

STP Exit Survey Review

2014 cohort



Developing people for health and healthcare

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Summary of findings



Overall, trainees' satisfaction with the STP is high

Despite the STP being a highly demanding and complex programme, trainees expressed high levels of overall satisfaction. Although many encountered challenges during their three years, most were glad they had completed it as they saw it as a key route into a career in healthcare science which provided them with opportunities they would not otherwise have had.



There is a need to raise awareness of some of the School's key functions

Although trainees strongly associated the School with areas in which we are highly visible, such as assessment and recruitment, awareness of other key functions, such as trainee support, was relatively low. This ought to be addressed as it could negatively impact a trainee's experience, for example if they were not aware of where they could turn to for help.



Communications from the School need to be slicker and more targeted

Most trainees felt that communications from the School were essential at key parts of their time on the programme, such as in the run-up to OSFAs. However, many also felt that they were not always relevant to them and could be repetitive at times. A more streamlined, co-ordinated and targeted approach to School communications could benefit pressured trainees.



Trainees need to be reassured about the School's role in quality assurance

Most trainees did not voice concerns about the quality of their academic or work-based training but those who did were often not aware of who they could report concerns to or were sceptical that their grievances would have an effect. Given that quality assurance of training providers is a core part of the School's work, we could make trainees more aware of our role.



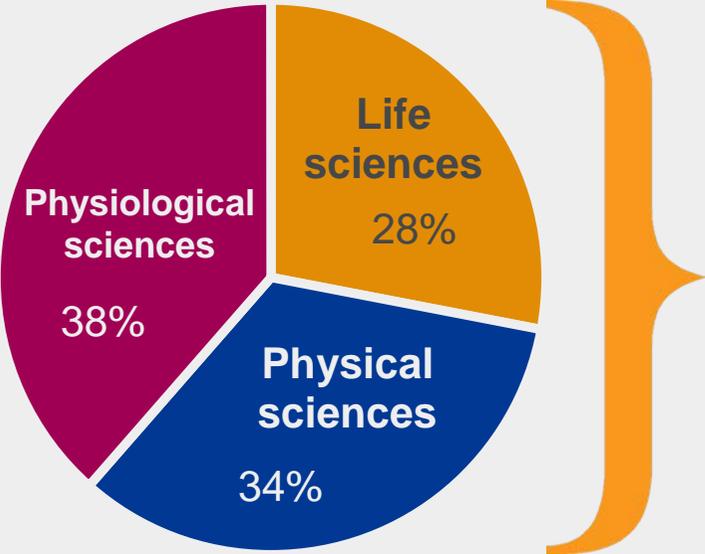
Advice and insights from past trainees need to be passed on to new trainees

Within the thousands of comments submitted to this survey, there is a wealth of insights, often gained in hindsight, which we should view as a valuable resource that can be passed on to future trainees. In particular, one question exposed any aspects of their training that trainees would have done differently; there are many tips which we could use in the future.

Overview of respondents



Trainees by themed board and specialism



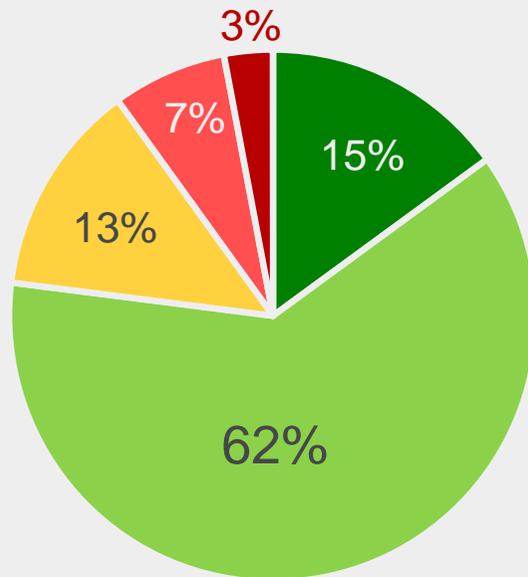
Life sciences	
Clinical Biochemistry	20
Clinical Bioinformatics	10
Clinical Immunology	5
Clinical Microbiology	7
Cytopathology	1
Genetics	12
Histocompatibility	1

Physiological sciences	
Audiology	16
Cardiac Science	32
Gastrointestinal Physiology	2
Neurophysiology	9
Reproductive Science	2
Respiratory & Sleep Science	6
Urodynamic Science	2
Vascular Science	3

Physical sciences	
Clinical Pharmaceutical Sciences	3
Imaging (ionising)	11
Imaging (non-ionising)	3
Medical Device Risk Management	2
Radiation Safety Physics	4
Radiotherapy Physics	32
Reconstructive Science	2
Rehabilitation Engineering	10

Trainees' experience of the programme

Q2: I have enjoyed my experience of the STP programme



Total agree: 77%

Total disagree: 10%

More than three quarters of trainees stated that they enjoyed their three years on the programme with only one in ten saying the opposite. Many trainees that gave additional comments felt that the programme offered them opportunities to train at a high level and other experiences that augmented their training. Some cited support from other trainees through networks as something which helped them through their time on the programme.

Many trainees, including those that enjoyed the programme, felt that their workload was stressful and intense at times; some argued that this is what they expected and/or that it was worthwhile to move up in their field whilst others felt that it conflicted with their personal life and tainted their overall experience of the programme. Some felt that deadlines and the academic side of the programme exacerbated this and that better support for trainees would have helped them.

Other comments mentioned poor communication, either between the School and trainees, the School and training providers or universities and trainees. Comments also highlighted inconsistency between training providers; some said that there was insufficient capacity or interest within their placement department to train and manage them effectively whereas others felt supported throughout.

Some trainees felt that the amount of time spent demonstrating competencies detracted from what they saw as more valuable learning on projects and some added that OLAT requirements were cumbersome, repetitive or inconsistent between programmes. Some trainees felt strongly that the timed format of the OSFA was not appropriate to adequately test their suitability to work in their field.

Sample of comments



I have had experiences that colleagues who have trained on previous schemes did not have access to”



The workload of the STP is immense considering the majority of it is done on top of the full-time job”

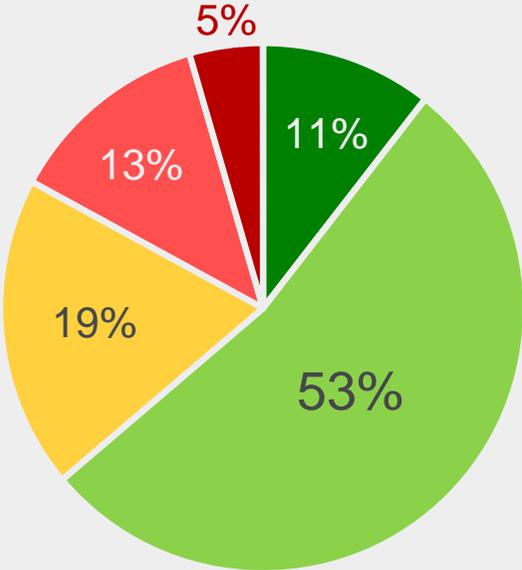


I did feel there was a lack of communication between the NSHCS, the university and the trainees at times”



The course has been poorly organised and there is not support for the STP within my specialism”

Q3: The STP has met my expectations



Total agree: 64%

Total disagree: 18%

Overall, there were fewer trainees who felt that the STP met their expectations than trainees who enjoyed the programme. There were still a clear majority who answered positively with many commenting that the programme gave them a clear path to advance their career in clinical science. Many trainees felt that they did not receive the hands-on support they expected to be available to them which lead to them organising their own placements, rotations and learning. Other trainees did not anticipate the amount of emphasis placed on demonstrating competencies through OLAT compared with placement-based learning.

Some trainees felt that the oversight of training providers was not robust enough and that they were unaware of whether the training they received was at the level it should be. Others felt that although their base hospital was delivering excellent training, they were not able to spend as much time there as they had expected due to other demands such as rotations and competencies. Some trainees felt that they were assigned relatively basic or routine work which did not enable them to develop their skills or demonstrate competencies as they has expected. Many of these trainees felt disappointed that the programme had been marketed to them as a structured, nationally regulated scheme but that they found the quality of placements and/or academic training was unequal.

A noticeable number of trainees had concerns around their future employment prospects within healthcare science. In certain specialisms, such as microbiology, trainees said that little work had been done to foster better understanding of the role and importance of healthcare scientists in their field; consequently, there were no opportunities for them after finishing the programme. Others pointed out that some centres are taking on more trainees than they intend to employ and this has left a number of trainees with no job to go on to.

Sample of comments



The STP has provided the general introduction and path to a career as a clinical scientist as expected."



The programme failed to correctly educate host placements of how the STP should work."



I feel that the MSc and STP were more segregated than I anticipated. There seemed to be little communication between the two."



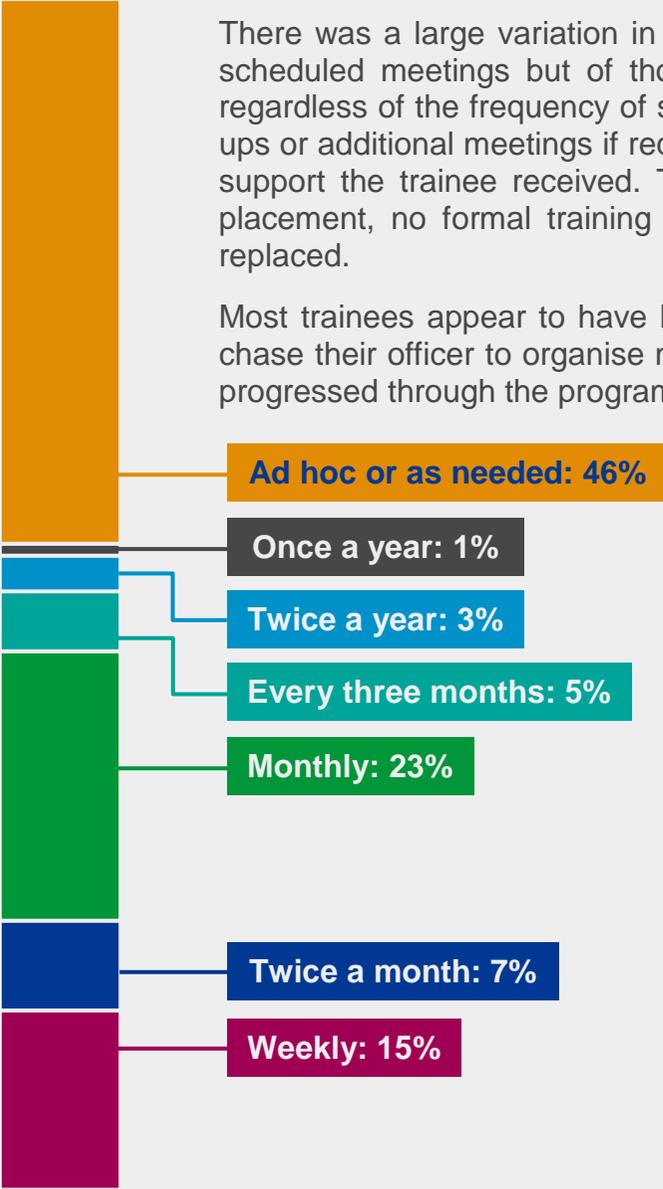
If I hadn't been as proactive as I am, I wouldn't have got through the STP."

Support from training officers

Q4: I met with my training officer:

There was a large variation in the frequency that trainees met with their training officers. Almost half did not have regularly scheduled meetings but of those that did, the vast majority met at least once a month. Many trainees commented that regardless of the frequency of scheduled meetings, they were able to contact their training officer and arrange informal catch-ups or additional meetings if required. This question also highlighted a number of individual concerns that had impacted on the support the trainee received. These included instances of training officers being changed once or several times during a placement, no formal training officer being allocated for long periods of time and training officers leaving and not being replaced.

Most trainees appear to have been satisfied with their training officer’s availability but a small number needed to prompt or chase their officer to organise meetings and support. Some also found that the frequency of their contact dropped off as they progressed through the programme.



“ I worked with her on a daily basis so we did not need formal meetings unless for MSF or CBDs.”

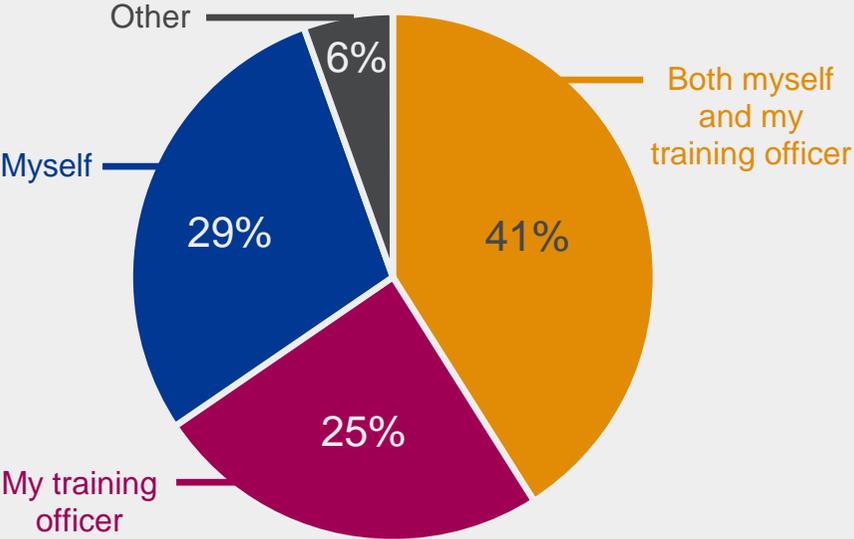
“ My local department have been excellent and supportive throughout.”

“ The onus was on myself to arrange meetings which was mostly okay.”

“ Weekly meetings were scheduled but were at times difficult due to clinic commitments.”

“ For the first two years I barely met with my training officer as no one seemed to want to take responsibility for my training.”

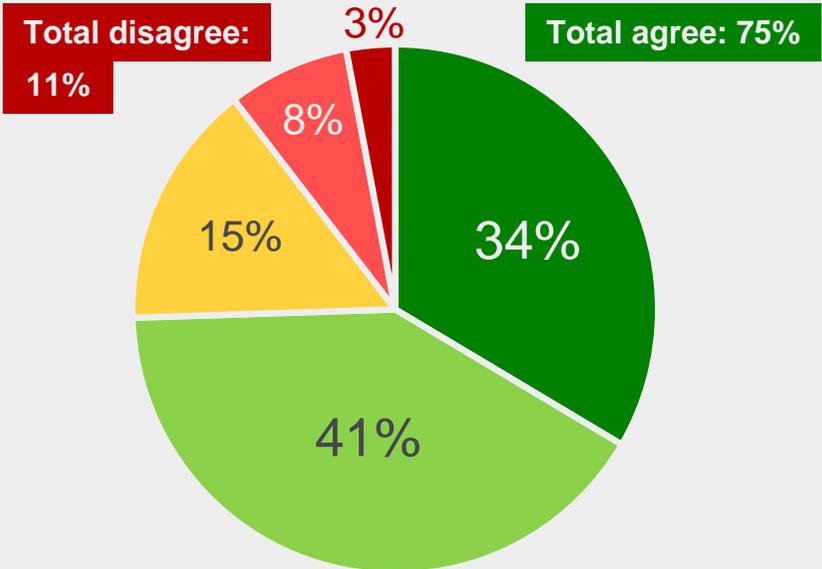
Q5: Who was usually responsible for the organisation of your rotations?



Most trainees did not have to organise their own rotations alone although almost a third did not receive assistance from their training officer. For trainees who responded 'other', many had their rotations organised by another member of staff who was not their allocated training officer training provider, such as a supervisor, co-ordinator or manager.

A small number of trainees did not feel supported by their provider as there were no plans in place to ensure they received the breadth of training they needed. Some took organisation into their own hands by contacting different departments or hospitals to ensure they were able to demonstrate competencies through their practical work. These trainees did not expect to have to do this but saw it as necessary to facilitate their full breadth of training.

Q6: Overall, I received adequate support from my training officer throughout the STP



Responses to this question clearly demonstrated trainees' approval of the support they received from training officers. Three quarters agreed that they received adequate support and a third had a very positive experience of working with their training officer. However, even amongst these satisfied trainees, there was a wide range of experiences.

A significant number of trainees felt that they could turn to their training officer for support and advice on their work-life balance and career progression. Many of the trainees who had a positive experience of the support they received also spoke about how their officer had 'gone the extra mile', for example by organising their own mock OSFAs, scheduling regular time for academic or e-portfolio work or building up their contacts with scientists in their field.



However, some trainees felt that their training officer did not receive the guidance or information about the programme they needed to understand how best to support their trainees whilst others had a number of training officers throughout the programme with their level of interest in the STP varying considerably. Other trainees found that they did not receive any support after their officer left their Trust or was absent for a period of time.

Some trainees had concerns around their rotations which they were left to organise and manage with little or no input from their training officer. In some cases trainees were not able to meet regularly with their training officer due to workload constraints within their department, particularly where their officer was a very senior member of staff. Some trainees received support from other members of their department whereas others felt that they were organising their own training and having to identify opportunities to demonstrate competencies.



Being the first STP trainee involved a steep learning curve for all and we supported each other throughout.”



More regular and scheduled meetings throughout the programme would have been better.”

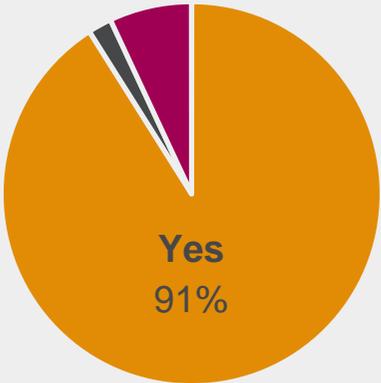


We had regular meetings about both my work-based learning and research projects; I felt encouraged during lab training.”



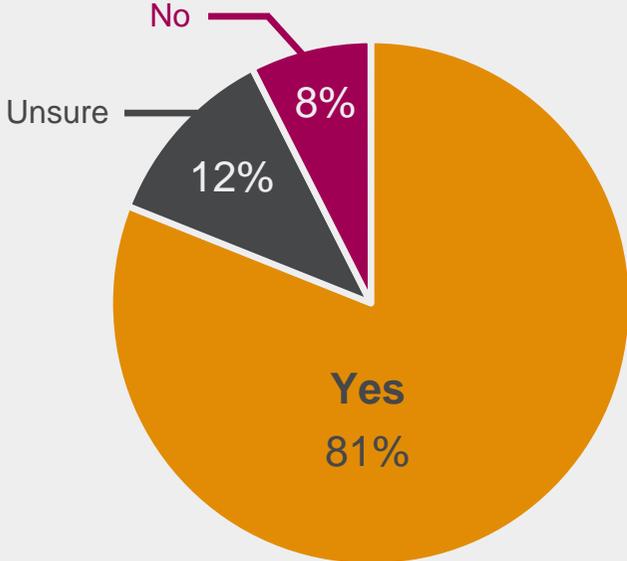
I did not receive much support at all. Most of my learning has been self-directed.”

Q7: I received an induction at the start of my training



Over 90% of trainees received an induction and the majority of those who did not were already working at their Trust prior to entering the programme and therefore did not need one. Some trainees commented that they found their induction to be thorough and effective whereas others only received a general induction for their Trust and not for their specific department. Others had to wait for long periods of time, even over a year, before they were properly inducted. Examples of poor communication included cases where a host Trust was not aware of a trainee starting and several inductions clashing with each other or with university commitments. A small number of trainees felt that their training officer was generally unaware of what an STP trainee needed to learn or do which meant they did not feel adequately prepared by their induction.

Q8: I knew whom to contact if I needed advice regarding my employment



The vast majority of trainees knew who their main contact for employment matters was during their time on the programme. For many trainees, their training officer or departmental manager was their first port of call and would direct them to the relevant contact within their Trust if necessary. Some trainees added that they did not have this contact upon starting their placement and had to proactively seek out this information themselves.

For a small number of trainees, this question highlighted their own confusion over the status of their employment while on placement. Some trainees were formally employed by a different Trust to the one where they carried out the bulk of their training. Other trainees were not made aware of who they were officially employed by which caused issues as their time on the programme came to an end.

For the small number of trainees who answered “no” to this question, many experienced issues before they began their placement. In some cases their Trust’s HR department did not make contact with them to gather their details or to provide them with information about their role or terms of employment. Other trainees did not have access to the resources that would

normally be provided for employees of their Trust as their department was separated from the main site. Some trainees also found that where they did identify the correct contact, the responses they received were rarely useful to them. One trainee also found that they had fallen in a gap between several organisations as their position was funded by their Trust but they were based in a lab owned by a joint venture between two Trusts and a private firm.



If not the first time, I would always eventually end up speaking to the correct people.”



Pre-employment HR checks were awful. They didn’t know who I was or anything about the job. Limited information came from my training officer.”



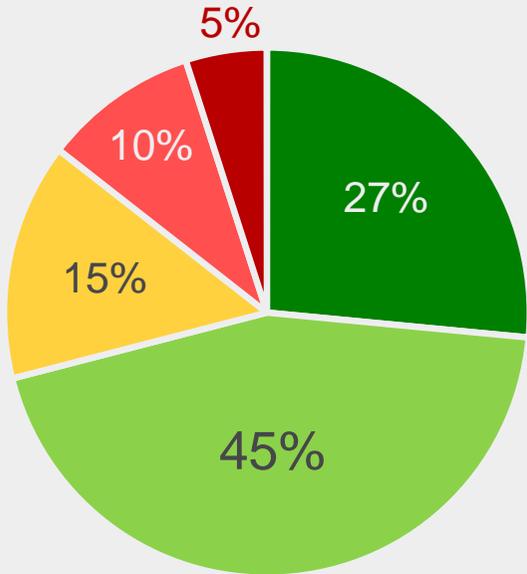
I didn’t know at the start as there is no staff or departmental directory at my hospital.”



I had to ring the department multiple times to try and speak to someone about starting.”

Academic aspect of the programme

Q9: The academic component complemented my work-based training



Total agree: 71%

Total disagree: 15%

Overall, most trainees valued the academic aspect of the STP although almost a third of trainees did not share this view. Many trainees that offered additional comments felt that the quality of their university course was excellent and fed into their work-based training well. Several trainees also complimented the fact that their lecturers were current or former clinicians which made their course highly relevant to the work they were doing on placement.

Many students felt that better communication between their university and training provider would have enhanced their experience of the academic portion of the STP. In some cases, trainees were going over topics and knowledge in their lectures that they had already covered as part of their placement. Some trainees also felt that the academic component would benefit from being slightly longer or 'front loaded' to give them more theoretical knowledge earlier on and more time on placement towards the end of the programme. In a few cases, academic modules were not relevant to the School's STP curriculum, particularly during trainees' first year on the programme.

For trainees who did not have a positive experience of this aspect of their training, many felt that the teaching had failed to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in their field or did not go into sufficient depth to equip them adequately for their work on placement. Some trainees felt that the quality of teaching they had received compared unfavourably with that given to other trainees on their specialism. Other trainees also found that they were grouped with other specialisms but that the course content was of far less relevance to them than it was to others.



The academic component of the STP was very strong and the quality of the lecturing was very high."



Some of it was irrelevant and did not complement the NSHCS curriculum. I fed this back to the uni."

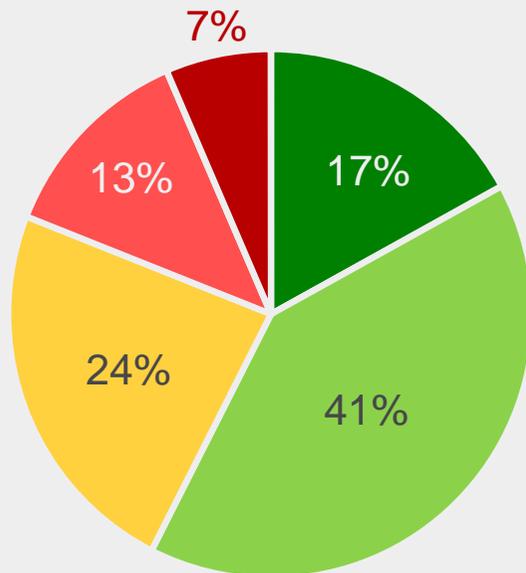


The university did not update lecture content and did not correct errors pointed out by previous year groups."



The timing of the content could be greatly improved to match that of the work-based training."

Q10: I had regular / sufficient contact with my university tutor(s)



Total agree: 58%

Total disagree: 20%

Overall, the number of trainees who gave a positive response to this question was noticeably lower than for previous questions. Most trainees still felt satisfied with the amount of contact they had with their university tutor with many noting that they were able to get in touch with them when needed and that they typically received quick and helpful responses, even when they were a distance learner. Many trainees noted that the level of support and responsiveness often varied between tutors with some being very proactive, for example by organising discussions on assignments, and others being slow to respond to requests for help.

The relatively large number of trainees who gave a neutral response to the question can partly be explained by many of them simply not needing to contact their tutor during their course. Some trainees gave this response as whilst they were satisfied with the support their tutor gave them, it often took a long time to get a response from them. In some cases trainees had to chase their tutors or other academic staff for feedback or guidance and a small number of trainees found that they only had regular meetings when writing their dissertation.

Some trainees found that they were not allocated a tutor or that their tutor did not contact them, leaving them unsure of whom to direct queries to. Course or module leaders sometimes fulfilled this function instead of allocated tutors but this sometimes lead to trainees receiving patchy or inconsistent support across their time on the programme. Some trainees felt that a lack of feedback from their tutor negatively impacted their experience of their master’s course whereas others found that they were able to be self-sufficient or seek help elsewhere.

Selection of comments



My university tutors were approachable and I could meet with them at any time I required advice.”



I had no help whatsoever from my academic supervisor. He did not get in touch at all.”

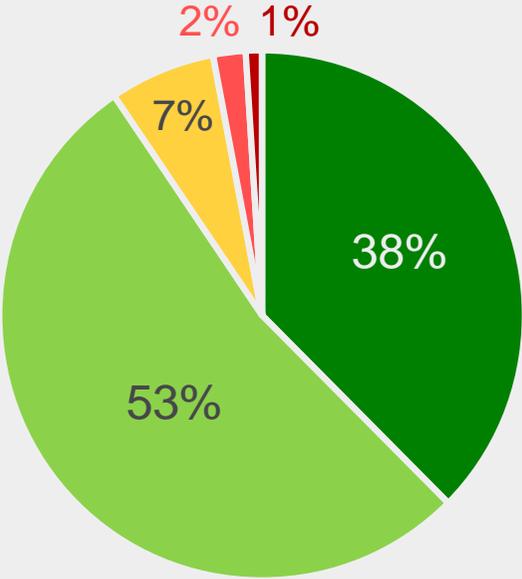


Tutors were helpful and responsive to communication. Organisation could be a little last minute.”



Assignment feedback was sometimes delayed and the date marks would be released was sometimes unclear.”

Q11: I understood the requirements for the MSc elements of my training



Total agree: 91%

Total disagree: 3%

The vast majority of trainees understood the demands of their master’s course with only a small minority having any doubt or misunderstanding. Many trainees commented that they were given materials or instruction on what was expected from them at the beginning of their course, or even at the beginning of each academic year.

Following on from positive responses to the previous question, some trainees were able to speak to their tutors or other academic staff to clear up any issues they were uncertain about. One trainee felt that they needed more direction on one aspect of their course but was generally satisfied.

A small number of trainees felt that they were not adequately equipped with an understanding of what was expected for individual pieces of work, especially when they had not worked at a master’s level before. Several trainees did not feel that they received enough feedback from completed work which impacted their ability to complete subsequent pieces of work. Others had a mixed view of the guidance they received; some felt that certain lecturers were clear about the requirements of their module but others were not whilst other trainees felt that their learning requirements on rotation were unclear compared to that of their specialist training.

A small number of trainees also had concerns regarding the marking of work. In some cases detailed assignment outcomes were not given and in others overall marks appeared to be very similar for all trainees rather than the spread of marks that would normally be expected.

Selection of comments



We were provided with a handbook at the beginning of each academic year detailing the requirements.”



Varied between modules and lectures, sometimes these were clear, at other times they were vague.”

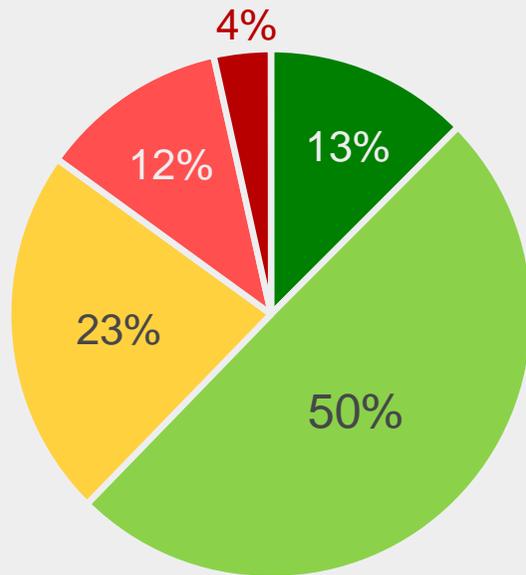


Course tutors were very accommodating at clarifying uncertain elements, especially given the limited contact hours.”



There was too little explanation of what was expected and little to no feedback was given.”

Q12: I was able to balance the work-based training with the university coursework



Total agree: 63%

Total disagree: 16%

Almost two-thirds of trainees felt that they were able to balance their training and academic study although there were a high number of additional comments to this question, reflecting the wide range of experiences that trainees had during their time on the programme.

For trainees who felt able to balance their commitments, many were afforded regular study time by their training officer which enabled them to keep on top of their academic work, particularly during intense periods with several consecutive deadlines or formal exams. Other trainees completed much of their university work in their personal time; for some this impacted upon their enjoyment of the programme whereas for others it helped them to cope with the varying demands of the programme. Some trainees found the demands of their final year particularly difficult to balance.

Some trainees felt that academic demands meant that their work on placement suffered or vice versa; this was particularly true for trainees working in busy or overstretched departments. Several trainees mentioned the requirement to complete competencies on OLAT as an additional demand on their time which they found difficult to cope with; some felt that guidance around how to complete

competencies was not readily available and that the system was burdensome to use. An overlap between coursework deadlines, university exams and the dates for mock and live OSFAs was also raised by some trainees as causing stress and difficulties for time management.

Overall, most trainees felt that they were able to balance the various demands of the STP with the support available to them, even if this was difficult at times.

Selection of comments



Workload could be very heavy during exam periods and in the final few months but never totally unmanageable.”



University coursework took up more of my time. I think my work-based training suffered as a result.”



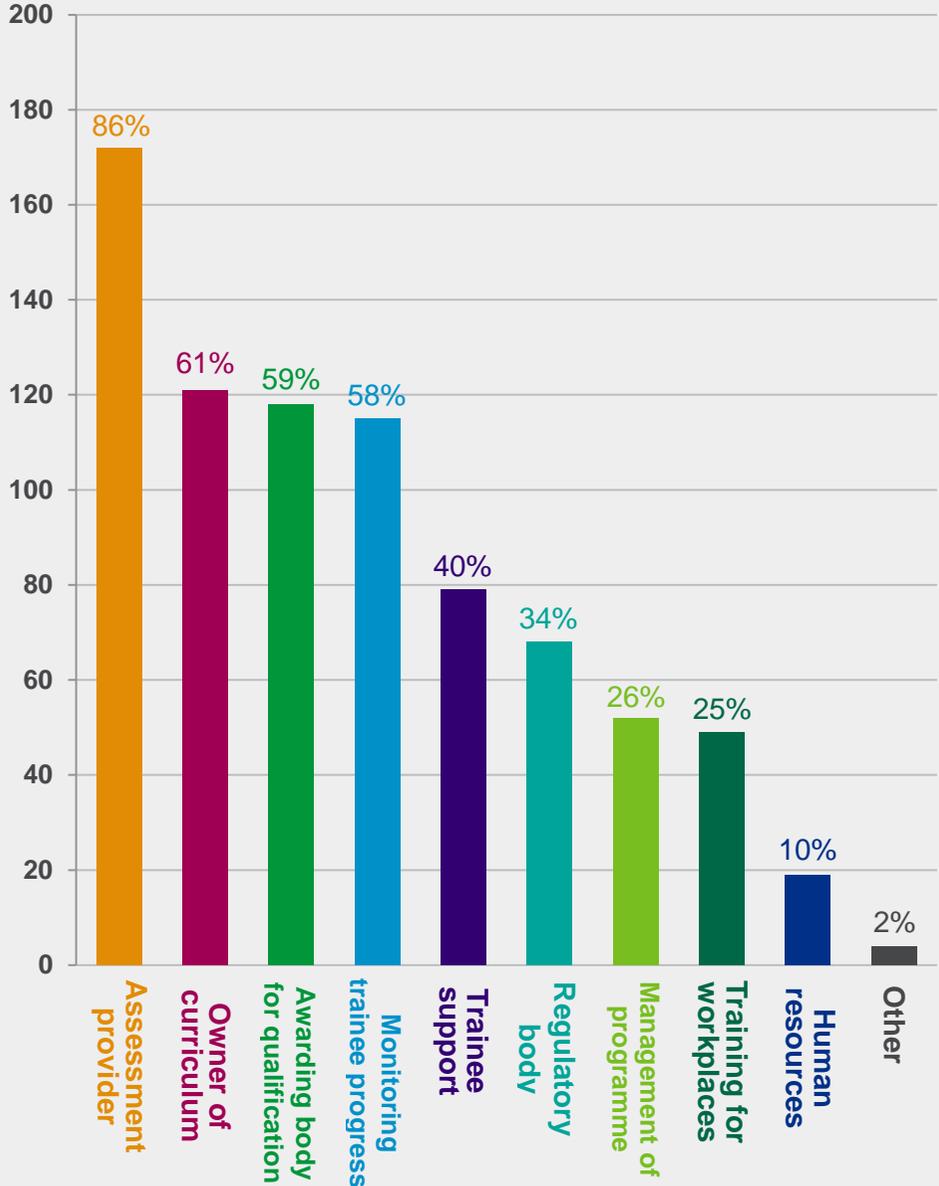
My centre were very understanding, I was given as much time as I needed to complete uni assignments.”



It was hard to keep on top of OLAT with university deadlines so that tended to be left until summer.”

Support from the School

Q13: What did you understand the role of the School to be during your training period?



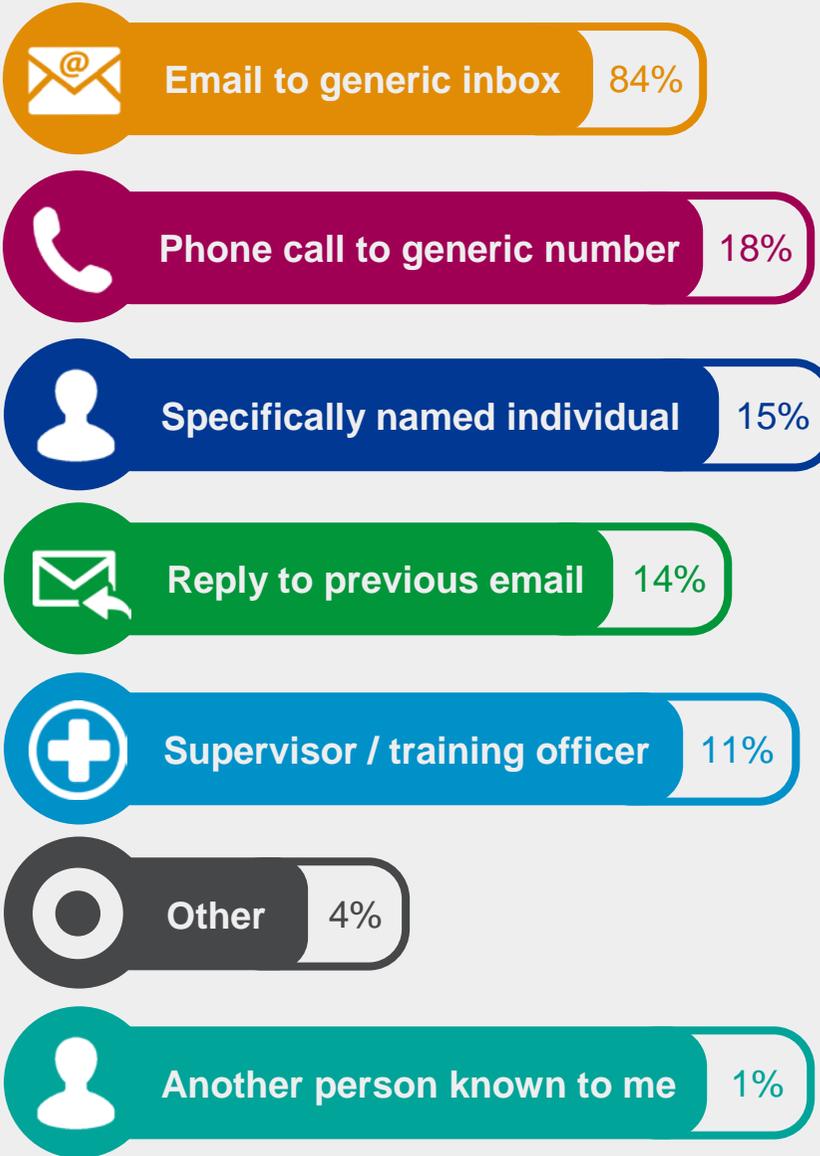
Trainees were able to select as many statements as they felt were appropriate in response to this question. There was a wide spread of answers with most trainees selecting several statements. Trainees clearly strongly associate the School with assessments, the curriculum and the functional structure of the STP; this is perhaps unsurprising given the highly visibility of the School during the key points of recruitment, induction and assessment at OSFAs. Most trainees recognised the School’s role in monitoring their progress which shows a clear association with the e-portfolio as a tool for the School to identify whether or not trainees are making the progress that would be expected.

Less than half of trainees understood trainee support to be part of the School’s remit. This may be born out of the fact that many trainees did not need to access much support during their time on the programme or that they may have instead received assistance from their training officer, Trust, etc. However, one trainee did comment that when they contacted the School for support they were referred back to their department which they found unhelpful as they did not feel trainees would contact the School unless they had exhausted other avenues, such as their placement provider.

Two thirds of trainees did not identify the School as a regulatory body which appraises and evaluates providers of academic or work-based training. This may reflect the fact that much of this work is not directly visible to trainees but it is worth noting as it could affect the likelihood of them contacting the School if they have concerns over the quality of the training they are receiving.

Overall, most trainees identified the core functions of the School but in some areas awareness of the School’s role could be improved.

Q14: If I needed to, I contacted the School via:



The vast majority of trainees made contact with the School via the generic email address. Less than half of trainees selected another option and all of those other methods of contact were used by less than a fifth of trainees. A small number of trainees were aware of a specific contact at the School and some relied on emails they had previously received from members of staff to follow up on queries they had. Around a tenth of trainees had asked their training officer or supervisor to contact the School on their behalf.

Among trainees who selected ‘other’, some had no need to contact the School other than to troubleshoot issues they were having with OLAT and others contacted their trainee representatives who raised issues on their behalf. Others found it very difficult to direct their query to the correct contact at the School which lead them to seek other ways of resolving their issues.

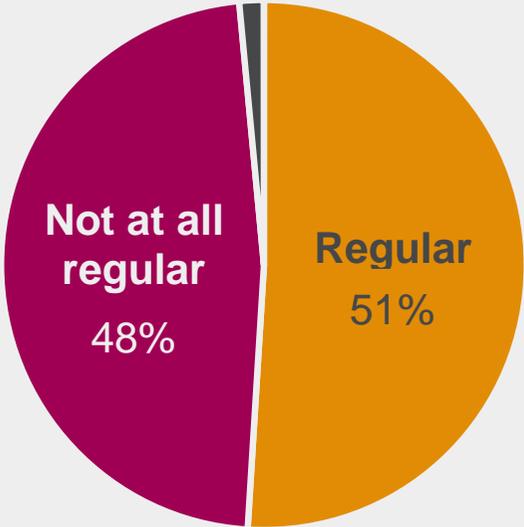
Selection of comments

“ I never needed to contact the School, except for with OLAT technical queries.”

“ I was informed not to contact the School.”

“ It was difficult to get in touch with the correct person from the School. Upon getting in touch, they were not helpful at all in solving problems and/or queries.”

Q15: How regular were communications from the School?



Trainees were evenly split over whether they felt the School communicated with them regularly or not. Many trainees commented that they did not think the School needed to communicate with them regularly and they were therefore satisfied with the amount they received. Other trainees were of the opinion that communications were sporadic and they would have been reassured by more regular contact.

Following on from the previous question, some trainees focussed their comments on communication they had with the School regarding issues they experienced whilst on the programme. Many of these trainees found the process of getting replies to their queries slow and would have valued more regular contact from the School. Other trainees mentioned the fact that they had been contacted periodically for feedback via surveys but that they did not receive any follow-up from this which led them to feel that their concerns had not been acted on. A small number of trainees said that communications from the School were regular but that their content was frequently not relevant to them meaning they did not pay close attention to future communications. Some also felt that content was heavily skewed towards information on assessments or surveys and they would have valued more variety in the School’s output, such as information on the wider healthcare science sector,

training opportunities, relevant events, etc.

Many trainees noted that the frequency of interaction with the School increased significantly during their final year on the STP, particularly with regards to the completion competencies on OLAT and preparations for OSFAs. Some trainees felt that the amount of communication they received before their final year was too low but that it became too frequent during their final year as demands on their time also increased. Many trainees also noted the issues the School experienced around the publishing of results from the OSFA; some felt that communications during this time should have been clearer and much more frequent.



There was regular communication from the School but it was not very useful.”



Communication was a little hit and miss. Sometimes responses to programme-specific questions took months.”

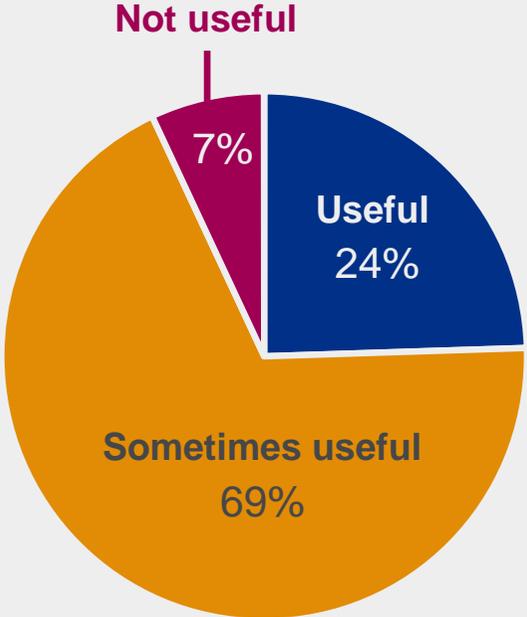


Possibly too regular via email, to the point where I did not read all the emails that came through.”



Irregular, and generally just sending out documents such as reasonable adjustment forms, etc.”

Q16: How useful were communications from the School?



Trainees had a variety of comments regarding how useful they found communications from the School. Many trainees complimented the emails they received on how to register for their OSFA, the related deadlines and information on what to expect and how they needed to prepare. However, several trainees felt that other communications caused them unnecessary stress or hassle as they did not contain all relevant information, did not clearly put across key messages effectively or had not been updated with current information. Some trainees felt that emails they received often repeated information they already had or were only relevant to trainees on different specialisms.

Many comments from trainees centred on the difficulties with releasing OSFA results and the communications which the School put out during this time. Many understood that the delay was caused by a technical error but felt that the School could have been much more proactive and responsive in keeping them up-to-date with what was happening. Trainees who contacted the School directly found it difficult to get a response on the day results were due to go out. A significant number of trainees also complained about receiving emails on that day which were unrelated to OSFA results; some felt that this increased their anxiety and frustration regarding the delay in releasing results.

Some trainees also had difficulties when contacting the OLAT helpdesk. They typically found that replies from the dedicated helpdesk email address were very slow and not always helpful. However, several trainees who then contacted the School directly and got through to the relevant member of staff found that they were able to resolve their query quickly and were satisfied with the service they received. Some trainees thought that communications which set out the deadlines and processes for completing all relevant OLAT competencies were not as clear as they could have been.

Selection of comments



They were useful to communicate optional and compulsory events, examinations and processes trainees have to fulfil.”



Generally only repeated information we already had. Notification of OSFA results went horribly wrong.”

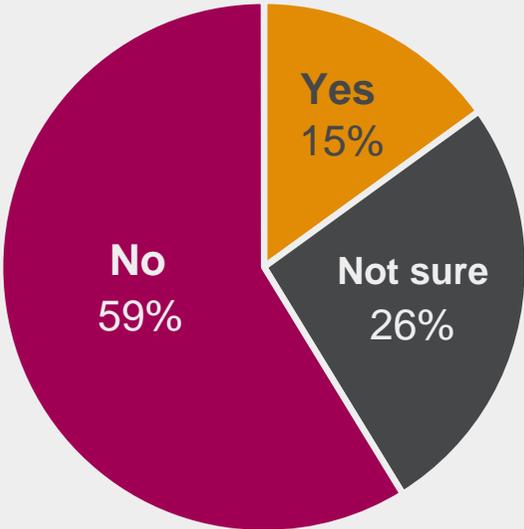


The reminders of OSFA deadlines and dates were very good.”



Sometimes communication from the School was not complete and caused undue stress or did not communicate effectively.”

Q17: I understood the process of how the School informed my training officer about my progress



A clear majority of trainees did not understand how their training officer was kept up-to-date with their progress during their time on the programme; less than one sixth of trainees did understand this process. Around a quarter of trainees left a comment, none of whom were aware of the process, or even that their training officer had had any communication with the School regarding their progress.

Many trainees said that they did not believe their training officer received any information from the School about their progress. Many said that their training officer did not have any conversations with them regarding their progress and nor did the School. Some trainees mentioned that their training officer received automatic emails if they had not made sufficient progress on OLAT and that this was the only method that they were aware of which enabled their training officer to monitor their progress. Others pointed to the fact that their training officer received the results of their OSFA before they did but that this came too late in their time on the STP to truly monitor their progress.

Many trainees who left a comment felt that the lack of communication from the School regarding their progress left them wondering if they were making good or insufficient progress compared to their peers. Others felt that this also contributed to their training officer taking little interest in their progress

and therefore not supporting them sufficiently. Due to having little contact with the School, some training officers may also have been insufficiently informed about the format of the programme, for example the divisions between placement-based training and university work.

Selection of comments

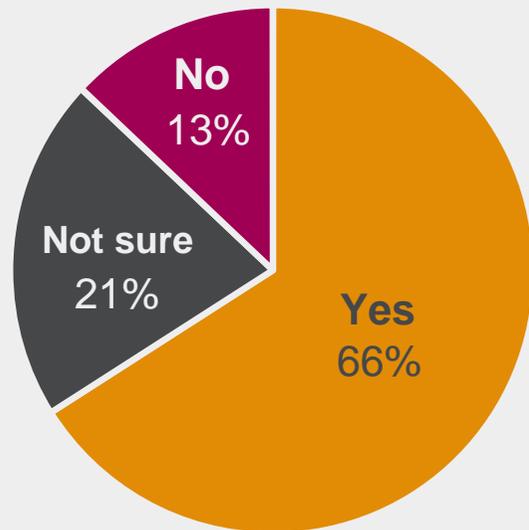
“
 Aside from the OSFA
 results and one email
 regarding OLAT there
 was limited contact.”

“
 I am not aware that the
 School informed my
 training officer about
 my progress at all.”

“
 I know my training officer could see
 my OLAT progress but I have no
 idea whether the School informed
 her how far ahead/behind I was.”

“
 In my experience it is
 not well understood how
 the School actually
 monitors progress.”

Q18: I had access to sufficient information to understand my progress



Two thirds of trainees felt that they were able to access the information they needed to sufficiently track their progress. However, for many trainees the only way they were able to do this was accessing their profile on OLAT and tracking their progress on completing their competencies. Many felt that this alone did not give them enough control or information on their overall progress on the STP. Others found OLAT to be an invaluable tool which gave them the structure they needed to regulate their own pace of work. A few trainees found it difficult to work with the interface of OLAT and therefore avoided using it beyond what was necessary.

Some trainees mentioned that they set up their own systems for monitoring their work in order to replicate what they feel the School did not offer them, such as spreadsheets covering their competencies, university work and rotations. Others relied on their training officer to help them structure and monitor their progress along the STP, for example by setting periodic deadlines or reviews.

Comments from many trainees mentioned the need for a kind of benchmark or guidance on expected progress at various stages, and for the various components, of the STP. Some felt that they had no comparison that they could use to contextualise their progress, particularly where they were the first STP trainee in their trust or department. Some trainees were able to glean some of this information by speaking to fellow trainees from their specialism, especially via their local trainee network; however, not all trainees had access to this. Some trainees therefore felt isolated and had to work out for themselves how much progress they needed to be making, particularly in the run-up to final university assessments and the OSFA.

Selection of comments

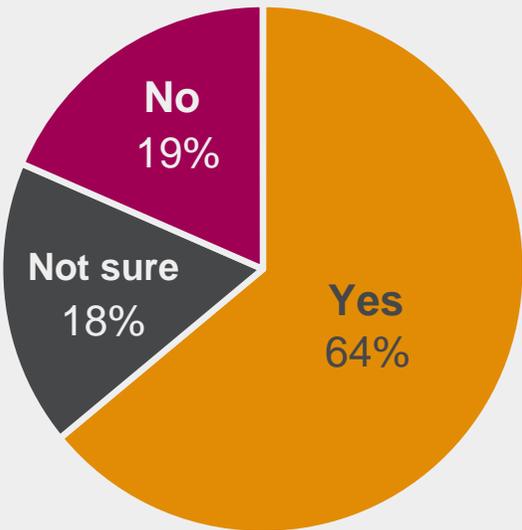
“ I understood my progress through conversations with my training officer and my own reading.”

“ There is inadequate feedback about progress which I found difficult. It is hard to judge if you are doing well or poorly.”

“ It would be useful if there was a benchmark for progression. I used a progression diary from the trainee in the year above.”

“ I was only aware of my progress and how that compared to other trainees through discussions with trainees in my cohort.”

Q19: I was aware of who held the role of being my Trainee Representative on the Themed Board for my specialism

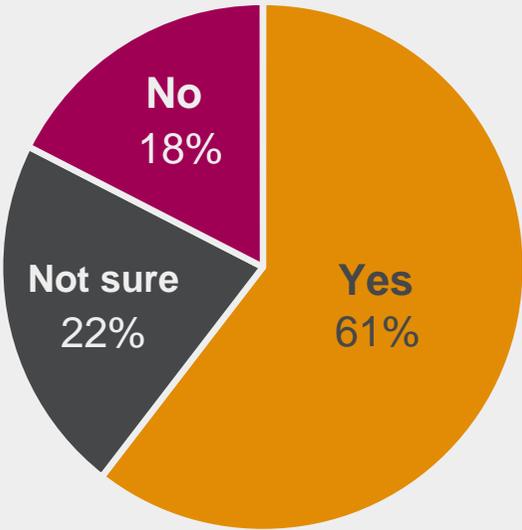


Most trainees knew who their representative on their specialism’s Themed Board was although just over a third did not. Many trainees did not need to contact their rep but those who did typically found that they were helpful and were able to resolve their issue.

The experience that trainees had of their reps was mixed, but mostly positive. Some trainees spoke about how their reps regularly communicated with them and were very proactive with seeking out and following up on issues raised by trainees. Others who contacted their rep did not receive a reply or were not sure who their rep was.

Some trainees were confused by the terminology used by the School and felt that the role of these reps and the Themed Boards could have been explained better; for example, some trainees were confused as to why they were being represented by a trainee of a different specialism. Other trainees felt that their specialism did not sit particularly well within their Themed Board meaning they were grouped with trainees who they felt had different issues and experiences to them.

Q20: I received updates from my Themed Board Representative



As with the previous question, the experiences of trainees were mixed. Some trainees received regular emails ahead of Themed Board meetings asking if they had any issues or feedback they wanted to give, as well as after meetings to keep them up-to-date with what had been discussed. Others did not recall having received any communication from their rep whilst others received updates from one rep but these did not continue after they were replaced by a different trainee.

A small number of trainees felt that given that their reps were based far away from them, they couldn’t relate to their concerns. Others also felt that whilst they valued the efforts of their rep in putting across their issues, they did not feel that the School listened to or took account of suggested changes put forward at Themed Board meetings.

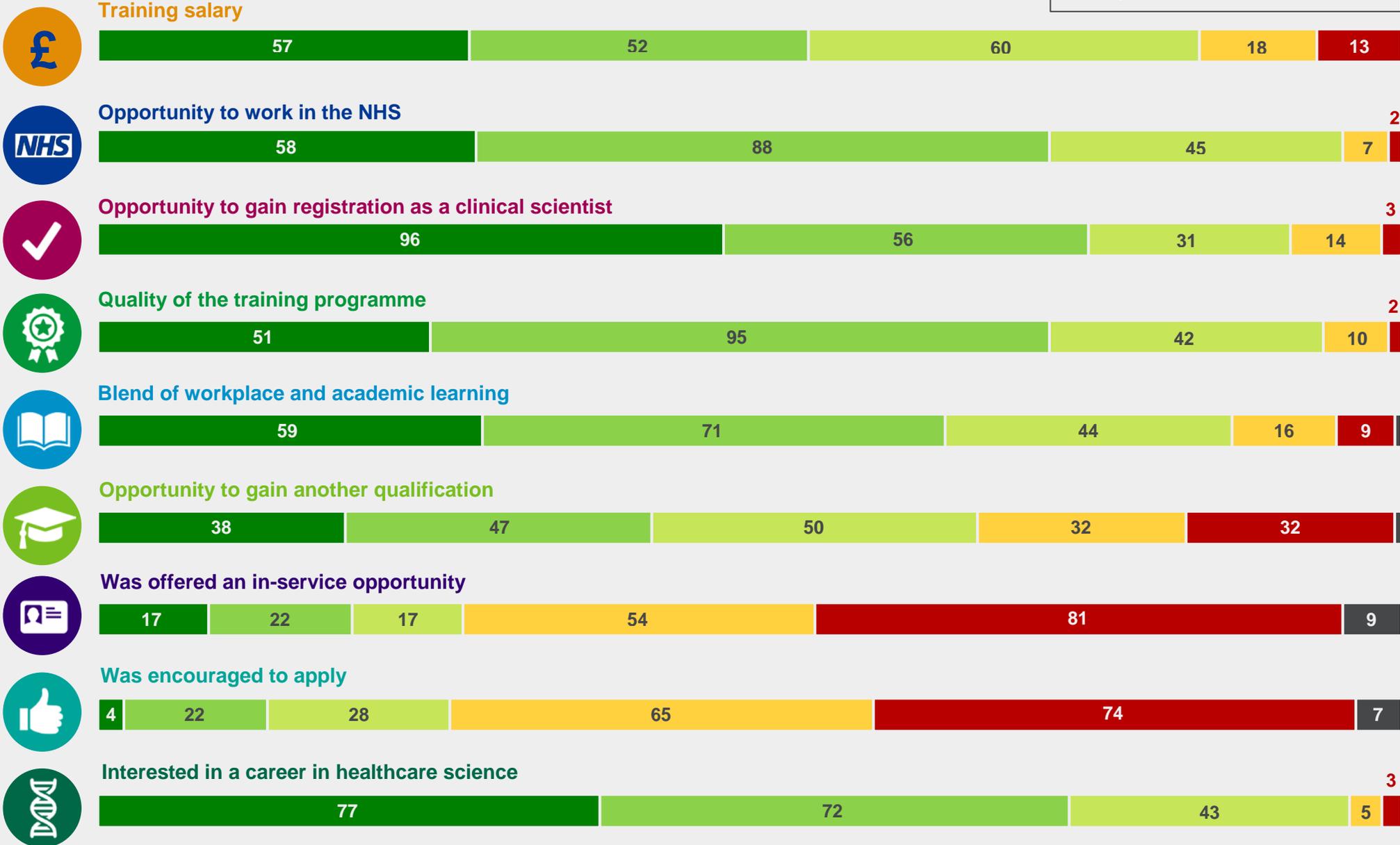
Looking back on the programme

Q21: Please tell us about your employment status:

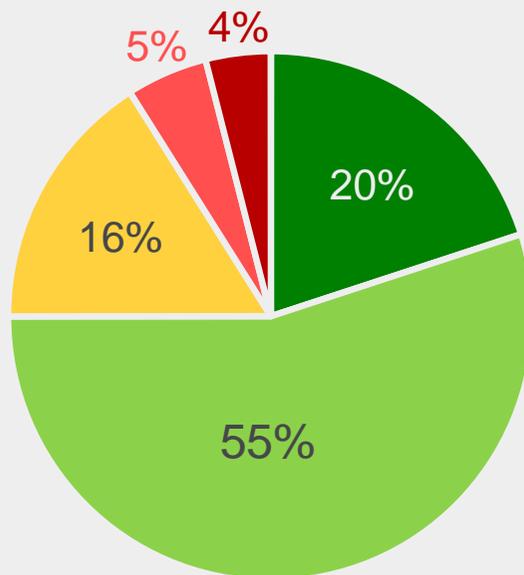
In a sign that trainees were still strongly committed to pursuing the career that the STP was designed to prepare them for, 79% were either employed, or seeking employment, as an NHS clinical scientist. Additionally, 95% of trainees were either employed, or seeking employment, in the NHS and only 4% were employed, or seeking employment, in a field other than healthcare science.



Q22: How important to your application to the STP were the following factors?



Q23: How likely are you to recommend the STP to friends and/or colleagues?



When it came to this question, three quarters of trainees said they would be likely or very likely to recommend the STP with less than one in ten saying that they would be unlikely to recommend it. Many trainees gave additional comments to explain their choice with many mentioning their initial motivations and the benefits of the programme covered in the previous question.

Many trainees felt that they would recommend the programme but only to people they knew who had a keen interest in healthcare science and were willing and able to manage a heavy workload; many felt that their enjoyment of the programme was partly down to their determination and passion for their area of work which helped them to cope with the stresses and pressures they experienced. Many trainees felt that unparalleled quality of the STP was partly thanks to the training salary offered which puts it above many other training programmes incorporating an MSc and that it was the only clear pathway into the profession. Another common theme was the broad exposure to clinical skills and knowledge that the STP grants through its varied mix of practical work, rotations, academic learning, elective placements, etc.

Some trainees, particularly those taking a more neutral view, felt that they would have to judge the personality or motivations of their friends or colleagues. These trainees argued that, whilst the STP may have suited them in many respects, it would not be appropriate for others in a different position to themselves, for example, those who wanted a more research-focused career or those who could not deal with a varied and heavy workload. Several trainees also said they would always encourage colleagues to look into the job market for their specialism, particularly in the case of newer specialisms; some trainees felt that there was little prospect of them continuing to work in their specialist area due to a lack of opportunities. Some trainees thought that more could be done to support them in seeking employment, even if this meant requiring them to work in the NHS for a period of time.

Some trainees felt that the amount of assessments they had to complete, including work-based competencies, academic assignments and the OSFA, restricted the amount of time they could spend on work which they saw as more valuable to preparing them for a career in healthcare science. Other trainees also argued that the differing experiences of trainees between regions and training departments mean they would not feel able to recommend the



programme without also advising prospective trainees to research their potential training providers in detail. Others also felt that their advice would reflect their own personal experiences of the programme, such as advising their colleagues to be proactive in seeking to change their training placement if it was like theirs.

Selection of comments



A good opportunity to train, gain an MSc and registration as a clinical scientist with a very good salary.”



Given the lack of effective workforce planning for post-STP clinical scientist posts, I’d struggle to recommend it.”

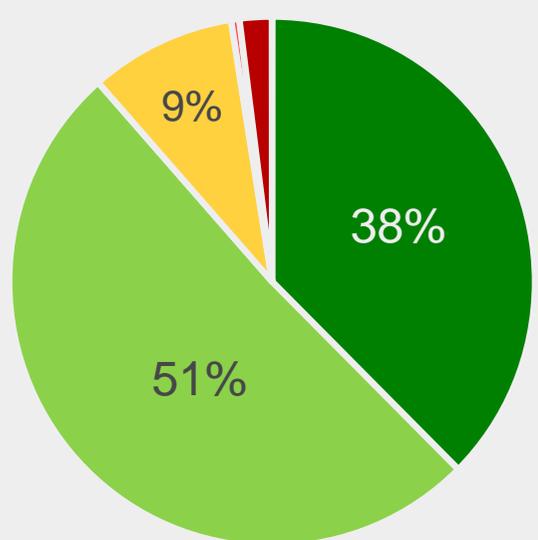


The opportunities in the STP are second to none. The mix of academic and workplace is essential to gain the correct balance.”



It takes a certain personality for this role and I would only recommend the course to people that I believed to be a good fit.”

Q24: I am pleased I took part in the training programme



Responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive: nine in ten trainees said they were pleased to have taken part in the programme with only five out of 200 respondents disagreeing. There were many trainees expressing how fortunate they felt to have taken part in the STP and begun their career in healthcare science. Many trainees reflected on the opportunities they had gained from having completed the programme which they would not otherwise have had. Many trainees were pleased to have gained registration as a clinical scientist and felt that the STP was best route available to them to achieve this.

Some trainees said that the stress and pressure they experienced on the programme coloured their answer to this question, although many felt that the opportunities it afforded them outweighed this. Amongst trainees who did not give a positive response to this question, most had either not enjoyed their training but were pleased to have gained registration, or were disheartened by the lack of job opportunities available to them upon finishing the programme.

Q25: If you could do the training all over again, what would you do differently?

Personal organisation / time management

Better time management. Focus on other opportunities as a trainee rather than the competencies.

Do as little as possible for each competency. There isn't time to do a good job on all of them unfortunately

Appreciate how fast time goes by and try to complete more competencies sooner

I would write less during rotations and ensure each rotation was completed before moving on

I would have more confidence in myself and not be afraid to ask more questions

I would be more assertive in using my time to write competencies / direct my own learning if I felt I wasn't able to learn anything useful in a particular given situation

I would ensure I took a more modular focus to the training programme to ensure that each module was completed in succession and the competences were completed in a timely manner

I would be more proactive in organising the work-based activities needed to fulfil the competencies.

Try to negotiate and allocate time during the working week just to work on completing competencies

Assessments / academic work

Be more assertive about the time required to complete the master's portion and be more persistent about chasing up tutors and asking questions

Complete the masters project earlier and pick a smaller project so that it is not impacting my other training

I would explain from the outset to training supervisors that the OSFAs require me to be very comfortable with the routine clinical work and therefore it is essential that I gain sufficient experience

I would have liked to have been able to manage my time more effectively during my university project write up so that my clinical work was not affected as much

I would apply now as the curriculum is being updated to reflect the advancements in the field.

Organise my elective and complete most of my MSc project during the second year

Do my MSc in my specialism

Dedicate more time to the academic aspect of the course. Competencies should have a time limit to ensure more time is dedicated to the MSc

Personal development / career opportunities

Ensure I looked at the job opportunities for each specialism before applying

I would take up opportunities to do STEM activities earlier on

Have more focus on things relevant to me at this point in my career

Push harder in my workplace for more advanced opportunities

With the knowledge of what the job role is once qualified I would get more experience of things such as quality management and audit when a trainee

Take more advantage of opportunities from the start (MDTs, clinics, conferences etc.)

I would go abroad for my elective and undertake more of the clinical experiential learning

Try to find opportunities to do more higher-level work to gain skills that would be more useful in the future

I would go to more conferences, do more presentations, see more around the hospital and take time to gain more experience outside of my specialism

Training provision / providers

Focus on trying to integrate myself more into the department. Get competencies completed in a non-report method

I would have spent less time in the lab and more time getting involved in the more clinical aspects of the training

I would be a little more forceful from the start to get things signed off rather than being overly considerate of "busy" supervisors

Choose a centre that had a better attitude towards training

I would try to do more practical work in the department

I would attempt to reach out to more NHS institutions to gain experience in areas which my host centre does not have the equipment or staff

I would apply to smaller centres with less trainees. A centre with lots of trainees is spread more thinly in terms of training time

I would have somehow found out about train the trainer courses and made sure my training officer went on one

I would ensure projects aligned with competencies earlier, and discuss these more with my supervisors

Q26: How do you think the Scientist Training Programme could be improved?

