**Principles of Continuing Professional Development**

The purpose of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is to help improve the safety and quality of care provided for patients and the public.

*Responsibility for personal learning*

You are responsible for identifying your CPD needs, planning how those needs should be addressed and undertaking CPD that will support your professional development and practice.

*Reflection*

*Good Medical Practice* requires you to reflect regularly on your standards of medical practice.

*Scope of practice*

You must remain competent and up to date in all areas of your practice.

*Individual and team learning*

Your CPD activity should aim to maintain and improve the standards of your own practice and also that of any teams within which you work.

*Identification of needs*

Your CPD activities should be shaped by assessment of your professional needs and the needs of the service and the people who use it.

*Outcomes*

You must reflect on what you have learned through your CPD and record any impact (or expected future impact) on your performance and practice.
Introduction

What is CPD?

1. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) refers to any learning that you take part in outside undergraduate education and postgraduate training which helps you maintain and improve your performance. It covers the development of your knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours across all areas of your medical practice. It includes all learning activities, both formal and informal, by which you maintain and develop the quality of your professional work.

Why CPD is important for doctors

2. What you learnt at medical school and during postgraduate training must be updated throughout your career to reflect changes in practice, the needs of the service and changes in society’s expectations of the way doctors work.

3. Effective CPD will help you anticipate and respond to those changing demands. It will enable you to keep up to date and fit to practise, and maintain the professional standards required of you throughout your career.

4. A summary of your CPD activity is one element of the supporting information that you will need to bring to your annual appraisal to demonstrate that you have met the requirements for revalidation.

5. In addition, taking part in relevant CPD can support specific changes in your practice and may enhance your career opportunities and work satisfaction.

6. Above all, your CPD should help you maintain and improve the quality of care you give your patients and the standards of the service in which you work.

The aims of CPD

7. CPD aims to improve doctors’ practice by affirming what is good, addressing areas requiring improvement and exploring new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Who the guidance is for

8. This guidance is primarily for doctors and references to ‘you’ are intended for doctors. It may also be of use and of interest to employers, representatives of doctors, patients and the public.

Doctors

9. The guidance explains what the General Medical Council (GMC) expects you to do to maintain and improve your practice through CPD. It will help you understand and meet the CPD requirements for revalidation.
Organisations

10. Employers and those contracting doctors’ services have a responsibility to make sure their workforce is up to date and practising to the appropriate standards. Doctors will be better able to maintain those standards in organisations which foster a culture of learning. This guidance will help everyone involved in developing the practice of individual doctors to understand what we, as the regulator, expect of their medical workforce so they can support doctors in meeting our standards.

Patients and the public.

11. The guidance will also help patients and members of the public to understand what we expect doctors to do in order to stay up to date and improve the safety and quality of care they provide.

Regulatory context

12. The GMC has a statutory duty to promote high standards of medical education. This includes the CPD of doctors once they have completed their undergraduate medical education and postgraduate training.

13. Our core guidance for the medical profession, Good Medical Practice (2006), sets out the principles and values on which good practice is founded and which we believe make a good doctor. It places a duty on you to keep your knowledge and skills up to date throughout your working life by regularly taking part in activities that maintain and further develop your competence and performance.

14. This guidance explains how you should fulfil that duty. Revalidation will confirm that you are doing so effectively.

How the guidance applies to you

15. This guidance covers planning, carrying out and evaluating your CPD. It also explains how CPD will work within revalidation. It does not tell you what CPD opportunities, or how much CPD, is right for you. You will need to judge how best to apply the principles of this guidance to your own practice and professional development.

16. In the guidance the terms 'you must' and 'you should' are used in the following ways:

- 'You must' is used for an overriding duty or requirement.

- 'You should' is used when we are providing an explanation of how you will meet the overriding duty.

- 'You should' is also used where the duty or principle will not apply in all situations or circumstances, or where there are factors outside your control that affect whether or how you can comply with the guidance.
17. CPD is about both maintaining and improving your medical practice. This guidance sets out approaches to CPD which all doctors should be able to follow.

18. In this guidance the term 'practice' includes all the professional roles that you perform currently and those that you plan to perform.

Planning your CPD

19. The purpose of CPD is to help improve the safety and quality of care provided by you and the teams in which you work. This goal should guide your thinking about your learning and development needs.

Responsibility for personal learning

20. You are responsible for identifying your CPD needs, planning how those needs should be addressed and undertaking CPD that is relevant to your practice and will support your professional development.

21. You must remain up to date and competent in all of the work that you do. This includes both the clinical and non-clinical aspects of your practice and any management, research and teaching or training responsibilities that you may have. Your CPD activities will help you do this.

22. Your CPD activities should also support potential changes and developments to your professional roles throughout your career. CPD should prepare you to deal with the changing nature of medical practice and the development of the teams and the services in which you work.

23. Not all CPD opportunities will be planned. You should be alert to opportunities for informal learning and reflection that arise spontaneously from your day to day practice. This can be one of the most fruitful forms of CPD because it links directly to your everyday work.\(^1\)

Planning your CPD to meet the needs of others

24. You must consider how you can support the needs of your teams, the organisations in which you work and the needs of your patients and the wider community.

25. How you divide your CPD activities across the different areas of your work will depend on your assessment of your needs in particular areas, the needs of your patients (if you treat patients) and the needs of the service. While it may be possible to identify these needs for yourself, it is important that you regularly discuss and agree them with your manager and appraiser.

\(^1\) Schostak J, Hanson J, Schostak J, Brown T, Driscoll P, Starke I, Jenkins N, The Effectiveness of Continuing Professional Development, College of Emergency Medicine, 2010

Also World Federation for Medical Education, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Medical Doctors: WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement, WFME Office, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, 2003, p 7.
26. You should therefore ask for, and be receptive to, ideas that others may have for your learning and development. Your annual appraisal or job planning discussion along with agreement of your Personal Development Plan (PDP) will help you to identify and address your needs and those of others.

27. Your medical director, manager or clinical lead may be able to give you advice about CPD activities that will help you to support improvements in the workplace or the quality of care in your organisation. Discussions with colleagues, patients or those who use your services may also highlight opportunities for improvement in your practice or ways in which your CPD activities could support the learning and development of your team as a whole and help provide a better service.

28. You should be prepared to review your PDP throughout the year in the light of these discussions to ensure that it remains relevant to your needs. Planning and evaluating your CPD needs and opportunities should be managed not just at appraisal, but on an ongoing basis.

**Reflecting on your practice**

29. Reflection on practice drives change in performance and is the key to effective CPD. *Good Medical Practice* requires you to reflect regularly on your standards of medical practice.

30. You must reflect on all aspects of your professional work. This should be informed by discussion with others and by specific evidence, such as data from audit, service improvement, complaints and compliments, significant events, workplace based assessments and feedback from patients and colleagues. This will help you identify your learning and development needs, which you should then agree with your manager (if you have one) and appraiser.

31. You must also reflect on what you have learnt from the CPD activities you have undertaken and record whether or not there has been any impact (or expected future impact) on your performance and practice. This will help you assess whether your learning is adding value to the care of your patients and improving the service in which you practice.

32. Reflection must be integral to your PDP and your appraisal discussion.

**The learning cycle**

33. Once you have identified a learning need you should find out more about the issue and what learning opportunities are available. You should then analyse and reflect on the information you have found, consider how the learning may influence your performance and decide whether and, if so, how you can integrate the learning within your practice. After taking part in CPD, you should evaluate and reflect on the impact of each activity and consider any further learning needs. [INSERT IMAGE of learning cycle]

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2 Moon J.A. Reflection in learning and professional development: theory and practice, 1999
3 GMP(2006), paragraph 14(b)
Carrying out your Continuing Professional Development

Content of your CPD activities

34. You must remain competent and up to date in all areas of your professional practice.

35. The content of your CPD is for you to determine in discussion with your manager (if you have one), educational supervisor (if you have one) and appraiser. The resulting PDP will influence many of your learning objectives. Unless you have given specific undertakings to the GMC, or had conditions attached to your registration as a result of involvement in our fitness to practise procedures, the GMC will not prescribe the CPD activities you should take part in.

36. From time to time, the GMC may identify and publicise issues which we believe may be relevant to the CPD of all doctors or to particular groups of doctors. This might relate, for example, to particular developments in medical practice, to wider issues of professionalism arising from our research and regulatory activity or to relevant legislative changes. It will be up to you to determine whether those issues are relevant to your own practice and whether they should be addressed through your CPD.

37. The Good Medical Practice Framework for appraisal and revalidation may provide a structure for discussing your CPD during appraisal. You do not have to map all of your CPD against the Framework, but your CPD activities should take account of the domains and attributes set out in the Framework. The domains are:

- Knowledge, skills and performance
- Safety and quality
- Communication, partnership and teamwork
- Maintaining trust

38. Although we will not specify what learning you must undertake, you should be prepared to look for developmental opportunities across all four domains and not confine your learning to those areas of your practice where you feel most comfortable.

Organising your CPD

39. There is no single correct way of ‘doing CPD’. How you meet your learning needs will depend on your own preferred ways of learning, what you are trying to learn and the opportunities available to you. You should, however, seek a variety of learning activities that allow you to learn in different ways. This is because there is
evidence that undertaking a range of different CPD activities aimed at addressing a particular learning need is likely to be more effective than one-off events.4

40. Your CPD should be a mix of formal and informal learning and should include activities which take place locally where you work as well as at regional, national or international levels5.

41. Some of your learning should be aimed at improving the effectiveness of your team as a whole and its contribution to the organisation in which it is based. CPD focused on the effectiveness of a team should be undertaken alongside team colleagues.

42. You should also participate in peer-based learning such as peer reviews, peer-tutoring and learning within specialty networks in order to stay up to date with changes in your specialty. Discussing and disseminating your learning to others may help consolidate your own learning and enhance that of the team.

43. You should discuss with your manager, appraiser, educational supervisor or the CPD lead in your workplace (as appropriate) how best to meet your particular learning needs and the support available to help you do this.

Amount of CPD

44. It is your responsibility to undertake sufficient, appropriate CPD in order to remain up to date and fit to practise in the work that you do and to be able to demonstrate this at your annual appraisal. This applies whether you are in full time or less than full time practice.

45. Most medical Royal Colleges and Faculties have developed CPD schemes or guidance to support doctors in keeping up to date and in maintaining and developing their professional standards in their specialty. The Colleges and Faculties may require doctors participating in these schemes to obtain a specified number of CPD credits over a five year period.

46. We do not require you to be a member of a College or Faculty CPD scheme, undertake a specific number of hours of CPD each year or acquire a particular number of CPD credits. However, you may find that participating in such a scheme is helpful both in keeping current and in being able to demonstrate on an ongoing basis that you are practising to the appropriate standards in your specialty. Even if you are not a member of a formal CPD scheme, you will still need to show your manager (if you have one) and appraiser how you are keeping up to date and following recognised best practice in your field or specialty.


Career breaks

47. If you are considering taking a break from medical practice, or already doing so, you should discuss with your College, Faculty, postgraduate deanery, employing organisation or appraiser what steps you might need to take to remain up to date in your specialty while you are away. You should also take advice on any support you will need to assist your return to practice in due course.

48. If you maintain your licence to practise while on a career break, you will be expected to keep up to date and participate in revalidation. In order to revalidate, you will be required to show that you have carried out appropriate CPD. Further information about revalidation and career breaks can be found at GMC | FAQs - different types of practice

CPD as supporting information for revalidation

49. Revalidation is the process through which doctors demonstrate periodically that they are up to date and fit to practise. It is the means by which you can show you have been taking part in CPD that is appropriate for the work that you do. Revalidation may also be a lever to help you discuss your developmental needs.

50. In order to revalidate you will need to participate in an annual appraisal covering the whole of your practice.

51. Participation in CPD will be one type of supporting information you will need to discuss at your appraisal to show that you are keeping up to date and working to enhance the quality of your practice.

52. Your appraiser will want to know what you think the supporting information says about your practice and how you may intend to develop or change your practice as a result.

53. The GMC does not prescribe any specific CPD activities that you must take part in for revalidation, but you must consider the advice in this guidance and follow recognised best practice for CPD in your field or specialty. If you are not clear about the CPD that is appropriate for your work, you should discuss this with your manager (if you have one) and your appraiser.

54. You can find further information about revalidation in the GMC guidance booklets Good Medical Practice Framework for appraisal and revalidation and Supporting information for appraisal and revalidation. [Information about revalidation] In addition, the medical Royal Colleges and Faculties have developed specialty specific guidance for their members on revalidation that includes advice on CPD.

Evaluating the impact of your CPD

55. It will often not be possible to measure directly the effect of a particular CPD activity in terms of improved patient outcomes. The fact that you cannot readily measure this effect should not diminish the value of the activity. However, you must
try to identify ways in which your CPD activity may help improve the quality of care provided for your patients and the public.

56. You should use the evidence from your practice, research, audit and other quality improvement information to reflect accurately on your performance and that of your team. You should then commit to making any necessary improvements to your own and your team’s practice as part of your professional development. In due course you should reflect on whether your CPD activities have helped you to meet your objectives and, if not, whether any further learning or other activities are needed. Research suggests that commitment to improving performance in this way is more likely to lead to changes in behaviour.

57. When considering the outcome of your learning, you may find it helpful to reflect on the following questions:

Knowledge of practice

- Have you identified learning priorities based on your practice?
- Are you developing and monitoring your learning needs and opportunities on an ongoing basis?

Scanning the environment

- Are you able to identify learning opportunities and to integrate this learning into your performance and practice?

Managing your knowledge in practice

- Have you used a PDP to manage your CPD planning, participation, reflection and impact?
- Have you gathered evidence of your CPD activities and recorded the impact of your learning?

Raising and answering questions

- Are you able to raise a question about or set objectives for your practice or performance, seek evidence, come to a conclusion about the question and demonstrate how this may impact on your practice or performance or meet your learning goals (the learning cycle)?

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Are you able to analyse, reflect on and connect your learning to your standards of medical practice? Have you considered how your learning and experience of your learning may be improved and used to plan future goals?

Practice assessment

Have you identified and are you able to use a range of tools and processes such as audit, colleague and patient feedback and review of significant events to identify areas for improvement or development in performance?

Recording CPD activity

58. Keeping a record of your learning needs, your learning and its outcomes is part of the learning process. It will help you validate your learning and support discussions with your appraiser, employer or others about your learning needs.

59. Even if the learning has been informal and has arisen directly from events in the workplace it is important to document what you have learned. This will assist with your appraisal discussion and your revalidation.

60. There is a range of organisations, including the medical Royal Colleges and Faculties, specialist associations and professional trade bodies that may be able to help you manage your CPD using an online portfolio or other similar tools.

61. We will not normally ask to see details of your CPD activity. However, *Good Medical Practice* requires you to be honest and trustworthy and act with integrity. You must therefore make sure that you record your CPD activity fully and accurately.

Ensuring quality and value

62. You are responsible for making sure that your CPD activities are relevant, effective and provide good value for money.

63. Some organisations accredit events and activities for CPD. For information about CPD accreditation and quality assurance of specific CPD activities you should contact the CPD provider, your medical Royal College or Faculty, specialist association, postgraduate deanery or CPD lead.

64. We do not endorse or accredit particular CPD activities. We do not give CPD points or credits for learning activities and we do not hold lists of CPD providers.

The role of others

65. Although this guidance is focused primarily on your responsibility as a professional to keep up to date through CPD, others have a role in helping you do this.
66. Our role is to set out the framework of principles and behaviours that should guide doctors’ CPD activity. Where appropriate, we will also raise awareness about trends, issues or opportunities which may be relevant to doctors’ CPD.

Employers and contractors of doctors’ services

67. Employers and contractors of doctors’ services have a responsibility to ensure that their workforce is competent, up to date and able to meet the needs of the service. It is in their interests to maintain and develop the professional skills of all of their medical staff whether they are consultants, staff grade, specialty or associate specialist doctors, sessional GPs, locums or trainees, and to facilitate access to the resources (including the time to learn) that will support this.

68. Employers and contractors should use the system of annual appraisal alongside job planning and PDPs to identify the CPD needs of their staff, to discuss how best those needs should be met and to monitor the effectiveness of doctors’ CPD activity.

69. Doctors will be better able to maintain and improve their performance where organisations have both a culture of learning and information systems which allow doctors to measure their outcomes and the quality of care they provide.

Responsible officers and medical managers

70. Doctors with managerial responsibilities should do their best to make sure that the individuals and teams they manage are able to fulfil their professional duties so that standards of practice and care are maintained and improved. They should make sure that their teams are appropriately supported and developed and are clear about their objectives. Medical managers should support the staff they manage to complete the learning and development activities identified by appraisal and performance review.

71. Doctors who are Responsible Officers within a designated organisation will have additional responsibilities set out in statutory regulations and must have regard to any guidance produced by the UK Health Departments for their organisation.

Systems regulators

72. Organisations such as the Care Quality Commission in England, the Health Inspectorate Wales, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland have responsibilities for overseeing the quality of care provided by organisations across the UK. This includes ensuring that organisations have in place arrangements for staff to obtain appropriate training, professional development, supervision and appraisal so that they are able to deliver care and treatment to an appropriate standard.

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8 GMC, Good Management Practice: guidance for all doctors ,p14 [draft for consultation]
9 Good Management Practice p15 [draft for consultation] Ref also the relevant Departmental guidance
73. Medical Royal Colleges, Faculties, specialist associations and professional trade bodies are some of the principal providers of CPD.

74. All Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties have published guidance on how CPD in their specialty should be carried out. A majority of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties also have formal CPD schemes that are based on the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges document, *Ten Principles of College/Faculty CPD Schemes*. These schemes provide a range of tools and advice to help you record and manage your CPD effectively and guidance on professional standards within a specialty. Many Colleges and Faculties have accreditation and approval systems in place that consider the educational quality of the CPD activities they approve.

75. Medical schools, higher education institutions, professional trade bodies and other organisations also provide a range of helpful courses and learning materials.

76. Some of the key organisations involved in CPD and some suggested further reading are provided at Annex A.

**Help for doctors**

77. We have identified examples of innovative or notable practice for CPD. You can find these on our website [Link].

**Annex A**

78. There are many organisations that may assist you with your CPD as well as further reading that you may find helpful. A selection of these is provided below:

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
- List of Royal Medical Colleges
- Royal Society of Medicine
- European Union of Medical Specialists
- British Medical Association
- NHS Employers

**Further reading:**

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges has produced a number of useful documents including:

- Reflective guidance and template
- The 10 Principles for College/ Faculty CPD Schemes
- CPD model
- The Return to Practise guidance
- Guidance on accreditation (DN: currently draft )

The Royal College of GPs has produced a guide on personal development plans (PDP) ([PDP guidance by RCGP](#)).
NHS Employers and the BMA have issued joint guidance on job planning [link]

The Department of Health (England) has guidance for Responsible Officers


World Federation for Medical Education, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Medical Doctors – WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement, 2003