**SUPPORTED RETURN TO TRAINING FOR ANAESTHETICS TRAINEES**

Thames Valley Deanery

Version 1: January 2020

Revision Date: January 2021

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**SECTION 1: PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of this document is to provide clear guidance for Anaesthetic trainees returning to clinical practice after a period of absence, for any reason, of greater than 3 months.

Returning to work has been recognised as a stressful time for trainees. It is natural to feel apprehensive about returning to work after a period of time away from clinical practice. The concept of ‘skills-fade’ is a phenomenon acknowledged by the GMC1 and Academy of Medical Royal Colleges2 in their 2014 and 2017 reports respectively. In a craft-based specialty with experiential learning the rate of skills-fade is greatest towards the beginning of an absence and significantly impacts performance after 3 months. As well as the duration of the absence, the amount of training undertaken prior to the absence also effects the rate at which the anaesthetist returns to their previous levels of confidence, competence and knowledge3. Therefore, plans for returning to work should be individualised to ensure both trainee wellbeing and patient safety.

SuppoRTT (Supported Return to Training)4 is a Health Education England initiative that forms part of the Improving Junior Doctors’ Working Lives Programme, instigated during the 2016 contract negotiations. It provides funding for courses, educational events and supernumerary practice that enhances the process of returning to training, as well as a framework to guide trainees and trainers in making tailored plans.

**SECTION 2: OVERVIEW**

**Prior to absence:**

Pre-Absence meeting prior to absence with Educational Supervisor\*

Discussion Points:

* CPD
* KIT/SPLIT days
* Any concerns

Pre-Absence Form completed and sent to:

* TPD
* HEETV SuppoRTT
* Uploaded to LLP

**During absence:**

Access to fully funded Professional Development Coaching

Funding for CPD via:

* SuppoRTT
* Study Leave
* Courses
* Educational events
* KIT/SPLiT days

**Prior to return:**

Pre-Return Form completed and sent to:

* TPD
* HEETV SuppoRTT
* Uploaded to LLP

Pre-Return Meeting with Supervisor 8-12 weeks prior to return

Discussion points:

* Individual plan for return
* Supernumerary period
* Concerns/Review

**Return review:**

Return Review Form completed and sent to:

* TPD
* HEETV SuppoRTT
* Uploaded to LLP

Discussion points:

* Overall progress
* Outstanding concerns

Return Review Meeting with Supervisor towards end of supernumerary period

\*In the first instance you should approach your Educational supervisor (ES) but other appropriate supervisors include College Tutors, Training Programme Directors (TPD) and Head of School (HoS)

**SECTION 3: “PRIOR TO ABSENCE” INFORMATION**

For a planned absence, the process of planning your return to training should begin before your absence starts. You should meet with your Educational Supervisor and complete the **Pre-Absence form** which can be found using the links below:

1. The Oxford deanery SuppoRTT website under “Documents and forms”:

<https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/>

**OR**

1. The Oxford School of Anaesthesia and ICM website:

<https://oxfordanaesthesia.org/return-to-practice>

The form lists topics to be discussed at this meeting, including the plan for facilitating your safe return to training.

**Section 4: “DURING ABSENCE” INFORMATION**

During your absence from work you have the opportunity to attend a range of clinical and non-clinical courses and educational events including:

* Courses organised as part of the local SuppoRTT programme
* KIT/SPLiT days
* External training events available under the HEETV study leave policy
* Professional Development Coaching

**SuppoRTT Courses:**

* **Skills and Simulation** for Returning Anaesthetists
  + 1-day course combining pastoral support, guidelines revision, practical skills and tailored, low-intensity simulation training
* **Cross Specialty Day**
  + **1-day course covering topics such as assertiveness, burnout and practical tips regarding handling the return to work as well as clinical updates for a range of specialty groups.**
* **Other courses that may be relevant for anaesthetists include Critical Care** for returning trainees**, Productivity in Focus** - for researchers and academics, **OxSTaR Non-technical skills** and **OxSTaR High-fidelity simulation.**

**All of these courses are free to book for HEETV trainees and some are also able to provide fully funded, on-site childcare**

**Information about the upcoming courses are found on** the Oxford deanery SuppoRTT website below under “Simulation modules” and “Upcoming events”. You can book your place by emailing Ann Heath at [srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk)

<https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/>

**KIT/SPLiT days5:**

* If you are on maternity leave you are able to take up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days.
* If you are on shared parental leave, each employee may take 20 Shared Parental Leave in Touch (SPLiT) days.
* The ability to take these days is not an entitlement, nor are they compulsory – they must be undertaken by agreement between the employee and the Trust/department. It is therefore worth discussing your plans at an early stage with your department and Trust.
* When utilised, these days be used for a clinical day at work or to attend courses.
* Working for any part of a day counts as a whole KIT/SPLiT day.
* If you take more than the maximum amounts stated above, your maternity/shared parental leave will automatically be brought to an end.
* Payment for these days is at your basic hourly rate for any hours worked, less any payments due such as Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP) or Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). If you take a KIT day while in receipt of full or half OMP, you will be entitled to a full or half day of time off in lieu respectively upon your return.
* Please note for any clinical contact you will need to inform your medical indemnity organisation.
* You will be required to complete some paperwork, and this differs between Trusts – contact your HR department for details.
* Whilst you may undertake RTT-related activities during a period of accrued annual leave before you return to work, these would not technically be KIT days which must be taken during your official maternity leave period. Any days of work undertaken during accrued annual leave would attract a day off in lieu rather than additional payment and should be by agreement with your employer.

**External courses:**

* RCoA GASAgain (Giving Anaesthesia Safely Again)
* RCoA and AAGBI Core Topics Days

**Professional Development Coaching:**

All trainees can access up to three one-hour sessions of professional development coaching to support their return.  These sessions can be arranged during the period of three months prior to return and up to six months after.

To book it, ensure that you have written a request for coaching sessions as part of the discussion on the Pre-Return Meeting form, complete the application available at https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/documents-and-forms/ and submit it to[**srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk**](mailto:srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk) who will contact you about allocating a coach.

The coaching is delivered by the Professional Support Unit and Wellbeing Service and more details can be found at <https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/professional-development-coaching/> and <https://www.tvpsw.com/psu> .

**Funding:**

* Local SuppoRTT courses are fully funded and free to book for HEETV trainees. If additional funding is required for a course/supernumerary training etc then it can be applied for by using the form found on the Oxford deanery SuppoRTT website under “Documents and Forms”. <https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/>
* For other courses that are “essential or desirable” for Anaesthetic trainees, study funding can be applied for in the usual way:
  + The list of courses and the most recent study leave form (version 7) can be found at <https://oxfordanaesthesia.org/study-leave>

\*\*\*Remember, an email attached to the study leave form from your ES approving your application for study leave can be accepted in lieu of a signature being completed, provided your supervisor has made the above affirmations in this email.\*\*\*

**Personal CPD:**

* There are **no mandatory requirements** or assessments that dictate what preparation is necessary before returning to work.  However, you have a duty to ensure that you are safe to return to practice.
* In addition to any courses, events, KIT/SPLiT days and coaching, you may consider familiarising yourself with any recent updates to guidelines that have been published during your period of leave e.g. Difficult Airway Society Guidelines, Resuscitation Council Guidelines, GMC Guidance, AAGBI publications and revising of the management of anaesthetic emergencies as necessary.

**Section 5: “PRIOR TO RETURN” INFORMATION**

8-12 weeks prior to your planned date of return you should meet with your supervisor and complete the **Pre-Return form** which can be found in 2 places:

1. The Oxford deanery SuppoRTT website under “Documents and forms”

<https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/>

**OR**

1. The Oxford School of Anaesthesia website:

<https://oxfordanaesthesia.org/return-to-practice>

The form lists the topics to be discussed at the meeting and includes;

* A summary of the CPD activities undertaken or yet to be undertaken
* The planned date of return and induction arrangements
* The duration of any supernumerary period and what work/assessments are to be included

\*\*\*Please note: The supervisor responsible for having the Initial Return Meeting with the trainee is also responsible for disseminating the trainees plan of return to all relevant educators/supervisors/medical education departments who will be responsible for the trainee during their return\*\*\*

**SECTION 6: SUPERNUMERARY TIME AND RETURN REVIEW INFORMATION**

* The HEETV SuppoRTT programme funds 3 days of supernumerary work on return to training.
* The Oxford School of Anaesthesia advises a **two-week supernumerary period** (If you are LTFT, this is full-time equivalent) to be rostered on your initial return to work
* The RCoA suggests that trainees who have had less than 12 months anaesthetics experience prior to a period of leave should repeat the Initial Assessment of Competence as part of their return to work3.

Towards the end of the trainee’s supernumerary period the Return Review Meeting form should be completed with your supervisor. This form can be found on Page 18 (Appendix C) at:

<https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/09/SRTT_TV_Guidance_Document_May19.pdf>

In this meeting **both the trainee and supervisor** should be satisfied with the progress made in order to be signed off for return to normal duties.

**SECTION 7: OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION**

**Annual leave**

* If during your absence you have continued to accrue annual leave you will need to communicate clearly with HR and your department regarding when this will be taken.
  + Many trainees choose to add a period of annual leave onto the end of an absence
  + If you do this then the annual leave period counts as paid training time and you should ensure that you are paid accordingly and that your TPD is aware that this time counts as having returned to work.
  + You may undertake RTT activities days during this annual leave period but these are not technically KIT/SPLiT days which must be taken during statutory leave. Such days would accrue an extra day of annual leave in lieu upon your return to training and should be agreed with your employer in advance.
* If your absence crosses from one annual leave year to another you may have to plan in advance (where possible) in order to utilise your full allowance6:
  + A maximum of 5 days annual leave (pro-rata for LTFT or placements <12 months) can be carried from one placement/leave year to another with the same employer.
  + Alternatively, payment in lieu for up to 5 days (pro-rata) can also be made for untaken leave.
  + These are not entitlements and are by agreement only with the employer
  + If this will affect you, you should discuss with HR at the earliest opportunity as it may be necessary to annual leave before starting any planned absence.
  + You should ensure you are paid appropriately and that the time is counted for training.

**Less Than Full Time Training**

* Many trainees choose to return to training on a less than full time (LTFT) basis after an absence
* There is a LTFT guide available on the Oxford Anaesthesia website under “Trainees” and “LTFT”: <https://oxfordanaesthesia.org/ltft>

**USEFUL CONTACTS:**

If you are having difficulty with any of the processes above, it may be useful to seek assistance from:

* SuppoRTT Champion
* LTFT Champion
* HEETV SuppoRTT Fellow
* Anaesthetics SuppoRTT programme development fellow
* LTFT OxDAT Representatives

**ONLINE RESOURCES**

* Email address for Thames Valley SuppoRTT office: [**srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk**](mailto:srtt.tv@hee.nhs.uk)
* The Oxford deanery SuppoRTT website:

<https://thamesvalley.hee.nhs.uk/resources-information/trainee-information/supported-return-to-training/>

* Oxford Anaesthesia website: <https://oxfordanaesthesia.org/> (“Trainees” 🡪 “Return to Training”)
* RCoA: Returning to Work After a Period of Absence:

<https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2019-09/ReturnToWork2015.pdf>

**References:**

1. <https://www.gmc-uk.org/about/what-we-do-and-why/data-and-research/research-and-insight-archive/skills-fade-literature-review>
2. <http://www.aomrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Return_to_Practice_guidance_2017_Revison_0617-2.pdf>
3. <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2019-09/ReturnToWork2015.pdf>
4. <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Supported%20Return%20to%20Training.pdf>
5. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook/part-3-terms-and-conditions-of-service/section-15-leave-and-pay-for-new-parents-england-wales-and-scotland>
6. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Documents/Pay-and-reward/Junior-Doctors/NHSDoctorsandDentistsinTrainingEnglandTCS2016VERSION8231219.pdf> Schedule 10, paragraph 21