



the
**SHELFORD
GROUP**

S T A R T
Surgical Training in Advanced
Robotic Technology



**SHELFORD GROUP
SURGICAL TRAINING IN
ADVANCED ROBOTIC
TECHNOLOGY (START)
PROGRAMME**

Supported by

ASiT
The Association of
Surgeons in Training

Welcome to the future of robotic-assisted surgical training

As stated in the [10 Year Health Plan for England](#) the NHS is committed to the adoption of robotic-assisted surgery as standard for an expanded range of procedures, over the next 10 years. The Shelford* START programme is an opportunity for you to be part of the next generation of surgeons trained in a consistent standard in robotic-assisted surgery (RAS) on the leading robotics platforms available in the NHS today.

Designed to provide a comprehensive and standardised training experience, the Shelford START Programme will offer you access to high quality training, simulation, and hands on exposure in robotic-assisted surgery in your local region. Taking place over 3-4 years across four different phases, the programme reflects the complex and evolving skill set required for performance of safe and effective robotic-assisted surgery, providing sustained progressive development.

The programme is accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England). The accreditation follows a comprehensive quality assurance process and provides reassurance to trainees and participating centres that START delivers a high-quality learning experience. The programme also meets the recommendations set out in [national guidance](#) on the implementation of robotic-assisted surgery in England.



Programme Aim & Purpose

- Equip trainees with essential skills for robotic and minimally invasive surgery.
- Promote excellence through hands-on, simulation-based learning.
- Achieve a START programme completion certificate, accredited by RCS England (for systems on which all four phases have been completed), to support career progression.



Unique Features

- **Platform-agnostic training:** Experience multiple robotic systems.
- **National collaboration:** Shelford Group, Royal College of Surgeons of England, Association of Surgeons in Training.
- **Quality assurance:** Programme accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons of England and monitored by their Quality Assurance department.
- **Continuous improvement:** Feedback-driven updates and benchmarking.
- **Skills tracker:** Access to a personal online dashboard for progress tracking, supervisor feedback and milestone badges.

Overview of Learning - Programme Phases

Surgical Trainees progress through a structured, multi-phase curriculum designed to foster independent practice readiness and safe integration into clinical service.

Phase 1: Introduction to fundamental robotic skills, system familiarity, and ergonomics.

Building on the e-learning provided, technology training is conducted by industry colleagues in regional surgical training centres. Trainees are then required to complete a series of simulation tasks and the built-in metrics of the simulators enable trainees to receive real-time feedback and track their progression over time

Phase 2: Consolidation of technical competencies through a technical skills day and supervised tasks.

Phase 2 builds on the fundamental skills gained during Phase 1, aiming to further develop proficiency in RAS and best practice. During this phase trainees will partake in the first of two skills days, employing state-of-the-art animal tissue models or high-fidelity simulations which mimic human tissue. These models are used to establish an understanding of port placement, docking steps, suturing, energy dissection, and allows trainees an insight into bedside assistance.

The trainees will also be required to observe RAS procedures relevant to their surgical speciality and accessible via their skills tracker to become more familiar with the use of robotic systems, instruments, and accessories.

Phase 3: Surgical skills lab training developing advanced technical skills, intraoperative judgement as well as bedside assists in live theatres.

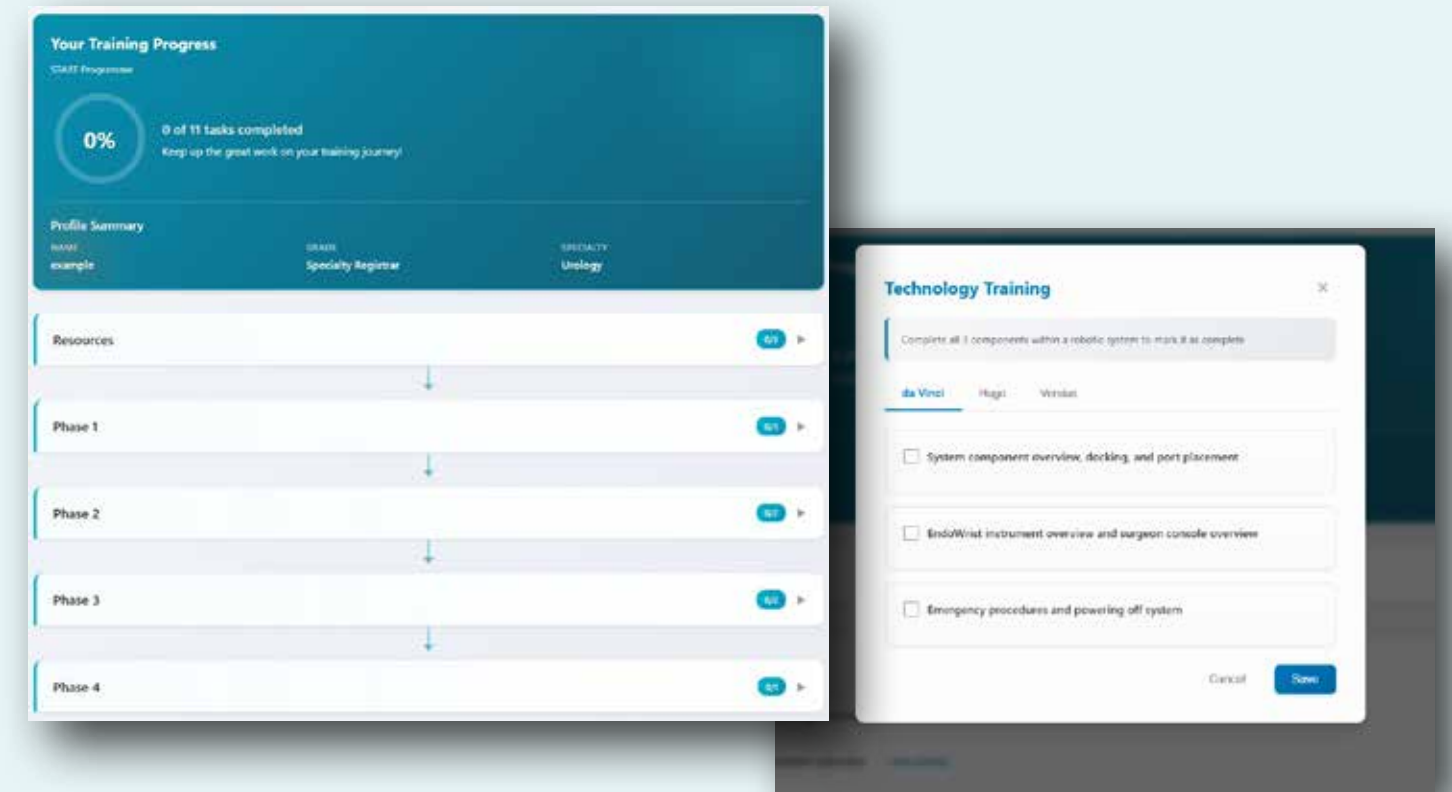
Phase 3 is speciality specific, with the second skills day employing cadavers or simulator models to perform relevant robotic-assisted procedures, patient positioning, port placement, and step-by-step surgical approach.

Phase 4: Participation in console cases with robotic systems.

This Phase focusses on independent practice readiness, advanced application, and safe integration into routine clinical service. Trainees perform procedures in the primary role of a console surgeon relevant to the surgical specialty.

Skills Tracker

- Personal online dashboard for progress tracking.
- Supervisor feedback and milestone badges for key achievements.
- Submission of completed records for certification review.



Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate proficiency in robotic and minimally invasive surgical skills across multiple leading platforms.
- Apply advanced intraoperative judgment and ergonomic principles in robotic-assisted surgery (RAS).
- Exhibit competence in simulation-based and hands-on surgical tasks, including port placement, docking, suturing, and energy dissection.
- Progress through a structured, multi-phase curriculum designed to enable safe integration into clinical service.
- Achieve a START programme completion certificate, accredited by RCS England (for systems on which all four phases have been completed), supporting career progression.

What is Expected of Trainees

- Engage fully in all phases of the programme, including e-learning, simulation, skills labs, and supervised clinical practice.
- Complete all simulation tasks and achieve target performance scores as defined by the programme.
- Log all activities and competencies in the Skills Tracker, including observations, bedside assists, and console cases.
- Seek and respond to supervisor feedback, demonstrating continuous improvement and readiness for independent practice.
- Attend all scheduled training days and actively participate in both group and individual learning activities.



Time Commitment

- 36-48 month programme.
- Flexibility in entry and progression, accommodating individual learning pace and clinical commitments, while maintaining a structured pathway.
- Trainees will be required to attend on-site training days, but will have flexibility around completion of online learning and simulation to accommodate their individual learning pace and clinical commitments.



- Deliver high-quality instruction and hands-on training in both simulation and live theatre environments.
- Provide real-time feedback and structured assessments using the Skills Tracker.
- Supervise trainees during bedside assists and console cases, ensuring patient safety and adherence to best practices.
- Support trainees' progression through each phase, offering guidance, mentorship, and formal evaluation.
- Participate in continuous programme improvement through feedback and benchmarking, in collaboration with the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Shelford Group.

About the Shelford Group

The Shelford Group is a collaboration between ten of the largest teaching and research NHS hospital trusts in England. Our work is co-ordinated by a central secretariat, and delivered through sub-groups of executive directors and professional leads from member trusts. We have three modes of operating, through which we aim to create value for members and the wider health system: mutual learning, policy development and system leadership. Find out more at <http://shelfordgroup.org>

For more information or to register interest

- For more information or to register your interest in the Shelford START programme, please contact info@shelfordgroup.org
- For more information about the START programme, including available regions, visit <https://shelfordgroup.org/start/> or scan the QR code.

