

Learning Environment and Educator Approvals FAQs

General Questions

Here are some overview questions which you may find useful. More specific questions relating to learning environments, educators, the assessment panel and the final steps of the process can be found further in this document. All initial approval enquiries for should be directed to your **ICS training hub** in the first instance

What is meant by the term “lead organisation”?

A lead organisation refers to the local training hub or PCN with a nominated lead, who takes leadership responsibility for the process and submits the completed, combined application form to their ICS training hub.

Why do learning environment and educator applications need to be “at scale”?

With the current need to expand educational capacity within Primary Care, at scale applications creates a more seamless and less resource intensive approach to quality approvals for everyone involved, compared to individual practice and educator approvals.

Underpinned by NHSE’s Quality Strategy, which sets out its national and local priorities, principles and overarching processes for multi-professional quality management, at scale approval enhances the opportunities for multi-professional learning and encourages collaboration and integration across a localised environment.

What is classed as an at scale application?

An at scale application is a form that includes multiple learning environments and/or educators, from either the same or different PCNs who are seeking approval. If any of those PCNs also wish to be approved, they too should be included. A single at scale form can include multiple:

- educators who are already in approved environments, and/or
- environments and PCNs who are seeking approval but with no educators (see Learning Environment Question [below](#) for more info) and/or
- environments and educators within those environments wishing to be approved.

A single environment, even if there are multiple educators within it, isn’t classed as at scale.

What is there is only a single environment or educator ready to be approved?

As a single environment or educator isn’t at scale, they cannot apply for approval independently and should wait until there are other environments and/or educators seeking approval in their geography. In this instance, they should contact their PCN or local training hub (lead organisation) who can advise when the next at scale application is being prepared.

Learning Environment Approval Questions

These questions are the most frequently asked regarding the process for learning environment approvals. If your specific question is not addressed here, you might find the information in the [guidance notes document](#). Alternatively, please contact your [ICS training hub](#).

Why should a PCN apply for accreditation?

While physical supervision may not take place within the entity of PCNs, it is recommended that PCNs apply for accreditation as a learning environment to help foster a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Accreditation can increase training capacity, streamline educational processes to reduce administrative burden, improve the quality of care through enhanced learning and development, and promote multi-professional learning.

Can a PCN apply for approval if there are no existing LEs approved, nor any seeking approval?

No. All approvals need to be at scale, so a PCN cannot apply for approval if there are no existing environments approved for training, nor none seeking approval at the time of application. The PCN will need to wait until there are environments ready to be approved and then apply for at scale PCN and multiple environments approval.

Can a learning environment apply for approval, even if the PCN isn't approved?

Yes. A learning environment can apply for approval, even if the PCN is not approved. This will however need to be an at scale approval, so must include other learning environments on the same form.

Can a learning environment be approved if there are no educators seeking approval?

Yes. A learning environment can be approved even if there are no educators seeking approval at that time and will be approved for (non-medical) multi-professional learners. The environment can only be approved for GP learners once a GP educator is approved. At that time, the environment will not require a second assessment panel (only the GP educator will require approval – see Educator Questions [below](#)). The application will need to be at scale, so will need to include other environments seeking approval – either with or without educators.

Does a learning environment have to reapply for approval after a specific period?

No. Once an environment is approved, it remains approved indefinitely. However, there may be specific circumstances where approval is suspended or withdrawn due to quality or learner concerns. These circumstances may require a future re-approval assessment panel for the environment to be reinstated as a learning environment. Should these circumstances occur, the environment will be guided through the process by the ICS training hub, in conjunction with the NHSE Quality Assurance team, Postgraduate and Primary Care Deans and Head of School amongst others.



Does a learning environment need a second assessment panel if they want to supervise different types of learners if already approved for teaching?

No. An environment approval is multi-professional and once approved, it is approved for all types of non-medical primary care learners. If an environment wants to supervise medical learners, there must be an approved GP educator within it. The GP educator will require approval, but the environment will not require a second panel.

What type of learners can an environment supervisor once approved?

A learning environment can be approved for either multi-professional or GP learners and is dependent on the profession of the educators. If there are no GP educators seeking approval at the same time as the learning environment, it will be approved for multi-professional learners but not for GP. When a GP educator applies for approval, either at the same time as the environment, or subsequently once the environment has been approved for multi-professional learning, it will then also be approved for GP.

What happens if there are changes within an approved learning environment?

Any changes within a learning environment should immediately be communicated to the ICS training hub. Changes can range from simply a change in practice management to a practice merger. The ICS training hub will inform the necessary organisations so records can be updated accordingly and advise on any next steps if necessary.

Educator Approval Questions

These questions are the most frequently asked regarding the process for educator approvals. If your specific question is not addressed here, you might find the information in the [guidance notes document](#). Alternatively, please contact your [ICS training hub](#). For GP educators, there is also a more detailed FAQs document on the [GP School](#) webpages.

What are the first steps I have to take if I want to be approved as an educator?

You first need to contact your [ICS training hub](#) to express your interest in becoming an educator. You will then need to attend the educator course relevant to your professional group:

- The “[Multi-Professional Supervisor Course for Educators in Primary Care](#)” for non-medical multi-professional educators.
- The “[GP Supervisor Course](#)” for all medical educators.

After attending the relevant course, you will be guided through the next stages of the approval process.

Can other educator courses be accepted as alternatives to the above?

Yes, but will be subject to ICS training hub approval, to ensure it meets the requirements for primary care education. If it is approved, you will not need to attend the relevant course above, so can start the application process.

Is there a minimum number of clinical sessions I must work to be able to supervise a learner?

No, there is no minimum number of clinical sessions for an educator to work to be able to supervise a learner, **but** you must be in a substantive role within your learning environment. If an educator is working fewer sessions than their learner, it is important to consider how the learner will be appropriately supervised and supported, both educationally and clinically when the educator isn't in practice. This will be discussed during the assessment panel if this is the case.

What learners can I supervise once I'm approved through NHSEs approval process?

As a non-medical multi-professional educator, you can supervise all other non-medical multi-professional learners, except for nurses (only nurse educators with the NMC's SSSA can supervise nurse learners). Any nurse educator who has been approved through our approval process and have the SSSA, are able to supervise all multi-professional learners, including nurses.

As a GP educator, you can supervise GP trainees, foundation doctors, medical students and all non-medical learners (except nurses). If you are the first GP educator in your environment to be approved, and your environment is already approved for multi-professional teaching, it will not need a second assessment panel.

There is a [useful infographic](#) summarising educator and learner supervision, which you might find useful.

Do I have to reapply for approval after a specific period?

No. Once you are approved as an educator, you remain approved indefinitely. However, there may be specific circumstances where approval is suspended or withdrawn due to quality or learner concerns. These circumstances may require a future re-approval assessment panel for you to be reinstated as an educator. Should these circumstances occur, you will be guided through the process by the ICS training hub, in conjunction with the NHSE Quality Assurance team, Postgraduate and Primary Care Deans and Head of School amongst others.

What happens if there are changes to my circumstances that could affect my educator role?

Any changes to your circumstances, regardless of whether they affect your educator role, should immediately be communicated to the ICS training hub. Changes can range from simply a change to personal contacts details, a change your working sessions to a more serious change in circumstance. The ICS training hub will inform the necessary organisations so records can be updated accordingly and advise on the necessary next steps if needed.

What happens if I move to a different practice within the London region?

If you move to another practice within London, either within or outside your current PCN, you will need to liaise with your ICS training hub, who will instigate a recorded “Record of Conversation” to start the process. Your educator approval won’t be affected by the move, so you will remain an approved educator. If your new practice is already an approved learning environment, you will be able to start supervising learners as soon as the allocation process allows. If it’s not approved, while your educator approval will remain, you won’t be able to start supervising learners until it has been approved, through the normal approval process.

What happens if I move to a different practice outside of London?

If you move to a practice outside of London, you will need to liaise with the relevant organisations within the new region to establish their local approval processes. Your London ICS training hub must be informed if you are moving out of London so your educator details can be removed from London databases.

Is there a time limit to apply for approval after completing the educator course?

No, there is no specific timeframe to apply for approval after completing the educator course. However, you would need to remain educationally active until you are ready to be approved. If you apply for approval 5 years after completing the educator course, the ICS TH may recommend you attend some educator top-up training or join your local Multi Professional Faculty Group or GP trainer workshop taking a learner (see next question for more detail).

What support is available for new educators?

As a new educator, there will be support available through your local training hub. Additionally, it is recommended you attend your local peer support group, either your local Multi-Professional Faculty Group or, if you are a GP educator, your local trainer workshop. All available support will be guided by your local training hub.

Assessment Panel Questions

These questions are designed to give a general insight to assessment panels. While each ICS training hub will have a slightly different process for conducting assessment panels, they all follow the same governance and criteria as outlined in the [Education Quality Framework](#). More information on assessment panels can be found in the [guidance notes document](#). Alternatively, please contact your [ICS training hub](#).

How should I prepare for the assessment panel?

The assessment panel will be based on the evidence and narrative submitted in the application form, so it is recommended to review these prior to the panel. This will help form the panel outcome. The panel may, however, require supporting evidence/documents to be submitted prior to the day to help guide discussions. If so, a member of the panel will communicate this to the applicants with enough time for the supporting evidence/documents to be prepared.

Some prior preparation may be required if not all applicants on the form are present for the assessment panel (see question [below](#)).

What can I expect to happen at the assessment panel?

While all assessment panels follow the same governance and criteria standards, each ICS training hub will have a slightly different way of conducting their panels based on local processes. You may be expected to discuss, in detail, the evidence and narrative submitted in the application form and possibly further demonstrate how you or your learning environment meet the required domains for approval. Your ICS training hub will give you the specific details of what you can expect to happen at the panel, when being arranged.

Do all educator applicants and environment reps have to be present at the panel?

It is recommended that all applicants included on the at scale application form attend the assessment panel but is not mandatory. There can be nominated representatives to act on behalf of the group, to present findings and evidence to the panel. Arrangements must be made between applicants to go through the individual evidence of those unable to attend, so they can be appropriately represented. Attendance requirements will be confirmed by the ICS training hub, as part of the assessment panel arrangements.

Who will be on the assessment panel?

As all ICS training conduct panels slightly differently, assessment panel members may differ within areas. As a minimum however, the panel will consist of a minimum of 2 assessors (as below) including:

- A lead assessor.
- An experienced medical educator and a registered member of one of the professional groups applying for approval.

Assessors will be drawn from training hub managers, clinical leads, and other experienced educators. A learner from one of the professional groups seeking approval can be part of the panel but does not change the requirement to have two qualified educator panel members.



What happens if the assessment panel recommend further actions?

The assessment panel may require some further actions after reviewing the evidence, which can be either *mandatory* or *recommended*. If the actions are mandatory, approval will not be put forward for ratification until they have been satisfactorily completed. If the actions are recommendations, the approval can proceed to ratification. As part of the panel outcome, the assessment lead will inform individual environments and educators if there are any actions that require attention. All actions will have a specific timeframe or review date and named responsible lead for completion.

What happens after the assessment panel?

Once the panel has taken place, the lead assessor will inform applicants of their individual outcome (along with any actions as above) which will be put forward to NHSE for ratification. Depending on ICS training hub processes, this will be done either at the end of the panel, or after panel discussion.

How soon after the panel can I start to supervise learners?

If there are no mandatory actions, supervision of learners can start after NHSE ratification, in line with local allocation processes.

Is there an appeals process if I or my learning environment is not recommended for approval?

Yes, you have the right to appeal the panel decision if you do not agree with it. Should this be the case, appeals should be made in writing to the Primary Care Dean and copied to the ICS training hub.

Final Stage Questions

These questions are the most frequently asked regarding the final stage of the entire approval process. If your specific question is not addressed here, you might find the information in the [guidance notes document](#). Alternatively, please contact your [ICS training hub](#).

What happens once my approval has been ratified by NHSE?

Once NHSE has ratified the panel outcome, the Primary Care Team will inform the ICS training hub, who will confirm the final approval with the individual educators and learning environments. Depending on local processes, an official approval letter or email will be sent from the ICS training hub may be sent, as final approval confirmation, detailing any recommended or mandatory actions.

All approvals will be added to the relevant databases held by NHSE and ICS training hubs. For GP training, this will enable allocations and WPBA monitoring (via the FourteenFish platform). ICS training hubs will inform HEIs of new multi-professional educators so their relevant databases can also be updated.

Why do all approvals have to be ratified by NHSE?

NHSE is responsible for the quality assurance of education and training of healthcare learners in London and that the expected quality standards of clinical educators and learning environments are followed. Quality primary care placement experiences, within a positive learning environment, support the development of all healthcare professionals, to deliver safe and effective person-centred care. This means that NHSE must ensure that there are high quality educators and learning environments for all healthcare learners which is undertaken as part of our remit to make sure patients are protected when learners care for them.

How soon can supervision start after final approval ratification?

Depending on learner availability and local need, supervision can start immediately once NHSE have ratified the approval.