

**Continuing Professional
Development Framework for
Pharmacists in Northern Ireland
June 2021
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For CPD period commencing 2024 – 2025

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About the Pharmaceutical Society NI

1. The Pharmaceutical Society NI is the regulatory body for pharmacists and pharmacies in Northern Ireland.
2. The primary purpose of the organisation is to ensure that practicing pharmacists in Northern Ireland are fit to practice, keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date, current and relevant and deliver high quality, safe care to patients and the public.
3. It is the responsibility of the regulator to protect and maintain public safety in pharmacy by:
 - setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the Register and for remaining on the Register;
 - maintaining a publicly accessible Register of pharmacists and pharmacy premises;
 - handling concerns about the fitness to practise of pharmacists, acting as a Concerns portal and protecting patients and the public; and
 - ensuring high standards of education and training for pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

Why the need for Continuing Professional Development?

4. CPD is the way in which you continue to learn throughout your career, so you keep your skills and knowledge up-to-date and you are able to practice safely and effectively. CPD is a process you will carry out throughout your whole career. It ensures you track and document your skills, knowledge and experience gained both formally and informally, beyond your initial education and training. CPD is not only formal courses but any activity from which you learn and develop.
5. CPD helps you to keep your practice and proficiency current in order that you maintain standards, improving patient and public confidence in the profession.

6. CPD is a requirement of your registration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI, so you need to meet our CPD standards to remain registered. As a legal requirement for all registered pharmacists in Northern Ireland, every registered pharmacist must meet the requirements of **Standard 5 of the Pharmaceutical Society NI's Code: [Professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance for pharmacists in Northern Ireland](#) – to maintain and develop professional knowledge, skills and competence.**

What is the CPD Framework?

7. [Article 4A of the Pharmacy \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1976 \(as amended\)](#) requires the Pharmaceutical Society NI to develop, publish and maintain a **CPD Framework** for all registered pharmacists in Northern Ireland.
8. The Framework sets the standard that is required for a registered pharmacist to maintain in order to continue to meet the standards of proficiency for the safe and effective practice of pharmacy.
9. The Framework outlines the statutory obligations of a pharmacist in relation to what they must do, how to do it and by when. It also outlines the process which commences if a CPD submission does not meet the standard required upon assessment.

Who must undertake CPD?

10. **All registered pharmacists** must complete an annual CPD submission and declaration to the Registrar, **by 31 May** or other date, as instructed by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI, except for those pharmacists who have been granted an exemption by the Registrar through the [Extenuating Circumstances](#) process (for more information regarding extenuating circumstances see pages 4 & 5).
11. CPD can be recorded and saved, throughout the CPD year, on the pharmacist's Membership Online (ROL) account in preparation for CPD

submission before the end of the CPD year.

12. The Regulator OnLine portal allows for the collation and submission of CPD portfolios for the majority of the CPD year with the new CPD submission period opening on 08 June (or nearest working day thereafter) and closing on 31 May.
13. Pharmacists who wish to submit a hard copy CPD portfolio must seek permission to do so from the Registrar by emailing their request, giving reasons for not wishing to submit via the ROL portal to cpd@psni.org.uk
14. Pharmacists submitting hard copy portfolios must ensure that the portfolio is received, by prior arrangement with the CPD Department, before 5.00pm on 31 May, or last working day before that date.
15. Certain categories of pharmacists will be exempt from CPD submission:
 - those granted an exemption by the Registrar following an application for extenuating circumstances;
 - those on the Visiting Practitioners Register who are undertaking requirements in their home state (in line with post Brexit arrangements); and
 - those that have applied for and have been granted voluntary withdrawal from the Register during the CPD year, i.e. no later than 31 May.

What happens if a pharmacist fails to comply with the CPD Framework?

16. Failure to comply with the requirement for CPD submission, or failure to engage with the process, may put a pharmacist's continued registration at risk.

Extenuating Circumstances

17. The [CPD legislation](#) permits the Registrar to consider granting

extenuating circumstances where the pharmacist has a 'reasonable excuse'.

18. Generally **unacceptable** circumstances which will not be taken into consideration by the Registrar include:
 - Short-term problems
 - Short-term illness
 - Family caring responsibilities
 - Unpaid leave
 - Annual leave
 - Career break
 - Non-serious disruptions or events such as holidays, travel, etc.
 - Excessive demands on personal time
 - Pressures of employment
 - Working occasional/minimal hours
 - Registration with another Regulator
 - Working outside Northern Ireland
 - Financial Problems
 - Unemployment
 - Decision to withdraw from the Register
 - Circumstances which have occurred outside the CPD year.
19. Generally **acceptable** circumstances are those that are beyond the normal difficulties experienced in life and have caused exceptional interference with the pharmacist's ability to work and/or undertake CPD activities and include:
 - Long-term illness
 - Acute personal or emotional circumstances
 - Hospitalisation
 - Family illness
 - Victim of crime
 - Criminal investigation, proceedings or other legal matters
 - Maternity leave
 - Paternity leave

20. There is no automatic entitlement to extenuating circumstances.
21. Pharmacists should apply within 21 days of becoming aware of the grounds that they consider to be extenuating circumstances.
22. The operational deadline for receipt of applications is **30 April** each year.
23. The Registrar will consider each application and advise of the outcome which could be:
 - request declined
 - requirement to complete a partial submission or
 - exemption from submission
24. The Registrar's decision is final.
25. The granting of extenuating circumstances relates only to the current CPD year and does not apply to any subsequent years.

Selection of Portfolios for Assessment

26. The Registrar has the authority to audit and assess all CPD submissions. A combined approach of random and focused selection will be used to select portfolios to be assessed (the size of sample to be directed by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI) including but not limited to the following criteria:
 - a random selection of a proportion of all CPD portfolios submitted;
 - all late CPD submissions;
 - all portfolios submitted by pharmacists who have changed their scope of practice in the past 12 months.
28. The IA will assess the portfolio against the published essential criteria and determine if the portfolio cycles have met all six criteria. The IA will then make a recommendation to the Registrar.
29. The IA's recommendation will be that the portfolio has:
 - met the required standard; or
 - not met the required standard.
30. If the IA concludes that the required standard has been met, the CPD portfolio will be marked as met standard.
31. If the IA concludes that the required standard is not met, the CPD portfolio will be subject to a verification assessment by a second IA.
32. If the second IA agrees that the standard has not been met, then the recommendation will be confirmed as 'not met standard'. The registrant will move to Reassessment 1.
33. If the second IA concludes the standard has been met, then the portfolio will be subject to an arbitration assessment by a third IA.
34. The decision of the third IA shall form the final recommendation to the Registrar.

Quality Assurance of Portfolios after first Assessment

Assessment Process

27. Each CPD portfolio selected for assessment will be allocated to an Independent Assessor (IA).
35. Two randomly selected portfolios, at the first assessment stage, are marked as control portfolios. These portfolios are assessed by all IAs and the results reviewed by the Registrar for quality control purposes.
36. The first IA to be assigned a control portfolio will be its assessor and only their recommendation will be binding. All other IAs will assess the portfolio for QA purposes only.

Figure 1: CPD Framework Requirements



*Notes on criteria – Unscheduled cycles must pass criteria 4 to 6 only (see figure 2 on page 10)

Amount & Type of CPD Required Form & Manner

37. Pharmacists must keep their CPD portfolio of evidence properly documented and must submit in the form and manner outlined by the Pharmaceutical Society NI.
38. Pharmacists must ensure that the recording format is as required by the Pharmaceutical Society NI. Those registrants wishing to submit a hard copy portfolio must follow the process as outlined at paragraphs 13 and 14.
39. Each scheduled cycle must be recorded as detailed under the four domains of successful learning (see Figure 2, page see 10). The exception to this rule is the recording of unscheduled cycles (see paragraph 51, page 8)
 - Reflection
 - Planning
 - Action
 - Evaluation
40. If selected for assessment, pharmacists must provide any additional supporting evidence, if requested by the Registrar and by the deadline specified by emailing their evidence to the CPD Department at cpd@psni.org.uk.
41. Any documentary evidence provided should be verifiable by a third party, where appropriate.

Current Scope of Practice

42. Pharmacists who change their scope of practice during the CPD year should include and evaluate CPD learning for both their former and new scope of practice.
43. It is essential that pharmacists can evidence how a learning cycle has been closed and the learning outcomes evaluated in practice.

44. The majority of CPD learning (at least 75%) must be evaluated directly in practice i.e. within the pharmacist's working environment during the CPD year. Some CPD learning can be evaluated only in a simulated test or environment (maximum 25%) to demonstrate how learning would be applied to a future situation. This also applies when evaluating learning related to a future change in practice or sector.
45. At least 75% of the total number of cycles must be directly evaluated within pharmacists' current practice and environment. In the case of reassessment at least 66% (2 cycles) must be directly evaluated within pharmacists' current practice and environment.
46. This allows up to 25% of the total number of cycles to have the learning outcomes evaluated using simulated practice or by evaluating their application to a situation in future practice or sectors. In the case of reassessment, up to 33% (1 cycle) can be learning related to a future change in practice or sector.
47. In considering CPD cycles for inclusion in their portfolios, pharmacists should take account of the range of their current scope of practice and environment. This includes the amount of time spent acting in an education supervisor (formerly pre-registration tutor) role.

Schedule and Unscheduled Learning

48. CPD cycles should be scheduled to address an identified learning need relating to the current scope of practice and environment.
49. A scheduled learning cycle is where a prior learning need has been identified and is addressed through a planned and structured approach.
50. At least 50% of CPD cycles must relate to scheduled learning activities.
51. An unscheduled learning cycle does not start with a *prior* identified learning need

and is often a reaction to circumstances that emerge during day to day working and which often requires immediate action, activity and outcomes.

It is the immediacy of the planning that distinguishes the unscheduled cycle from the pre-planning of the scheduled cycle. The essential criteria, Reflection, Planning, Action and Evaluation stages must be completed for all scheduled cycles. *For unscheduled learning cycles there is **no requirement to record the reflection and planning stages. Only action and evaluation are required.***

52. A maximum of 50% of CPD cycles may relate to unscheduled learning activities.

Minimum number of hours

53. A full CPD portfolio submission must include a minimum of 30 hours' CPD activity as recorded in the Action phase of the cycles. CPD activity must not include activity that is deemed as an application of learning.
54. A partial CPD portfolio submission must include a minimum of 15 hours' CPD activity as recorded in the Action phase of the cycles. CPD activity must not include activity that is deemed as an application of learning.
55. Although there is no limit to the number of CPD hours or cycles that the pharmacists can record and save in their ROL portfolio, pharmacists submitting more than 30 hours of CPD activity may be asked to specify the cycles amounting most closely to the 30-hour minimum requirement, that they want considered for assessment.

Number of Cycles

56. When selecting CPD cycles for their portfolio, pharmacists must submit no less than 4 and no more than 10 cycles.

Essential Criteria for Assessment

57. To meet the standard, CPD cycles must comply with the six essential criteria (see [Figure 2, page 10](#)) recorded under the

four domains of successful learning (see paragraph 39).

58. Pharmacists must demonstrate how they identified, planned and actioned the learning activity in response to an identified learning need.
59. In evaluation, at least 75% of the cycles (in the case of remediation, 2 cycles) must demonstrate how learning has been applied in the context of their current scope of practice and environment.

Standard Required

60. To meet the standard, all CPD portfolio submissions that are assessed must achieve a mark of 50% or more. This must include:
 - at least 50% of the number of submitted cycles; and
 - those cycles that meet standard must contain at least 50% of all CPD hours submitted.

Failure to Comply

61. Article 2 of the [CPD Regulations](#) is clear that a pharmacist will fail to meet the requirements if they:
 - do not comply with the requirement to submit a CPD portfolio;
 - do not comply with the requirements and conditions of the CPD Framework and the form and manner in which a portfolio must be submitted;
 - do not meet the required standard within the specified timeframe after remedial measures have been directed;
 - can be regarded as making a false declaration about their compliance with the terms of the CPD Framework.
62. Where a pharmacist is deemed not to have complied with the CPD Framework, Article 3 of the [CPD Regulations](#) gives the Registrar the powers to:
 - impose one or more remedial measures (Reassessment 1 and 2) in connection with CPD that does not meet the standard; or

- initiate steps to remove a pharmacist from the Register; or

- remove an annotation in respect of a specialist area of practice against a pharmacist's name in the Register.

Remedial measures where the standard is not met

63. Where a recommendation is made, after a verification or adjudication assessment, that a portfolio has not met the standard, the Registrar can apply remedial measures.
64. The first stage of remediation is Reassessment 1. This requires the pharmacist to submit 3 new CPD cycles, totaling a minimum of 10 hours, undertaken in the current CPD year (i.e., CPD activity undertaken since 01 June).
65. The pharmacist will have 9 weeks to submit a reassessment portfolio. This will be assessed for compliance against the essential criteria.
66. To meet the standard, a minimum of 2 of these cycles must achieve a mark of 50% or more and those cycles that meet standard must contain at least 50% of the CPD hours submitted.
67. The pharmacist's portfolio will be allocated to an Independent Assessor (IA).
68. The IA will assess the portfolio against the published essential criteria and determine if the portfolio cycles have met all six criteria. The IA will then make a recommendation to the Registrar.
69. The IA's recommendation will be that the portfolio has:
 - met the required standard; or
 - not met the required standard.

70. If the IA concludes that the required standard is not met, the CPD portfolio will be subject to a verification assessment by a second IA.
71. If the second IA agrees that the standard has not been met, then the recommendation will be confirmed as 'not met standard'.
72. If the second IA concludes the standard has been met, then the portfolio will be subject to an arbitration assessment by a third IA.
73. The decision of the third IA shall form the final recommendation to the Registrar.
74. The pharmacist only enters Reassessment 2 if their portfolio does not meet the required standard at Reassessment 1.
75. The second stage of remediation is Reassessment 2. The requirements and assessment process for Reassessment 2 are the same as those for Reassessment 1.
76. If the portfolio does not meet standard at Reassessment 2, the steps outlined in the [CPD Regulations](#) will be followed. This may lead to a decision to remove the pharmacist from the Register.

Appealing a decision to remove a name from the Register

77. A pharmacist has a statutory right to appeal, via the Statutory Committee, any decision to remove their name or to remove their annotation from the Register for CPD non-compliance.
78. The Registrar has the authority to suspend a pharmacist's registration while the appeal process is undertaken.

Figure 2: CPD Framework Essential Criteria

Reflection	1. Did the pharmacist identify a specific learning need(s)? 2. Did the pharmacist describe why they wanted to learn about this (the context for the learning activity)?
Planning	3. Did the pharmacist describe the learning activity/activities they plan to complete to meet the learning need(s)?
Action	4. Did the pharmacist include a summary of the related activities they have completed to meet the learning need(s) identified?
Evaluation	5. Did the pharmacist evidence how their practice has changed or will change after meeting the specific learnings identified? 6. Is it evident that the learning need(s) identified has/have been fully addressed within the specific cycle?
	Please note: Only the Action and Evaluation stages are required when completing an unscheduled cycle

Restoration of a name to the Register following removal for CPD non-compliance

79. An applicant may apply to the Registrar for restoration of a name or an annotation to a name to the Register any time after being removed for CPD non-compliance.
80. The applicant, under Regulations 10 (2 & 3) and 11 (2 & 3) of the [CPD Regulations](#), will be required to submit to the Registrar:
 - a completed application form for restoration to the Register;
 - payment of the prescribed fee;
 - a timeframe for the submission of a personal development plan; and
 - a CPD portfolio comprising between 4 and 10 cycles, a minimum of 30 hours' CPD learning activity and fully compliant with the requirements of this CPD Framework, within 3 months of the date of restoration to the pharmacist's name to the Register.
81. The portfolio will be subject to assessment by an independent assessor to ensure that it meets standard. Where the portfolio does not meet standard, the pharmacist will be required to re-submit those cycles that do not meet standard within a set timeframe.
82. Pharmacists making such CPD submissions, at or shortly after application, will not be required to make a CPD annual submission later in that CPD year.
83. The granting of a restoration to the Register by the Registrar is subject to the applicant's agreement to comply with the above requirements within the required timeframes.
84. Where an application for restoration of a name or an annotation to a name to the Register is refused, the applicant may appeal to the [Statutory Committee](#) of the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

Requirements on joining the Register

85. A pharmacist applying to join the Register, who has not been registered as a pharmacist or has not worked as a pharmacist within the last 12 months, will be required by the Registrar to make an early CPD submission for assessment. This requires the pharmacist to submit 3 CPD cycles, totaling a minimum of 10 hours, undertaken in the current CPD year (ie CPD activity undertaken since 01 June). This portfolio must be submitted within 2 months of the pharmacist joining the Register.
86. The portfolio will be subject to assessment by an independent assessor to ensure that it meets standard. Where the portfolio does not meet standard, the pharmacist will be required to re-submit those cycles that do not meet standard within a set timeframe. This portfolio must be submitted within 2 months of the pharmacist joining the Register
87. Pharmacists making such CPD submissions, at or shortly after application, may include the same cycles (only those which met standard) for their CPD annual submission later in that CPD year.

Requirements on re-joining the Register

88. A pharmacist applying to re-join the Register, having voluntarily withdrawn from the Register during a previous CPD year but having failed to submit a CPD portfolio for that year, will be required to make a full CPD portfolio submission within 2 months of re-joining the Register.
89. The portfolio will be subject to assessment by an independent assessor to ensure that it meets standard. Where the portfolio does not meet standard, the pharmacist will be required to re-submit those cycles that do not meet standard within a set timeframe.
90. Pharmacists making such CPD submissions, at or shortly after

application, may include the same cycles² (only those which met standard) for their CPD annual submission later in that CPD year.

91. Pharmacists will be required to meet any other requirements in place at the time of their application.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

92. When using examples from practice to evidence CPD learning, pharmacists must ensure that they maintain patient confidentiality as per the Pharmaceutical Society NI's [Code of conduct ethics and performance](#).
93. The Pharmaceutical Society NI keeps personal files/records on all registrants. All data is handled in confidence and in accordance with [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) 2018](#). The organisation's Data Protection Policy is available upon request.

Further Guidance

94. The [CPD Resources section](#) of the organisation's website can be used to access links to:
 - Relevant legislation
 - Guidance documents
 - Application forms
 - Recording format for paper submissions
 - Frequently asked questions

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