While you are out of programme

Keeping up to date

There is limited evidence about how time away from clinical practice affects your clinical skills, but it is suggested that there may be some impact after at least 3 months away from clinical work. However, this will be influenced by many factors, including:

- Duration of time away
- Nature of leave
- Prior level of experience
- Type and amount of clinical work done while away from usual practice
- Nature of clinical work e.g., acute care, highly skilled procedures

With this in mind, how much time you invest in keeping up to date during your leave, is left to you to decide.

The following are just a few thoughts to consider:

- Understand the purpose of your leave and what you hope to gain from your time away. It is perfectly acceptable to detach completely from your clinical training if this is the right thing for you.
- Accept that you will lose some clinical skills but have faith that you will regain these when the time comes, especially if you engage with the return-to-work resources available to you.
- Try not to feel guilty about taking time out, instead embrace your time out and appreciate the transferable skills you are undoubtedly acquiring.
- No one is judging you and you do not need to prove to anyone you are keeping up to date. Your time is precious, so any learning you do, should be meaningful and intentional and bring you closer to achieving your unique goals.
- Only take on projects that really spark your interests, this intrinsic motivation will help you get the project finished.
- Learn to say ‘No’ without saying ‘No’ when you are asked to take on a new commitment that you may struggle to fulfil or does not fit with your current goals. Use phrases like ‘Thank you for thinking of me but I can’t commit to this at the moment’. People will appreciate your honesty.
- If you do want to devote some time to your professional development, it may be more favorable to develop your non-clinical skills such as leadership, management, teaching, or mentoring, which may have been difficult to fit in when you had clinical commitments.
- Clinical skills and knowledge are easy to forget when you are not applying them in practice, so think about the right time to undertake these activities (nearer your return is ideal) and/or choose activities that promote deep learning rather than superficial learning, so they are more likely to stick.

- Be realistic about the time you have available and don’t take too much on; it’s often better to concentrate on one thing at a time.
- Be mindful & listen to your body – knowing when to take a step back takes strength of mind
- Time out can be a time for significant growth, particularly if the circumstances which led to your leave were difficult; reflect on this and don’t be afraid to share what you have learnt with others when you return.

Keeping in Contact

- We recommend that you remain in contact with one-named person, preferably your Training Programme Director.