

O&G Foundation Programme Taster

Not rotating in O&G during your Foundation Years but keen to have some experience prior to specialty training? A 'taster' is a great opportunity for just that! This article outlines what a taster is, how to organise one and provides some top tips on getting the most out of your O&G taster.

What is a taster?

A taster provides an opportunity to spend a short amount of time, usually up to 5 days, in a specialty that you have not worked in during your FY1 or FY2. By speaking to more senior doctors and participating in clinical activities, a taster can help to develop your understanding of the specialty and what a future in that specialty might look like.

Why undertake a taster?

If you already know that O&G is the career for you, a taster can help to demonstrate your commitment to specialty. The initiative and organisational skills required to arrange a taster, as well as having evidenced interest in, and motivation to pursue, O&G are attributes outlined in the Person Specification and are assessed in the application process. A taster can also provide exciting opportunities to network, undertake quality improvement and get involved in research projects.

For those who are less certain about career pathways, tasters can be used to compare different specialties and help to rule in or rule out potential options. We hope that a taster in O&G is a positive experience for you!

How to organise a taster?

Many taster programmes have already been developed and may be advertised via your deanery by emails or on their website. The Foundation School Directors should also have a register of all local tasters.

Alternatively, you may want to organise a taster yourself by contacting a consultant or department directly. Your Educational Supervisor or the medical education department at your hospital may be able to provide you with contact details of specialists who have a particular interest in teaching. In our experience, however, most consultants are happy to supervise a taster for junior doctors.

No matter how you go about organising your taster, make sure to do so early and get study leave arranged through the postgraduate medical education centre.

How to get the most out of a taster?

Our top tips for getting the most out of your taster include:

- Prior to the taster period, speak to your supervisor about your expectations and what you are hoping to achieve. Plan a timetable that is appropriate to your learning needs but also suits the department.

- Participate in a broad range of opportunities (e.g. clinic, theatre, ward, MDT meetings, teaching) to fully understand what a career in O&G involves.
- Ask current trainees what life is like in the speciality. Get a grasp of shift patterns, work/life balance and non-clinical opportunities available. Ask about specialty application process, exams and the curriculum.
- Look for opportunities to carry out quality improvement and research.
- Get involved! Demonstrating interest and enthusiasm is always valued.
- Reflect on your taster and document this in your portfolio. What did you enjoy? What did not meet your expectations?
- Most importantly, enjoy it!

In summary, a taster is a great opportunity to become better informed about a particular specialty that you have not otherwise had much exposure to during the Foundation Programme. Organise it early, be enthusiastic and reflect on what you have learnt. Hopefully, a taster in O&G will only confirm it as your career choice!



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