AGIP Approved Training Routes into GI Physiology

This document provides a structured comparison of the **only three** approved training routes available for hospitals aiming to develop or expand their Gastrointestinal (GI) Physiology services. These pathways include:

- **Scientist Training Programme (STP) – Direct Entry**
- **Scientist Training Programme (STP) – In-Service Entry**
- **Accredited Specialist Scientific Practitioner (ASP) Programme**

Each pathway is detailed below to support decision-making regarding the most appropriate route for your hospital's needs. All academic content is currently delivered by Newcastle University but may be subject to change in future years.

Anyone seeking to conduct GI Physiology investigations must complete one of these courses.

For a guide as to which pathway may be appropriate for certain situations click here.

Scientist Training Programme (STP) – Direct Entry

Eligibility Criteria

- A 2:1 undergraduate degree (including integrated Master's) in a relevant science subject.
- A 2:2 undergraduate degree plus a relevant separate Master's degree is also acceptable (individuals with a 2:2 undergraduate degree and no Master's degree are not eligible to apply).

Funding Structure

- Fully externally funded by the NSHCS.
- Salaries and tuition fees are covered.

Employment Status

- Trainees are employed on a **three-year fixed-term training contract**, typically at **Agenda for Change Band 6**. This pay is externally funded and will not be drawn from the employing department or hospital budget.
- 20% of the trainee's time **must** be dedicated to academic study
- If the department does not wish to hire the trainee at the completion of their training, there is no obligation to do so.

Completion Qualification

- The trainee is awarded a **Master's degree** upon completion.
- Eligible for registration as a Clinical Scientist in GI Physiology with The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- Completion also allows trainees to apply for AGIP accreditation as an Independent Practitioner in GI Physiology.

Candidate Selection

- Candidates are selected through a **national recruitment process** which ensures rigorous selection and (high) standardisation of trainee quality.
- Despite its rigour, the selection process does not guarantee the employer and prospective trainee will meet before the employment start date, unless arranged separately independent of the NSHCS.

Timeline

- **May (Year 1)** – Regional NSHCS representatives should be contacted to register interest in taking on a trainee.
- **Late January – Early February (Year 2)** – Trainee applications take place.
- **Spring (Year 2)** – Interviews are conducted.
- **Summer (Year 2)** – Applicants and the recruiting department are notified if the applicant has secured their place.
- **September (Year 2)** – Trainees commence the programme.
- **August (Year 4)** – Completion of training.

STP Direct Entry Further Information

Hospitals interested in taking on an STP trainee must register their interest with the National School of Healthcare Science. The point of contact for this process is region-dependent. For more specific instructions, visit: How do I express an interest in hosting a trainee.

For further information about the STP Direct Entry training route, please visit: NSHCS STP Direct Entry Guidance.

If you have any questions, you can contact the AGIP education secretary. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Scientist Training Programme (STP) – In-Service Entry

Eligibility Criteria

- A 2:1 undergraduate degree (including integrated Master's) in a relevant science subject.
- A 2:2 undergraduate degree plus a relevant separate Master's degree is also acceptable (individuals with a 2:2 undergraduate degree and no Master's degree are not eligible to apply).
- Candidates must already be employed within the NHS.

Funding Structure

- Externally funded by the National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS), reducing financial strain on the department.
- Tuition fees and salary top-up to band 6 are covered.

Employment Status

- Trainees remain in their existing NHS roles while completing the training.
- 20% of the trainee's time must be dedicated to academic study

Completion Qualification

- The trainee is awarded a **Master's degree** upon completion.
- Eligible for registration as a Clinical Scientist in GI Physiology with The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).
- Completion also allows trainees to apply for AGIP accreditation as an Independent Practitioner in GI Physiology.

Candidate Selection

- Hospitals nominate existing staff for training.
- Allows for career progression of an individual already working within the organisation.

Timeline

- **May (Year 1)** – Applications submitted.
- **September (Year 1)** – Trainees commence the programme.
- **September (Year 3)** – Completion of training.

STP In-service Further Information

Hospitals interested in taking on an STP trainee must register their interest with the National School of Healthcare Science. The point of contact for this process is region-dependent. For more specific instructions, visit: How do I express an interest in hosting a trainee.

For further information about the STP In-service training route, please visit: NSHCS STP In-Service Entry Guidance.

If you have any questions, you can contact the AGIP education secretary. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Accredited Specialist Scientific Practitioner (ASP) Programme

Eligibility Criteria

- An undergraduate degree (including integrated Master's) at ideally a 2:1 level in a relevant science or clinical subject.
- Clinical experience in a gastroenterological, upper GI surgical, or colorectal surgical setting.
- Clinical experience in a GI Physiology setting is preferable.
- Regular supervision must be provided by an AGIP-accredited training officer or mentor. If this is not readily available, the individual should contact the AGIP education secretary to see if an appropriate supervisor can be arranged.

Funding Structure

- The cost of each 10-credit module is **£730** (UK residents) or **£1,760** (international students) for the 2025-2026 academic year. Fees may be subject to change in subsequent years.
- Each End-Point Assessment (EPA) attempt costs **£300** (this is also for the academic year of 2027-2028 and may subject to change in subsequent years).
- Funding must be covered by the hospital or the trainee.

Employment Status

- Trainees remain employed in their current role while undertaking the training.
- No additional salary support is provided through this pathway.

Completion Qualification

- Trainees receive credits at **MSc-level** under a **micro-credentialing** approach, which reflects the credit 'value' of the modules taken. The programme does not currently confer a full Master's degree.

- Completion allows trainees to apply for AGIP accreditation as an Independent Practitioner in GI Physiology (in combination with appropriate clinical experience).

Candidate Selection

- Hospitals nominate individuals they deem suitable for training.
- The programme is ideal for practitioners looking to specialise in **either** upper **or** lower GI physiology investigations while maintaining their professional practice.

Timeline

- **31st July (Year 1)** – Course registration deadline.
- **September (Year 1)** – University teaching and work-based training begin.
- **June/July (Year 2)** – End-Point Assessment.
- **August (Year 2)** – Final portfolio submission.
- **September (Year 2)** – Certification issued.

ASP Further Information

For more details on the ASP training route, refer to the "ASP Information for Prospective Trainees and Supervisors" document or contact the AGIP Education Secretary. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

How do I choose the best training pathway for the needs of my unit?

When selecting the best training route for your hospital, consider the following factors:

- **Scope of Training**: If your hospital requires staff competent in both upper and lower GI procedures, the **STP (either in-service or direct entry) is preferable** due to its comprehensive training, formal qualification, and the ability for individuals to register with the HCPC with the protected title of 'Clinical Scientist'. However, the ASP can be more suitable if a flexible approach to training is required, or if the department is not accredited to provide STP training with the National School of Healthcare Science.
- **Existing Staff Development**: If the hospital wants to upskill current employees to enable them to provide the **full catalogue of investigations across both upper and lower GI physiology**, the **in-service STP** route is the best choice. If the staff that they wish to upskill will only be developing in **either** upper **or** lower GI physiology, then the **ASP** is a more suitable and focused programme.
- **Immediate Needs**: The **ASP can provide a quicker solution** for targeted training in either upper or lower GI physiology but lacks the formal recognition of the STP. However, this should not be considered a fast-track training route, as it still requires intensive training.

- **Financial Implications**: Both **STP routes are externally funded**, while the **ASP requires departmental funding** for modules and assessments.
- **Candidate Availability and Selection**: The **direct entry STP attracts candidates from a national pool**, ensuring a high standard of applicants. However, because these candidates are drawn nationally, they may not be 'tied' to the geographic area in which they train. As a result, upon the completion of their training, there may be less incentive for them to remain in the same location. In contrast, the **ASP and in-service STP allow hospitals to nominate specific candidates**, potentially increasing long-term staff retention.
- **Retention and Programme Completion**: The **ASP has a higher attrition rate** than the STP, as it does not provide a formal MSc qualification or financial incentive to persevere with the course, as it often facilitates lateral moves. Additionally, these individuals often already have a secure job, whereas STP applicants' careers are often more dependent on the outcome of the STP (particularly direct entry trainees), which acts as further incentive to keep them on the course.

Hospitals should assess their **staffing needs, funding availability, and long-term service goals** to determine the most appropriate training pathway for their team.

Considering Establishing a GI Physiology Department?

If your hospital is considering establishing a GI Physiology service, it is recommended that you contact the **AGIP Education Secretary** for guidance on the most appropriate training routes and to discuss potential support mechanisms for developing a sustainable service model. Contact details can be found below.

Further Information

- **National School of Healthcare Science (NSHCS):** www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk
- **Health Education England (HEE):** www.hee.nhs.uk
- **AGIP Webpage:** www.bsg.org.uk/agip
- How do I express an interest in hosting a trainee
- NSHCS STP Direct Entry Guidance
- NSHCS STP In-Service Entry Guidance

Contacts

For additional details and application guidance, please contact:

- **AGIP Education Secretary (John Gallagher):** john.gallagher6@nhs.net

- **NSHCS Recruitment Team:** england.hcsrecruitment@nhs.net

For queries about the STP MSc course or ASP modules, please contact:

- **AGIP Education Secretary (John Gallagher):** john.gallagher6@nhs.net
- **Newcastle University:** pgclinsci@newcastle.ac.uk

For queries about unit STP training accreditation, please contact:

- **NSHCS Accreditation Team:** nshcs.accreditation@hee.nhs.uk