

Self-Development Time (SDT) FAQs for Foundation Trainees (and their Supervisors)

What is self-development time?

Self-development time is being introduced for all Foundation doctors in England as a result of the Foundation Programme Review carried out by Health Education England (HEE). It is time which will be formally included in the personalised work schedule of a Foundation doctor to allow them to carry out non-clinical activities related to their curriculum or career exploration, it is similar to the Supporting Professional Activity (SPA) time included in consultant contracts.

When was SDT be introduced?

SDT was rolled out in August 2020 in all English Foundation Schools for F2 doctors in order to support their health and wellbeing. It will be introduced for all F1 and F2 doctors from August 2021.

How much time will be given for SDT?

Health Education England has asked from August 2021 for a minimum of 2 hours on average per week for FY1 and FY2 doctors.

What am I meant to do during SDT?

SDT is intended to be used for non-clinical activities that are essential for meeting the curriculum requirements for successful sign-off at ARCP or for developing future career plans – examples include meeting with supervisors, working on the ePortfolio, carrying out Quality Improvement work, formally reflecting on your clinical practice, and exploring career opportunities. Fuller descriptions of intended uses of SDT can be found in the [Intended Uses of SDT Time document](#).

What if my work schedule already includes time for these activities?

Where trusts or individual departments have already included such time in work schedules it is expected that this will be re-named as SDT.

Does SDT have to be given every week or can it be amalgamated?

As long as Foundation doctors get 2 hours of SDT *on average* every week, trusts can be flexible about how it is rostered. Feedback from our 2020 pilots suggested that SDT is more useful to Foundation doctors when multiple weeks' worth of SDT is taken together, e.g., two weeks' worth of SDT for an FY1 could be given as 4 hours, in one afternoon, once a fortnight. Such arrangements may well work better for both Foundation doctors and service delivery.

Who decides when the SDT is timetabled?

According to the Terms and Conditions of Service (2016) for doctors in training, Educational Supervisors are accountable for ensuring that a personalised work schedule, based on the generic work schedule for the post, is agreed with their supervisee. SDT should be included in both the generic work schedule and the final agreed personalised work schedule. In many Foundation posts the responsibility for discussing and agreeing the personalised work schedules will be delegated to the named Clinical Supervisor.

How do I plan and record SDT?

Your plans for, and use of, your SDT should be included in the regular discussions with your Educational Supervisor. Making a Personal Development Plan, and regularly updating this throughout the year, will help identify non-clinical activities you should undertake during SDT. The ePortfolio does not contain a specific section for documenting use of SDT but the evidence you gather of progress in achieving your PDP objectives, along with the records of your Educational Supervision meetings, will show how the SDT has been used.

Can I do locum shifts when I am rostered to be on SDT?

SDT is NOT extra time off, it should be considered as work, and therefore you cannot do locum shifts when you are rostered to be on SDT (this would mean you are being paid twice for the same time; this will be considered fraud).

What if I am working LTFT?

You should be given SDT pro-rata to the percentage of whole time equivalent you are working.

Do I have to do the same thing in SDT each week?

No - your non-clinical and career development needs will vary as you progress through Foundation training and it is important to regularly review these and how you will use your SDT to achieve success.

How does using SDT for career exploration differ from taster days?

Foundation doctors are expected to develop career planning skills and to proactively explore and plan their career options. SDT can be used for activities to support this, such as gathering careers information from internet resources (such as Royal College websites or the [Health Careers](#) website), seeking advice from relevant clinicians, and taking time to reflect on career options and plans. Taster days are meant to provide a much longer opportunity, usually up to a week's duration, for experiencing one or more specialties and are provided out of the Foundation doctor's study leave allowance.

Can I do e-learning in SDT?

Yes – using SDT to do e-learning to further your knowledge about areas that are in the curriculum, have been identified in your reflections, or are related to your career planning

are all very appropriate uses of the time. SDT is not, however, meant to be used for mandatory e-learning done as part of trust teaching programmes or for doing mandated trust electronic induction and essential training packages.

What if I do not get the SDT?

In the first instance discuss this with your named Clinical and Educational Supervisors - as they are responsible for your personalised work schedule, they should be able to support you in getting the appropriate SDT. You may want to consider whether you submit a 'Training issue' exception report. If the situation cannot be resolved with the help of your supervisors, you should talk to your Foundation Training Programme Director.

What happens if clinical demand peaks again?

If clinical demand peaks again due to exceptional circumstances (such as another wave of -COVID-19) then we would not expect trainees to continue with SDT time during that period. It would be a local decision as to if it was appropriate to continue with SDT time.