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Public Health Today

CPD audit – feedback for members

NOW that the continuing professional development (CPD) audit for the year 2016/17 is over, the time has come to provide our members with some feedback.

Overall, 90.2% of audit submissions were found to be satisfactory, but this means that nearly 10% were unsatisfactory. Looking back at the results, there were two main reasons for this:

- Fewer than 40 CPD credits were supported by a satisfactory reflective note

- Fewer than 25 CPD credits were clearly linked to the Personal Development Plan (PDP).

In this short article, we hope to provide you with some guidance as to how you can avoid these pitfalls should you be selected for audit next spring.

The General Medical Council (GMC) requires doctors to “reflect on what you have learnt from your CPD activities and record whether your CPD has had any impact (or is expected to have any impact) on your performance and practice. This will help you assess whether your learning is adding value to the care of your patients and improving the services in which you work.” This is confirmed by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and has been adopted and approved by FPH for all our members.

A current standard for a satisfactory audit is that “a minimum of 40 credits must be supported by reflective notes that have been assessed as ‘satisfactory’”. How do

we determine if a reflective note is satisfactory or not? FPH’s online CPD diary provides a framework of four questions to help guide members when reflecting on their CPD activities. On page 34 of the FPH’s CPD policy, there is a very useful table which summarises the characteristics of POOR / BORDERLINE / GOOD answers to these four questions. A satisfactory reflective note is one in which at least three elements are assessed to be either borderline or good. A common observation during the audit was that some of the reflective notes read more like “descriptive notes of a learning activity” as they did not contain any genuine reflection. Reflecting on an activity (what I have learned and what I need to do as a result) is different from reporting on an activity (who did or said what).

When writing your reflective notes, you may wish to refer to the table on page 34 of the FPH CPD policy to ensure that your notes are of good quality.

The GMC also requires doctors to “think about how your learning will support the needs of your patients and teams, the organisations in which you work and the wider community.” Whilst most members will discuss their learning needs and agree a PDP during their annual appraisal, in recommending that “planning and evaluating your CPD needs and opportunities should be managed on an ongoing basis, not just at your appraisal” the GMC recognised that learning needs may change over time. This is equally true for all healthcare and public health professionals.

Another standard for a satisfactory audit is that “a minimum of 25 credits must be directly related to the

PDP.” You can satisfy this requirement by making clear the linkage between one of your PDP objectives and a specific CPD activity in your answer to the first of the four questions in the online CPD diary. In addition, FPH’s online CPD diary provides the ability to record your personal development needs and to directly link your PDP objectives to individual CPD activities. It is therefore recommended that you use this facility. One of the challenges we faced this year was that some appraisers agreed PDPs were more or less organisational objectives rather than personal development needs. As a result, it was sometimes impossible to identify the direct link between individual PDP and CPD activities.

You may wish to review your own personal development needs and to record them in the PDP that is provided in the online CPD diary, as recommended.

We hope that you will bear this feedback in mind when you complete your online CPD diary over the coming months. CPD Advisers will be running Regional CPD Roadshows from October, to provide further updates and (when requested) one to-one support for our members. This will be in addition to the session(s) on ‘How to write reflective notes’ that we run annually during the FPH conference.

If you have any questions, please contact your local Regional CPD Advisor. Contact details may be found at www.fph.org.uk/faculty_advisers

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