

Policy on Career Break and Career Change

Background

The Register of Clinical Technologists (RCT) was set up in 2000 to provide a voluntary register which would protect the public by setting standards for the training, competence and conduct of clinical technologists. Once accepted onto the register, after completing an approved training course or through an equivalence route, registrants are required to pay an annual renewal fee and confirm each year that they are carrying out continuing professional development (CPD) and that they will abide by the RCT Code of Professional Conduct. The names of all registrants in good standing with the register (that is, having paid registration fees and not having been removed from the register following disciplinary proceedings) appear on a searchable online register on the RCT's website (www.therct.org.uk).

Scope

The career break and career change policy applies to all registrants.

Definitions

A **career break** involves a registrant taking an extended period of time away from their work, and returning to work in the same Scope of Practice.

A **career change** involves a registrant taking time away from their current Scope of Practice to undertake further training and development (which may be paid or unpaid) before returning to work in a different Scope of Practice.

CAREER BREAK

Aims

This policy has been developed to enable registrants to take an extended period of time away from work in order to balance their career with other commitments, responsibilities and interest.

Reasons for a career break may include:-

- care and/or responsibility for children or other dependants requiring unpaid time away from work; or
- personal study, training or development, requiring unpaid time away from work; or
- secondment to a different role not covered by the RCT scopes of practice; or
- taking a break from working in the UK (registrants must be able to show they have kept up their CPD through their work in a different country upon their return and 're-activation'); or
- any other purpose agreed by the RCT e.g. overseas travel or voluntary work.

Registrants who are planning to take a career break are required to notify the registrar using the 'Career Break Notification Form' (P&P document 03-21-12 0008) and their 'career break' status will be noted on the register upon commencement of their break. Registrants must then complete the 'Return from Career Break Notification Form' (P&P document 03-21-14 0145) on return to work and forward this to the RCT Registrar so that their 'career break' status may be updated. If the career break has spanned over two years, supporting information will also be required, by way of study documentation or training records.

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Financial

No refund of pro-rata registration fees will be permitted. To avoid the annual renewal fee registrants must provide the completed relevant notification form otherwise the renewal fee will become due on the 1 January each year.

Our requirements for returners

If registrants take a break in practice of less than two years they can begin practising again without having to meet any additional requirements set by us, except that they must pay the full renewal fee for the year in which they return to practice and provide the relevant completed notification form. We believe that this is flexible enough to accommodate registrants who take a short break from practice (and particularly for registrants who take leave to start a family) without compromising public protection and our role in upholding standards.

- 0 – 2 years out of practice – no requirements
- 2 – 5 years out of practice – 30 days of updating
- 5 years or more out of practice – 60 days of updating

Period of updating

The period of updating knowledge and skills can be made up of any combination of supervised practice, formal study or private study. Our only requirement is that any private study makes up no more than 50% of the total period.

For example, if 30 days of updating are required this could be completed by:

- 30 days of supervised practice; or
- 10 days of supervised practice, 10 days of private study, and 10 days of formal study; or
- 15 days of private study, and 15 days of formal study.

This is not an exhaustive list. The above are just examples to show how our requirements are flexible enough to accommodate registrants' requirements.

Supervised practice

'Supervised practice' is practising under the supervision of a registered professional. A supervisor must:

- be on the Register of Clinical Technologists or the HCPC Register; and
- have been in regulated practice for at least the previous three years and not be subject to any fitness to practise proceedings or orders, i.e. they must not be cautioned or subject to 'conditions of practice'.

There are no detailed requirements regarding the level of supervision needed or the tasks to be undertaken. This is best negotiated directly between the registrant and the supervisor on the basis of individual learning needs. We do require that the supervisor should only supervise those activities which are within their own Scope of Practice. This is so that the supervisor can provide relevant input and guidance and also to ensure that both the registrants and the supervisor are practising safely and effectively. This means that the period of supervised practice could be undertaken, for example, in teaching, management or research or wherever the supervisor practises their profession.

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Formal study

'Formal study' is a period of structured study which is provided by a person or organisation. This can include distance learning or e-learning or any other type of course or programme that is relevant to the registrant's practice.

Types of formal study that may be chosen could include:

- 'return to practice' programmes run by educational institutions or other bodies;
- relevant 'continuing professional development' courses;
- relevant modules or elements currently included in programmes run by educational institutions; or
- programmes offered by professional bodies.

The RCT do not approve return to practice courses because we believe that the registrant is best-placed to determine which courses are most appropriate and which types of formal study will best update their skills and knowledge so that they can re-enter practice safely.

Private study

'Private study' is a period of study which the registrant structures. Private study could use resources including:

- websites;
- library books; and
- journals.

Private study may be a particularly useful option if where the registrant plans to return to a field which is extremely specialised or where there may be limited opportunities for formal study or supervised practice. It may also prove useful if they live in an area where it is difficult to gain a period of supervised practice or if they need to fit the updating period around other demands on their time such as another job or caring responsibilities. However, registrants should be aware that private study can only make up a maximum of half of your total period (e.g. 15 of the 30 days' updating or 30 of the 60 days' updating).

Structuring your period of updating

The RCT recognises that updating required will be individually tailored. The areas of the registrant's profession that they need to update will depend on:

- the area in which they intend to work when they begin practising again;
- their prior experience;
- any relevant skills they gained whilst out of practice; and
- any relevant developments in their profession during the time when they were out of practice.

Registrants do not have to do their period of updating full-time: they can complete it part-time if they wish. For the purposes of completing their forms we regard one day as being equivalent to seven hours.

Registrants do not have to complete the entire period of updating at once. They can carry out part

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of their period of updating then have a break then come back and complete the rest. Our only requirement for the timescale is that all of their updating should be completed within the twelve months before they apply for registration. We believe that this strikes a balance between operating a flexible system which recognises that returners are more likely to have family and caring commitments and recognising that if updating is undertaken over a much extended period of time then the opportunities for development are limited.

Extension to career break

Registrants who are currently on a career break approved by the registrar and wish to extend their return to work date, must notify the registrar using the 'Career Break Extension Form' (P&P document 03-21-36 0155) This should be submitted at least one month prior to the original proposed return to work date. If an extension to the career break means that the total career break spans over two years, supporting information will also be required, by way of study documentation or training records.

CAREER CHANGE

Aims

This policy has been developed to ensure that the public is protected when a registrant is moving from one Scope of Practice to another and gaining competencies and knowledge in the new area.

Registrants who are planning a career change are required to notify the registrar using the 'Career Change Notification Form' (P&P document 03-21-13 0078) and their 'career change' status will be noted on the register upon commencement of their training period.

Financial

No refund of pro-rata registration fees will be permitted. To avoid the annual renewal fee, registrants must provide the completed relevant notification form otherwise the renewal fee will become due on the 1 January each year.

Completion of new training

Once the training is completed, the registrant will need to submit evidence that they meet all current criteria before they will be registered in their new scope of practice. This evidence will be reviewed by an RCT assessor, but no fee will be charged for this assessment. The applicant should contact the office once their training has been completed and they will be put into contact with either an assessor, or the registrar, who will then provide guidance on what the applicant will be required to demonstrate. This will be in the form of a shortened equivalence style report, which will need to be countersigned by the applicant's line manager or head of department. If successful, the Scope of Practice against his/her name on the register will be altered to reflect this and his/her status on the register will be amended from 'Career change' to 'Registered'. The annual renewal fee will become payable again from the following January and CPD will be required in the new Scope of Practice area.