

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

FACT SHEET

Continuing Professional Development

What is Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the way in which members of the occupational therapy profession maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal and professional qualities required in the exercise of their profession. Now that occupational therapy is part of the national registration and accreditation scheme practitioners need to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to professional development by engaging in and providing evidence of ongoing learning and continued competence in occupational therapy.

How does it work?

CPD works in a 12 month cycle in which an occupational therapist undertakes certain activities to a minimum of 30 hours in that cycle. In general it requires occupational therapists to review their practice of occupational therapy on a continual basis. CPD typically requires occupational therapists to identify learning objectives, plan and participate in relevant and appropriate profession-oriented learning activities and reflect on the value of those activities. All CPD activities must be documented.

Many registered occupational therapists would already be undertaking at least 30 hours of CPD each year by undertaking professional development activities such as attending conferences, reviewing journals, participating in journal clubs, presenting or attending education sessions at work, teaching or attending on-line or distance courses. For these practitioners the recording of such activities may not yet be a routine occurrence. The important things to remember are to record how the activity was planned, attended, reflected upon (how did the activity relate to and assist the practice of occupational therapy?) and document each learning experience – what the activity was, how long was spent undertaking the activity and then making a brief summary of the implications for practice. A template example of how to keep a CPD record is available at the Board's website (www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx).

What do I need to do?

The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board) has established a CPD registration Standard which sets out the requirements practitioners need to maintain and improve competence in practice, thus ensuring the safety and quality of services provided to the public.

The Standard is published at the Board's website and specifies that all practising occupational therapists must complete a minimum of 30 hours of CPD per year directed towards maintaining and improving competence in occupational therapy practice. The CPD registration Standard requires occupational therapists to keep a CPD Record detailing activities undertaken and evidence of CPD activities (a CPD

Portfolio) for a minimum of five years (www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx).

The Board has also developed CPD Guidelines which provide additional information and assistance about how to comply with the Board's requirements. All practitioners must become familiar with the Board's Standards and Guidelines. The Board's CPD Guidelines expand on the CPD registration Standard and provide detailed information on:

- CPD requirements
- Exemptions
- What counts as CPD
- Advice for rural and remote area practitioners, and example of a CPD record in this circumstance
- The 3 CPD categories (formal learning activities; informal learning activities; engagement with the profession)
- Keeping a CPD Portfolio
- Participating in a CPD program
- Failure to comply
- Definitions
- Template – example of a CPD record
- Example of a development plan, completed CPD record

Is CPD mandatory?

CPD is mandatory under the National Law¹.

The community has the right to expect that health practitioners will provide services in a competent and contemporary way, and in a way that meets best practice standards. CPD is an important component in ensuring the delivery of occupational therapy in a safe and competent manner by occupational therapists.

By what date do I need to comply?

As a one-off exception, occupational therapists will have 17 months to meet the usual 12 month requirement of obtaining 30 hours of CPD (i.e. from 1 July 2012 to 30 November 2013). The extended cycle ensures that no practitioners are disadvantaged.

From 1 December 2013 all practising occupational therapists will need to comply with the Board's requirement of obtaining 30 hours of CPD, every 12 months, in each registration renewal year. Practitioners will be required to declare compliance with the CPD registration Standard each time registration is renewed annually.

What activities count as CPD?

CPD includes a range of formal and informal activities as well as engagement with the profession. Courses and conferences are well recognised forms of CPD, but there are also other ways in which practitioners can keep up to date and enhance their skills.

In-service sessions, cases, conferences, journal clubs, peer consultations, mentoring arrangements, professional information exchanges at meetings, making presentations, reading professional publications, online learning and internet research are all ways in which occupational therapists can actively participate in CPD. Receiving or providing supervision can also contribute to CPD, provided that written records are maintained for each session which summarise the development outcomes and actions planned.

The Board's CPD Standard and Guidelines do not refer to 'approved' training or education providers to deliver CPD activities. Approving providers to deliver CPD restricts consumer choice and may be

¹ Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law) is available at www.ahpra.gov.au

perceived as suggesting that one provider has a commercial advantage over another provider, thereby discouraging occupational therapists from selecting from the full range of training options relevant to their specific professional practice. It is the nature of the activity that determines it being CPD, not the provider, site or time at which it is undertaken.

For occupational therapists the Board has specified that a maximum of up to 25 hours per registration year may be gained from either formal or informal learning activities and a maximum of up to 10 hours per registration year may be gained from engagement with the profession. Each practitioner may choose how they wish to accumulate their minimum of 30 hours CPD from a mix of activities.

One of the most important aspects of CPD is reflection on new learning and how this can be integrated into practice. Reflection as defined in the registration Standard and Guideline is the process of thinking critically about one's practice. This may involve consideration of assumptions and alternative approaches, comparison to the practice of colleagues, considering the potential relevance and application to practice of new knowledge, acquired through reading, formal learning or other CPD activity.

I live in a rural area and it is difficult for me to access CPD opportunities. What should I do?

Proper professional development is achieved through a wide range of activities which may be pursued throughout a practitioner's career. There are many and varied opportunities for CPD and the Board has ensured that recognised CPD activities include options accessible to those whose opportunities are limited by cost or geography. To assist rural and remote practitioners to identify CPD options additional examples are included in the Board's CPD Guidelines.

The Board notes that practitioners who become professionally isolated are at higher risk of lapses in competence or judgment. This includes practitioners isolated by geography. The Board therefore recommends that only a portion of CPD should be self-directed learning with no peer interaction.

How do I record CPD activities?

The CPD Guidelines provide more helpful information about CPD including a template for recording CPD objectives, activities and reflection, as well as a worked example of a completed CPD record.

A CPD record for each year of activity is to include:

- a) Goals and outcomes of CPD
- b) Details of CPD activity (date, activity time, provider or participants/resources) for each of the three CPD categories; and
- c) The contribution of that activity to your goal to enhancing your competence in occupational therapy.

I only work part-time, so do I need to comply with the minimum of 30 hours of CPD, each year?

Yes, all practitioners must obtain a minimum of 30 hours CPD each year because part-time practitioners also need to deliver safe and competent occupational therapy services.

The minimum of 30 hours per year required by the Standard can be achieved through a wide variety of activities making it achievable for all practitioners irrespective of the number of hours that they work in a capacity as an occupational therapist. A range of day to day work activities (other than delivering occupational therapy services as an employee) can contribute to CPD where these activities are specifically directed to developing or maintaining occupational therapy practice, knowledge, skills or competence.

Partial exemptions

The Board appreciates that practitioner's circumstances may change so the Standard includes provision for partial exemption, by a reduction of CPD hours, in special circumstances. The exemptions allow for more flexible CPD arrangements but continue to ensure competence of practice to protect the public.

In applying the partial exemption from the CPD standard in special circumstances the Board has decided that a minimum of 12 hours of CPD would be expected for a practitioner, unless a compelling reason exists to accept fewer hours of CPD.

A Guidance document and Form for practitioners to complete has been published to the Board's website. (see www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx).

Any request for exemption must be submitted in writing using the Form, prior to the end of the registration period (i.e. 30 November each year).

The Board's CPD Guidelines provide examples of special circumstances by which exemptions may be considered.

Do I need to submit evidence of my CPD activities every year?

No. You will be required to sign a declaration of compliance with the Board's Standard each time you renew your registration. Periodic random audits are conducted to ensure that practitioners are compliant with the CPD Standard. If audited a practitioner will be required to produce evidence of compliance with the Standard and must produce their CPD record and their CPD portfolio of evidence.

Are students required to comply with the CPD requirements of the Board?

No. The Standard is mandatory and applies to all registered occupational therapist practitioners except students and practitioners who have non-practising registration.

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September 2013