



Continuing Professional Development Guidance for Physician Associates

1. Background

a) Definition of "Continuing Professional Development"

A continuing process, following completion of a Physician Associate programme, that enables individual Physician Associates to maintain and improve standards of medical practice through the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. CPD should also support specific changes in practice.

b) The rationale behind participation in CPD and the relevance of CPD to recertification and registration

In line with the Competence and Curriculum Framework for the Physician Assistant (2006) revised (2012) and as stipulated by the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register, as a condition to remain on the register, Physician Associates have to recertify every six years. Recertification is the process that will ensure that registered Physician Associates remain up to date and are fit to practice. In addition, to remain on the Managed Voluntary Register Physician Associates are required to complete 50 hours CPD per year. Please refer to Faculty of [Physician Associate Fitness to Practice Guidelines](#) and [Code of Conduct and Scope of Practice Guidelines](#) for further information.

The Faculty of Physician Associates will require documented proof of CPD as an essential component of the information needed to remain on the Managed Voluntary Register.

2. RCP CPD diary

In order to facilitate Physician Associates to meet the requirements of registration, the Faculty (in conjunction with the Royal College of Physicians) have developed a CPD diary. This enables Physician Associates to document their CPD and is a benefit of their membership. It will be desirable over time to increase the linkage between CPD and appraisal. Appraisal focuses on meeting agreed educational objectives. It is hoped through use of the CPD diary and its further development that it will become a useful tool for Physician Associates as an adjunct to their employer's requirements for appraisal.

a) Those who are required to participate in CPD and the CPD diary



All registered Physician Associates will be required to provide documentation that they are participating in CPD in order to keep up to date and fit to practise through the CPD diary. If you are a member of the Faculty of Physician Associates and do not currently have access please contact the Faculty at FPA@rcplondon.ac.uk. It is a mandatory requirement that members of the Faculty of Physician Associates are registered and using the CPD diary to document their ongoing CPD.

b) Principles behind CPD and the CPD diary

Normally, credits given by Faculty of Physician Associates for CPD should be based on one credit equating to one hour of educational activity (or an equivalent measure of educational activity). The minimum required should be an average of 50 credits per year. It will be the responsibility of individual Physician Associates to ensure that they undertake a range of CPD activities that reflect the local and national needs of their practice and their own learning needs.

c) How do Physician Associates register their CPD?

On the CPD diary the Physician Associate either select CPD activities from a database of Approved "External" activities and enter these in their personal CPD diaries, or enter other CPD activities directly into their diaries where these are felt to be educationally valuable.

The CPD diary year runs from 1 April to 31 March each year. We are aware that not all PA programmes fit into this cycle and would ask recent graduates to sign up to the CPD diary by the first April following their graduation.

After completion of the activity it is necessary to complete a reflection (private) and a simple feedback (which may be shared with the provider) in order for the relevant number of CPD credits to be added to the Diary. The total credits obtained in each year may be viewed at any time together with a summary of the reflections entered. At the end of each year a certificate is available indicating the categories and number of credits achieved. A rolling five-year summary and certificate is also available.

An annual 5% validation audit is carried out requiring evidence that participants have fulfilled their annual requirement and have maintained a true record of their activities. Providers of approved "External" activities are requested to keep records of attendees for five years in order to facilitate this process. Participants are required to provide their own attendance records where these cannot be obtained from providers.

d) What should be included as CPD?

CPD should include activities both within and outside the employing institution, where there is one. In order to support Physician Associates in obtaining a proportion of their CPD outside their workplace, it is desirable to include a category of 'external' CPD wherever possible; for example, a minimum threshold of 25 'external' CPD credits. There should also



be a balance of learning methods that includes a component of active learning CPD activities should include professional development outside narrower specialty interests.

e) CPD Categories

Categories assist people to classify CPD and to ensure that a balance of activities is undertaken.

CPD credits can be either Clinical or Non-clinical and can be derived from Personal, Internal or External activities.

- Clinical credits concern any event in which the educational content directly relates to clinical topics.
- Non-clinical credits concern an educational event that is not directly related to clinical issues, e.g. management courses, ethical and legal issues, appraisal training.
- External credits are given for events outside the hospital or trust such as attending conferences and study days. These may be regional, national or international meetings, and are often held by specialist societies, or are meetings that attendees pay for. Any External meetings not found by searching in the CPD Diary should be entered under 'Unlisted External Meetings'.
- Internal credits are events within or organised by the hospital/trust/GP. E.g. hospital Grand Rounds, journal clubs, local evening medical meetings, etc.
- Personal credits relate to study such as private reading, lecturing, researching etc.
- Exemption credits may only be claimed in exceptional circumstances when a Physician Associate is unable to meet the annual minimum requirements due to illness, maternity leave or long absence from work.

f) Credit requirement per year and per five years

In order to allow for unexpected or special circumstances (see section i) the Faculty runs a five year rolling programme for CPD requirements. The credit requirements over five years are a total of 250 CPD Credits. Of these, at least 125 should be Clinical External and at least 25 should be Non-Clinical External credits. The annual credit requirement of 50 CPD Credits is given as a guide to ensure members reach their required CPD hours and this is the number of hours that will be audited against. Certain minimum and maximum restrictions apply to the categories of credits claimed:

- External – the annual minimum requirement for External credits is 25.
- Internal – There are no restrictions or requirements on the number of Internal credits claimed.
- Personal – Only 10 Personal credits may count towards the total annual minimum credit requirement. However, you may record as many Personal credits as you have completed.



- Distance learning - only the first 10 RCP approved Distance Learning credits will be counted as External, the remainder can be claimed as Personal.
- MSc - only 12 External credits may be claimed for an MSc or equivalent activity each year. The remainder can be claimed as Personal.
- Examining - only 12 External credits may be claimed for Faculty of Physician Associates examining activities each year. All other examining activities can be claimed as Personal.

g) Educational activities that qualify for CPD

- Work related MSc or equivalent activity (External)
- Unlisted External meetings (External)
- Internal CPD meetings (Internal)
- Internal trust or employer mandatory training (Internal)
- Participating in audit meetings or Morbidity and Mortality meetings (Internal)
- Participating in Grand Rounds or Specialty Clinical Meetings (Internal)
- Participating in Seminars/Workshops (Internal)
- Internal trust or employer mandatory training (Internal)
- Carrying out information searches (Personal)
- Making new presentations at conferences (Personal)
- Participating in Committees/Working parties (Personal)
- Reading Journals and texts (Personal)
- Refereeing articles and texts (Personal)
- Undertaking a research project (Personal)
- Undertaking QA/enhancement/peer reviews (Personal)
- Writing examination questions or examining (Personal)
- Writing review articles and texts (Personal)

h) Specific exclusions from consideration for CPD credits

It is not possible to claim External CPD credits for teaching, speaking at, or facilitating meetings, since they do not count as learning activities. Any time spent preparing a talk or lecture may be claimed as 1 Personal credit per hour of preparation time for the first time the presentation is made.

A speaker or facilitator attending a conference may claim for attendance for the educational time during which they are not speaking, as 1 Credit per hour.

i) Special Circumstances

All registered Physician Associates should remain up to date with the CPD requirements. Physician Associates working less than full time have an equal obligation to provide high quality patient care as do those working full time, and thus should maintain the same commitment to their CPD.



In some circumstances participation in CPD may be difficult or impossible for periods of time. The following are some of the circumstances to be considered, and some of the ways in which these may be addressed:

j) A rolling five-year programme

A shortfall in CPD activity at the end of a fixed five-year cycle is difficult to make up. However, the use of a rolling cycle allows the average amount of activity to be maintained over five years if a shortfall occurs.

k) Sick-leave, Maternity Leave or other Career Breaks

Any deficit in CPD activity should be made up over the remainder of the five-year cycle. This may be achieved either prospectively (where possible) retrospectively after return to clinical work, or a combination. Where the absence is for more than a year, advice from the Faculty should be sought.

3. Audit of Physician Associates CPD via RCP CPD diary

a) Auditing

In order to quality assure their CPD system and to verify that claimed activities have been undertaken and are appropriate, the Faculty of Physician Associates will audit participants' activities on a random basis. There will be an annual random audit of the records of 5% of all Faculty of Physician Associate CPD Diary users.

The purposes of the audit are:

- To ensure that credits claimed are supported by evidence
- To ensure that the minimum annual requirement has been achieved
- To ensure that Diary users use their diaries correctly

The random selection for audit is made annually prior to the 30th June each year, which is the final deadline for CPD credit submissions. In order to meet all of the CPD Scheme requirements, it must be the case that:

1. The annual minimum credit requirements have been met.
2. The minimum requirement of 25 external Credits claimed is all supported by evidence of attendance.

The Diary user needs to be able to produce evidence for all Unlisted External events, and it is also possible for us to confirm attendance at all Approved External events.



3. All CPD Credits are claimed correctly

- All credits are claimed in the correct category.
- There is no duplication of events.
- Credits are claimed for the correct meeting on the correct date.
- Credits are claimed for the right CPD year.
- The correct numbers of credits are claimed for each event.

b) Consequences of failing to provide evidence or providing insufficient evidence

Failure to produce sufficient evidence to support claimed credits will result in an individual being referred to the Professional Standards Sub-Committee of the Faculty of Physician Associates.

4. Developing the RCP CPD diary

On-going development of the RCP CPD diary is undertaken by the post registration sub committee at the Faculty of Physician Associates. If you have any comments or suggestions or would like to be involved in development work, please contact the Faculty via FPA@rcplondon.ac.uk.