

What can we learn? A national survey of foundation doctor learning opportunities and modalities



Wesley Kai-Xian McLoughlin^{1,2}, Heather McAdam³, Joanna Stephen⁴, Christine Rea⁴, Fiona Cameron^{2,4}

¹Department of Ophthalmology, Ninewells Hospital

²School of Medicine, University of Dundee

³School of Medicine, University of Glasgow

⁴Scottish Foundation School Team, Dundee

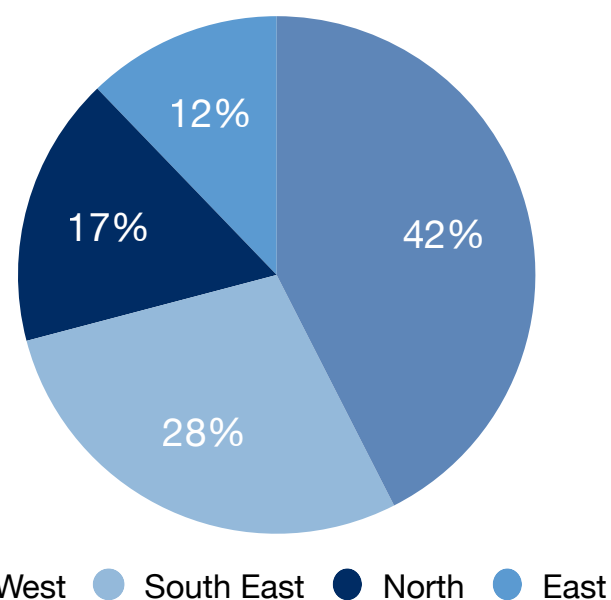


Fig. 1: Survey responses by foundation deanery.

Demographics

We received **320** responses across all four Scottish foundation deaneries, representing (RR c. 13.9%, Fig. 1).

Most respondents did not have any self-reported adjustments (85.9%, n=275/320), such as LTFT (n=18), 'reasonable' adjustments (n=9), academic time (SFP, n=11) or direct entry FY2 (n=6).

Most respondents were foundation year 1 (FY1) doctors (60.9%, n=195/320). Placements were from a diverse range of **33 specialities**.

The foundation programme is a two-year, work-based training programme which is intended to bridge the gap between medical school and speciality training. During foundation, doctors are required to complete core and non-core teaching hours and are encouraged to engage in placement-specific educational activities.

We hypothesised that *foundation doctors do not have allocated time to complete core or non-core learning and often do not get to make the most of available learning opportunities.*

What we did

We circulated an anonymous, optional 22-item online survey (Forms, Microsoft) via Scottish Foundation School email to all current foundation doctors in Scotland.

Survey questions included information about their latest placement (December 2024-April 2025), adjustments, when they completed learning, what resources were used, job-specific learning opportunities and free-text comments on what they felt was effective or inefficient.

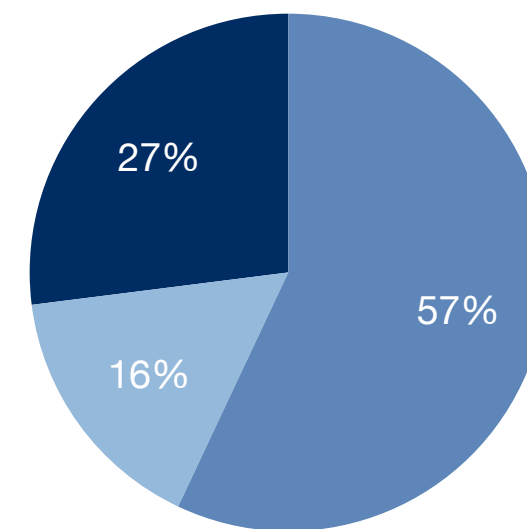
Almost a quarter (24%, n=74/320) of respondents said they could only 'some of the time' or 'never' attend core teaching (Table 1). Less than half (46%, n=147/320) reported core teaching was 'always' bleep-free or uninterrupted. Most respondents attended core teaching in person (57%, Fig. 2). *In-person core teaching* remained the preferred delivery method (76%, n=244/320).

Almost a third (28.1%, n=90/320) of respondents reported using the NES Teaching Repository for non-core learning. Most respondents (86.9%, n=278/320) reported completing core-teaching in personal time (Fig. 3).

Multiple free-text comments reported poor staffing or rota planning prevented core teaching attendance. Role specific educational activities, if offered, were often ad hoc (n=86, Fig. 3).

Survey Question	Always	Most of the time	Half the time	Some of the time	Never	N/A
How often were you able to attend core teaching?	61 (19%)	121 (38%)	64 (20%)	56 (18%)	18 (6%)	-
If you were unable to attend core teaching from, would you be given time to catch up/day(s) in lieu?	39 (12%)	16 (5%)	5 (2%)	20 (6%)	194 (61%)	46 (14%)
How often was core teaching bleep-free /uninterrupted?	147 (46%)	89 (28%)	26 (8%)	33 (10%)	25 (8%)	-
Is core teaching attendance taken?	191 (60%)	42 (13%)	9 (3%)	22 (7%)	56 (18%)	-

Table 1: Table summarising how often respondents were able to attend or catch up on core teaching, in addition to bleep-free and attendance-taking prevalence.



● In person ● Online (Live) ● Online (Recorded)

Fig. 2: Survey responses of the most common mode of attending core teaching

What we found

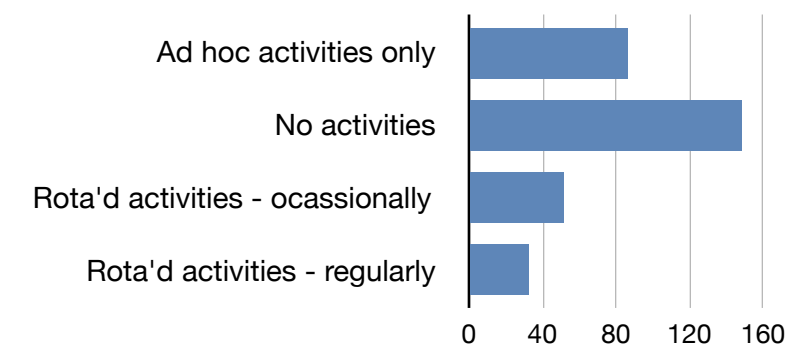


Fig. 3: Survey responses of frequency and scheduling of role specific educational activities