

Exceptional arrangements for the OSFA

Policy overview

The NSHCS recognises its responsibility to ensure that no trainee is disadvantaged in their opportunity to complete their Objective Structured Final Assessment (OSFA). It also recognises that a trainee may not be able to attend the OSFA on the published date due to certain life events, or circumstances outside their control. This policy on exceptional arrangements for the OSFA ensures that:

- Where a trainee is not able to attend the OSFA on the published date, the trainee can apply for exceptional arrangements to reschedule their OSFA (see full details below).
- Where a trainee is able to attend the OSFA on the published date but has specific additional needs, the trainee can apply for exceptional arrangements to accommodate these needs. These may include the provision of a personal chaperone or carer, access to a private space for breast feeding or for other needs, additional or extended rest breaks, or the opportunity to be seated throughout the OSFA.

All applications for exceptional arrangements must be supported by appropriate evidence. Trainees with a condition, illness or injury should be mindful that the OSFA may be demanding in terms of physical activity, such as moving between stations, long periods standing, sitting down and getting up within stations, or operating equipment. Trainees are advised to discuss their options with their training officer and doctor or other healthcare professional as appropriate. Depending on the circumstances outlined in the trainee's application for exceptional arrangements, the trainee may be required to sign a self-declaration of being fit to attend the OSFA.

All applications for exceptional arrangements will be anonymised before being considered by a cross-specialism OSFA policy board, consisting of senior managers of the NSHCS and specialists as deemed appropriate. The board will make their decisions based on the principle of equity for all trainees, including those not requesting exceptional arrangements, and past and future OSFA candidates.

Trainees with specific educational needs should refer to the policy on Reasonable Adjustments. Trainees who wish to inform the NSHCS of a life event or circumstance, but do not wish to apply for any exceptional arrangements, should complete the Mitigating Circumstances form as described in the OSFA Regulations document.

Applying for exceptional arrangements

Trainees who wish to apply for exceptional arrangements should complete the attached form as soon as they are aware of the need for exceptional arrangements, with the appropriate evidence being sent separately if necessary, so as not to delay the application. Trainees should be mindful that the NSHCS may not be able to accommodate very late requests for support for specific needs, such as private spaces, extended rest breaks, or the allocation of a personal chaperone or carer. There is no legal requirement for trainees to inform the NSHCS if they are pregnant or become pregnant whilst registered on the STP. However, trainees are strongly encouraged to disclose a pregnancy that may impact on the trainee's ability to take the OSFA at the earliest opportunity.

Examples of events and circumstances covered by the exceptional arrangements policy

The OSFA policy board will consider all requests for exceptional arrangements on a case-by-case basis. However, as a guide, it is anticipated that requests prompted by the following events will be permitted:

- serious injury or illness, including contagious illness;
- for pregnant trainees, a due date within four weeks of the OSFA, or an OSFA date within four weeks of giving birth;
- serious illness or death of an immediate family member (e.g. sister, father, son).

Examples of events and circumstances not covered by the exceptional arrangements policy

The OSFA policy board will consider all requests for exceptional arrangements on a case-by-case basis. However, as a guide, it is anticipated that requests prompted by the following events will not be permitted:

- a clash with a social event or any other event that could be rearranged;
- honeymoon, where the date of the OSFA has been published for 10 months or more (from 2015 onwards);
- electives, where the date of the OSFA has been published for 10 months or more (from 2015 onwards);
- holidays;
- events over which the trainee can exercise choice in whether to attend;
- minor illness.

Rescheduling options for each OSFA event

Trainees considering submitting an application to reschedule an OSFA event, should be mindful that there are a limited number of rescheduling options available. There are also different options available for each OSFA event. The OSFA policy board will, as a principle, encourage trainees to take their OSFA at the next available opportunity.

Live Generic OSFA

All trainees are invited to choose the date and time of their Generic OSFA, across a two- or three-day period in July. If a trainee is unable to attend the Generic OSFA on their selected day, they should complete an exceptional arrangements application, indicating all of the rescheduling options that would be suitable.

1. Take the Generic OSFA the previous, or following, day where this is possible;
2. Take the Generic OSFA on the same day as the trainee's Specialist OSFA, if feasible;
3. Take the Generic OSFA in November, when the NSHCS is delivering the OSFA resit.

All rescheduled Generic OSFAs will be delivered at the OSFA venue, and will be subject to the same rules and regulations as all other OSFA events.

Rescheduled Generic OSFAs may consist of a different combination of Generic stations, of comparable difficulty, as that taken by other trainees, to ensure that the trainee is not advantaged by insight to station content from trainees in the same year group who have already completed the live Generic OSFA.

Live Specialist OSFA

If a trainee is unable to attend their Specialist OSFA on the published date, they should complete an exceptional arrangements application, indicating all the rescheduling options that would be suitable:

1. Take the Specialist OSFA in November during the delivery of the OSFA resit for the same year group
2. Take the Specialist OSFA in the following July at the next delivery of the live Specialist OSFA with the following year group

All rescheduled Specialist OSFAs will be delivered at the OSFA venue, and will be subject to the same rules and regulations as all other OSFA events.

Rescheduled Specialist OSFAs may consist of a different combination of stations, of comparable difficulty, as that taken by the rest of the trainee's cohort, to ensure that the trainee is not advantaged by insight to station content from trainees who completed the live Specialist OSFA.

OSFA resit

If a trainee who requires an OSFA resit is unable to attend at any time over during the resit period in the November following the live OSFA, the next available opportunity to take the resit will be at the Specialist OSFA in the July of the following year (to include the resit Generic stations).

Mock OSFA

The Mock OSFA is for learning purposes only and is not compulsory. Trainees who do not take the Mock OSFA are still eligible to take the live OSFA. However, trainees who do not attend the Mock OSFA, and do not take one of the options outlined below, may feel disadvantaged in their preparation for the live OSFA.

If a trainee is unable to attend the Mock OSFA on the published date, they should complete an exceptional arrangements application, indicating all the rescheduling options that would be suitable.

1. With the agreement of the trainee's training officer, take a local Mock OSFA. A local Mock OSFA is conducted in the trainee's workplace, by workplace colleagues, under the supervision of the trainee's training officer, and at a time and date that is most convenient to those offering the local Mock OSFA. Where permission is granted for a local mock OSFA, the NSHCS will liaise directly with the trainee's training officer. The NSHCS will request that the training officer ensures that a trainee taking a local Mock OSFA will not have sight of any station materials that could give the trainee an advantage over trainees taking the national Mock OSFA. Trainees should be aware that a training officer is not obliged to offer their trainee a Mock OSFA; it is an entirely voluntary offering.
2. As a standalone option, or in addition to Option 1, the trainee will be permitted to attend the live Generic OSFA one circuit early to receive a brief tour of the venue, and to observe trainees positioning themselves on circuit, and moving between stations¹. The observing trainee will not be permitted to observe trainees inside stations, or be permitted access to any stations or station materials.

Exceptionally, other arrangements may be made for trainees to reschedule their OSFA event/s.

If you wish to apply for exceptional arrangements, please complete the form below and return via email to the NSHCS at NSHCS.assessment@hee.nhs.uk. Supporting evidence may be sent via email or hard copy to the NSHCS.

The NSHCS will confirm receipt of an application via email, and will inform the trainee of the date of the next meeting of the OSFA policy board, at which the application will be considered.

¹ This arrangement is offered until such a time as the NSHCS publishes a video of the OSFA that may substitute for observation.

Part 3: Trainee's request

Trainee use only		Office use only
Please check relevant boxes		Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reschedule an OSFA event (please complete Part 4)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provision of exceptional arrangements at OSFA on published date (please complete Part 5)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reschedule an OSFA event <u>and</u> provide exceptional arrangements (please complete Parts 4 and 5)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other. Please specify here and check relevant boxes in Parts 4 and/or 5	

Part 4: Rescheduling an OSFA event

Trainee use only		Office use only
Please check all relevant boxes to indicate preferences		Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the Generic OSFA the previous/following day (July)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the Generic OSFA on the same day as the trainee's Specialist OSFA (July) if arrangements are feasible	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the Generic OSFA at the OSFA resit (November)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the Specialist OSFA at the OSFA resit (November)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take the Specialist OSFA at the next delivery of the live Specialist OSFA (July of the following year)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take a local Mock OSFA	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend the live Generic OSFA early for a brief tour and observation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other rescheduling arrangement Please specify:	

Part 5: Provision of exceptional arrangements at OSFA on published date

Trainee use only		Office use only
Please check all relevant boxes to indicate preferences		Comment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Additional rest break	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Extended rest break	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Provision of a personal chaperone or carer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	To remain seated where practically possible	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other exceptional arrangement Please specify:	