



Developing a learning plan for continuing professional development

Three simple steps to a practical learning plan

CPD gives you and your patients confidence that you are engaged with and benefit from the evolving knowledge base within the profession. It also provides you with an opportunity to pursue professional interests and advance your professional skill set. A meaningful learning plan with identified, practical goals can increase your personal satisfaction and professional achievement in your role as an optometrist.

An annual CPD learning plan is also a requirement to maintain registration as an optometrist in Australia.

Remember, the OBA CPD Registration standard requires all optometrists to complete the following within each registration period:

- 20 hours of CPD (or 30 hours for therapeutically endorsed optometrists)
- A minimum of five (5) hours which are interactive
- A maximum of five (5) hours which are non-clinical/non-scientific will count towards your overall annual tally

In this guide, we overview 3 simple steps to build a comprehensive annual learning plan using Optometry Australia's online resource. This resource is designed to support you to develop a learning plan that is relevant and practical, and aligned with the CPD Registration Standard requirements of the Optometry Board of Australia (OBA).

The Optometry Board of Australia's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Registration Standard requires registered optometrists to maintain a CPD portfolio/learning plan that documents their:

- learning goals
- planned CPD activities
- reflections on learnings

Optometry Australia's online learning plan resource has been designed specifically to support members to identify individual learning goals, identify CPD activities that will help meet these learning goals, plan to undertake CPD and to reflect on the educational activities completed.

Step 1: Goals

The first step in developing your CPD learning plan is defining your learning goals for the year. This requires a process of reflection on your professional strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, as well as on how you would like to develop your professional career.

Ideally, your learning goals will be set very early in each registration period and associated CPD cycle, though you may wish to adjust or make additions to these as further opportunities or areas for improvement become relevant throughout the year.

Optometry Australia's learning plan resource asks you to specify: What are your professional learning and development goals for this period, and which of these are of highest priority?

Identifying and specifying learning goals can seem challenging. The OBA has developed advice on identifying CPD learning goals, accessible via: <https://www.optometryboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/CPD.aspx>

Some simple tips to assist in identifying and developing learning goals are outlined below:

- Reflect on your areas of strengths and areas in which improvement may be required. This will help you to set goals designed to address areas needing improvement as well as goals directed at building on your strengths.
- Consider how you want to shape your future practice and structure learning goals designed to help you develop the appropriate skills and expertise.
- Staying across clinical advancements and advancements in best practice care across a range of areas is important for all optometrists. It may be useful to consider areas of practice within which you are aware you need to extend your knowledge based on recent advancements, and include goals to address these.
- Limit your priority learning goals to between four and six, to enable you to focus and build on your learning and development throughout the year. You may wish to supplement this with additional goals likely to be met through a single learning activity or series/suite of activities. Remember, it is expected that you will reflect on each CPD activity that you undertake throughout the period in terms of evaluating how it helped you achieve your learning goal.
- All practitioners have a responsibility to enhance their cultural awareness in order to help ensure they are offering care in a culturally safe context. For many, cultural awareness CPD activities will offer benefit.
- Specify what you are aiming to do (e.g. update knowledge, enhance skill, better understand) with regard to what specific area of practice, specific presentation or specific patient group (e.g. management of progressive myopia in childhood and adolescence or low vision aids available for patients).

The following are examples of learning goals:

- To update my knowledge and understanding of the diagnosis and management of [X]
- To learn about the current protocols for assessment and treatment of [X]
- To enhance my skill and confidence in effectively undertaking procedure [X]
- To enhance my cultural awareness and responsiveness and better understand how to offer culturally safe care

Step 2: Planning

Once you have set your learning goals, you need to plan how to address them over the course of the registration period. The key step here is identifying CPD activities that will support you to meet your learning goals.

Things to consider include:

- **Content:** Is the content aligned toward achieving your learning goals? Is it pitched at a level that will support you to extend your current knowledge/skills?
- **Presenters/Providers:** Do the speakers, authors or content-developers seem reputable?
- **Format:** Is the format of learning a good fit for you and what you are aiming to achieve? (For example, more traditional lecture-based updates provided by experts in a topic or field may be useful for meeting goals to update knowledge, whereas more interactive offerings that allow you to engage experts may be a better fit if you are wishing to delve deeper into different treatment options for a specific presentation).
- **Access:** Is the activity accessible at a time and place that suits you?

To assist in this regard, Optometry Australia's learning plan resource allows you to search all Institute of Excellence Quality Assured CPD offerings, using a broad range of search filters. In this way, you can identify CPD activities that are most likely to support you to meet your learning goals. Preferred CPD activities are able to be selected and uploaded to your online plan. Once you have completed an activity and submitted an evaluation/reflection, the colour-code will change from "grey" to "green" to signify its "completion" within your plan. For more details on how to use the online learning plan resource to upload activities you plan to do and record activities you have completed, see: <INSERT LINK HERE>

Step 3: Reflection

The OBA CPD Registration Standard requires optometrists to evaluate and reflect on their learnings and notate how it is expected to improve patient outcomes. Reflective practice is well established as a tool to support continual learning.

Reflective practice simply requires you to think about how a CPD activity meets your learning needs, and how the ‘take-home’ messages or practical skills gained can be used to improve day-to-day professional practice.

The OBA’s advice on ‘Reflecting on your continuing professional development’ is accessible via: <https://www.optometryboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/CPD.aspx>

The OBA CPD Registration Standard requires you to record your reflection on each CPD activity undertaken. This can be done simply within the Optometry Australia online learning plan resource.

To provide an appropriate reflection it is recommended that you consider and record the following:

1. The learning goal that the CPD activity was intended to meet
2. Your reflection on key learnings from the activity
3. Whether your learning goal was met (it may have only been partially met or not met at all)
4. Whether, and how, you will change your practice as a result of what you learned

After highlighting the learning goal the activity was intended to meet, it is recommended that you provide at a minimum, three (3) to four (4) sentences outlining your reflection.

Within your reflection you may also want to consider:

- If the activity highlighted an interest in, or need for, gaining further information or skills
- Making a plan to change relevant practices or procedures in your workplace
- The experience provided by the CPD provider, and if you will use them again

Examples of what the OBA considers to be appropriate and inappropriate reflections can be found in their ‘Template- CPD portfolio’ via: <https://www.optometryboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/CPD.aspx>

You should also note that the OBA has advised that if a CPD activity did not meet your learning goal, you are still able to count the time spent undertaking the activity toward your accrued CPD hours, provided that you note why the activity didn’t support you to meet your goal and what you plan to do to meet that goal.