



ROYAL  
COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS  
OF IRELAND

# Understanding Professional Competence





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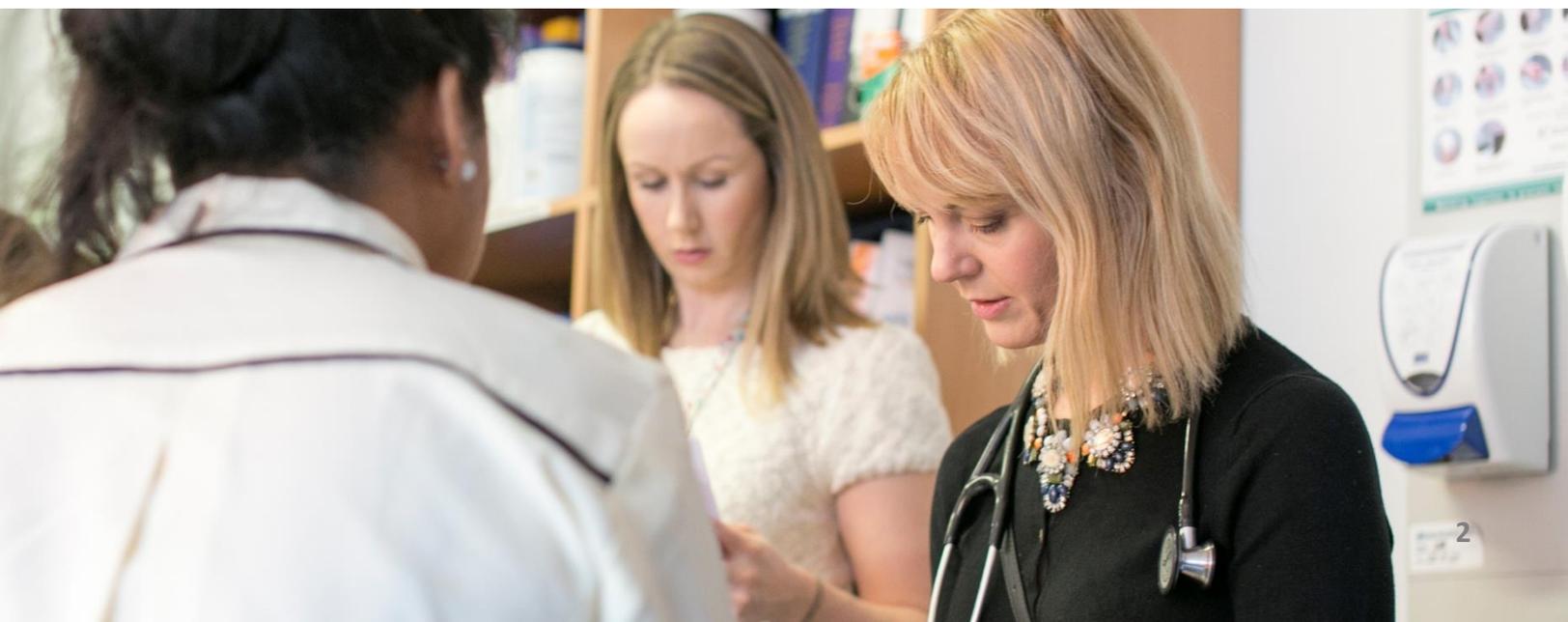
# What is Professional Competence?

## *A legal requirement for doctors in Ireland since 2011*

Maintaining professional competence is essential for keeping up to date with advances in medicine so that you can continue to provide optimal and safe patient care. Professional Competence Schemes were introduced in Ireland in 2011 so that doctors can prove they are developing and maintaining key skills and competencies throughout their medical career.

If you are on the Supervised, General or Specialist Division of the Irish Medical Council Register, you must be enrolled on a Professional Competence Scheme to show that you are actively maintaining your Professional Competence in a manner recognised by the Irish Medical Council. This is a legal requirement in Ireland.

Each year when you apply to retain your registration with the Irish Medical Council, you are required to state the name of your Professional Competence Scheme and the date you enrolled, or renewed your enrolment, on that scheme. Failure to make this declaration will place your continuing registration at risk.



# What you are required to do each year

*This is a summary of what you need to record every year in order to show you are maintaining Professional Competence*

Over the course of the professional competence year (1 May to 30 April every year) you will need to

- complete one Clinical (Practice) Audit or Quality Improvement project
- gather and record a minimum of 50 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits across four CPD categories by engaging in learning activities:
  - **External (maintenance of knowledge and skills)**  
- minimum 20 credits per year (required)
  - **Internal (practice evaluation and development)**  
- minimum 20 credits per year (required)
  - **Personal Learning - minimum 5 credits per year (required)**
  - **Research or Teaching - 2 credits per year (desirable)**

The remaining credits can be made up of any combination of these four categories.

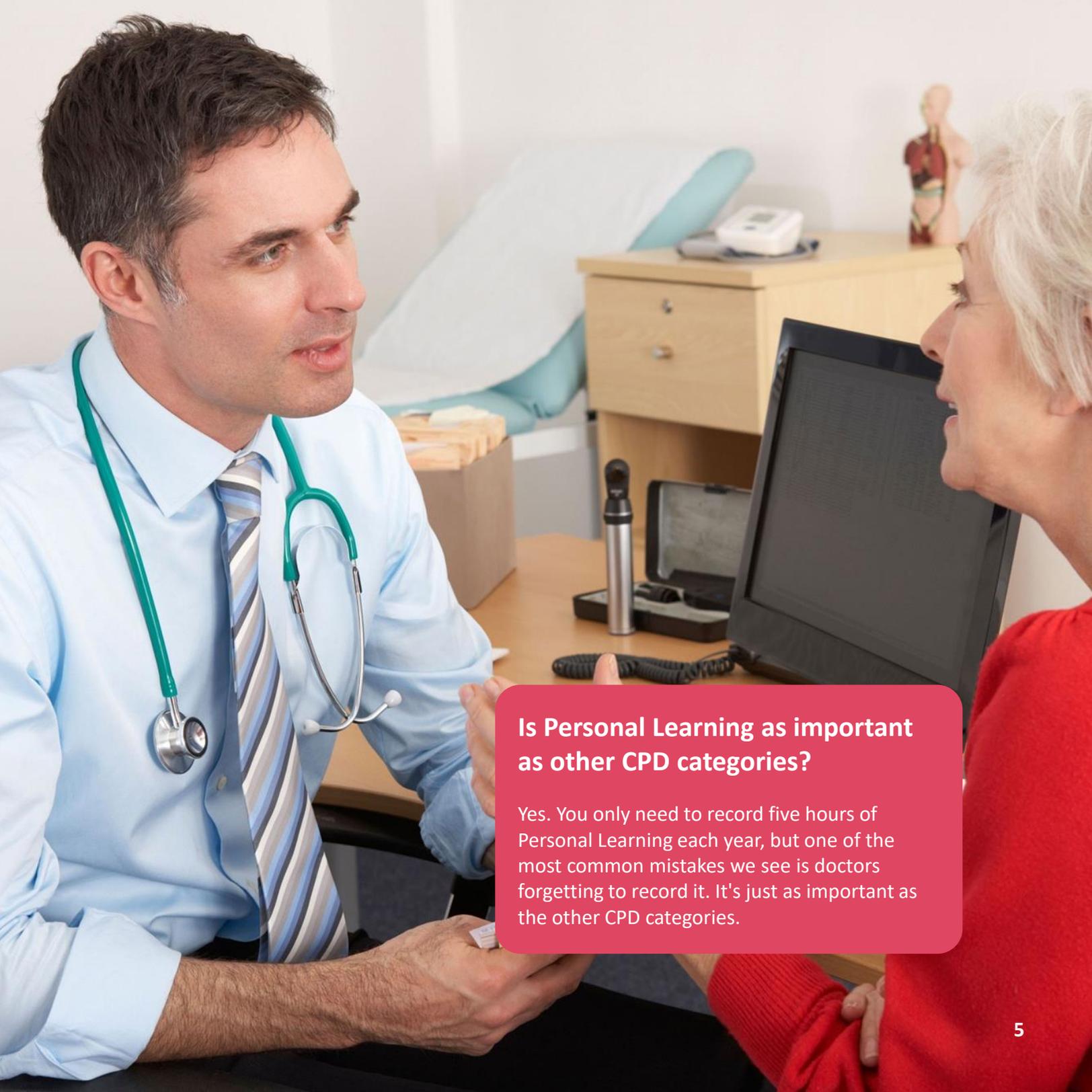
## Your annual PCS checklist

- **1** Audit or Quality Improvement Project
- **20 Credits** in the External CPD Category
- **20 Credits** in the Internal CPD Category
- **5 Credits** in the Personal Learning CPD Category
- **50 CPD** credits recorded overall

# Understanding CPD requirements

*Remember, 1 hour = 1 CPD credit*

CPD Category	Sample Activities	What to record
<b>External - Maintenance of Knowledge and Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International/national meetings</li> <li>• Faculty/Society meetings</li> <li>• Conferences approved for CPD</li> <li>• Courses/workshops approved for CPD</li> <li>• Medically related advanced degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 20 credits per year</li> <li>• Evidence documents required</li> </ul>
<b>Internal - Practice Evaluation and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical clubs</li> <li>• Morbidity and mortality meetings</li> <li>• Clinical risk meetings</li> <li>• Case presentations</li> <li>• Chart reviews</li> <li>• Grand rounds</li> <li>• Attending journal clubs</li> <li>• Multidisciplinary meetings</li> <li>• Peer review groups</li> <li>• Committee meetings</li> <li>• ACLS, APLS etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 20 credits per year</li> <li>• Evidence documents required</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading journals</li> <li>• Online learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 5 credits per year</li> <li>• No evidence required</li> </ul>
<b>Research or Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accredited RCPI Trainer</li> <li>• First time delivery of lecture, oral or poster presentation, published article</li> <li>• Examiner for RCPI exams</li> <li>• National standards development</li> <li>• Examination question setting</li> <li>• Teaching undergraduates, postgraduates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 credits per year desirable</li> <li>• Evidence documents required</li> </ul>



### **Is Personal Learning as important as other CPD categories?**

Yes. You only need to record five hours of Personal Learning each year, but one of the most common mistakes we see is doctors forgetting to record it. It's just as important as the other CPD categories.

# Understanding Clinical (Practice) Audit and Quality Improvement requirements

*You are required to complete one Clinical (Practice) Audit or Quality Improvement Project per year*

Clinical (Practice) Audit is not the same as CPD - it's a separate Professional Competence requirement. To meet this requirement, you must complete one audit or quality improvement project about an aspect of your own practice every year.

This is a requirement for all doctors enrolled on a Professional Competence Scheme, not just those working in hospitals. We recommend starting your audit or quality improvement project early in the year and spending at least 12 hours per year on it.

*Need some help with this?*

Our online course Performing Audit will help you plan, design and conduct a clinical audit. Our Professional Competence Clinical (Practice) Audit booklet, available on the RCPI website, also provides guidance on this topic.



# The 8 domains of Good Professional Practice

## *The skills required by every doctor*

The Medical Council's eight Domains of Good Professional Practice set out the principles on which good practice is founded.

You should map your Professional Competence activities against the relevant Domain of Good Professional Practice and ensure that activities undertaken over the course of a five-year cycle cover all eight domains.

For example, the preparation and delivery of lectures could be mapped against Communication and Interpersonal Skills, Management, Scholarship, and Professionalism.

There is more detailed guidance about this on our website. We also recommend reading the Medical Council's guidance on Professional Conduct and Ethics.

## The eight domains

- Patient Safety and Quality of Patient Care
- Relating to Patients (trust and partnership with patients)
- Communication and Interpersonal Skills
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Management (including self-management)
- Scholarship (teaching and research)
- Professionalism (professional and ethical conduct)
- Clinical (Professional) Skills





**Renew your enrolment each year the easy way!**

Did you know? You can set up a direct debit to pay your annual Professional Competence Scheme fee each year, meaning you don't have to remember to renew your enrolment. Simply complete the Direct Debit Mandate form on our website to set this up.

# Professional Competence activities are recorded in ePortfolio

## *You are required to log activities in ePortfolio for Professional Competence*

You must record your CPD and Clinical (Practice) Audit activities and keep documentary evidence that you have taken part in these activities (e.g. a certificate of attendance).

As a doctor on an RCPI Professional Competence Scheme you will record activities in our ePortfolio for Professional Competence. This is a separate ePortfolio to the one you used as a Trainee. Once you have enrolled on a Scheme you will be given access to this ePortfolio and instructions on how to use it.

Each year you will receive an Annual Statement of Participation, which is a summary of the CPD and Clinical (Practice) Audit claims that you entered in your ePortfolio. The Medical Council may ask you for a copy of your Annual Statement of Participation.



# Don't neglect your ePortfolio!

## *Make sure you record the minimum number of activities in ePortfolio*

You are required to meet the minimum requirements of your Professional Competence Scheme **every year**. It is extremely important to make sure your ePortfolio accurately reflects your Audit and CPD activities by the end of the year (30 April).

We are required to send the Medical Council the registration numbers of doctors who did not meet the minimum requirements of their Scheme. To avoid this, update your ePortfolio regularly and make sure you are on track to meet the minimum requirements.

### **Tip for success!**

Create a Personal Development Plan each year. This will help you plan ahead and manage your Professional Competence.

If you complete a Personal Development Plan in ePortfolio by 30 September, you can claim 5 credits in the Internal CPD category.





### Tip for success!

It's important to remember that Clinical (Practice) Audit is not the same as CPD – it's a separate Professional Competence requirement.

We recommend that you spend at least 12 hours per year on your audit or quality improvement project.

# Make sure your Annual Statement is accurate

## *Your Annual Statement of Participation is an important document*

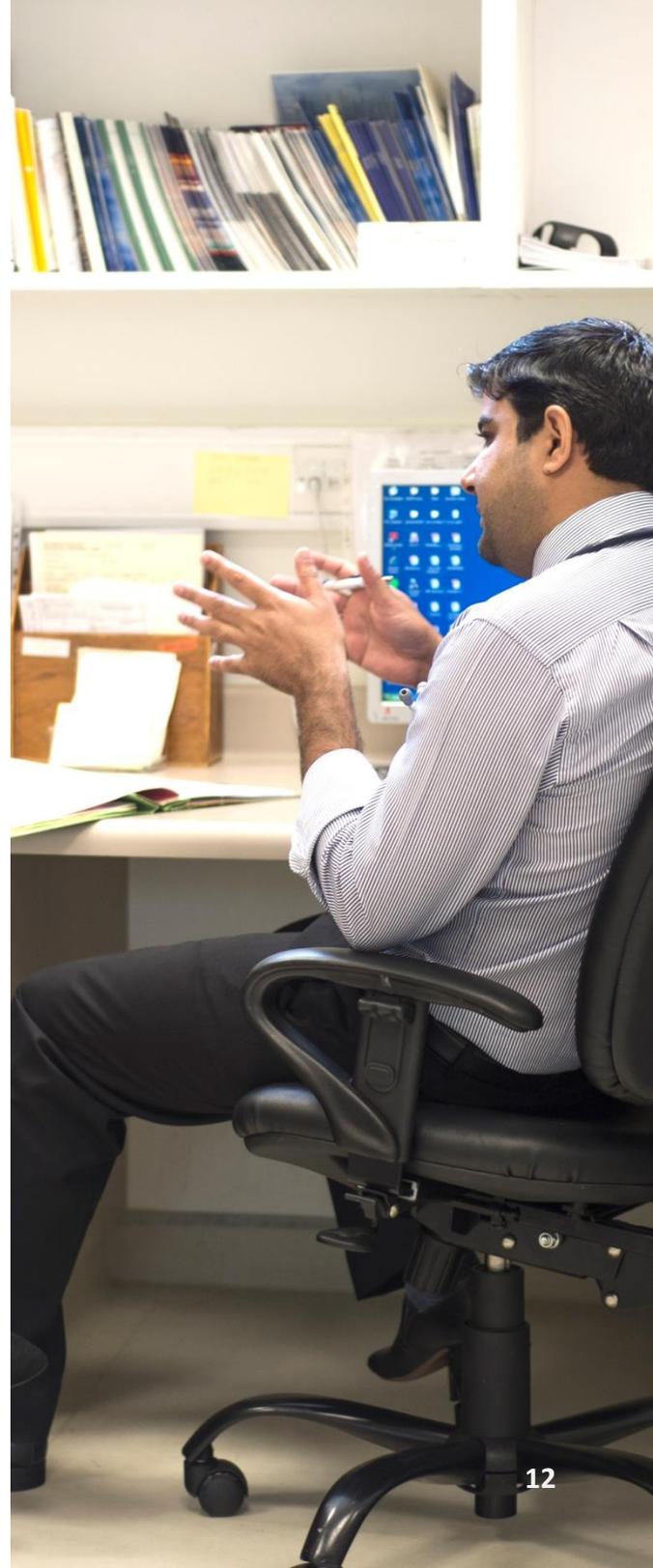
It is extremely important to make sure your ePortfolio for Professional Competence accurately reflects your educational activities by the end of the year (30 April) before we create your Annual Statement of Participation.

Your Annual Statement of Participation summarises all the CPD and Clinical (Practice) Audit claims that you entered in your ePortfolio in the previous year.

Each year, when you apply to retain your registration with the Irish Medical Council, you will be asked to confirm that your Annual Statement demonstrates that you are meeting your professional competence requirements. Failure to do this will place your continuing registration at risk.

We are required to send the Medical Council the registration numbers of doctors who did not meet the minimum requirements for the previous professional competence year.

Doctors who did not meet the minimum requirements will be contacted by the Medical Council.



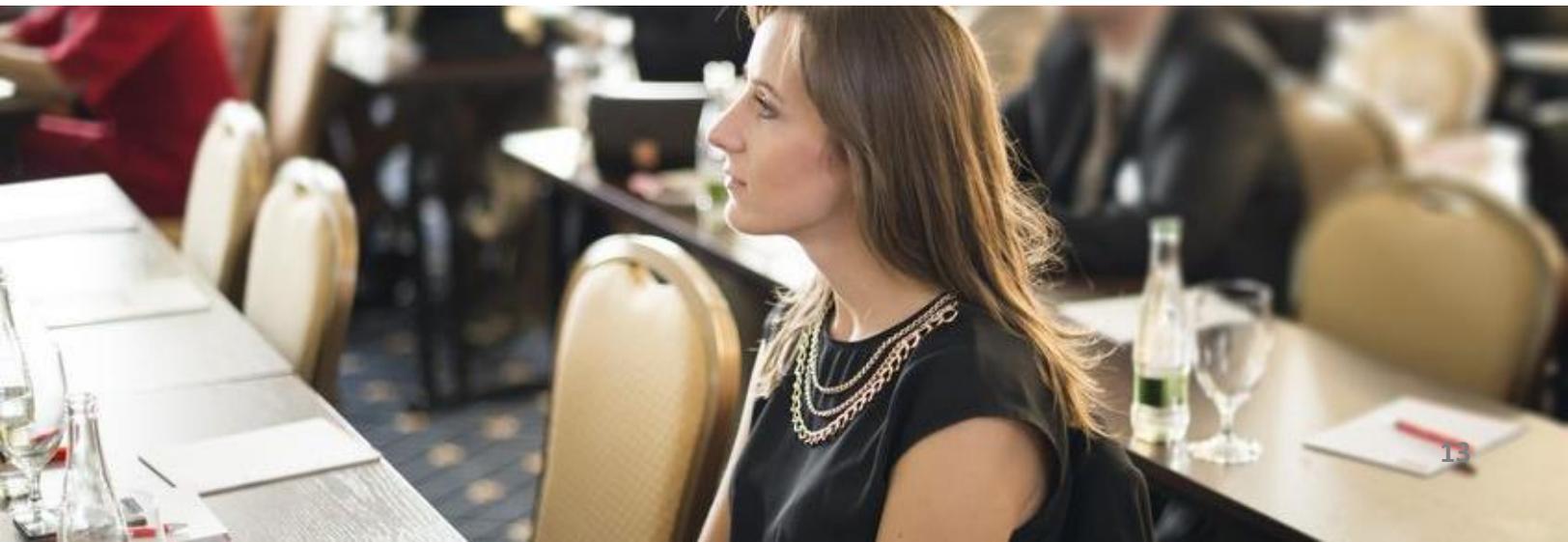
# Why you need to keep evidence of CPD activities

## *Evidence of CPD activities are needed for the Annual Verification Process*

It is important to have evidence of participating in External, Internal and Research or Teaching CPD activities. We recommend that you add this supporting evidence (e.g. a certificate of attendance) to your ePortfolio; however you do not need to upload these documents before we generate your Annual Statement of Participation. Your Annual Statement does not show whether evidence has been attached to forms in ePortfolio.

Evidence is required for the Annual Verification Process that we carry out each year, so you should always make sure to collect your evidence and keep it in a safe place. If you are selected for the Annual Verification Process, you will be given plenty of time to upload your documents to ePortfolio.

Evidence documents must display your name, title of the activity, the date the activity took place, and the contact details of the organisers. Examples of evidence documents include certificates, letters or memos confirming attendance at an activity on the organiser's headed paper.



# Reasons to create a Personal Development Plan

*A Personal Development Plan is worth 5 credits and will help you plan your year*

We recommend that you create a Personal Development Plan each year as it encourages you to:

- Define your practice
- Identify CPD and Clinical (Practice) Audit activities appropriate for you
- Set out goals for your personal development

A Personal Development Plan can be used to monitor your progress. It will also help you reflect on the various roles that you fulfil in your post and possible steps to update your knowledge, maintain your experience and improve your skills if necessary.

Having a plan will also help you see when you need to arrange leave or cover in order to attend an educational activity.

If you complete the Personal Development Plan form in your ePortfolio by 30 September, you can claim 5 credits in the Internal CPD category.



# Financial support for CPD

The HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) unit provides financial support to NCHDs and consultants. For information go to [www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/ed/fin](http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/leadership-education-development/met/ed/fin)

## *If you are a consultant*

Consultants employed in the public service in Ireland can claim up to €3,000 per year for courses, conferences, reference materials and professional fees under the HSE's Consultant CME Scheme.

## *If you are an NCHD*

### **HSE's Clinical Course & Examination Refund Scheme**

This scheme is open to all NCHDs in Ireland. You can claim a full refund of the cost of attempting a course or exam for the first time. Check the list of approved clinical courses and examinations on the HSE website.

### **Continuous Professional Development Support Scheme**

The CPD-SS is an educational programme for NCHDs who are not in training posts. It allows doctors to access CPD activities free of charge.

### **HSE Training Supports Scheme for NCHDs**

This HSE scheme is open to all NCHDs. Funding is allocated based on grade, with up to €2,000 available. Funding is available pro-rata for doctors on shorter contracts.



A man in a dark suit and pink tie is sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop. Two women, one in a black top and one in a red top with a stethoscope, are standing next to him, looking at the laptop and smiling. The background shows office shelves with binders and a window.

## Key dates during the Professional Competence year

- 30 April - Deadline to enrol or renew enrolment for the current year
- 1 May - Enrolment opens for new professional competence year
- Mid-May - Deadline to record activities in ePortfolio for inclusion in Annual Statement
- Mid-May - Annual Statements generated in ePortfolio
- 30 September - Deadline to complete Personal Development Plan to be eligible to claim 5 Internal CPD Credits

# Absent from practice?

## *Let us know so we can update your records*

If you need to go on leave (maternity leave, certified sick leave, bereavement leave, parental/adoptive leave, or carer's leave) you should maintain some level of engagement in maintenance of Professional Competence.

If you are on leave for 90 days or more within a professional competence year for one of the reasons listed above, we can make sure this is noted on your annual statement - but only if we know about it. Please let us know if you are going to be absent from practice for an extended period so that we can update your records.

You don't need to upload certificates relating to your leave to ePortfolio, but you should keep them in a safe place.

## *When to consider removing yourself from the medical register*

If you stay on the Medical Council register while on sabbatical or extended leave you are expected to continue to meet your Professional Competence Scheme requirements. The Medical Council does not allow doctors to stay on the register if they cannot meet their Professional Competence Scheme requirements.

If your absence from practice has an impact on your ability to meet professional competence requirements, you should consider removing yourself from the medical register. If you do not practice medicine and do not intend to practice medicine for the foreseeable future, the Medical Council advises you to voluntarily withdraw from the register.

## *Moving abroad? Retiring? Starting a training programme?*

If you move abroad, retire, or start a training programme please let us know (in writing) and we will update your Professional Competence Scheme status. Similarly, let us know if you change your Medical Council registration type.



### Tip for success!

It's all too easy to leave adding information and documents to your ePortfolio to the last minute. To make sure that we have time to help you with any potential problems before the Professional Competence year ends in April, please try to record your CPD and audit claims regularly - and contact us straight away if you need help.

# Help and support available to you

## *Contact details for our Professional Competence support team*

We have a highly experienced Professional Competence support team in RCPI. They are always happy to answer your questions and advise you on how to maintain Professional Competence.

Contact us if you

- Need help with your ePortfolio - We can arrange a convenient time to work with you to ensure your records are up to date
- Have difficulty assigning categories to your Professional Competence activities
- Have any questions at all relating to your Professional Competence Scheme

Jennifer Noordman or Deirdre Donegan in our Professional Competence department will be happy to help. You can reach them Monday – Friday during office hours.



**(01) 863 9739**



**professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie**

If you have forgotten your password and need help logging in to your ePortfolio, please contact the RCPI Helpdesk, which is open Monday to Friday during office hours on Freephone 1800 303 574 or [helpdesk@rcpi.ie](mailto:helpdesk@rcpi.ie)

A man with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a blue lanyard, is sitting at a desk. He is looking down at a notebook and writing with a black pen. A smartphone is on the desk in front of him. The background is a blurred office setting with vertical blinds.

## More tips for success!

Based on what we've learned from providing support to doctors since 2011, we have developed an extensive set of resources and tips for success.

You will find a wealth of information on our website [www.rcpi.ie/professional-competence](http://www.rcpi.ie/professional-competence)

# CPD opportunities in RCPI

*We are a leading provider of CPD opportunities for doctors in Ireland*

We offer a wide range of practical workshops, online courses, national conferences, Masterclasses and more long-term undertakings such as diplomas and certificates. Browse our range of CPD approved courses and events by going to **[www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie)** > **Courses and Events**

## CLINICAL PRACTICE

We offer a wide courses relating to clinical practice, including advance care planning, endoscopy, child protection, and care of the older person.

## CONFERENCES AND MASTERCLASSES

We hold a wide range of conferences, Masterclasses and scientific meetings each year. Most Masterclasses can be watched live at our webcast centres.

## PROFESSIONALISM

We offer a range of courses relating to professional matters such as ethics, open disclosure, data protection and patient safety.

## QUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

We offer world-class training in Quality Improvement methodology and advanced leadership skills, tailored specially for frontline healthcare workers.

## RESEARCH AND AUDIT

Choose from courses on designing randomised controlled trials, how to use SPSS to analyse research data, or how GDPR impacts your day to day role.

## TRAINER RESOURCES

If you supervise and train other doctors you can get expert advice and training on mentoring, supervision and effective teaching skills on these courses.

# Our final words of advice to you

*There is lots more information and advice on the RCPI website*

There is a lot of information and documents involved in maintaining Professional Competence and it can be daunting, especially towards the end of the year when you need to update records in time for your Annual Statement of Participation in Professional Competence.

Based on what we've learned from providing support to doctors since 2011, we have developed a set of resources and tips for success. You will find a wealth of information on our website **[www.rcpi.ie/professional-competence](http://www.rcpi.ie/professional-competence)**.

If you have recently enrolled on a Professional Competence scheme, our Getting Started guide will help you with the basic requirements, including how to log in to your ePortfolio.









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