Continuing professional development: guidance for all doctors

We are publishing new guidance for doctors on continuing professional development (CPD). This information sheet tells you about the guidance.

What is in the CPD guidance?

The guidance describes:

- how doctors should plan, carry out and evaluate their CPD activities
- the responsibilities of others, such as employers and colleges, in supporting doctors’ CPD
- the use of appraisal, job planning and personal development plans (PDPs) in managing CPD and how to record CPD activities
- the relationship between CPD and revalidation
- the importance of taking account of the needs of patients and of the healthcare team when doctors consider their own learning needs
- how doctors should reflect on the domains in Good Medical Practice when evaluating their CPD needs.

Who is the CPD guidance for?

Doctors

The CPD guidance is for doctors. It explains what we expect doctors to do to maintain and improve their practice through CPD. It will help them understand and meet the CPD requirements for revalidation.

Employers

The 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 keeping up to date and meeting our standards.

Patients and the public

The guidance will also help patients and the public understand what we expect doctors to do to stay up to date and improve the safety and quality of care they provide.
What is CPD?

CPD is any learning outside of undergraduate education or postgraduate training that helps doctors maintain and improve their performance. It covers the development of their knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours across all areas of their professional practice. It includes both formal and informal learning activities.

What are the aims of CPD?

CPD activities should maintain and improve:

- the quality of care given to patients and the public
- the standards of the teams and the services in which doctors work.

What do we expect of employers in supporting CPD?

Employers and contractors of doctors’ services are responsible for making sure their workforce is competent, up to date and able to meet the needs of the service. They should maintain and develop the skills of all of their medical staff. They should also facilitate access to the resources (including the time to learn) that will support this.

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

How much CPD do we require?

Doctors are responsible for doing enough appropriate CPD to remain up to date and fit to practise in their work and to be able to demonstrate this at appraisals. CPD activities should be relevant and effective and provide good value.

We don’t endorse or accredit particular CPD activities. We don’t give CPD points or credits for learning activities and we don’t hold lists of CPD providers.

How will evidence of CPD be used as part of revalidation?

Evidence of CPD activities will be one of several pieces of information doctors will need to discuss at appraisals to show they are keeping up to date and working to enhance the quality of their practice. Appraisers will want to know what doctors think the information says about their practice and how they plan to develop or change their practice as a result.

We don’t prescribe the CPD activities needed to revalidate, but doctors must consider the advice in the CPD guidance and follow the recognised best practice for CPD in the relevant field or specialty.

What is the link between Good Medical Practice and CPD?

Good Medical Practice 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 doctors to keep their knowledge and skills up to date throughout their working life by regularly taking part in activities that maintain and further develop their competence and performance.

Our Good Medical Practice Framework for appraisal and revalidation provides a useful structure for discussing CPD during appraisals. CPD activities should take account of the domains and attributes in the framework.

For more information

You can read the full guidance at: www.gmc-uk.org/education/continuing_professional_development/cpd_guidance.asp.

The GMC is a charity registered in England and Wales (1089278) and Scotland (SC037750)