

**Specialist Training Fund for Higher  
Specialist Trainees,  
GP Trainees (Years 3 & 4)  
and  
Streamlined Trainees Years 3 – 8 (ST  
3-8)**

**Guidance Document for Trainees,  
Training Body Personnel & Employers  
July 2024**

*Title: Specialist Training Fund*

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*Approved by: National Programme Director NDTP*

*Effective from: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024*

## Introduction

To complement the suite of educational and training supports implemented on foot of the introduction of the NCHD Contract 2010, the HSE created in 2011 a fund for Higher Specialist Trainees i.e. Specialist and Senior Registrars, who are enrolled in approved Higher Training Programmes. This fund is used to support Higher Specialist Trainees to participate in education and training activities which are additional to those mandatory elements of training provided by the individual training bodies which are funded via the agreements in place with the HSE.

The application for reimbursement will be administered by the Postgraduate Training Bodies.

Training Bodies will submit all details of expenditure under the auspices of this scheme to the HSE (NDTP) on a quarterly basis.

## Amount Available to Each Eligible Trainee:

The funding available to each HST/ST3-8 and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year GP trainee is equivalent to €500 per year of training. While each trainee can carry over €500 per year for the number of years that their specialist training period consists of, they cannot claim such funding in advance.

## Who This Fund Is Available to?

This Specialist Training fund is only available to those trainees i.e. SpRs/SRs/ST3-8 who:

- are actively participating in a higher specialist training programme and
- who hold the NCHD Contract(2010).

This specialist training funding is also being made available to GP trainees in their third and fourth years of training and those SpRs/SRs/ ST3-8 who are on the HSE-supported Dr. Richard Steevens' Scholarship.

The fund will **not** be available to those higher specialist trainees i.e. who:

- do not hold the NCHD Contract(2010),
- are inactive on a programme,

are engaged in overseas training (with the exception of those on the HSE-funded Dr. Richard Steevens' Scholarship),

- are in full time research, or are in a clinical post for which they are not receiving training credit.

Should such individuals become eligible for funding at a certain time, they will not be eligible to claim for funding prior to the date they became eligible.

### **What This Specialist Training Funding Can Be Used For?**

This fund can be used by Senior / Specialist Registrars/ ST 3-8 and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> year GP trainees to support their participation in relevant educational and training events that have been approved by the relevant postgraduate training body. This may include, where deemed appropriate by the postgraduate body, a proportion of the travel and subsistence costs associated with the educational and training event.<sup>1</sup>

This fund can also be used to support the purchase by trainees of specialist medical equipment specifically required as part of their training programme, for example, magnifying glasses for use in microsurgery.

### **What This Specialist Training Funding Cannot be Used For**

This specialist training fund cannot be used:

- to further subsidise trainees in educational activities for which the HSE already has separate arrangements in place e.g. contribution toward defined examinations and clinical courses<sup>2</sup>;
  - to pay for or subsidise educational activities which are funded via the Agreements in place between the HSE and the individual training bodies regarding the provision of specialist medicine training;
  - for the purchase of on-line resources, software, lap tops, palm pilots or any other hardware;
- and

for programmes/training modules provided directly by local employers, for example Infection Control training courses

### **How A Trainee Can Access This Fund?**

Trainees who are eligible to avail of this fund must submit the signed reimbursement form and return it with original receipts and a certificate of attendance (if applicable) to their Training Body. All applications must be signed and approved by the current trainer or training director as set out by the Training Body.

Once the claim is received, the Training Body will review the reimbursement form and issue to the applicant, formal acknowledgment of the application. If approved, the Training Body

will issue payment directly to the trainee. The decision of the Training Body regarding the eligibility of the application made is final.

Applications should only be submitted after an educational event has taken place.

### **When can a trainee apply?**

Trainees can apply for funding in respect of financial liabilities incurred from the dates Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 to Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Applications received in relation to expenses incurred prior to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024 will not be considered, as the deadline for receipt of claims arising from this period has passed.

### **How A Trainee Can Access This Fund?**

Trainees must complete the reimbursement form before the educational event to receive prior approval from the relevant trainer/training director. The application form should only be forwarded to their Training Body with original receipts after the educational event has taken place. This allows the trainee to submit all relevant documentation (e.g. receipts, acknowledgement of payment) along with a required certificate of attendance or equivalent thereof. The Training Body will maintain a detailed record of fund payments for each trainee.

Applications for claims in relation to expenses incurred in the 2024/2025 training year must be received by the Training Body no later than **13<sup>th</sup> October 2025**.

Trainees who have completed their HST/ST/GP training must make their final claim three months following their completion from the programme.

### **When A Trainee Can Apply**

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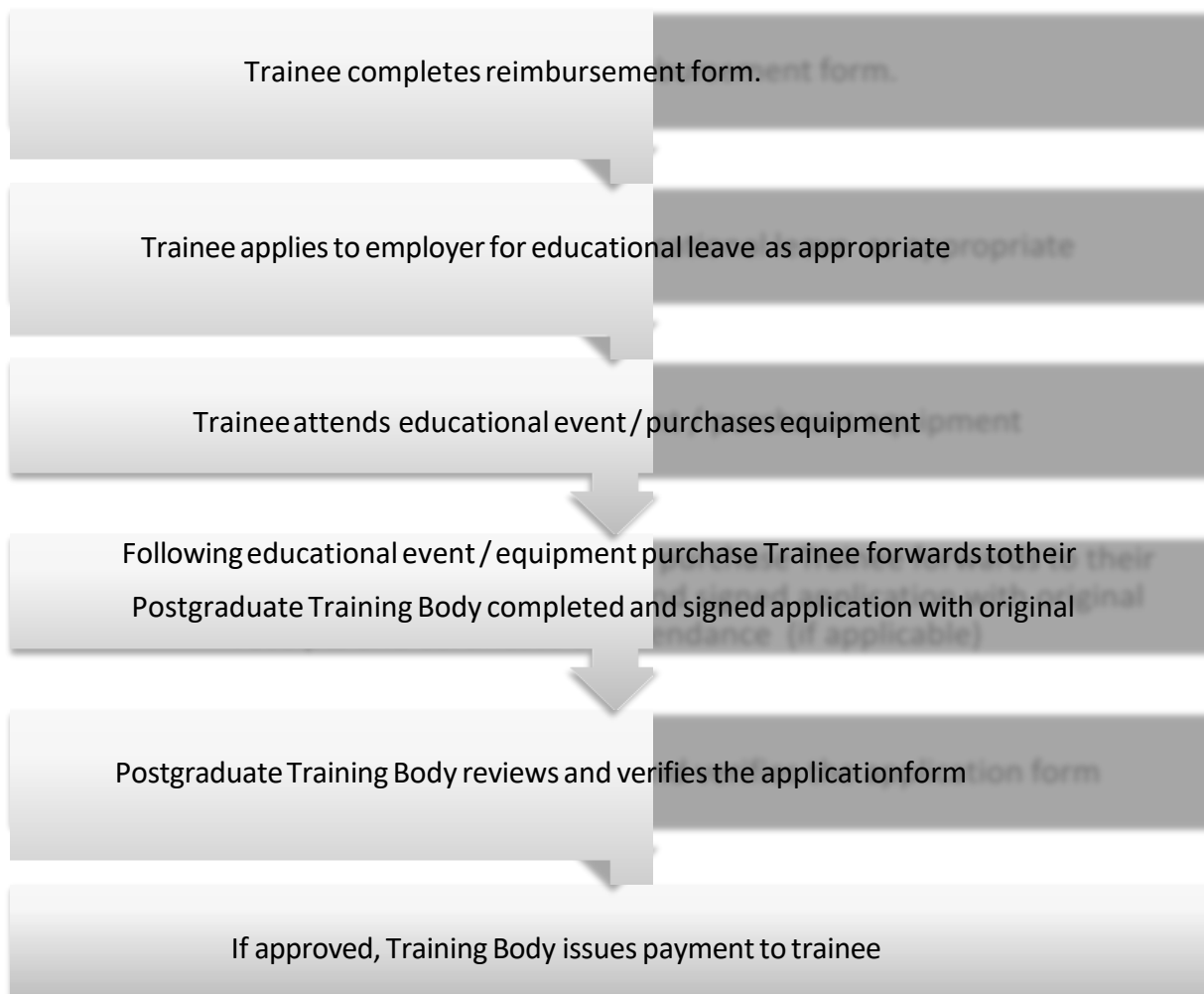
Trainees must complete the reimbursement form before the educational event to receive prior approval from the relevant trainer/training director. The application form should only be forwarded to their Training Body with original receipts after the educational event has taken place. This allows the trainee to submit all relevant documentation (e.g. receipts, acknowledgement of payment) along with a required certificate of attendance or equivalent thereof. The Training Body will maintain a detailed record of fund payments for each trainee.

## Educational Leave

Approval by the relevant trainer /training director of an application by a higher specialist trainee prior to the educational event taking place does not confer automatic approval of educational leave which may be required by the trainee to attend the educational event. **Approval of educational leave remains the responsibility of the employer.** To apply for educational leave to attend educational events that have been approved by the training body as being appropriate for support from the specialist training fund, higher specialist trainees are required to continue to apply directly to their employer. A copy of the signed application form should be submitted with their application to their employer as supporting documentation.

### Appendix One:

#### Diagrammatic Overview of Application Process



## Appendix 2

### Frequently asked questions:

#### 1. Is there a list of events/courses approved for the Specialist Training Fund?

No, there is no set list of events/courses that are approved. The fund should be used to support your participation in relevant educational and training events. The Postgraduate Training Body will review the claim and if appropriate issues payment.

All events/equipment that are educationally relevant and support your training will be considered with the following exceptions

- Hardware such as laptops
- Courses/events already supported through the HSE NCHD Clinical Courses Refund Scheme (Please contact your employer directly or look at the National Doctors Training & Planning website [www.hse.ie/doctors](http://www.hse.ie/doctors) for further information on this refund scheme.)

#### 2. Can this fund be used for online journals?

No, the fund is geared towards attendance at educational events/courses or specialist medical equipment required specifically for higher specialist training. It is anticipated that the trainees will access online resources available through their employer or training programmes.

#### 3. Can this fund be used towards the tuition fees for Masters programme/PhD?

Yes, the fund can be used towards the contribution of tuition fees if the educational course is relevant to your training. Claims can be made anytime during the academic year and must be supported by the receipt of tuition paid.

#### 4. If I am enrolled on a course that runs over one or more years do I need to wait until after I complete the course to claim?

No, the fund can be used towards the contribution of tuition fees if the educational course is relevant to your training. Claims made anytime during the academic year and must be supported by receipts of tuition fees paid.

#### 5. Do I need to submit a certificate of attendance for my higher degree?

No, claims for a higher degree can be supported with the receipt of tuition paid.

#### 6. Can this fund be used to fund USMLE?

No, the fund must be used towards education events/equipment. Costs associated with medical licensing/registration will not be considered.

#### 7. Can this fund be used towards the cost of an ACLS course?

No, there is a separate Clinical Courses and Examination Refund Scheme for NCHDs operated by the HSE which will refund the fees of specific HSE approved clinical courses and examinations.

This HSE NCHD Refund Scheme is managed directly by employers and sites. Please contact your employer directly or look at the National Doctors Training & Planning website <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/ed/fin/> for further information on this refund scheme.

**8. Can I claim towards the purchase of textbooks?**

Yes, original receipts must be included with the reimbursement form.

**9. Can this fund be used for exams fees towards professional exams i.e. membership/fellowship exams?**

No, there is a separate Clinical Courses and Examination Refund Scheme for NCHDs operated by the HSE which refunds the fees of specific HSE approved clinical courses and examinations. This HSE NCHD Refund Scheme is managed directly by employers and sites. Please contact your employer directly or look at the National Doctors Training & Planning website <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/ed/fin/> for further information on this refund scheme.

**10. Can this fund be used towards travel expenses in relation to professional exams?**

Yes, the fund can be used for travel expenses incurred relating to professional exams. All such claims will be considered in line with HSE Guidelines regarding travel and subsistence and if approved, will be reimbursed at public sector rates.

**11. Can this fund be used towards travel expenses in relation to mandatory study days?**

Yes, the fund can be used for travel expenses incurred relating to attendance of mandatory study days. All such claims will be considered in line with HSE Guidelines regarding travel and subsistence and if approved, will be reimbursed at public sector rates.

**12. Can I claim mileage for an event/conference?**

Yes, mileage can be claimed. Each mileage submission must be considered in the context of available public transport. All such claims will be considered in line with the HSE Guidelines regarding travel and if approved, will be reimbursed at public sector rates.

**13. Can I claim for accommodation for an event/conference?**

Yes, accommodation can be claimed. All such claims will be considered in line with the HSE Guidelines regarding travel and if approved, will be reimbursed at public sector rates.

**14. If I don't claim the full €500 in the year do I lose the remainder of the funding?**

No, the specialist training fund is designed as a rolling fund. For each year of training that you are eligible to claim the specialist training fund you can avail up to €500 towards education events/equipment. However, if you do not claim the full €500 the remainder will "roll over" to the next year of training making your available amount to claim €500 plus the amount "rolled over" from the previous year.

Trainees who have completed their training must make their final claim within three months following completion of their programme. Retrospective claims passed this date will not be considered and remaining funds will be returned to the HSE. [The event I want to claim will be taking place in the future – can I claim the fee now if I have paid the](#)

registration fee?

No, claims will only be considered retrospectively and must be supported with a certificate of attendance.

**15. Can I claim if I am on maternity leave?**

Yes, if you hold the NCHD Contract(2010).

**16. I am doing research this year, am I eligible for the €500 specialist training fund?**

No, this fund is only available to those higher specialist trainees i.e. specialist registrars and senior registrars who:

- are actively participating in a Higher Specialist Training programme and
- hold the NCHD Contract(2010).

This specialist training funding is also being made available to GP trainees in their third and fourth years of training and those SpRs/SRs/ST3-8 who are on the HSE-supported Dr. Richard Steevens' Scholarship.

**17. I am in a clinical post for which I am not receiving training credit – am I eligible for the Specialist Training Fund?**

No, you must be actively enrolled in a Higher Specialist Training programme, receiving clinical credit and hold an NCHD Contract 2010 to be eligible.

**18. If I finish training in January can I claim the full €500?**

No, if you complete training in January you can claim €250. All claims must be made within 3 months of your completion date.

**19. How long will it take for the reimbursement to be sent to me?**

Once your claim has been reviewed and processed by the Postgraduate Training Body payment should be made within 8 weeks.