

**Distance Learning Guidelines**

**Continuing Professional  
Development**

**Distance Learning Approval**

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**Note: This document applies only to the approval of distance learning materials specifically produced for this purpose. This does not include journal articles (print- or electronic-based) or modules/programmes incorporating material published in or as journal articles, nor the broadcasting of live or recorded conferences, lectures or teleconferences. These will be considered separately for evaluation and CPD approval.**

## 1. Background

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the educative means of updating, developing and enhancing how physicians apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in their working lives. Since 1995 the Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians (comprising the Royal Colleges of Physicians of London, Edinburgh and The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow) has developed policies and criteria for CPD activity.

The purposes of the CPD scheme are:

- To approve CPD activities organised and developed by individuals and organisations (non-commercial and commercial)
- To allow physicians to record their participation, in the form of credits, in these approved CPD activities.

## 2. CPD Credits

Physicians are required to register a minimum of 50 CPD Credits annually, of which 25 must be external (category 1) credits.

The Federation has an Approved Distance-Learning Credit category in order to acknowledge the increasingly available high quality online educational opportunities. Physicians can register up to 10 Approved Distance-Learning Credits towards their minimum annual requirement of 25 external (category 1) credits. **Physicians can only register Distance-Learning Credits from Distance-Learning materials/products that have been approved for this purpose by the Federation.**

## 3. Distance-Learning Communications Media

Distance-learning can be defined as providing education to physicians engaged in learning at a time and place of their own choosing and at a distance from a presenter, facilitator or tutor.

The Federation will consider approving high quality distance-learning products delivered in the following ways, or a combination of these:

- Computer based via the Internet, CD-ROM and DVD
- Via mobile devices
- Through audiovisual media including video and DVD

This list is not exclusive. Communications media are constantly evolving and the Federation wishes to encourage innovative approaches to the provision of CPD distance-learning.

#### 4. Approval Criteria

Distance-learning products submitted to the CPD Office for consideration and approval must meet the criteria listed in A to N below. Two members of the CPD Distance-Learning Evaluation Panel (see section 5) will be asked to make a recommendation based on these criteria.

All products eligible for approval should:

**A) Identify and state the target audience.**

The target audience must fall within the remit of the Federation and must be clearly identified in terms of professional role and specialty. The Federation CPD scheme is intended for trained doctors, Consultants and Staff and Associate Specialist Grades.

Please see: <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialties/Pages/Specialty.aspx> for Federation supported specialties.

**B) Define specific learning objectives which are appropriate for the target audience.**

The learning objectives must be stated at the beginning of the module or programme.

**C) Provide good quality content covering the subject matter.**

Content must represent up-to-date evidence-based best practice as advised by experts or opinion leaders in the field, and must be able to deliver the stated learning objectives.

**D) Focus on a specific clinical or non-clinical (professional) subject.**

Distance-Learning materials focussing on clinical issues could, for example, cover a particular disease, condition, treatment or patient management problem. For non-clinical issues the subject could focus, for example, on a particular educational, managerial or academic skill (e.g. teaching, appraisal or assessment).

**E) Illustrate a degree of interactivity between the user and material to enhance and reinforce the learning process.**

Ideally this should involve the user in decision making or a test of knowledge during the course of the materials and not just through a series of questions at the end of the programme.

**F) Incorporate the key principles of adult learning to enhance knowledge, attitudes and skills and to develop understanding of content and context.**

As best practice, the product should contain features that encourage reflective practice, peer learning/interaction with peers and problem-based or task driven approaches to learning.

**G) Provide a valid method of assessment to measure whether the user has achieved the stated learning objectives.**

For example, undertaking a set of self-assessment questions (we recommend a 'best-of five' format) or submission of a portfolio of work. If self assessment questions are used there should be at least 10 questions to each CPD credit applied for.

**H) There should be evidence that all legal, medico-legal and ethical considerations are met.**

These include: copyright, patient consent for clinical materials used, patient confidentiality and data protection.

**I) Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by a commercial organisation must be declared in the materials. Any competing or vested interest on the part of the producer or contributors must also be declared.**

**J) Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by commercial organisations must not influence the structure or materials.**

The materials will not be approved if there is bias towards use of any commercial product that does not represent current evidence-based professional practice.

**K) Be flexible and free from unreasonable geographical and resource (hardware and software) implications and time constraints that will restrict access to use**

Users should be able to work at their own pace and at any time with the ability to stop and continue with the module or programme when desired.

**L) Provide facilities to enable users to evaluate the product.**

To determine user-satisfaction; to provide feedback from the user to the provider and to the CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel; and to determine the products influence on the user's performance, behaviour and clinical practice.

**M) The provider's evaluation record for previous or on-going products must be satisfactory or, where not, reasons for unsatisfactory ratings must have been addressed.**

**N) Upon successful completion of the product, the user must be provided with a certificate stating the user's name and details, results from the assessment section, CPD Distance-Learning Credits awarded and CPD approval code.**

The user is advised to keep a copy of the certificate for audit purposes.

## **Expiry date and suggested credits**

When submitting a distance-learning product for evaluation and approval, providers should suggest to the CPD Office the number of CPD Distance-Learning Credits to be awarded and an expiry date for CPD approval. Current and expected advances within the subject area should be taken into account when considering the expiry date. The expiry date must be no longer than two years after the date the product is approved for CPD. When CPD approval has expired, providers will have an opportunity to revise their work and submit a new application for CPD approval.

## **5. CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel**

An evaluation of the product will be conducted by two members of the Panel. The Panel will include the Federation's Regional CPD advisers and specialty representatives, other consultant physicians drawn from the medical specialties, and professionals noted for their expertise in non-clinical issues. Members of the Panel **will not be disclosed** to providers at any time during or after the evaluation and approval process.

The Panel members will assess the value of the product as a CPD resource using the criteria outlined in section 4. The Panel members will be asked to complete a CPD Distance-Learning Evaluation Form (also available to providers on the CPD website).

The Panel members will recommend to one of the Federation's Directors of Continuing Professional Development that the product be:

- Approved - including the suggested expiry date and number of CPD credits
- Approved - subject to minor amendments
- Not approved and referred back to the provider with reason(s)

If the product is approved subject to minor amendments the product may be resubmitted once in these circumstances. (See section 9 for further information)

## **6. Appeals**

In case of disagreement between the provider and the assessors an appeal must be made in writing. The matter will be referred to two Directors of CPD of the Federation's three Colleges. The final decision will rest with the Directors. An extension of the review period should be expected in these circumstances.

## **7. Terms and Conditions for Providers Indicating CPD Approval by the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians**

Upon written confirmation of approval the provider will be asked to agree to the terms and conditions for indicating CPD approval on the packaging, communications media and any promotional material.

- The following statement (or words similar) must be indicated on the packaging, front-end screen and certificate (see below) – “This product has been approved for ‘x’ Distance-Learning Credits by the CPD Scheme of the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. The expiry date for CPD approval is *month / year.*”
- Where applicable (e.g. with CD-ROMs and printed materials) providers must deposit a functioning copy of the final version of their work with the CPD Office.
- The product will automatically be removed from the electronic events database at the end of the approval period.
- Providers must be able to demonstrate that the following systems have been set up and included within or alongside the product:
  - Issuing of certificates to and keeping of records of those physicians awarded CPD Distance-Learning Credits. Certificates should contain the following: physician’s name, CPD credits awarded, a CPD activity code **and the issue date of the certificate.**
  - A CPD activity code or codes will be issued to the provider upon approval. The activity code will be valid until the end of the agreed expiry date.
  - Individuals utilising a product must not be able to access the electronic or print copies of certificates, records and self-assessment scores of other users that are held by the provider.
  - Collection of feedback – relevance, quality and effectiveness – from physicians regarding the use of the product. A report summarising the results of any feedback must be provided to the CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel on an annual basis or upon request.
- The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians reserves the right to withdraw CPD approval at any time, should it feel that any of the above terms and conditions has been contravened, in which case the provider must no longer communicate that their distance-learning product has been approved for CPD by the Federation.

## **8. Submitting a Distance-learning product- completing the application**

Please use the official application form to submit a package for approval or copy the headings onto a separate document exactly as they appear on the official application form. Providers should **submit a detailed résumé** of the product under the following main headings:

## 1) BASIC DETAILS

### Title of Module or Programme

#### Proposed start/launch date and proposed expiry date

Current and expected future advances within the subject area should be taken into account when considering the expiry date. The expiry date should be no longer than two years after the date the work is approved for CPD.

#### Number of Hours for a User to complete programme

Provide an accurate assessment of how much time is required for a User to complete the programme in full

#### Suggested CPD Credits

1 CPD credit = 1 full hour of learning/educational content

Please round up for every additional 30 minutes and round down for everything less than 30 minutes. For example 1hour 30 minutes = 2 CPD Credits 1hour 15 minutes = 1 CPD Credit

#### Target Audience

Include professional role and specialty for example: Consultants, Rheumatology Please note the educational content of the programme must be primarily aimed at consultants and post training physicians

*Please see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialties/Pages/Specialty.aspx> for Federation supported specialties*

#### Fees to be charged to Users

Details of any charges to Users for using the programme or accessing the module

#### Contact Details of Provider/Applicant

Details of an individual(s) to whom we can primarily discuss administrative and educational issues to do with the application

## 2) AUTHORITY

Please provide contact details of *all* parties involved in the programme. For example: author, reviewer, I.T Developer. Also provide the names of any sponsors involved in the programme as well as what sort of sponsorship they are providing. For example: Donation towards the costs associated with building a website for the programme/ producing a workbook for Users.

## 3) FORMAT OF THE PROGRAMME/MODULE

The clinician who reviews the application for accreditation needs to be able to replicate the full process a User would experience when accessing the distance learning programme/module. Therefore please:

- For online programmes which require a log in: provide us with access details. (Website address, username and password etc.) If the website is still under construction or not yet live- a log in for a test/development area or temporary site is acceptable as long as it is nearing completion. NB: If you do provide us with a log in for a temporary area please provide details of minor changes which may be made or additional information which will be included when the site is completed and launched.
- Provide all materials which a User would require to complete the distance learning programme- for example: workbook and CD Rom.
- Provide assessment questions on which a User is assessed *and an answer key*.
- Provide evidence that interactivity between the User and the programme exists and demonstrate how/where this is present.
- Provide 1 x emailed copies of all of the above materials and application form. (See contact details on Page 6)

#### **4) ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**

What systems are in place to issue certificates, register CPD credits gained and collect feedback from Users?

What is/is there any assessment criteria and pass rate required of a User to achieve CPD Credits on completion of the programme?

#### **5) LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

**Please provide a minimum of 3 learning objectives associated with the programme**

The objectives should reflect measurable outcomes, and use action verbs such as “evaluate,” “identify,” “review” etc.

Include details about what the distance learning material hopes to achieve, and how this will be put in practice.

For example, has the package been developed to raise awareness of a particular issue, or is it to update physicians on an ongoing study?

#### **6) OTHER INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION**

Please state here:

- That ‘all ethical and medico-legal considerations have been met’ to include copyright, patient consent and data protection. Please declare that there is no conflict of interest with regards to the commercial interest of any parties involved in the development/implementation and/or sponsorship of the package.
- Further details regarding intended Users, subjects and specialties

- Details and results of any market research and evaluative procedures
- Methods used to select information for inclusion in the programme (e.g. based on expert opinion, literature, research etc.)

Providers will need to send the following to the London College CPD Office (see section 10 – contact details):

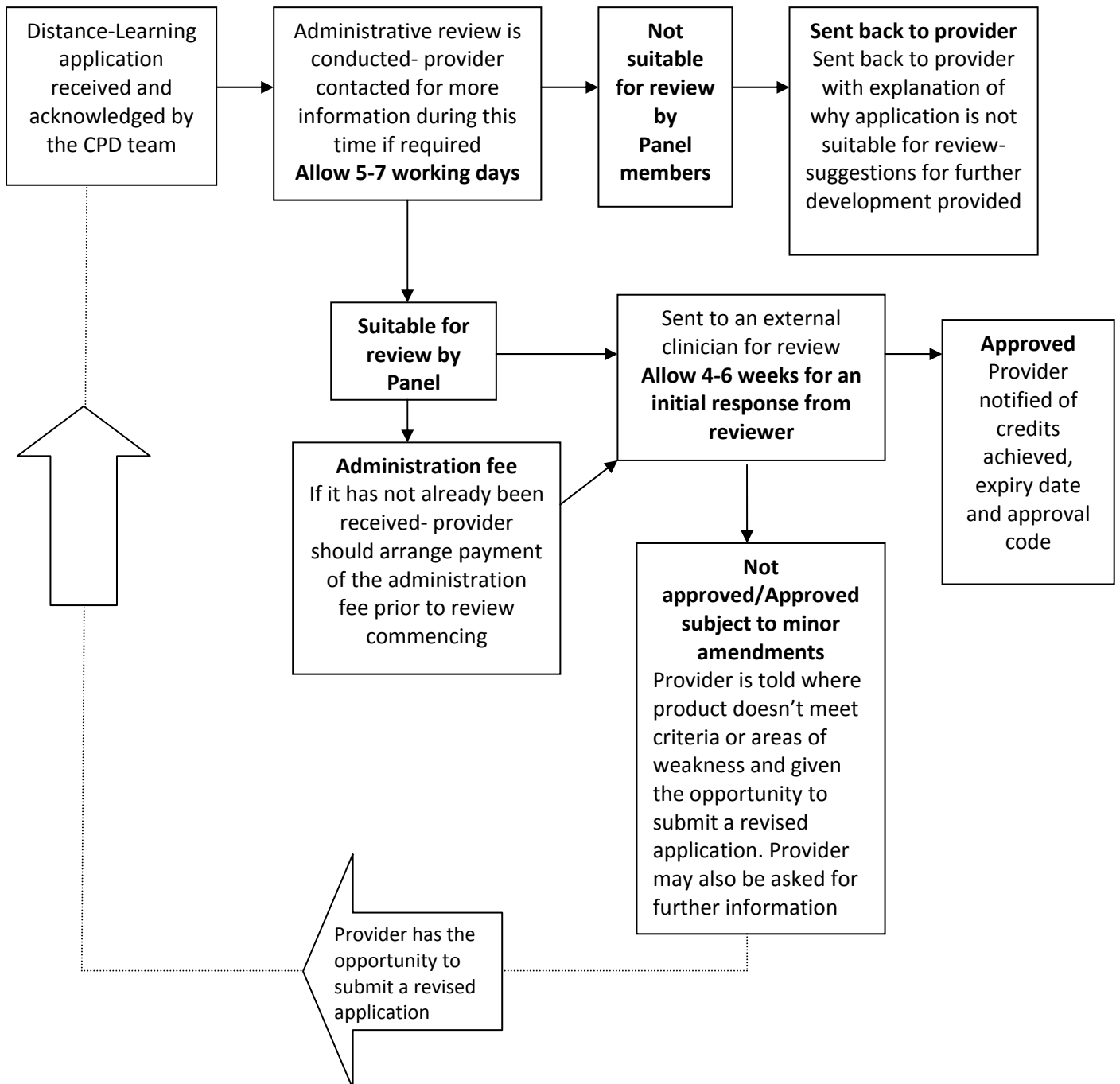
- An electronic copy of the Distance-Learning approval application form
- Log in and password details for online products where applicable
- Hard copies of any programme materials (e.g. Workbooks, Pen drive etc.) where an electronic version is not available
- Administration and evaluation fee for each product submitted for approval

### **Blended learning**

To apply for CPD approval of a blended learning product, providers are required to complete both the distance learning application form and event approval application form and submit them to the CPD office at the same time.

**(Please see overleaf for the distance-learning review time frame)**

## The Distance-Learning review time frame



## 9. Administration and Evaluation Fee

An administration and evaluation fee applies to any distance-learning application made to the Federation. This fee must be paid in advance of an external review commencing and should be arranged and included when making a formal application.

Our fee structure is on a per credit basis and charges are as follows:

<b>NUMBER OF CREDITS</b>	<b>COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>NON-COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS (excluding VAT)</b>
1	£500	£250
2	£1000	£300
3	£1500	£350
4	£2000	£400
5	£2500	£450
6	£3000	£500
7	£3500	£550
8	£4000	£600
9	£4500	£650

- If an application is *not approved* for CPD credits, or an application is withdrawn by the provider, then the non-refundable 1 credit administration fee will be retained (£500 + VAT for commercial providers and £250 + VAT for non-commercial providers).

The commercial fees apply to:

- 1) Commercial providers producing a distance learning product (including joint productions with medical societies)
- 2) Commercial providers making an application or producing the product on behalf of a non-commercial organisation. This includes situations where the commercial provider is the host or provides a platform for a non-commercial product to exist
- 3) Non-commercial providers receiving financial support and/or contributions towards the cost of developing, launching or maintenance of a distance learning product from a commercial organisation
- 4) Products sponsored by or jointly produced with a pharmaceutical, industrial or commercial company.

Please note:

- If, when an application is evaluated and it is approved for more CPD Credits than estimated at the application stage, the provider will be requested to pay the additional fee per credit above the original payment amount to receive the full CPD approval.

- If an application is approved subject to amendments the provider will have one opportunity to amend the product accordingly and re-submit a revised application.  
If the amendments are not made as required and therefore the application is rejected, a new application may be submitted later, but a new fee will be charged.

### **Arranging payment**

Payment can be made using one of the following options:  
(Contact details below)

- 1) Complete the credit card payment section of the application form.  
Alternatively telephone the CPD office to make a credit or debit card payment. NB: We do not accept American Express.
- 2) Send a cheque made payable to 'The Royal College of Physicians' – marking the product title and provider name on the back of the cheque for reference.
- 3) Request an invoice (by email or telephone) - providing us with the following details: the title of the product, name and address to send the invoice to and a purchase order number or reference.

If clarification or advice is required as to which fee applies- please contact the London CPD Office to discuss the applicable fees. (See Section 10) In these cases we will need to see a sample of the product or a completed application form in order to offer fee guidance.

### **Review of Fee Structure**

The fee structure and policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that charges are realistic and equitable.

#### **CHECK LIST:**

***Before submitting your application, please check that you have:***

- Read and understood our distance learning guidelines and completed all sections of the application form in full, providing a detailed résumé of the programme. (incomplete application forms will not be accepted)
- Provided an electronic copy of the Distance Learning approval application form, module and programme (see contact details below)
- Provided active online log in details/URL to access the programme where applicable

- Compiled postal copies of any programme materials (e.g Workbook, CD Rom etc.) *where an electronic version is not available*
- Included an answer key to any method of assessment which is part of the programme
- Enclosed a cheque for the administration fee with the programme title marked on the reverse for reference Or Completed and enclosed a credit card form for the administration fee Or Requested an invoice
- Enclosed any additional information which may be useful during the review process

## 10. Contact Details

- **The Federation of the Royal College of Physicians of the United Kingdom Federation CPD Office - Distance-Learning**  
 Royal College of Physicians of London  
 11 St Andrews Place  
 Regent's Park  
 London  
 NW1 4LE  
  
**Contact:** Jayne Bates  
**Tel:** 0203 075 1516  
**Fax:** 020 7487 4156  
**Email:** cpd@rcplondon.ac.uk or jayne.bates@rcplondon.ac.uk  
**Websites:**  
[www.rcplondon.ac.uk](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk)  
[www.rcpsg.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk)  
[www.rcpe.ac.uk](http://www.rcpe.ac.uk)
- **The Federation of the Royal College of Physicians of the United Kingdom is a working partnership of three Colleges:**
  - Royal College of Physicians of London
  - Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
  - Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow