

Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities

Background

In August 2019, the Optometry Board of Australia (OBA) announced changes to the Registration Standard and CPD Guidelines for optometry, which become/became effective on 1st December 2020.

In response to the changes, Optometry Australia (OA) launched its Institute of Excellence in 2019, which has been purpose-built to ensure that optometrist members can identify and access high quality CPD which is quality-assured by Optometry Australia. These guidelines have been developed to assist CPD Providers seeking Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance of CPD activities.

Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance is not required by the OBA, but it enables CPD providers to:

- Promote educational activities or events on Optometry Australia's Institute of Excellence CPD Calendar
- Promote educational activities or events with a time-based CPD logo/badge provided for advertising purposes
- Upload attendance data so that the amount of CPD hours undertaken by optometrists can be automatically uploaded to their CPD portfolio and learning plan
- Further promote educational activities or events via a course module and dedicated page on Optometry Australia's online learning platform
- Have independent learning educational activities hosted by Optometry Australia's online learning platform, with the content managed and CPD hours allocated to optometrists upon completion of the activity

Quality Assurance of CPD activities, and associated Institute of Excellence promotion of the activity, is valid until the activity has been conducted or, in the case of independent learning activities, until the end of the CPD cycle in which the Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance is applied for.

In seeking Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance, CPD providers are agreeing that the information they provide regarding their CPD offering is accurate and comprehensive, and that Optometry Australia will be advised of changes that may impact the assessment of the activity, such as a change in presenter or content.

Optometry Australia retains the right to not quality assure CPD offerings, at its discretion.

Criteria for OA Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance of CPD Activities

Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance provides a signal to optometrists that the CPD activity has been designed to meet OBA requirements and to meet quality criteria specified by Optometry Australia. To that end, the following criteria will be considered when assessing CPD activities for Quality Assurance under the Institute of Excellence.

a) Quality of Education

The content of the activity must reflect accepted optometric practice based on critical appraisal of the scientific literature. Activities promoting theories and techniques that are not supported by scientific evidence, nor generally accepted by the optometric profession will not be eligible. Any materials presented should be current, relevant and at an appropriate level of education for Australian optometrists. Non-clinical content must address issues that support optometrists to provide safe, quality care to their patients and communities, or support the personal and/or business development of the individual in a way relevant to the practice of their profession. This content must also reflect best-practice in the relevant field.

The educational format should reflect research-based, proven, best educational practice principles. Activities should be engaging and effective in delivering the stated learning objective/s. Providers may be requested to make improvements to the delivery or content of any materials in order for their activity to pass the quality-assurance process.

b) Ethical and legal standards

CPD activities must comply with the OBA's Code of Conduct for optometrists and accepted ethical standards expected within health services and higher education providers.

When presenting information about patients (e.g. case reports, diagnostic test results), care must be taken to ensure that the identities of patients are not disclosed. Where this is not possible (e.g. in the use of images), the informed consent of patients must be obtained.

Content that is subject to copyright should not be presented unless relevant permissions have been sought and granted.

c) Learning objectives

The Institute of Excellence is designed to assist optometrists to participate in a range of CPD activities that are both relevant and engaging for individual optometrists' development. In choosing CPD activities, optometrists are required to assess their personal CPD learning goals and develop a learning plan, which outlines the desired outcomes of undertaking CPD activities within specific topic areas.

To assist optometrists to make relevant choices, it is required that CPD activities list the expected learning objective/s in a manner that completes the following statement:

“At the completion of this CPD Activity, participants should be able to...”

Optometrists will then be better placed to make decisions on what CPD to undertake in line with their own self-assessed learning needs.

Providers applying for Optometry Australia’s Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance must provide at least one (1) learning objective for each CPD activity.

Activity classification, time calculation and allocation

Each quality assured activity will be allocated an activity classification and an estimated time allocation. For a CPD activity to be granted Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance, it must be at least 15 minutes in duration (or equivalent for independent learning activities).

The time taken undertaking a CPD activity will be calculated based on rounding principles and allocated in the manner outlined in the table below left below (on an ongoing pro-rata basis). If a CPD activity is certified, it may be promoted using the Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance logo/badge (as shown in Figure 2 below).

Figure 1: CPD activity time allocation

Activity Duration	Time based CPD hours allocated
<15 minutes	0.00 hours
15-29 minutes	0.25 hours
30-44 minutes	0.50 hours
45-59 minutes	0.75 hour
60-74 minutes	1.00 hours
75 – 89 minutes	1.25 hours
90-104 minutes	1.50 hours



Advertisements within an activity will not be considered as part of the minimum written text, audio or visual duration of a CPD activity.

For independent learning CPD activities, for every learning hour, it is expected that each activity will include at least 3000 words of optometry-related text or equivalent amount of content delivered via audio or visual means.

OA Institute of Excellence Logo/Badge Use

OA has developed the OA Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance Logo/Badge to clearly identify CPD activity classification and time allocation in order to remove ambiguity for all CPD providers and optometrists. Each new application for OA Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance will be assessed in isolation. It is important to remember that a provider who has had CPD activities quality assured previously should not presume that any/all subsequent activities shall also receive quality assurance. Once each individual application has successfully undergone the quality assurance process, CPD Providers will then be supplied with and are able to promote the CPD activity with the OA Institute of Excellence's Quality Assurance logo/badge. The colour palette is an integral part of OA's branding – as such, the logo/badge is not to be reproduced in any other colour or format.

Providers should not advertise or promote their CPD activities as being Quality Assured by OA until this is confirmed in writing and the respective logo/badge has been supplied. Use of a logo/badge supplied to a provider on a previous occasion for use in the promotion of a subsequent/future CPD activity which has not yet been quality assured is strictly prohibited. OA reserves the right to take appropriate action, at its own discretion, if contravention of any of these requirements occurs.

Providers must ensure that as part of their application, they clearly classify each activity or session with the options below. Each activity will be assessed and classified as a combination of the following:

- Clinical or non-clinical session
- Therapeutic or non-therapeutic session
- Interactive or non-interactive session

Clinical or non-clinical classification

CPD activities or sessions will be classified as clinical in nature where the proposed content is related to ocular or systemic conditions involved in the care of a patient. This may include but is not limited to all aspects of a patient examination including history taking, diagnosis, management, referral and prescribing of optical or therapeutic appliances and agents. Clinical activities must deal with ocular conditions, systemic conditions with ocular effects, vision and visual perception, optometric management and/or ophthalmological management.

Non-clinical/non-scientific activities (which shall be denoted with the descriptor "N") must be relevant to practice and improve the management of patients in some tangible way. CPD activities or sessions may be classified as non-clinical in nature where the proposed content is not directly related to the clinical care of the patient. This may include but is not limited to topics such as patient billing, business management, law, psychology, foreign languages, first aid, occupational health and safety, cultural awareness & training and business or personal development needs.

Each application will be assessed to ensure that the correct classification is attributed to each session and allocated accordingly.

Therapeutic or non-therapeutic classification

A CPD activity relevant to scheduled medicines endorsement has been defined by the Board as an educational activity that meets the learning goals of the optometrist relevant to any stage of therapeutic management, as described below.

Therapeutic management involves the following stages:

- patient assessment
- differential diagnosis of conditions of the eye
- development of a management plan
- appropriate choice of medicines (this may involve writing a prescription, ceasing medicines, dose adjustment and advising on over-the-counter medicine)
- advice to the patient about the appropriate use of the medication
- development of a treatment plan
- monitoring outcome
- administration
- supply (if required) and completing any necessary documentation
- understanding and engaging in collaborative care models with other health professionals

In order for activities to be quality-assured as therapeutic CPD activities they must meet this definition. A CPD activity relevant to scheduled medicines endorsement shall be denoted with the descriptor “T”, which refers to the word “therapeutic”, if at least 50% of the educational content relates to any of the stages of therapeutic management as outlined above.

Interactive or non-interactive classification

In order for a CPD activity or session to be Quality Assured as interactive, the Provider must show that the format will provide an opportunity for attendees to engage with the presenter and other attendees. This exchange of information must be done in real time and may include technology (e.g. polling), hands on workshop activities or small group discussions. In order for content to be classified as interactive (which shall be denoted with a lower case “i” descriptor) a substantial proportion (at least an expected 25%) of the activity must involve an exchange of information between the practitioners.

Assessment

There are no requirements for CPD activities to include assessment in order to be quality-assured by Optometry Australia. However, assessment and feedback components can complement and enrich learning experiences.

Interactive and non-interactive activities are eligible for additional time allocation if the CPD activity includes an assessment component which includes a feedback mechanism to participants at the time of assessment or a reasonable time after the activity so they can review their results against the correct answer.

Assessment activities will take optometrists different times to complete. Through the quality-assurance process an expected time allocation for assessment elements will be made. This allocation will be credited to the learning plan and CPD portfolio of optometrists completing the activity. It remains the responsibility of the optometrist to amend the time taken for the activity if this does not match the time estimated and allocated.

In deciding whether an assessment component will be included as part of the Quality Assurance process, providers should consider the following criteria:

- All assessment should be directly linked to the learning objectives of the activity
- Inclusion of assessment should add value and quality to the activity
- Providers, or examiners engaged by providers, are expected to have the appropriate skills and experience to design appropriate assessment questions
- Assessment questions need to be included with the application for Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance

Where multiple choice assessment questions are included at the conclusion of an educational activity, the time allocation shall be applied based on the guiding principle of **15 minutes for each set of 5 multiple choice questions attempted**. It is recommended that for multiple choice style assessment a pass mark of at least 50% is required in order for the additional CPD time to be allocated. Multiple attempts may be offered.

Where assessment is included in short answer or essay form, the time allocation shall be applied based on the duration required by the optometrist to complete the question/s.

For educational modules where there are assessment components throughout the activity, the provider may apply for Quality Assurance based on an expected overall time period it should take the optometrist to complete.

It remains the responsibility of the optometrist accessing the CPD to amend the time taken for the completion of assessment.

Feedback on Quality of CPD Activities

Optometry Australia is dedicated in ensuring that there is an extensive range of high quality CPD activities available for optometrists to meet their CPD requirements. It is vital for the ongoing provision of quality CPD activities that providers seek feedback from participants of the CPD activities that they provide. The feedback may take many formats and may occur at the time of the activity or after the activity.

Feedback on the quality of the CPD activity should:

- be in a format to encourage optometrists to provide quality feedback
- check if the optometrist believed the activity was aligned with the stated learning objectives
- provide optometrists with the opportunity to reflect on how the activity met their learning goals
- be based on aspects relating to the educational content

Optometrists concerned about the quality of any CPD activity that they have undertaken shall be encouraged to notify Optometry Australia of their concerns, which may result in an investigation or audit being undertaken.

Audit of CPD Providers

Optometry Australia may, at any time (i.e. in real time or retrospectively), audit the CPD activities provided by CPD Providers in order to assess compliance with Optometry Australia's Institute of Excellence quality-assurance criteria.

As such, CPD Providers should maintain materials relating to all CPD activities for a period of two (2) years following the date of provision of the CPD activity.

If it is determined by Optometry Australia that a Provider has failed to ensure the delivery of quality education in the manner that they had advised, the Provider may become ineligible for Optometry Australia's Institute of Excellence quality-assurance of future activities for a period determined by the organisation.

The delivery of quality education includes monitoring/recording attendance and participation of optometrists and subsequent electronic upload of attendance data within the Provider Portal.

Appendix: Tier options and fee schedule

Quality Assurance Tier options and fee schedule

Optometry Australia's Institute of Excellence Quality Assurance fees vary with the duration of the CPD activity and whether the activity has already been run in that CPD registration period. There are additional fees for late applications or if the provider chooses to take the opportunity to promote and/or host the educational content on Optometry Australia's online learning platform, which helps ensure the activity is promoted to optometrists.

Application type	Duration of activity	Cost	Benefits
Tier 1: Initial application fee (minimum 28 days before course date)	0 minutes – 3 hours (180 minutes)	\$200	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours
	3 hours and 1 minute – 6 hours (181 minutes - 360 minutes)	\$400	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours
	> 6 hours (361+ minutes)	\$750	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours
Tier 2: Course shell in Optometry Australia's online learning platform with redirection to Provider website		\$200 in addition to Tier 1 fee	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours Additional course shell on online platform redirecting optometrists to external course page
Tier 3: Online course promoted, hosted and managed on Optometry Australia's online learning platform		Price on Application	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours Event promotion on OA online learning platform Online content uploaded and managed by OA with CPD hours allocated automatically upon completion

Special and additional fees			
Repeat activity (within same CPD registration period)		\$100	Event promotion in Institute Calendar Time-based logo/badge provided for promotion Automatic uploading of CPD hours
Urgent application fee (within 28 days of course date)		\$150 in addition to Tier 1, 2 or 3 fee	