

Continuing Professional Development

Distance-Learning Modules and Programmes

Guidelines for Approval

Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians

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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 three UK Royal Colleges of Physicians of London, Edinburgh and Glasgow) has developed policies and criteria for CPD activity for all medical specialties in the UK.

The Federation has developed a CPD scheme:

- 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, on an annual basis, a minimum of 50 CPD Credits, of which 25 must be External Credits. External Credits can be registered by physicians attending events outside their hospital or trust such as regional, national or international conferences and study days.

The Federation has introduced an Approved Distance-Learning Credit category in order to acknowledge the increasingly available high quality online educational opportunities that can be accessed from home or the workplace, without the need for physicians to cancel their usual work schedule. Physicians can register a maximum of 7 Approved Distance-Learning Credits towards their minimum annual requirement of 25 External Credits. **Physicians can only register Distance-Learning Credits from modules or programmes that have been approved for this purpose by the Federation.**

When submitting a distance-learning module or programme for evaluation and approval, providers are invited to 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 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. When CPD approval has expired, providers will have an opportunity to revise their work and submit a new application for CPD approval.

3. Distance-Learning Communications Media

Distance-learning can be defined as providing education through print or electronic communications media 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 modules or programmes 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
- Through paper-based learning packages

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 modules or programmes submitted to the CPD Office for consideration and approval must meet the criteria listed in 4.1 to 4.15. Two members of the CPD Distance-Learning Evaluation Panel (see section 8) will be asked to make a recommendation based on these criteria.

All modules or programmes eligible for approval should:

4.1. Identify and state the target audience.

The target audience must fall within the remit of the Federation (a list of recognised medical specialties can be found on the CPD website) and must be clearly identified in terms of professional role and specialty. The Federation CPD scheme is intended for Consultants and Staff and Associate Specialist Grades.

4.2. 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.

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

Modules or programmes 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 skill (e.g. teaching, appraisal or assessment).

4.4. Provide good quality content covering the subject matter.

Content is based on up-to-date best practice as advised by experts or opinion leaders in the field, and will deliver the module's or programme's learning objectives.

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

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

4.6. Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by a commercial organisation must be declared in the module or programme material. Any competing or conflict of interest on the part of the producer or contributors must also be declared.

4.7. Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by commercial organisations must not influence the structure or content of the module or programme.

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

4.8. Incorporate the key principles of adult learning to enhance knowledge, attitudes and skills and to develop understanding of content and context¹.

4.9. Provide interactivity between the user and material to enhance the learning process.

4.10. 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.

4.11. 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 (for clinical modules or programmes we recommend a ‘best-of five’ format) or submission of a portfolio of work.

4.12. Provide facilities to enable users to evaluate the module or programme.

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 module’s or programme’s influence on the user’s performance, behaviour and clinical practice.

4.13. The provider’s evaluation record for previous or on-going modules or programmes must be satisfactory or, where not, reasons for unsatisfactory ratings must have been addressed.

4.14. Upon successful completion of the module or programme, the user must be provided with a certificate stating the user’s name and details,

¹ As best practice, we recommend that the module or programme should contain features that encourage reflective practice, peer learning/interaction with peers and problem-based or task driven approaches to learning.

results from the assessment section, CPD Distance-Learning Credits awarded and CPD approval code.²

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

4.15. Indicate the likely time required to complete the package, and the number of CPD Distance-Learning Credits to be awarded.

This information must be stated at the beginning of the work and on any packaging.

5. Applying for CPD Approval

Providers should **submit a detailed résumé** of the product under the following main headings.

Title of Module or Programme

Authority

Parties involved (author, reviewer, sponsor, publisher, etc) including details of status and qualifications.

Contact Details of Provider

To discuss educational, administrative and technical issues.

Format

Details of the medium (e.g. CD-ROM), special requirements (hardware or software) to use the module or programme and access details (website address, username and password...)

Suggested CPD Credits and Expiry Date for the Module or Programme

Administrative Arrangements

Systems in place to issue certificates, register CPD credits gained and collect feedback; proposed date of release and sales price; indication that all ethical and medico-legal considerations have been met.

Other Information in Support of Application

Intended users and subject / specialty, and details and results of any market research and evaluative procedures; objectives of the package and educational value to the user; assessment method employed, and self-assessment pass rate required for CPD credits; methods used to select information for inclusion (e.g. based on expert opinion, literature searches, etc).

² The CPD Distance-Learning Credits awarded and CPD approval code will be confirmed by the CPD Office immediately after the submitted module and programme has been approved.

6. Administration and Evaluation Fee

Fees for Programmes

An evaluation fee for **each** distance-learning **programme** submitted will be charged:

- Produced by a non-commercial provider (including medical societies*) £250 plus VAT
- Produced by a commercial provider (including joint productions with medical societies) **£1,500 plus VAT**
- Sponsored by or jointly produced with a pharmaceutical, industrial or commercial company **£1,500 plus VAT**

* This reduced fee will not apply if the programme is produced by a commercial provider, who incorporates expert input from a Royal College or Faculty and then distributes the work on a commercial basis.

Fees for Modules

Where a distance learning programme consists of a series of modules produced at regular intervals, the full charge will apply for up to three modules. For a single module the charge will be approximately pro rata, or £500 plus VAT for commercial providers and £100 plus VAT for non-commercial providers.

Review of Fee Structure

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

7. Submitting a Distance-Learning Module or Programme

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

- Three copies of the module or programme (or access details)
- Detailed résumé of the product (see section 5)
- Administrative and evaluation fee for each module or programme submitted (see section 6) – cheques should be drawn on a UK bank and made payable to the *Royal College of Physicians of London*.

8. CPD Distance Learning Evaluation 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 the evaluation and approval process.

Two members of the Panel will evaluate each module or programme. The Panel members will assess the relative value of the programme 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 (available on the CPD website).

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

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

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 (see section 9).

9. Appeals.

In case of disagreement between the provider and the assessors the matter will be referred to two Directors of CPD of the Federation's three Colleges. The final decision will rest with the Directors.

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

- The following statement (or words similar) must be indicated on the packaging, front-end screen and certificate (see below) – “This module/programme has been approved for Distance-Learning Credits for the CPD Scheme of the Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. Approval is for x credits. The expiry date for CPD approval is *month / year*.”
- **The module or programme will automatically be removed from the electronic events database at the end of the approval period.**
- Where applicable (e.g. with CD-ROMs and printed materials) producers must deposit three copies of the final version of their work with the CPD Office.
- Providers must be able to demonstrate that the following systems have been set up and included with the module or programme:
 - 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 (see below) **and the issue date of the certificate.**
 - Individuals completing a module or programme 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.
 - 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.

- Collection of feedback – relevance, quality and effectiveness – from physicians regarding the use of the package. 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 have been contravened, in which case the provider must no longer communicate that their distance-learning module or programme has been approved for CPD by the Federation.

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

 Tel: 020 7935 1174 ext. 422
 Fax: 020 7487 4156
 Email: cpd@rcplondon.ac.uk
 Websites: www.rcplondon.ac.uk/professional/cpd/index.htm
 www.rcpe.ac.uk/education/CPD/index.php
 www.rcpsg.ac.uk/Education/CPDTools/FederationCPD/
- **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**