



# **Protected Study Time - Guidance for Radiographers, Managers and Union Representatives**

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**Published:** Friday, May 1, 2009

## **Summary**

The Society of Radiographers publishes this guidance regarding the provision of protected study time. Protected study time is defined as 'A contractually agreed allocation of hours or days per annum, to be taken by the employee for the purposes of self-directed study and other CPD activities'. This document gives guidance and provides radiographers, managers and union representatives with a clear understanding of the current policies of the Society of Radiographers in this regard.

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This document gives guidance regarding the provision of protected study time and provides radiographers, managers and union representatives with a clear understanding of the current policies of the Society of Radiographers (SoR) in this regard.

**1.2** It is recognised that the provision of protected study time will entail considerable difficulties in many clinical departments. Employers should recognise that the implementation of protected study time supports professional employees in retaining their registration (for radiographers, compliance with the Health Professions Council's Standards for Continuing Professional Development<sup>(1)</sup> (CPD) is a regulatory requirement). However, the benefits of protected study time (improved clinical and staff governance, improved morale and more effective clinical practice) should be seen as a positive contribution to service quality and effectiveness.

**1.3** Employers should recognise that protected study time will necessitate a review of staffing requirements (see 2.2.3 below for advice on managing this situation in the short term). Practitioners should understand that the introduction of protected study time may, in the short term, increase service delivery pressures.

## **2. Definition of 'protected study time'**

**2.1** The Society of Radiographers defines protected study time as '*A contractually agreed allocation of hours or days per annum, to be taken by the employee for the purposes of self-directed study and other CPD activities*'.

**2.2** It will be helpful to consider the components of this definition in more detail.

**2.2.1 'Contractually agreed'.** Employers and union representatives should agree an appropriate allocation and this should be evidenced by a formally documented agreement which will form part of the departmental employees' terms and conditions of service. The Society provides a template for such an agreement; union representatives are advised to seek advice from their national or regional officer before signing this. 'Grace and favour' arrangements have provided many practitioners with valuable opportunities for personal study, but these can be withdrawn at any time and provision is often sporadic and unsustainable.

**2.2.2 'Hours or days per annum'.** SoR previously defined the appropriate allocation as '10% of hours worked, in accordance with the terms of the working time directive(2)'. This remains a long-term objective. For the moment, SoR recommends an allocation of six days per annum for full time staff. Part-time staff should receive this on a *pro-rata* basis.

**2.2.3 'To be taken by the employee'.** SoR strongly recommends that protected study time be managed on the same basis as annual leave. This places the onus on the practitioner to apply for study time as appropriate and to be accountable for using such time appropriately. Managers will be able to consider requests on a similar basis to those for annual leave. Managers will, quite reasonably, expect employees to account for the time taken (see 4.5 below).

**2.2.4 'Self-directed'.** Practitioners will determine their CPD needs and plan their learning activities individually (through personal reflection and review of practice) and collaboratively (including discussions with managers and clinical supervisors as part of a formal personal development or career progression review). It is essential that practitioners have the flexibility to undertake their learning activities as appropriate. For this reason it is inadvisable to stipulate that protected study time should be spent in the clinical department. It is unlikely that the clinical department can offer all necessary resources (including quiet and freedom from disturbance) to support the full range of learning activities required.

## 3. Guidance for Practitioners

**3.1** Practitioners should understand that protected study time represents a significant contribution by the employer to personal development and continuing learning. Compliance with professional and regulatory requirements for CPD, however, remains primarily the responsibility of the individual practitioner.

**3.2** Extra personal resources may well be required to undertake CPD satisfactorily, especially at times of career development or significant change and practitioners should allocate these accordingly as an investment in their personal and professional development.

**3.3** For part-time staff protected study time is allocated *pro-rata* to hours worked, as with other terms of employment such as salary, annual leave and bank holiday allocation. Equality issues can arise if part-time employees are seen to be less favourably treated with regard to career and development or learning opportunities. Union representatives are trained to take appropriate action if this occurs.

**3.4** Practitioners should be able to evidence their good use of protected study time. SoR strongly recommends that all members use the College of Radiographers' on-line portfolio 'CPD Now'. This enables the practitioner to plan, record and evaluate CPD activities and to evidence this through a certificate of CPD accreditation. This resource is available to all SoR members at no extra charge. The manager can also quite reasonably ask that evidence of any agreed learning activities is provided. CPD Now will allow you to produce this easily and effectively.

**3.5** SoR members should support and, where possible, contribute to their union representatives' efforts to secure protected study time on their behalf. Practical support might involve assisting representatives in carrying out a learning needs survey, for instance.

## 4. Guidance for Managers

**4.1** Managers are urged to work closely with staff and union representatives to ensure that a protected study time agreement is reached.

**4.2** SoR recommends that protected study time is managed on the same basis as annual leave (see 2.2.3 above)

**4.3** In the longer term, protected study time should be factored into manpower requirements in a similar way to annual leave, sickness etc.

**4.4** Managers working in the NHS may find an overall increase in staff hours worked due to the phased increase in the working week under Agenda for Change. SoR recommends that the aggregate of these 'extra hours' (which will impact differently in departments) is used to offset the overall effect of protected study time. This is easier to apply and more equitable than giving individual employees an allocation based on their increase in hours. The argument that such extra hours can be used to reduce waiting times and increase service targets should be resisted.

**4.5** Managers are entitled to see evidence that protected study time has been used effectively. For more guidance please refer to the document '*Continuing Professional Development; Professional and Regulatory Requirements(3)*' (SoR 2008) section 4.2.4

## 5. Guidance for Union Representatives

**5.1** Securing a protected study time agreement is a significant union undertaking and all representatives in a clinical department should collaborate on this, although the lead will normally be taken by the union learning representative.

**5.2** Union representatives should obtain the protected study time pack from the SoR and should actively engage as many members as are required to support appropriate union processes.

**5.3** Union representatives are strongly advised to seek the advice of their regional or national officer once they are ready to sign a formal protected study time agreement with their employer.

## References

1. Health Professions Council *Your guide to our standards for continuing professional development* May 2006 HPC
2. Society and College of Radiographers *A Strategy for Continuing Professional Development*, 2003 SoR
3. Society and College of Radiographers *Continuing Professional Development; Professional and Regulatory Requirements* 2008 SoR

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