

Flexible Training Policy

Area of College	Education, Learning & Assessment
Document Writer	Executive Officer, Education Policy, Research and Evaluation (EPRE), Education, Learning & Assessment
Document Owner	Manager, EPRE, Education, Learning & Assessment
Approved by	College Education Committee
Effective Date	27/03/2025
Next Review Date	02/12/2025
References/Legislation	
Associated RACP Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College By-Law: Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process • Progression through Training Policy • Recognition of Prior Learning Policy • Special Consideration for Assessment Policy
Applicability	All RACP training programs

Note: This is a controlled document within the [RACP Policy Framework](#).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. PURPOSE	3
3. SCOPE	3
4. POLICY CONTENT	3
4.1 Applications for flexible training arrangements	4
4.2 Part-time training	4
4.3 Interruption during a training program.....	5
5. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEALS	6
5.1 Exceptional circumstances	6
6. REVIEW OF POLICY	6
7. DEFINITIONS	6
8. HISTORY	7

1. INTRODUCTION

The RACP is committed to flexible training for trainees of all RACP training programs.

Provision of flexible training opportunities, including support for taking time off training, is essential to developing a sustainable and quality physician workforce. Access to flexible training, including taking parental leave during training, for parents and carers of all genders, is a requirement for progressing gender equity in medicine.

Provision of flexible training requires collaboration between RACP training program committees, trainees and training providers.

2. PURPOSE

This policy details the provisions for flexible training in RACP training programs. These provisions are designed to:

- a) Encourage retention of RACP trainees who are unable to train on a full-time continuous basis.
- b) Support diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-discrimination and wellbeing in training.
- c) Assist trainees to pursue training whilst fulfilling other obligations such as carer responsibilities.
- d) Support continued training in programs on a time-equivalence (pro-rata) basis.

3. SCOPE

This policy outlines the flexible training options available for RACP trainees (including post Fellowship trainees). The policy details provisions for part-time training and interruptions to training (including parental leave).

Implementation of these provisions is monitored through training provider accreditation processes, as well as through monitoring and evaluation activities related to training programs and selection into training.

Access to flexible working arrangements and leave are provided for in Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand employment and anti-discrimination legislation.

The Medical Board of Australia and Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | Medical Council of New Zealand provide regulatory guidelines related to taking a break from medical practice and impacts on medical registration.

In addition to this policy, trainees, training program committees and training providers are instructed to reference materials in the Associated RACP Documents section above.

4. POLICY CONTENT

As expected of trainees undertaking full-time, continuous training pathways, trainees undertaking flexible training pathways must meet the educational standards of the training program.

4.1 Applications for flexible training arrangements

Trainees are encouraged to plan as far in advance as possible if there is a need for flexible training arrangements.

- 4.1.1 Approval of flexible training arrangements must be sought prospectively in writing from the relevant training program committee with any applicable fee.
- 4.1.2 Interruptions from training without prospective approval may be grounds for discontinuation of training. Exceptions can be made by the relevant training program committee where the need for flexible training arrangements and/ or readiness to return to training is not readily predictable
- 4.1.3 Applications to vary an approved training program including interruptions or change to part-time hours can be made at any time during the year.
- 4.1.4 Trainees may apply for interruption or part-time training as many times as they wish and for as long as they wish at any stage of training, however all training program requirements must be completed within the relevant time limit set out in the RACP Progression Through Training policy.
- 4.1.5 Each application for interruption or part-time training covers a maximum time of 12 months. A trainee must submit a new application at the end of the approved 12-month period if they wish to extend the interruption or part-time training arrangement.
- 4.1.6 If an application for flexible training is not approved by the relevant training program committee, the training program committee will provide a written explanation to the trainee.

4.2 Part-time training

- 4.2.1 For training undertaken from the 2023 training year onwards, part-time training refers to training completed at a minimum of 0.2 full-time equivalent (FTE).
- 4.2.2 Part-time training duties should be pro-rated to full time training duties provided that all educational requirements will be met.
- 4.2.3 Part-time training can be undertaken according to a variety of models as offered by the training provider, provided that educational requirements are met. For example part-time training may consist of set days per week, variable days, longer blocks of time worked/time off (such as “month-on, month-off” arrangement) or combinations thereof.
- 4.2.4 Trainees undertaking part-time training are required to complete the same number of work-based learning and assessment tools pro-rated to the amount of training for which they have been approved.
- 4.2.5 Requirements for submission of [reports containing structured supervisor feedback on training progress](#) (as defined in Section 9) are not pro-rated for part-time trainees; these continue to be required as specified in training handbooks to ensure part-time trainees receive regular formal feedback on their progress.

4.3 Interruption during a training program

- 4.3.1 Interrupted training is any absence (full-time) from an approved training position which exceeds the allowable absence as set out in the Progression Through Training policy.
- 4.3.2 During an approved interruption to training:
- a) Training periods undertaken are not eligible for certification.
 - b) Completion of work-based learning and assessment tools and [reports containing structured supervisor feedback on training progress](#) are not required.
 - c) Research projects or other written project requirements may be undertaken.
 - d) An interruption fee is payable to remain in the training program. No fee is payable for interruptions from training due to parental, family and domestic violence, carer, compassionate/bereavement, or medical leave.
- 4.3.3 If training is interrupted for part of a [training year](#), work-based assessment requirements for the remaining period will be determined on a pro-rata basis by the relevant training program committee.
- 4.3.4 Trainees may interrupt their training for a continuous period of up to 12 months without being required to complete additional training requirements.
- a) If training is interrupted for more than 12 continuous months, a return to training plan may be developed to support the trainee during the first six months upon return to training as arranged between the trainee and their supervisor and the relevant training program committee.
 - b) If training is interrupted for more than 24 continuous months, a return to training plan will be required. The plan will be determined on a case by case basis and will depend upon activities undertaken during interruption. The relevant training program committee may require an additional period of training.
- 4.3.5 If a trainee interrupts their training during a previously approved period of training, any prospectively approved training time already undertaken is eligible for certification.
- 4.3.6 Interrupted training due to **parental leave or medical leave:**
- a) Approved full-time parental leave and medical leave are excluded from accruing towards the time limit to complete training.
 - b) Part-time parental leave and medical leave (i.e. part-time training) are not considered an interruption and will not be excluded from the time limit to complete training.

- c) Trainees on parental leave may make use of [Keeping in Touch Days](#) with their employer in accordance with relevant legislation and employment conditions. Keeping in Touch Days may be eligible for approval towards training time, should the relevant training program committee deem that these meet the educational requirements.

4.3.7 Interval between Training Programs

- a) A trainee who has completed Basic Training (Divisions) must commence Advanced Training (Divisions) within five years of the completion of Basic Training.
- b) No more than two consecutive years may be spent away from clinical work during the interval between completing Basic Training and commencing Advanced Training to ensure currency of knowledge and skills.
- c) The relevant training program committee may require evidence of clinical work undertaken during this period.

5. RECONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPEALS

Rights of reconsideration, review and appeal are set out in the College By-Law: Reconsideration, Review and Appeals Process.

5.1 Exceptional circumstances

Provisions for special consideration of exceptional circumstances are set out in the RACP Special Consideration for Assessment Policy.

6. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements. The policy may also be changed as a result of other factors.

Staff and members of the College may provide feedback about this document by emailing RACPPolicy@racp.edu.au.

7. DEFINITIONS

Term	Means
College	The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, ACN 000 039 047, an incorporated body limited by guarantee.
Fellow, Trainee, and Member	have the same meaning as in the College Constitution.
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	refers to a minimum 38-hour work week.
Interrupted training	is any absence (full-time) from an approved training position which exceeds the allowable absence as set out in the Progression through training policy. Examples include extended holiday, extended illness, parental leave or postgraduate study (refer to 4.4).

Term	Means
Keeping in Touch Days	Keeping in Touch Days allow employees who are on parental leave to go back to work for a few days, without affecting their parental leave entitlements. The days are designed to help employees stay up to date with their workplace, refresh their skills and assist their return to work. Details are available on the Fair Work Australia website and Employment New Zealand website.
Medical leave	in the context of this policy refers to an approved interruption (full-time) due to medical reasons, as evidenced by a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner (refer to 4.3.6).
Parental leave	in the context of this policy refers to an approved interruption (full-time) due to maternity, paternity, adoptive leave or permanence order, whāngai, miscarriage, stillbirth or termination (refer to 4.3.6).
Reports containing structured supervisor feedback on training progress	refers to reports that provide supervisor feedback regarding a trainee's learning and performance, completed at the end of a rotation or training year but sometimes in the middle of 12-month rotations. These vary for different training programs and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward/Service Consultant Report (Basic Training) • Mid-Year Progress Report (Basic Training) • Annual Progress Report (Basic Training) • Supervisor's Report (Advanced Training) • Learning Contract Report (Public Health Medicine) • Training Status Report (Occupational and Environmental Medicine)
Training Program	refers to any education program of the RACP's Divisions, Faculties or Chapters. Basic Training and Advanced Training are considered separate programs for this policy.
Training year	refers to the calendar year in which the majority of the annual training experiences occur. Training year is sometimes known as clinical year or medical year.

8. HISTORY

Revision	Effective Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	01.01.2012	New policy
2.0	01.01.2017	Full revision
3.0	01.08.2020	Redraft of the policy to align with new curricula. Changed 4.3 to reflect the change to pro-rating of assessment tools.
3.1	01.01.2023 (approved on 02.12.2022)	Update following review incorporating feedback related to gender equity in training and administrative update to transfer to new policy template.
3.2	27.03.2025	Administrative update of committee titles as part of the Education Governance Review Initiative.