



Interscheme transfer policy

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1.0 Purpose

This policy puts in place a mechanism by which trainees enrolled on the national programme of GP training may, in appropriate circumstances, transfer from one training scheme to another.

2.0 Scope

2.1 Within scope

2.1.1 GP Trainees

This policy applies to trainees enrolled on the national programme of GP training under the auspices of the Irish College of GPs (“College” or “the College”).

2.1.2 College training schemes

This policy applies to all training schemes under the governance of the national programme of GP training under the auspices of the College.

2.1.3 The GP training directorate

This policy applies to the GP training Directorate, which incorporates the national director, regional programme directors, and the GP training manager.

2.2 Out of scope

This policy relates to trainee interscheme transfers only and does not apply in circumstances where directing staff, GP trainers, or others wish to transfer from one scheme to another.

To transfer from one scheme to another, trainees must obtain approval from both the Irish College of GPs (the College) and their employer. This policy applies to the training programme under the governance of College only and does not apply to employment matters, which are the sole preserve of the Health Service Executive.

3.0 Policy statement

3.1 General principles

3.1.1 Transfers are not an automatic entitlement

In general, interscheme transfers are considered only in rare, exceptional situations where there has been a significant change to a trainee's personal circumstances. They should not be viewed as an automatic entitlement. Transfers should not subvert College selection procedures or the training scheme matching process, nor should they be viewed as an "unofficial" round of the latter.

The College reserves the right to decline applications where capacity for transfer does not exist and / or the grounds for the application are not deemed to be valid.

3.1.2 Trainees must obtain approval from both College and the employer

Employment contract related issues around transfers of contracts of employment, payroll and other employment issues are to be dealt with by the trainee directly with their employer. Trainees should seek the advice of their respective employer's HR department for advice on their eligibility and on all statutory rights and contractual arrangements.

For the avoidance of doubt

- The College can approve an interscheme transfer on educational grounds and within the scope of the training programme but
- The trainee must also obtain approval from the employer (provided the College has approved their initial application).

3.1.3 Unforeseen and unavoidable changes to personal circumstances

Trainees may apply for interscheme transfers where there has been both an unforeseen *and* unavoidable change to their personal circumstances that has, or could have, a significant impact on their ability to continue training under the auspices of the scheme on which they are presently enrolled.

For the avoidance of doubt:

- Unforeseeable: the trainee could not have reasonably predicted or anticipated the change in personal circumstances
- Unavoidable: the trainee could not have reasonably avoided or prevented the change in personal circumstances

3.1.4 Committed relationships: marriage, civil partnership, and cohabiting couples

For the purpose of this policy, the following relationships are recognised:

- Marriage
- Civil partnership
- Cohabiting couples

Marriage and civil partnerships are clearly defined in law and are not further discussed.

The term “partner” is henceforth used for simplicity to refer to the person with whom the trainee is in a committed relationship.

3.1.4.1 Cohabiting couples

Cohabiting couples are defined as opposite or same sex adults living together in an intimate and committed relationship but who are not married or in a civil partnership. Under the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, several factors are considered in determining whether two people are cohabitants, including the duration of the relationship, the basis on which they live together, the degree of financial or other relations between them, whether there are dependent children, and the degree to which they present themselves as a couple.

To have rights of legal redress under the Act, cohabitants must demonstrate that they have been living with another adult as a couple for a period —

- Of 2 years or more in the case where they are the parents of one or more dependent children, and
- Of 5 years or more in any other case.

This latter test is adopted for the purpose of this policy, although individual submissions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, particularly in relation to new disability or health issues as outlined in 3.2.2 below.

3.1.5 Applications and documentary evidence

All applications for interscheme transfers are managed through the GP Training Directorate. While trainees may seek guidance from their scheme director, they may not approach schemes to which they wish to transfer.

Applications for interscheme transfers must be made using approved College forms and according to the conventions set down in the procedure accompanying this policy. This includes the submission of documentary evidence of the trainee’s change in personal circumstances.



The College reserves the right to institute disciplinary action where a trainee is found to have submitted false or misleading information, or to have withheld relevant information, while submitting an application.

3.1.6 Time limits

In general, requests for interscheme transfers unrelated to a new disability or health issue are generally not considered within the first year of training, or in the final six months of training.

3.2 Grounds for transfer which are usually agreed

3.2.1 *A new disability or health condition affecting the trainee*

Interscheme transfers may be considered where:

- The trainee has developed a new disability or health issue as defined by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004; and
- Where the disability or health issue has developed following the commencement of their current training scheme and/or following the acceptance of a place on that training scheme; and
- For which treatment is both available and necessary; and
- Where the treatment, care or social requirements can only be carried out in the geographical area to which the trainee has applied to relocate; and
- Where the foregoing has been confirmed by a report from their occupational health physician

The Employment Equality Acts and the Equal Status Acts define disability as follows:

“Disability means:

- the total or partial absence of a person’s bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person’s body;
- the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness;
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body;
- a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction; or
- a condition, disease or illness which affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour.”

3.2.2 *A new disability or health condition affecting a person to whom the trainee is the primary carer*

Interscheme transfers may be considered where the trainee is the primary carer to someone who has developed a new health condition or disability, as defined by criteria set down in 3.2.1. This will usually be a partner, sibling, parent or child.

The trainee must demonstrate that:

- They (the trainee) are the person’s primary caregiver, and
- That the person’s disability or health issue has developed following the trainee’s commencement of their current training scheme; and
- That the person’s disability or health issues is such that they require ongoing care; and

- That the person requiring care is resident in the geographical area to which the trainee has applied to relocate; or
- That, for the management of their condition, the person requiring care must move to the geographical area to which the trainee has applied to relocate.

3.2.3 A significant change to the trainee's personal circumstances owing to a change in a committed relationship

The reader is referred to section 3.1.3 above for the relevant definitions. Again, the change in circumstances must be both unforeseen and unavoidable and have a significant impact on the trainee's ability to continue in their current training scheme.

Circumstances which may be agreed include but are not limited to:

- An unforeseen and unavoidable change in the partner's employment such that they must move to a different geographic area; this must correspond to the area to which the trainee has applied to transfer;
- An unforeseen and unavoidable change in custody arrangements relating to dependent children whereby the trainee must move to comply with a legal ruling; or
- Familial breakdown (e.g., divorce or separation) where the trainee must move to comply with a legal ruling or on safety grounds

3.3 Grounds for transfer which are generally not agreed

Circumstances which are generally not agreed include:

- Health conditions or disabilities affecting the trainee which may be managed locally
- Health conditions or disabilities affecting a person to whom the trainee is the primary caregiver which may be managed locally
- A change in the location of a partner's employment (as outlined in 3.2.3 above) which was initiated at the partner's request
- Higher or further education undertaken by a partner
- A change in living preferences
- General housing problems
- General financial problems
- Extracurricular activities (e.g., sport, arts and theatre)

3.3.1 A note regarding subspecialty and academic training

The College does not currently offer subspecialty / GP with special interest training as a component of the national GP training programme; these are generally pursued as post CSCST fellowships following completion



of training. While some schemes have particular areas of interest, a trainee's desire to pursue that interest will not usually constitute grounds to request an interscheme transfer. Prospective trainees are encouraged to consider such alignments prior to application to GP training.

Additionally, some trainees may wish to pursue research, education or other academic activities through an affiliate school of medicine. This is not a core training requirement. In addition, there is broad geographic distribution of academic departments of General Practice in Ireland. In sum, this will not usually constitute grounds to request an interscheme transfer.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

Trainees will apply for interscheme transfers pursuant to the regulations set down in this document.

Scheme directors will advise trainees on the interscheme transfer process and such alternatives that may be available.

The GP training Directorate will receive and process applications.

5.0 Contact

GP Training Quality Assurance and Enhancement

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