

Guidance for continuing professional development (CPD) for physician associates

Introduction

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the educative means of updating, developing and enhancing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to work safely and effectively as a physician associate (PA). All PAs are currently required to fulfil CPD requirements to remain on the [Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register](#) (PAMVR).

From 1 April 2024, all PAs will be required to start logging their CPD through the FPA ePortfolio.

After 31 March 2024, the RCP CPD Diary will no longer be required, and anyone registered on the RCP CPD Diary are to transfer to the new FPA ePortfolio.

CPD is an essential component of being a healthcare professional. All qualified PAs who are registered on the PAMVR are required to **complete 50 hours of CPD per year**. Following the removal of the physician associate national recertification examination in March 2023, the requirement for PAs to evidence their learning and ongoing knowledge has changed.

Following regulation with the General Medical Council (GMC), all PAs registered with the GMC are expected to follow their revalidation model:

- > Every five years PAs will be required to provide evidence of annual appraisals.
- > Their employer must confirm they are fit to practise.
- > They must demonstrate that they are working within their locally agreed framework of clinical governance.
- > They must submit reflections on, and evidence of:
 - > CPD
 - > Complaints and compliments
 - > Feedback from colleagues and patients
 - > Quality Improvement Project (QIP)
 - > Significant events (reflecting and learning from incidents that have occurred to improve overall quality of care).

CPD year

The CPD year runs from 1 April – 31 March which falls over two calendar years (eg 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025).

CPD requirements

PAs are trained as generalists and the FPA require all PAs to keep up to date in all 18 areas of the [Core Clinical Practice Curriculum](#) (CCPC) which was launched in September 2023.

Each of these 18 areas has specific topics within them and the detail on this can be found within the PA content map document.

You are expected to complete **250 hours of CPD every 5 years**. This is split into at least 125 hours divided across the 18 areas in the CCPC (core) and 125 hours on your area of practice (additional). For example, if you work in rheumatology then you would aim to spend 125 hours on areas within rheumatology and then 125 hours spread across the other specialty areas.

This table displays the CPD breakdown of requirement for annual and 5-year cycle.

	Annual CPD requirement	5-year CPD cycle requirement
Core CPD Category A represents the 18 different areas of the Core Clinical Practice Curriculum.	25 hours (25 CPD)	125 hours (125 CPD)
Additional/supplementary/my specialty CPD Category B is for you to evidence your supplementary learning in your area of practice.	25 hours (25 CPD)	125 hours (125 CPD)
*Verifiable <i>Out of the total hours achieved in category A and B, 20% of the hours should be verifiable CPD.</i> <i>This means that the learning has been awarded formal certification from a body such as the RCP, FPA or other.</i>	10 hours (10 CPD) <i>Within every annual cycle, a minimum of 10 hours of your CPD will need to be verifiable.</i>	50 hours (50 CPD) <i>Within every five-year cycle, a minimum of 50 hours of your CPD will need to be verifiable.</i>
*Non-verifiable <i>Out of the total number of CPD achieved in category A and B, 80% of the hours can be submitted as unverifiable.</i> <i>This includes the self-directed learning you have done without a formal course or approval of the content. The expectation is that you will reflect on your learning using evidence based resources in your ePortfolio.</i>	40 hours (40 CPD) <i>Within every annual cycle, a minimum of 40 hours of your CPD will need to be non-verifiable.</i>	200 hours (200 CPD) <i>Within every five-year cycle, a minimum of 200 hours of your CPD will need to be non-verifiable.</i>
Total CPD to achieve	50 hours (50 CPD)	250 hours (250 CPD)

*The total CPD includes how many verifiable and non-verifiable CPD is required within the annual and 5-year CPD requirements. These are minimum requirements, however PAs can obtain additional verifiable and non-verifiable CPD.

18 specialty areas – CCPC

1	Acute and emergency (inc. toxicology)
2	Cardiovascular
3	Child and adolescent health
4	Clinical haematology
5	Dermatology
6	Ear, nose and throat (ENT)
7	Ophthalmology
8	Obstetrics and gynaecology
9	Endocrine and metabolic
10	Gastrointestinal
11	Infection (inc. sexually transmitted infections)
12	Mental health
13	Musculoskeletal
14	Neurosciences
15	Renal and urology
16	Respiratory
17	Surgery
18	Palliative and end of life care

Each PA is responsible for accruing CPD within each of the 18 specialty areas. Each specialty must be entered separately to claim CPD. You are mandated to evidence your theoretical knowledge through clinical updates against all of the 18 specialties, ensuring that a wide breath of presentations and conditions are covered.

While there will be some overlap between specialty areas, **you must choose one area/specialty only** when logging your CPD.

CPD type – clinical and non-clinical

You may not be working clinically (eg academics), however all physician associates will need to complete 25 hours of clinically related CPD annually to maintain the core CPD requirements. This can be through a range of activities, including self-directed learning (eg journal articles), conferences or courses.

You should spend the remaining 25 hours on professional development depending on your area of work. For example, lecturers may wish to evidence their ongoing knowledge and updates in pedagogy or assessment.

Verifiable and non-verifiable CPD

Over the 5-year period, there is an expectation that 20% of your total CPD will be verifiable – this is a minimum of 50 hours. At least 40% of your CPD total will be non-verifiable – this is a minimum of 200 hours in a 5-year cycle.

Verifiable CPD means that the learning event has been formally accredited by an accrediting organisation such as the FPA, RCP or other accredited body (ie CPD credits). You must be able to provide evidence that the event has been accredited (eg certificates from approved CPD).

Example:

1. Attending an FPA accredited 1-hour lecture on ECG interpretation can be entered as 'Reflection on learning' on the ePortfolio. You will need to reflect this as a '**clinical**' CPD type and select either acute and emergency or cardiovascular specialty. You will need to reflect on your learning and review which of the GMC's good medical practice domains it fits with depending on the reflection you have taken from the event. You will need to select '**Verifiable CPD**' and then link the evidence to this form once saved that it has been accredited (eg a certificate confirming CPD credit).

Non-verifiable CPD means that the learning event has not been formally accredited by the FPA, RCP or any other accredited body. This is your own learning that you have done (eg) reading an article or guidance.

Example:

1. Reading the latest guideline on urinary tract infections in paediatrics can be entered as a 'Reflection on learning' on the ePortfolio. You will need to reflect this as a '**clinical**' CPD type and then reflect on your learning and review which GMC's good medical practice domains it fits with, depending on the reflection you have taken from the event. You will need to select '**Non-verifiable**' CPD.

	Annual minimum requirement
Verifiable	10 hours (10 CPD)
Non-verifiable	40 hours (40 CPD)

General Medical Council (GMC) good medical practice domains

For each CPD reflection of events/activity that is undertaken, you must select the appropriate [Good Medical Practice](#) domain this fits in with. You are expected to evidence CPD across all four [Good Medical Practice](#) domains, including (you can select one or multiple that apply):

- Knowledge, skills and development
- Patients, partnership and communication
- Colleagues, culture and safety
- Trust and professionalism

Exemptions

Exemptions are mitigating reasons on why the minimum required CPD for the year could not be achieved. Exemption CPD can only be claimed in exceptional circumstances such as long-term illness or absence due to parental leave or career break. **Exemptions do not count towards your overall CPD credit for the year**, and these will need to be achieved during your 5-year CPD cycle if there are any shortfalls.

While these can be claimed, they effectively work as a placeholder and do not count towards your overall CPD.

Examples:

1. PA took 6 months of maternity leave in the current CPD year. This would be recorded by completing the CPD exemption form.
2. PA has been on sick leave for 4 weeks or more – to claim exemption the CPD exemption form should be completed.

FPA CPD audit

The FPA will carry out an annual audit on 20% of randomly selected PA's ePortfolio. They will review the CPD that has been recorded and whether the individual had maintained a true record of their activities.

How many CPD credits can I claim?

For everyone 1-hour of educational learning/activity you can claim 1 CPD credit. Credit should be round up/down to the nearest whole number.

Example 1: You completed 2 hours teaching activity, but this only contained 1 hour of educational learning. You will claim 1 CPD credit.

Example 2: You completed 45 mins of educational learning through reading an article. You will round this up to claim 1 CPD credit.

Example 3: You completed 1.15 hours of educational learning through watching an online seminar. You will round this down to claim 1 CPD credit.

Not meeting the annual minimum CPD requirement

If you have not met the minimum annual 50 CPD credit requirement, you will need to make up any shortfall within the 5 year CPD cycle. There is some flexibility to allow you to catch up on any gaps over the 5-year period.

You will be required to meet the 250 CPD credit when you complete your 5-year CPD cycle.

Moving to a new specialty

The GMC are clear that each PA must take responsibility for their own CPD. If a PA moves to a new specialty, then they must be actively obtaining education within that specialty to evidence that they are developing their learning to support their transition. Core CPD gained does not provide evidence of competency in practice but is designed to evidence ongoing theoretical knowledge across medicine and surgery.

Academic PAs – not working clinically

PAs who do not work clinically will still be regulated by the GMC and must still meet the criteria outlined by the GMC (25 clinical CPD) in order to revalidate. The GMC will provide clarification regarding their stance on the revalidation model for PAs working in academic settings at a later time.

Accredited postgraduate certificate/diploma/master's course

You can claim a maximum of **12 CPD credits** for an accredited course for the duration of the course/study and it can only be claimed in one CPD year.

PA national examination examiner

As numbers of graduating PAs increase there is a need to maintain high numbers of examiners at the PA national exam. To be an examiner you must have practised as a PA for at least 3 years.

Up to a maximum of 12 hours (12 CPD) can be claimed for activities relating to examining in any 1-year cycle, only where evidence of up-to-date learning can be demonstrated (eg evidence of assessment theory/technique relevant to the examining being undertaken).

Employer review of CPD

CPD activities and credits should be reviewed as part of your annual appraisal with your supervisor. This will then be reviewed by the responsible officer at revalidation every 5 years as part of the GMC requirement.

RCP CPD Diary – after 31 March 2024 this will no longer be in use

If you have previously logged your CPD activities using the RCP CPD Diary, you will not be able to continue to record your CPD from 1 April 2024. You are mandated to start logging all CPD activities using the FPA ePortfolio.

You will still have read-only access and can download all your CPD into a PDF and import this into your FPA ePortfolio account, as well as saving it in your personal library.

CPD summary

All CPD entries that have been logged on the FPA ePortfolio for both clinical and non-clinical activities will be displayed on the CPD summary page. This will show a breakdown of what you have achieved within the annual CPD year and accumulatively leading up to your 5-year CPD cycle. It will give you a better understanding of the specialty areas you have covered and any gaps in your CPD that you need make up (if there are any shortfalls).

FPA CPD Diary

From **1 April 2024**, all PAs who are a member of the FPA will be mandated to start recording their CPD using the FPA ePortfolio. The FPA will no longer recognise CPD logged on the RCP CPD Diary.

Updated March 2024