

## Postgraduate Medical Training

# LEVEL 4

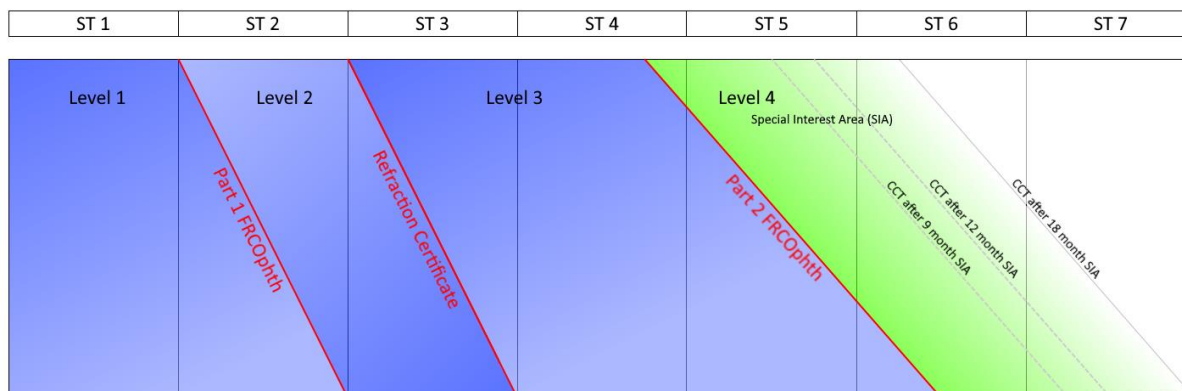
## Guidance for Training Programme Directors 2024

### Introduction

1. This document aims to provide guidance on the implementation of Level 4 ophthalmology training in the new curriculum (to be introduced from 2024).
2. It is intended as a guide for College Tutors, Educational Leads, College Tutors, Training Programme Directors and Heads of Schools.
3. It has been developed with input from the RCOphth Training Committee Level 4 Task & Finish Group and the Curriculum Sub-Committee. The OST Project Board also obtained input from three specialist societies which should be regarded as opinion rather than formal recommendations or guidance from the OST Project Board. Please contact the societies below directly for further information.
  - Vitreoretinal Surgery (British & Eire Association of Vitreoretinal Surgeons - BEAVRS)
  - Urgent Eye Care (British Emergency Eye Care Society – BEECS)
  - Paediatric Ophthalmology (British & Irish Paediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus Association – BIPOSA)
4. There are two appendices:
  - Appendix 1 scoring sheet for SIA selection
  - Appendix 2 sample application form for Level 4

### The structure of the training programme

5. Ophthalmologists in training will be expected to achieve Level 1 latest by the end of OST2, Level 2 latest by the end of OST3 and Level 3 latest by mid-way of OST6 in all domains, including all twelve Special Interest Areas (SIA) in the Patient Management domain as set out in the diagram below. The last 12 to 18 months of training will be dedicated to Level 4 in 2 SIAs.



Progression through the Levels of Competency within the training pathway can occur at varying times, as indicated. Examinations can be taken at any point prior to, or within, training as agreed with the Examinations department, but are required by the boundaries shown above. Transition from one level to the next will be possible after satisfactorily completing the training requirements, which will include the examination as indicated above. For example, progression from Level 1 to Level 2 can occur at any point within ST2, on completion of Level 1 competencies, and attainment of the Part 1 FRCOphth examination.

6. The Patient Management domain is divided into the twelve SIAs listed below. All 12 SIA must be completed to Level 3 before a trainee can commence Level 4 training. Those SIAs marked with an asterisk also require Level 4 in Cataract Surgery.

- Oculoplastics and Orbit
- Cornea and Ocular Surface Disease\*
- Cataract Surgery
- Glaucoma\*
- Uveitis
- Medical Retina
- Vitreoretinal Surgery\*
- Ocular Motility
- Neuro-ophthalmology
- Paediatric Ophthalmology
- Urgent Eye Care
- Community Ophthalmology (longitudinally throughout the programme)

7. Deaneries should use the following indicative ranges when planning their Level 4 SIA programmes:

- Up to 18 months – Oculoplastics, Cornea & Ocular Surface, Glaucoma, Vitreoretinal Surgery
- 12-18 months – Ocular Motility, Uveitis, Paediatric Ophthalmology, Medical Retina, Neuro-ophthalmology
- 6-12 months – Urgent Eye Care, Community Ophthalmology
- 6-12 months – Cataract Surgery (to be integrated longitudinally)

## Selection into Level 4 Special Interest Area (SIA) training

8. From August 2024, trainees will do Level 4 training in two SIAs of their choice as part of the Ophthalmology specialty training programme. They will only be able to progress to Level 4 if they have achieved all the competencies for Level 3 and passed their FRCOphth Part 2 exam. Although Curriculum 2024 gives some essential criteria for selection to certain Level 4 SIA (e.g. Level 4 in Cataract Surgery is essential for entry to Level 4 in Glaucoma, Cornea & Ocular Surface and Vitreoretinal Surgery) these are unlikely to be helpful when choosing between two well-qualified candidates. The Curriculum Sub-Committee has developed five guiding principles to assist TPDs to develop processes to ensure that Level 4 SIA training places are allocated to the trainees who will derive maximum benefit from the training. Please see Appendix 1 sample scoring sheet for SIA selection and Appendix 2 sample application form for Level 4

**Principle 1 - Most trainees will be able to do the Level 4 placement of their choice, in their current deanery/programme, without competition.** The majority of programmes have fewer than 40 trainees, meaning that in most programmes, approximately 5-6 trainees will enter Level 4 SIA training in any one year. We anticipate that all deaneries are able to offer SIA in Medical Retina, Glaucoma, Cornea & Ocular Surface, Oculoplastics and Vitreoretinal Surgery. This means that most trainees will be able to enter an SIA of their choice, without competition. However, there will be occasions when more than one trainee applies for the same SIA post, and these guidelines are intended to assist TPD/HoS to allocate trainees in a transparent process that will have the confidence of both trainers and trainees.

**Principle 2 - The local clinical supervisors who will provide the training must have a major say in any appointments. They should propose desirable criteria, subject to the approval of the TPD/HoS.** The SIA will last from 6-18 months, and the senior trainees will take considerable responsibility in the latter part of the Level 4 training. It is essential that the clinical supervisors who will provide the training are confident that the trainee has the necessary aptitude for the SIA.

TPDs/HoS have identified Level 4 training opportunities in their programme and we recommended that the clinical supervisors who will deliver the training are identified at the same time. The clinical supervisors should then compile a list of desirable characteristics for a trainee in their SIA. These might include prior experience in the SIA, with a clear demonstration of commitment to the SIA; research or quality improvement projects; evidence of teaching skills; or other criteria. The criteria, and scoring system, should be transparent, and available to trainees in the programme. They should be measurable from the trainee's ePortfolio. As far as possible, they should be generic. This makes it easier to develop the criteria, and ensures that, if trainees are unsuccessful in one SIA, they will still have a strong portfolio for their second choice. We have developed a sample scorecard with a proposed scoring system. This can be tweaked and adapted for local conditions (see below).

The main role of the TPD/HoS will be to ensure that the proposed criteria and scoring systems are consistent with Curriculum 2024, can be determined from the ePortfolio, and do not unfairly disadvantage any trainee or group of trainees. The desirable criteria should be available as soon as possible in order that trainees can start preparing for competitive entry to Level 4 training in August 2024 and beyond.

**Principle 3 - If there is competition, posts must be awarded transparently, according to agreed criteria, and respecting principles of diversity, equality, and inclusion.** If all parties are to have faith in the process, it must meet high standards of transparency and reproducibility, as well as being fair to all trainees. This will require a rather more rigid and bureaucratic process, based on the ePortfolio. If trainees are excluded from doing the SIA of their choice, the appointment procedure may be challenged, so it must be robust.

**Principle 4 - Selection must be based on a review of the ePortfolio rather than interviews or an exam or other test of competency.** The GMC has indicated that, because ophthalmology training is a run-through programme, there can be no additional interviews or tests in order to select trainees for Level 4 training.

We understand that some desirable skills, such as “dealing with uncertainty” or “can communicate complexity to patients appropriately” might be easily tested by interviews or communication skills assessments. However, interviews, or other tests, cannot form part of the selection process. All candidates will be at least Level 3 in these domains, and this will be documented in the GSAT.

We recommend that even if there is no competition for the post, it would be valuable to assess the trainee’s ePortfolio against the list of desirable criteria to reduce the risk of an inappropriate appointment, or to provide targeted training prior to starting Level 4 training.

**Principle 5 - The role of the TPD /HoS should be acting as a referee or umpire, to ensure that any selection process is fair, transparent and equitable.** As the TPDs will not have Level 4 skills in the majority of the SIA programmes, we recommend that their primary function should be to ensure that there is an accessible list of desirable criteria produced by the clinical supervisors, that these criteria are equitable, fair, and relevant, and that they can be assessed from the ePortfolio.

During the selection process, they will not be directly involved, except if they are delivering Level 4 training in an SIA. However, their input and advice will be vital for ensuring that the selection is transparent and fair.

### *FAQs on SIA selection*

**If two trainees want to do the same SIA, and there is capacity to train more than one trainee, can an additional Level 4 training post be created?**

This is entirely a matter for the local TPD/HoS. Having two trainees doing the same SIA may create difficulties for other SIA, which will be relatively understaffed. In order to achieve all the competencies, it might be necessary to extend the training for one, or both, trainees. The total number of Level 4 posts in any SIA is not fixed by RCOphth or the GMC, so the TPD is permitted to create an additional post.

**Two trainees in successive years want to do the Glaucoma SIA. As this lasts 18 months, do they have to compete for it?**

The best solution is for the two trainees to overlap. Alternatively, the second trainee could start their level 4 training six months later and extend their training by six months. Another option is to utilise training opportunities in peripheral or district general hospitals which may be able to create a six-month timetable for a Level 4 SIA.

**Only one trainee has applied for the Vitreoretinal Surgery Level 4 SIA, but the trainers don't want to take him/her as they don't believe he has the required surgical skills. Can they refuse to train him/her?**

Yes, but this should only happen in very exceptional circumstances. This situation should have been prevented by good career guidance and educational supervision during the preceding five years. The reasons for refusing a trainee's choice must be clear and verifiable.

**We have two excellent trainees who both want to do Cornea & Ocular Surface, but there is only one Level 4 post in this SIA in our deanery. There is a vacant Level 4 Cornea & Ocular Surface post in an adjacent deanery. Can one of our trainees apply for this?**

At present, the only certain way to do this would be an inter-deanery transfer (criterion 5 page 8). See:

[https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/portals/1/Content/Resource%20Bank/Inter-Deanery%20Transfer/Trainee%20Guide%20to%20Inter%20Deanery%20Transfers%20%20\(August%202022\).pdf](https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/portals/1/Content/Resource%20Bank/Inter-Deanery%20Transfer/Trainee%20Guide%20to%20Inter%20Deanery%20Transfers%20%20(August%202022).pdf). These take time, but it is now easier to get an inter deanery transfer in order to pursue training. In order to give trainees the option of applying for an inter-deanery transfer, selection must be completed at least six months (preferably 9-12 months) before the starting date of the Level 4 SIA post.

## Standards for Level 4 training

9. All trainees must complete Level 4 training in at least 2 SIAs.
10. At the end of Level 4 training, both the trainer and trainee must be satisfied that the level achieved is that of an independent consultant in this SIA. If this level is not achieved further training (via extension of training) would be required before application for CCT.

11. All Level 4 timetables must afford the trainee the opportunity to complete training in this SIA to the level of an independent consultant. The learning outcomes required are listed in the [Syllabi](#). If there are areas that one trust/board within a region cannot provide, local arrangements will need to be made to afford the trainee the opportunity to complete training. Not all units will be able to provide training in all SIAs. It is important for all TPDs to know what units can deliver Level 4 training in which SIA and which combinations can be facilitated.
12. Any Level 4 timetable will need to include theatre sessions, specialist clinics and RSTAC (Research, Study, Teaching, Audit and Curriculum requirements) sessions. At Level 4 the trainees will be expected to teach junior colleagues in clinics and theatres and be involved in the development and management of the service.

### Development of timetables

13. Regions will need to identify which SIAs they can deliver Level 4 training in and communicate this to enable trainees to decide what SIA they can do in each region.
14. Trainees will need to identify as early as possible in Level 3 training which 2 SIAs they intend to complete in the last 18 months of training.
15. Suitable timetables will need to be generated to afford the trainee the opportunity to train to completion of 2 SIA Level 4 in the last 12 to 18 months of training.
16. Two RSTAC (Research, study, teaching, audit and curriculum requirements) sessions are required weekly in addition to the postgraduate teaching requirement.
17. Out of hours/ acute services should be appropriate for Level 4 training and locally determined.
18. There are multiple combinations possible for 2 SIA and each trainee will need to work with their college tutor and TPD to determine an appropriate timetable. A trainee cannot demand any combination of 2 SIAs - this will need to be discussed with the TPD and then decided. The SIA combinations will be dictated by the regional logistics and the feasibility of time-tables.

19. See an example timetable for Ocular Motility and Cataract Surgery below.

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>AM</b>	Complex cataract pre/post op- clinic	RSTAC	Ocular Motility theatre	Ocular Motility clinic	Teaching
<b>PM</b>	Cataract list	Ocular Motility clinic	Ocular Motility theatre	RSTAC	Extraocular muscle Botox session

## Resources

20. All documentation relating to the new Curriculum is on the [Curriculum2024 webpage](#).

21. All the syllabi can be found here <https://www.rcophth.ac.uk/training/ophthalmic-specialist-training/ost-curriculum/curriculum-2024/syllabi-patient-management-and-other-domains/>. There is a separate document for each Level 3 and Level 4 SIA. The links to the Level 4 SIA are below.

- [Oculoplastics and Orbit](#)
- [Cornea & Ocular Surface Disease](#)
- [Cataract Surgery](#)
- [Glaucoma](#)
- [Uveitis](#)
- [Medical Retina](#)
- [Vitreoretinal Surgery](#)
- [Ocular Motility](#)
- [Neuro-ophthalmology](#)
- [Paediatric Ophthalmology](#)
- [Urgent Eye Care](#)
- [Community Ophthalmology](#)

22. There is also a document for all the [other Level 4 domains](#) (non-Patient Management).

February 2024  
Curriculum 2024

## Appendix 1 sample scoring sheet for SIA selection

	Activity	Points	No.	Notes
<b>1</b>	<b>Higher degrees in relevant specialty</b>			
a	PhD	3		
b	MD	3		
c	MSc	1		
<b>2</b>	<b>Special Interest Area (SIA) meetings</b>			Points given for every presentation
a	Oral presentation at international meeting	4		
b	Poster presentation at international meeting	3		
c	Oral presentation at national meeting	3		
d	Poster presentation at national meeting	2		
e	Oral presentation at regional meeting	2		
f	Poster presentation at regional meeting	1		
g	Attendance at special interest area meetings	1		Only if relevant to the SIA - i.e. attending BEAVRS doesn't give you points for an oculoplastic SIA
<b>3</b>	<b>Organisation of SIA meeting</b>			
a	National	4		
b	Regional	3		
c	Local	2		
<b>4</b>	<b>Publication in SIA journal, or subspecialty article in general journal (Eye, BJO etc)</b>			Points given for every publication
a	Paper – first named author	4		
b	Paper – authorship in first 3 named authors	3		
c	Review/invited article	3		
d	Book chapter	3		
e	Case report	2		
f	Contribution of data to national study groups	1		
<b>5</b>	<b>Audit/quality improvement within SIA</b>			Points for every audit
a	Audit/QI lead with demonstrable change in practice – published	4		
b	Audit/QI lead with demonstrable change in practice – presented	3		
c	Audit/QI lead with no demonstrable change in practice – presented			
d	Involvement in audit	2		
<b>6</b>	<b>Simulation</b>			
a	Completion of relevant simulation module/course, with documented acceptable outcomes	3		
b	Personal use of simulation to enhance relevant surgical skills	1		





	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Teaching (must have feedback to demonstrate effective teaching/training)</b>			Points given for experience/expertise in teaching, not for every instance
a	Delivery of SIA teaching sessions	3		
b	Authorship of relevant e-learning module	3		
c	Supervision of junior trainees in surgery	3		
d	Delivery of dry/wet lab to peers	2		
e	Formal teaching of medical students/AHP/other medical staff	2		
f	Attendance at TTT course	1		
g	Teaching qualification (e.g. certificate, diploma, MSc)	3		
<b>8</b>	<b>Other (indicating knowledge of, and commitment to, the SIA)</b>			
a	Attendance at SIA clinics/ theatre lists over and above timetable requirements			
b	Attendance at SIA teaching sessions			
c	Any other activity demonstrating commitment			

## Appendix 2 sample application form for Level 4

### **APPLICATION FORM LEVEL 4, Ophthalmology, Mystery Deanery**

**Please fill in this form completely. Put all details in the Notes box.**

**Name:**

**Current ST Year of Training:**

**CCT date:**

**If LTFT, please advise %:**

**Preferred start date for Level 4: August/ February 20 \_\_ \_\_**

**(Please strike out month and fill in year accordingly)**

**Preferred Special Interest Areas for Level 4:**

- 1.
- 2.

**Have you completed all the requirements for Level 3 (all 12 SIAS and all 7 Domains AND FRCOphth Part 2)?** YES/ NO

**\*Exempt from exam for entry in August 2024 and February 2025**

**If applying for Cornea, VR or Glaucoma, have you completed Level 4 in Cataract Surgery?** YES/ NO

**If any of the above two answers is NO, please list remaining competencies and date of completion-**

- 1.
- 2.



3.

	<p><b>Notes by Trainee- please list details (MUST have full evidence in EPortfolio)</b></p> <p><b>THIS COLUMN WILL BE ANNOTATED BY PANEL AT SELECTION STAGE</b></p>	<p><b>Score (ONLY FOR PANEL)</b></p>
<p><b>Presentations</b> (Maximum 12 points including additional points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Oral in International Meeting- 3 each</i></li> <li>• <i>Poster in international meeting- 2 each</i></li> <li>• <i>Oral in National meeting- 2 each</i></li> <li>• <i>Poster in National Meeting- 1 each</i></li> <li>• <i>Additional points for presentations in preferred SIA: 1 point per presentation</i></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Indexed (Pubmed) Publications</b> (Maximum 12 points including additional points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>First author on paper- 4</i></li> <li>• <i>Second or third author on paper- 3</i></li> <li>• <i>Author on paper (not in first three authors)- 2</i></li> <li>• <i>First author on case report-2</i></li> <li>• <i>Author on case report (not first)- 1</i></li> <li>• <i>Author in Review Paper or Book Chapter- 3</i></li> <li>• <i>Additional points for publications in preferred SIA: 1 point per publication</i></li> <li>• <i>Contribution of data to national study groups- 1</i></li> </ul>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non-indexed publication: 1 point per publication (irrespective of SIA)</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Additional Qualifications</b> (Max 8 points, maximum of 4 qualifications)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Educational:</b> -PGCert, FHEA or equivalent (2 each)</li> <li>• <b>Other:</b> -Digital, Darzi fellowships or similar (2).</li> <li>• <b>Further qualifications:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MSc (2)</li> <li>- MA (1)</li> <li>- PhD (3)</li> <li>- MD (3)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<p><b>Teaching experience</b> (must have feedback to demonstrate effective teaching/training) (Max 10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Delivery of Local/ Regional teaching in preferred SIA -(2)</b></li> <li>• <b>Delivery of Local/ Regional teaching (1)</b></li> <li>• <b>Delivery of National /International teaching-(3)</b></li> <li>• <b>Authorship of relevant e-learning module (3)</b></li> <li>• <b>Supervision of junior trainees in surgery (2)</b></li> <li>• <b>Delivery of dry/wet lab to peers (2)</b></li> <li>• <b>Attendance at TTT course (1)</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Clinical governance experience</b> (Max 5 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Audit/QI lead with demonstrable change in practice – published (3 points)</b></li> <li>• <b>Audit/QI lead with demonstrable change in practice – presented (2 points)</b></li> <li>• <b>Audit/QI lead with NO demonstrable change in practice – presented (1 points)</b></li> <li>• <b>Serious Incident panel (1 point)</b></li> </ul>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Committee involvement (1 point)</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Leadership experience</b> (Maximum 8 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Organisation of National meeting (2 points; additional 1 point if in applied SIA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Organisation of Regional meeting (1 points; additional 1 point if in preferred SIA)</b></li> <li>• <b>Organisation of Local meeting in preferred SIA (1 point)</b></li> <li>• <b>Leadership or Management course (1 point)</b></li> <li>• <b>Completed QIPP (1 point)</b></li> <li>• <b>Business case (1 point)</b></li> <li>• <b>Leadership role (1 point)</b></li> <li>• <b>Shadowing trust management (1 point)</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Level 4 Competencies</b> (Maximum 8 points)</p> <p><i>Please list any Learning Objectives for Level 4 that have already been achieved.</i></p> <p><i>Please clearly mention the Domain, SIA (if applicable) and Learning Objective</i></p>		
<p><b>Others</b> (Maximum 5 points)</p> <p><i>Any other activity that demonstrates knowledge and commitment to the preferred SIA</i></p>		
<p><b>Personal Statement</b> (Score out of 10)</p>	<p>See Statement on Page 7</p>	
<p><b>Total (max points score is 80))</b></p>		



The ROYAL COLLEGE of  
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS  
*CURRICULUM 2024*

**(Please mention word count at end. MAX 250 WORDS)**