

Policy

Subject:	Continuing Professional Development Program
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The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) mandates that Fellows, including Fellows of Faculties, and Affiliates of the RCPA in active medical or dental practice in Australia or New Zealand, participate in the RCPA CPDP. International members are required to participate in the RCPA program or an equivalent formally structured program in their country of domicile. Trainees, Associate members and Overseas Trained Specialists (OTS)/Area of Need (AON) doctors undertaking additional training, examinations or assessment to attain Fellowship may also participate.

The RCPA Continuing Professional Development Program (CPDP) is designed to meet the strengthened CPD requirements of the Australian Medical Council, the Medical Board of Australia, the Medical Council of New Zealand, the Dental Board of Australia, the Dental Council of New Zealand, and similar requirements in other countries. Accordingly, the RCPA program includes requirements for continuing medical education, peer review and quality/outcome/audit measures to promote patient safety and demonstrate ongoing competence **relevant to scope of practice**.

All relevant details, the CPDP Information Manual, recording and submission tools, forms and sample templates are available in the [CPDP section](#) of the College website.

Key elements of the RCPA CPDP:

- The CPDP is developed, promoted, monitored and evaluated by the Board of Education and Assessment. Significant changes to the program are endorsed by the Board of Directors
- Activities undertaken for the CPDP must reflect the participant's current or recent scope of practice
- The College's CPD requirements for new Fellows commence from 1 January in the year following the granting of Fellowship
- The program requirement is for 60 hours per annum
- Participants working part-time are required to complete the full number of hours for the program
- Submissions, whether by summary or logbook, must be finalised no later than 31 March for activities undertaken in the previous calendar year so that certification may be provided to the relevant registration authority for each corresponding year.
- A Certificate of Participation, stating the number of hours of activities undertaken, may be printed from the website.
- Fellows who are not up to date with respect to CPDP will not be given a Certificate of CPDP Compliance if requested.

- A random audit 5% of all Fellows' returns will be undertaken each year, requiring the individual submission of documentation as determined by the substantiation requirements set out in the RCPA CPDP Information Manual.
- If you have been audited by the Medical Board of Australia or the Medical Council of New Zealand for the year under review and can verify their acceptance of your submission, this will satisfy the College's audit requirement.
- If you have had all CPD requirements audited by RCPA in the year under review the MBA and the MCNZ will accept the College audit and not require a further audit.
- If the outcome of the audit is unsatisfactory, the Fellow will be audited in subsequent years to ensure compliance.
- Participants are required to maintain a suitable record of their activities. Tools to support recording and reporting are available on the RCPA website. Participants are required to retain records for at least three years. Documents should be backed up in a format that can be readily presented for audit if required.
- Each category of the CPDP includes a range of activities from which participants must select at least two, in addition to any mandatory elements, that are relevant to their scope of practice. A minimum of 15 hours per annum is required for each category.
- Development and annual updating of an individualised professional development plan is a mandatory item under Category B for Australian and New Zealand Medical Practitioners. Guidelines and a sample template may be found on the RCPA website. It is recommended that participants refer to the applicable trainee curriculum handbook to ensure that the plan reflects current expectations for the scope of practice in their discipline. Peer review of progress with the plan may be included under Category C.
- Participation in training in the prevention and management of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination is mandatory for all RCPA supervisors and examiners. It is recommended that this type of training forms part of all Fellows' continuing education.
- Participation in education for cultural safety is a high priority for medical and practitioners in all jurisdictions. The College provides an online module as an adjunct or alternative to employer-provided instruction and it is recommended that such education forms part of all Fellows' continuing education.
- All registered medical and dental Fellows must individually participate in External Quality Assurance (EQA) activities where suitable activities or programs exist for the applicable scope of practice. Individual enrolment in such programs is not required. Examples of some suitable programs may be found in the [Laboratory Management section](#) of the RCPA website for reference.
- Fellows who are unable to meet the requirements of RCPA CPDP may continue to be members and receive benefits of RCPA membership. However, the RCPA is required to report non-participation and recency of practice to the Australian Health Practitioner Registration Agency or Medical Council of New Zealand as applicable unless the member is exempt. This may impact on registration status. Fellows in other jurisdictions must report their compliance or non-compliance in accordance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- Exemptions are normally only granted for prolonged absence, up to 12 months, on the basis of illness, parental leave, bereavement or other compassionate grounds.
- Fellows having difficulty meeting the requirements of the RCPA CPDP may contact the RCPA office for assistance by phone or by email (cpdp@rcpa.edu.au) at any time.

The CPDP and joint/dual Fellows in Australia and New Zealand

Medical practitioners who have specialist registration must meet requirements for **every specialty** in which they are registered. Submissions by joint/dual Fellows regarding participation in a program with another specialist college or organisation will not be accepted as complying with RCPA requirements. All joint/dual Fellows must submit RCPA CPDP returns if they wish to continue to receive Participation Certificates or Certificates of CPDP Compliance.

The CPDP and international practitioners

Fellows and Faculty Fellows who live in countries other than Australia and New Zealand and who **are not** registered for medical or dental practice in Australia and/or New Zealand, may participate in their country of domicile specialist college or professional organisation continuing professional development program. They will be deemed to be compliant with the RCPA CPDP requirements if the program is approved by the RCPA Board of Education and Assessment. Recognised international programs will not be subject to audit by the RCPA.

The RCPA will only support applications for registration in Australia or New Zealand if the applicant can demonstrate at least twelve months of compliance with RCPA CPDP requirements.

Fellows or Faculty Fellows who live in countries other than Australia and New Zealand, and who **are** registered for medical or dental practice in Australia and or New Zealand, must participate in the RCPA CPDP program or apply to the Board of Education and Assessment for possible special dispensation.

The CPDP and Faculty Fellows

Fellows of the Faculty of Clinical Forensic Medicine or the Faculty of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology who are in active clinical practice must meet the full requirements of the RCPA CPDP.

Fellows of the Faculty of Science who are engaged in clinical diagnostic practice must meet the requirements of the RCPA CPDP. Other Fellows of the Faculty of Science are strongly encouraged to participate. Other structured programs offered by recognised scientific or academic bodies may also be suitable.

Absence from practice

Absence from active practice for this purpose is defined as a continuous period during which no or minimal practice in the relevant scope of practice is undertaken. The Medical Board of Australia has specific requirements regarding recency of practice (see below).

From the College CPDP perspective, an allowable absence from practice may occur across two calendar years and CPDP hours can be accrued on return to active practice provided the absence does not exceed 12 months duration. Examples include parental leave, sick leave and long service leave.

The College expectation aligns with the MBA Recency of Practice Standard which further specifies the following requirements to be met prior to return to work:

- For medical practitioners absent from practice for up to 12 months, there are no additional requirements prior to recommencing practice
- Medical practitioners with at least two years' experience who are absent from practice for up to three years are required to complete the equivalent of one year's pro rata CPDP activities relevant to their scope of practice prior to commencement
- Medical practitioners with at least two years' experience who are absent from practice for

more than three years are required to submit to the BEA, prior to return to work, a prospective program of activities to demonstrate that their knowledge and skills will be maintained at a satisfactory standard. This may include working under supervision and completing specific education and/or assessment (see [RCPA Retraining Policy](#)). For Australian practitioners this plan must also be submitted to the MBA.

- For medical practitioners with less than two years' experience in their field of practice prior to a leave of absence of 12 months or more, the practitioner must work under supervision in a training position approved by the BEA. For Australian practitioners this plan must also be approved by the MBA.

Note for Australian practitioners, other new MBA Recency of Practice conditions apply for medical practitioners with limited or restricted registration and for medical practitioners intending to change their scope of practice. Further information may be obtained at the [MBA website](#).

The CPDP and recency of practice in Australia

All registered medical practitioners in Australia, except those with non-practising registration, must comply with the Medical Board of Australia's Recency of Practice standard. To meet this standard, you must practise within your scope of practice at any time for a minimum total of:

- Four weeks full-time equivalent in one registration period, which is a total of 152 hours, or
- Twelve weeks full-time equivalent over three consecutive registration periods, which is a total of 456 hours

Full-time equivalent is 38 hours per week. The maximum number of hours that can be counted per week is 38 hours. Medical practitioners who work part-time must complete the same minimum number of hours of practice. This can be completed part-time.

When you apply to renew your registration in Australia, you must declare whether you comply with this registration standard. Compliance may be audited by the Medical Board. Therefore, you should retain relevant records for five years. Further details may be accessed at the [Medical Board of Australia website](#). This includes helpful advice for those who practice intermittently and in non-clinical roles, who are planning extended leave, or who are returning to practice after extended absence or amending their scope of practice. Fellows who are uncertain about their ability to meet recency of practice and corresponding professional development standards are encouraged to contact the [RCPA](#) for early advice or to seek exemption if applicable.

References

Medical Board of Australia registration standard: Continuing Professional Development
Medical Board of Australia registration standard: Recency of Practice
Medical Board of Australia: Building a Professional Performance Framework
Medical Council of New Zealand: Recertification Requirements for Vocationally Registered Doctors Practising in New Zealand
Dental Board of Australia Continuing Professional Development Registration Standard
Dental Council, New Zealand, Continuing Professional Development

Related RCPA policies:

Retraining – Policy Number 1/1997
Scope of Practice Recognition – Policy Number 3/2006
Ageing Pathologists – Policy Number 3/2013
Anti-discrimination, Bullying and Harassment – Policy Number 12/1999