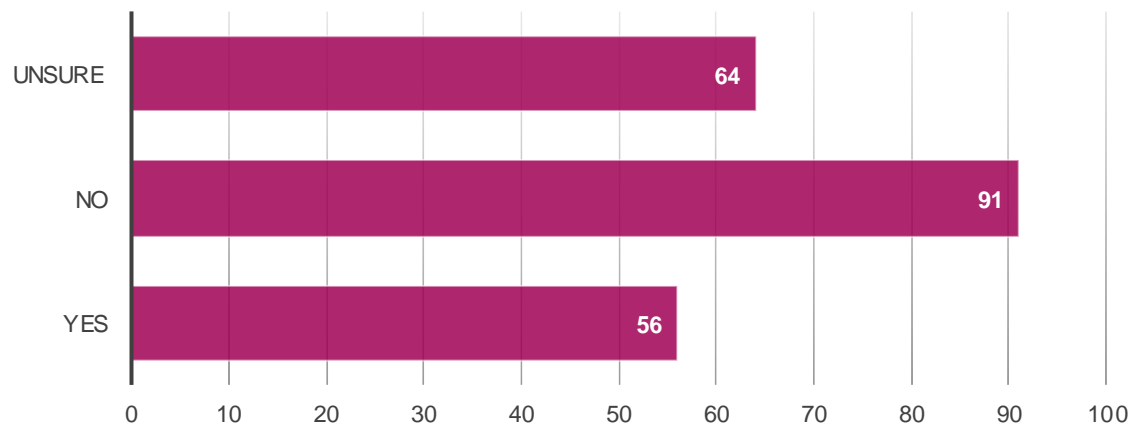
“Recent monthly memo is quite useful with concise key information and links to further reading.”

“Often lengthy emails and not very precise which meant they weren't always fully read or understood by students and training officers.”

“Too many emails, difficult to keep up and find relevant one.”

“Sometimes too much info in emails so you'd miss the important news.”

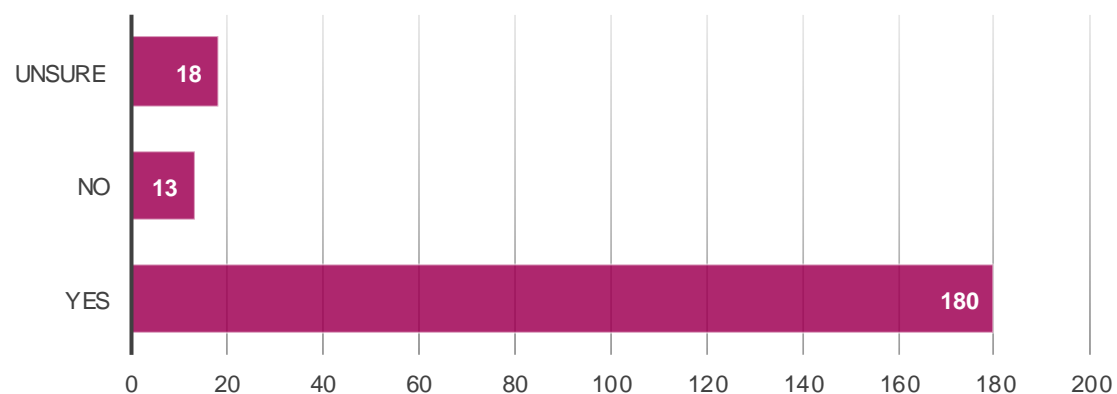
Q23: I understood the process of how the School informed my training officer about my progress



Almost half the trainees said that they did not know their training officer received any information from the School about their progress.

Most of the comments from trainees would like to see more communication between training officers and the School, particularly when the training officers are new to the role.

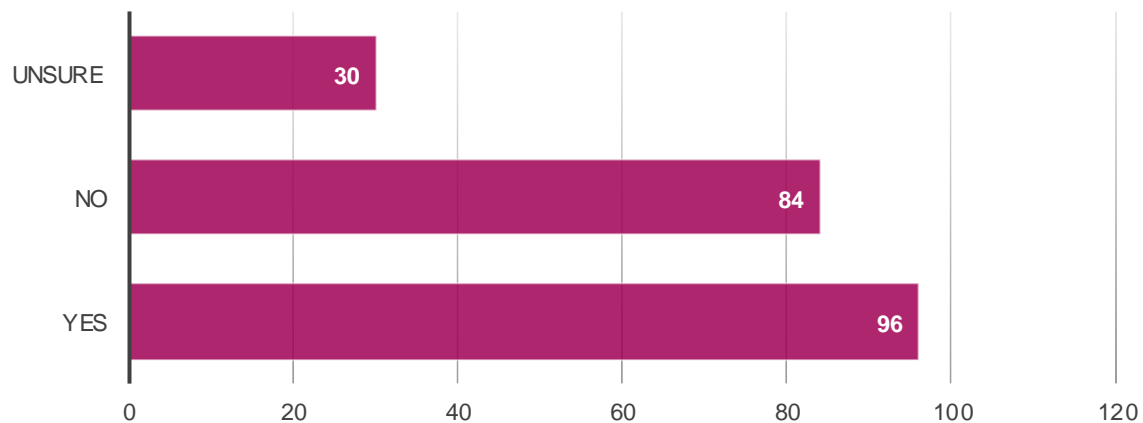
Q24: I had access to sufficient information to understand my progress.



Over 85 per cent of trainees felt that they were able to access the information they needed to sufficiently track their progress. Many trainees were able to do using OneFile and tracking their progress on completing their competencies. Many felt that this alone did not give them enough control or information on their overall progress on the STP.

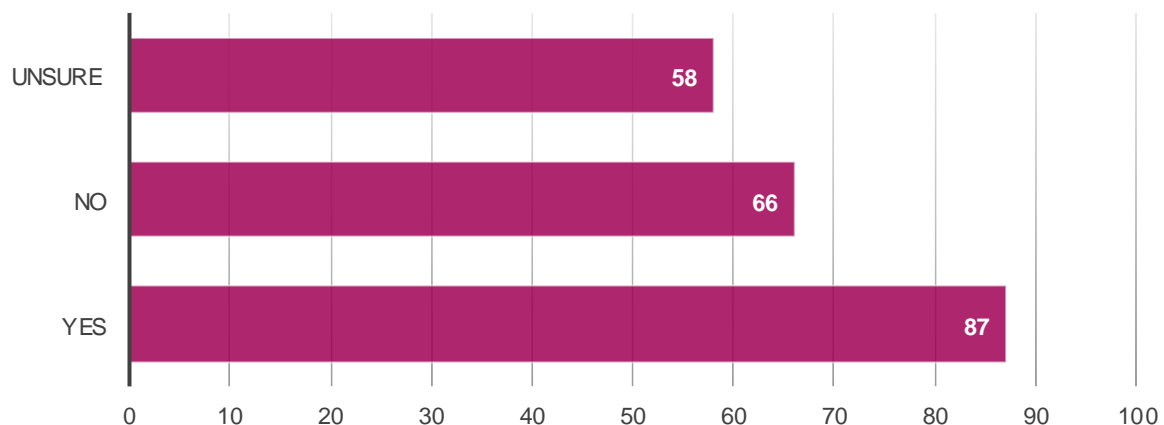
Your trainee representatives

Q25: Were you aware of who represented your specialism on the School's Themed Board?



Most of those that did not know who their rep was said they believed the information would be easy to locate.

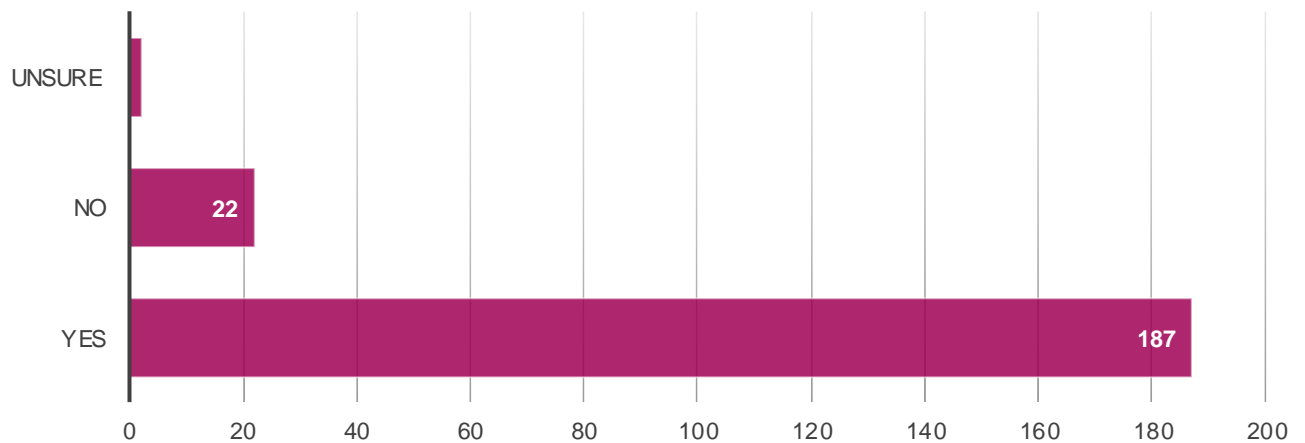
Q26: Did you receive updates from your trainee representative on the Themed Board?



As with the previous question, the experiences of trainees were mixed. Most trainees commented that the updates were infrequent and often unhelpful.

"Trainees send a lot of emails. Most of them are a distraction."

Q27: Were you aware of a trainee network in your region?

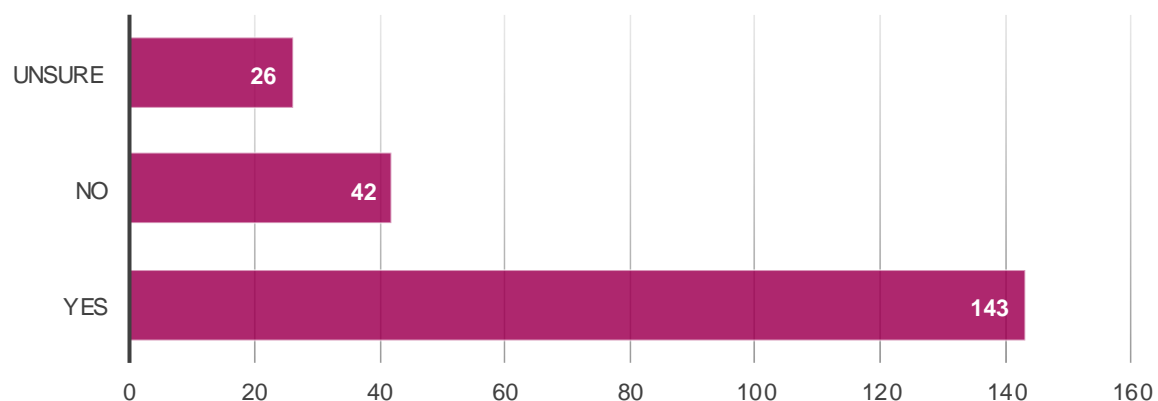


Trainees found the trainee networks really useful for running networking events and providing advice.

“Trainee network was really helpful and hosted useful events.”

“They ran some very useful workshops about Professional Practice competencies.”

Q28: Did you receive updates from your trainee network representative on the Trainee Representative Group?

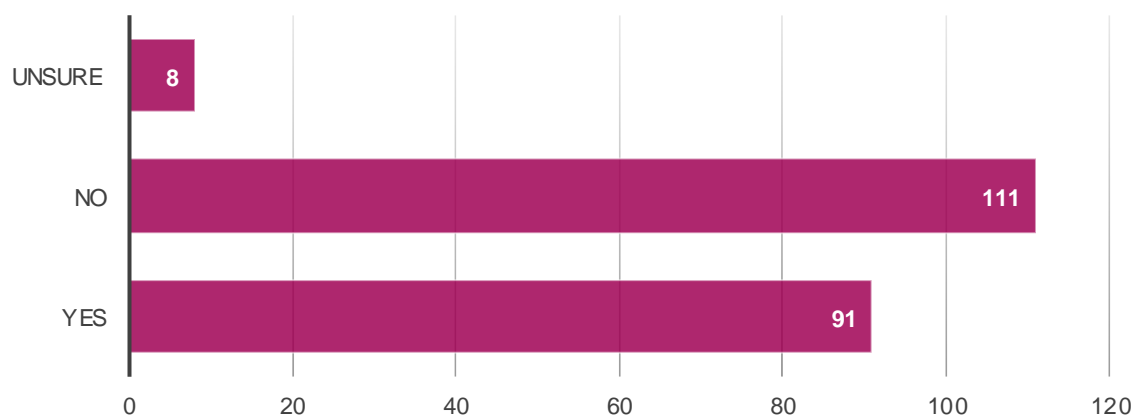


As with the previous question the majority of those trainees that commented praised their local trainee network.

“Feedback was requested prior to meetings.”

Reporting concerns

Q29: During your time on the STP, did you have any concerns about the quality of your work-based or academic training?



The percentage of trainees that did not have any concerns about the quality of their work-based or academic training has massively increased from 5 per cent in the 2019 STP exit survey to over 50 per cent this year.

However, there were comments from several trainees on a lack of guidance and feedback on completed work. They were unsure what they had produced met the quality required. Several trainees also raised concerns over the quality of academic training

“I was the first STP in my hospital so it was difficult sometimes to understand what was required.”

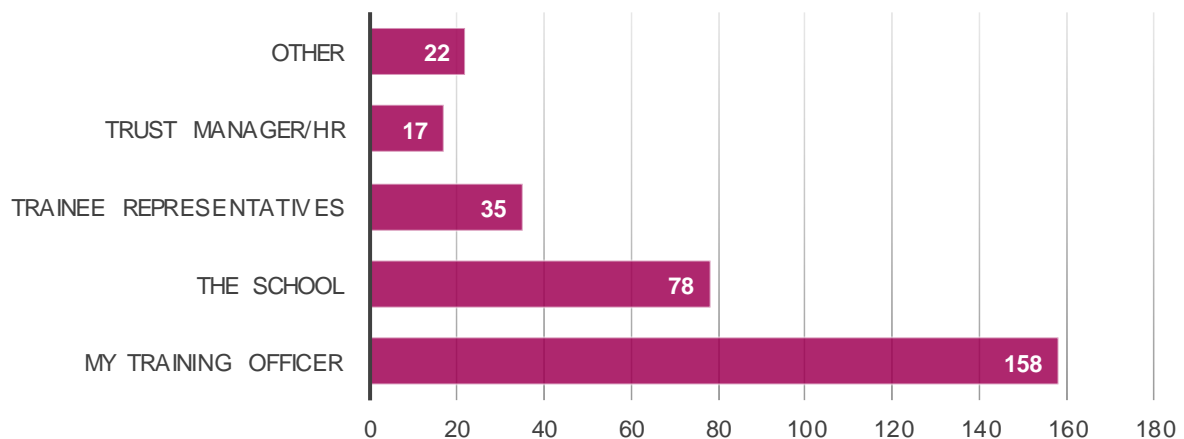
“I was unable to complete some competencies at my workplace even though they had been accredited as being able to provide the requirements of the training for my specialism.”

“I felt my trust and department were extremely supportive and understanding in particular my TO. However, I felt the university training was lacking and poorly organised.”

“Academic training was below expected standard.”

“Some lectures could have been better. Some focused on topics that were irrelevant because they were the expert field of the person who was available.”

Q30: Who did you report (or would have reported) your concerns to? (please select all applicable answers)



Among trainees who selected 'other' almost all the answers were the University, either the Tutor or course co-Ordinator.

Several comments addressed concerns that they did not feel comfortable reporting concerns due to the direct working relationship.

"I would have been uncomfortable raising concerns about my training to my TO / department because I worked with them every day and they were the ones providing my training."

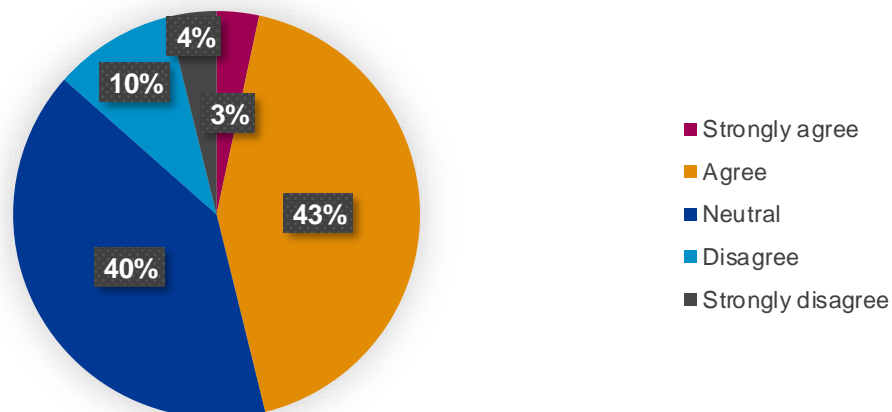
"Occasionally I would mention it to my training officer but I didn't feel able to raise my concerns elsewhere as I didn't want to create an uncomfortable work environment for myself or seem like I was being difficult."

"I felt unable to report my concerns to either my training officer or the school as this would have made the remainder of my time at my trust awkward and uncomfortable as my training officer would know I complained about the lack of training."

Q31: I believe the School takes trainees' concerns into account and acts on them.

Total agree: 47%

Total disagree: 14%



Lots of trainees did not feel the need to voice a concern to the School so were unable to comment.

Several trainees felt that the School needed to do more to support trainees' mental health and wellbeing and that they should be proactive with this. A small minority of trainees were not happy with the way that their concerns were dealt with.

"I have contacted the School and had a telephone conversation with two people to express my concerns but nothing changed."

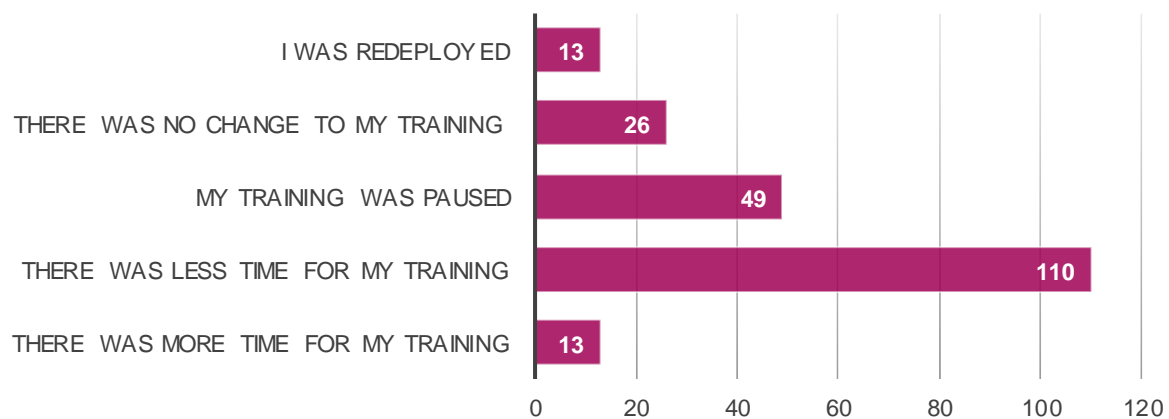
"I highlighted concerns about my, and my training officer's, understanding of the requirements for competencies, and did not receive the level of support or help that I would have liked. I felt dismissed and like my questions and concerns were not taken seriously."

"I haven't seen much evidence of this upon request. But I understand that this can be difficult and it's not always possible to act on concerns. I believe the School provide as much support as possible."

"I feel like the process for dealing with concerns is very slow."

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

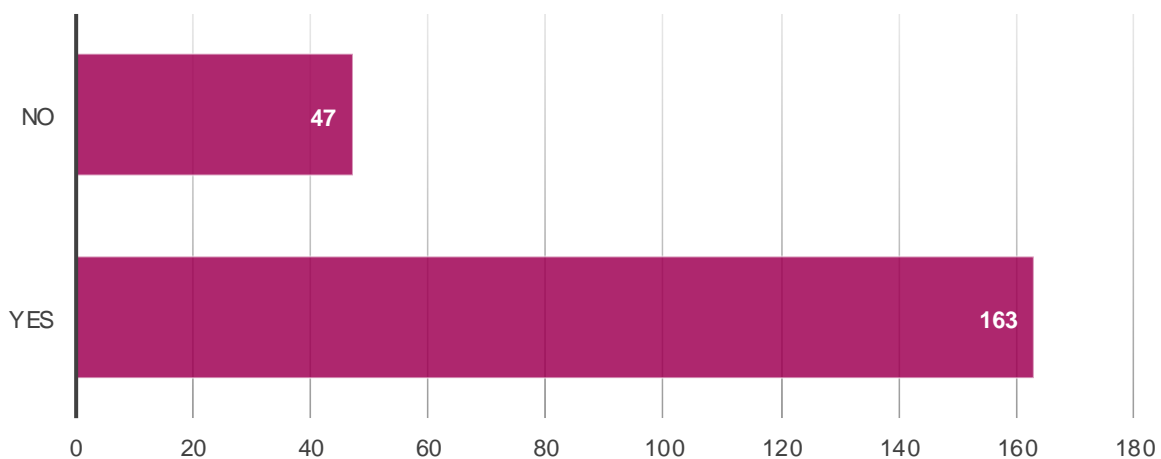
Q32: How was your training impacted by COVID?



Over 50 per cent of trainees had less time for their training due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Only 6.2 per cent of trainees were redeployed.

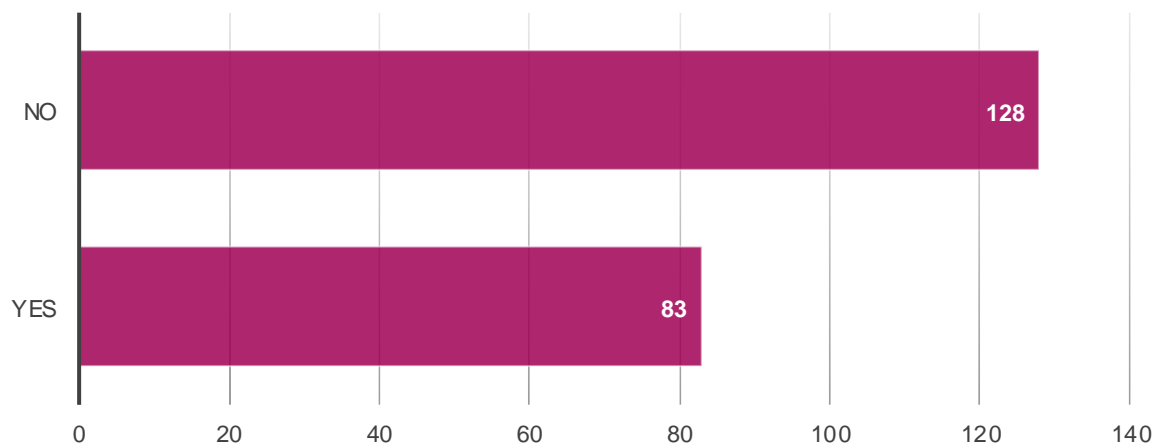
Q33: Did you join the temporary HCPC register?



Over three quarters of trainees joined the temporary HCPC register during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Q34: Did any opportunities to apply your skills become available to you because of COVID?

Trainees being added to the HCPC register early allowed them to take on more responsibility and fill in for other staff members who had been redeployed or were away from the hospital for health reasons.



Q34a: If yes, what experiences did you have?

“I could take on more responsibility in the team and take on work of colleagues who had been redeployed.”

“Took on more responsibility in my department for delivering our usual services due to short staffing and an increase in workload.”

“I was able to work primarily on Point of Care testing for 6 months during COVID, as my experience on my elective and my interest in the subject, and the need for increased support were essential to manage blood gas provision across the trust.”

“COVID gave me a good motivation to start working a bit more independently within my skillset, and I think there was more willingness on the part of nursing and medical staff to utilise my skills.”

“HCPC temporary register allowed me to be trained to help verify results to help my department for potential staffing issues or redeployment of staff due to the pandemic.”

Looking back on the programme

Q35: Please tell us about your employment status:

Employment status of trainees	Number of trainees
Employed as a clinical scientist in the NHS	145
Employed as a clinical scientist outside of the NHS	9
Employed in another HCS role in the NHS	34
Employed in another HCS role outside of the NHS	3
Unemployed and seeking employment as a clinical scientist in the NHS	16
Unemployed or seeking employment as a clinical scientist in the private sector	1
Employed or seeking employment outside of HCS	3
Not employed or seeking employment	0

In a sign that trainees were still strongly committed to pursuing the career that the STP was designed to prepare them for, 76 per cent were either employed, or seeking employment, as an NHS clinical scientist. This has risen from 73 per cent of trainees in the 2019 STP exit survey.

Additionally, 85 per cent of trainees were either employed, or seeking employment, in the NHS and only 6.2 per cent were employed, or seeking employment outside of the NHS.

Q37: If you could complete the STP all over again, what would you do differently?

Personal organisation / time management

“I would get OneFile competencies done earlier.”

“Plan my placements from the start and more in advance.”

“I would relax about not knowing everything at the start of the STP.”

“Use my study days to purely focus on university work. Even though my training officer encouraged me to do this, at times it was difficult to purely focus on academic work.”

“Manage time more efficiently and effectively. Prioritise importance of task list. Put own mental health above requirements of the course.”

“I would definitely try to improve my organisation of different tasks to manage my time and handle the many different elements of the training programme during busy periods.”

“Take more advantage of the trainee networks.”

Assessments / academic work

“Started working on my MSc project sooner.”

“Organised specialist rotations to coincide with academic modules.”

“I would try to get more MSc project measurements taken sooner into the final year and try to tidy up some more specialism competencies ahead of time.”

“I would probably have been more persistent in asking people to assess my work/sign things off. I spent more time than I'd have liked chasing people towards the end, despite having tried to avoid this.”

“Using the university work to sign off competencies in an earlier and more organised fashion.”

Personal development / career opportunities

“Would have started independent work earlier to build up greater experience and independence.”

“Work towards a long-term employment post earlier.”

“Pushed for more training opportunities in the first 18 months.”

“Push for training in hands on skills sooner than I did.”

“I would try and gain as much experience in the field as possible.”

“I think I would be more realistic about my responsibilities as a trainee. Initially I waited for opportunities to arise but I should have taken a more pro-active approach earlier in my training.”

Training provision / providers

“Have a clearer training plan agreed with my TO at the beginning of the programme.”

“I would ensure a comprehensive training schedule was made so that I knew at what stage I should be at various points in the programme.”

“I would be more proactive with arranging rotations and not wait for my training officer to guide me. I would look further ahead to the specialist rotations and start gathering evidence for these much earlier.”

“Ensure the school is more involved in the host departments ability to provide training. I had no idea that the training I was being provided was so inadequate and unsupported until it was far into my programme and I only knew who to raise concerns with when I met an STP from another specialism who had contacts at the school.”

“I would try to address concerns over certain aspects of my training earlier.”

“Insist on a training plan being put into place.”

Q37: How do you think the STP could be improved?

The main suggestion from trainees on ways the STP could be improved was to have a stronger presence in quality assurance to ensure there was a degree of consistency, this would ensure that all trainees have access to the same opportunities not dependent on their training departments. As part of this increased presence trainees have suggested a suite of online guidance for training officers was produced helping new training officers understand the requirements better.

A similar suggestion of unifying the academic teaching when provided by several universities was also mentioned by a number of trainees.

“Do more to ensure that trainees receive an equal level of training across the Trust providers. Keep a closer eye on the quality of training that trusts provide. Ensure that training officers actually produce a training plan and that the students all have access to the same opportunities.”

“Improved consistency across all training providers.”

“The NSHCS should work with training officers and laboratory managers more closely so that they understand what STP trainees will expect. Because I felt as if I was going mad trying to get across what I had been led to expect from the NSHCS.”

“Better oversight of trainee placements from the School.”

“Closer contact between the school and training departments and having check ins with trainees to see how they are doing in their department not just how their OneFile is which is not always a reflection of a trainees actual training experience.”

“I think there could be more guidance for training officers/training departments on how to create more structure for the STP. My training was very much facilitated by me, which is difficult when you don't necessarily have the contacts to arrange your own training. I would be very easy to fall behind.”

“Centralise university training it felt like there was a big difference between Manchester and Newcastle's courses from speaking time other trainees.”