



The ROYAL COLLEGE of  
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

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**To Heads of School, Training Programme Directors,  
Regional Advisors, College Tutors, Educational Supervisors and all  
Ophthalmologists in Training**

**Re: Research, study, teaching and audit (RSTA) sessions**

The Training Committee have discussed the concerns of trainers and trainees that the new Junior Doctor Contract (JDC) and changes in rotas has had a negative impact on training, by requiring regular rest/zero-hour days or sessions to compensate for consecutive hours worked on call, whether this is resident on call, or shift work, or non-resident on call. In order to ensure that training opportunities are still maximised it is accepted that OST3-7 years may have a reduction of one RSTA session for the timetable to remain neutral at 7 clinical sessions, to maintain progress in training.

The way that this is implemented may vary due to the variety of different rotas in different units and will require individualised review of timetables to ensure that, for example, surgical opportunities are maintained and the timetable is balanced as previously. The new JDC already ensures an individualised review of the timetable for trainees by their Educational Supervisor to ensure that the right training opportunities are included. This does not mean that all timetables should be changed to reduce the RSTA session automatically but allows the Training Programme Director and Educational Supervisor the opportunity to ensure appropriate training opportunities are maintained.

It is vital for trainees to continue to acquire and develop their generic professional capabilities and therefore they should still engage in research, quality improvement and audit projects as well as taking up leadership and management opportunities in the time allocated. This is already mandated by our curriculum but is further emphasised by the introduction of the Generic Professional Capabilities Framework by the GMC. Therefore trainees should not be expected to undertake excessive administration tasks in their RSTA and teaching session; indeed, this should be kept to a minimum to protect time for appropriate developmental activities.

The Training Committee have had feedback from the Ophthalmologists in Training Group (OTG) and will continue to receive feedback on the implementation of this change from the Heads of

School and TPDs and from trainees to monitor the impact of the new contract on training and changes in RSTA sessions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Spencer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F'.

**Miss Fiona Spencer FRCS (Glas) FRCOphth**  
*Chair – Training Committee*