

Frequently asked questions

December 2015

Continuing professional development

The Optometry Board of Australia has developed these FAQs to guide optometrists through the Board's continuing professional development requirements.

There are five key sections:

Information available – lists the Board's CPD document.

Requirements – focuses on the requirements including for CPR and those who hold a scheduled medicines endorsement as well as questions on exemption applications.

Accredited and non-accredited CPD activities – differentiates between accredited and non-accredited activities, information for optometrists wanting to complete CPD overseas, and those undertaking postgraduate study.

Record keeping – focuses on the record keeping requirements listed under the standards.

Providers – outlines information of interest to providers of CPD activities.

Each section has an introductory statement that outlines the key issues for this section and relevant points in the Board's CPD registration standard, guidelines and policy.

Information available

The Board has developed a range of documents to convey its continuing professional development (CPD) requirements to all optometrists and to provide guidance on how these requirements can be met.

The Board's CPD guidelines and CPD provider manual provide guidance to CPD providers on the accreditation process for CPD activities.

The Board has developed 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website. This lists the key documents and will be the publication site for ongoing updates.

How do these documents differ?

The registration standard outlines the CPD requirements. It was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 9 November 2012.

The guidelines provide endorsed and non-endorsed optometrists with information on how to meet the requirements of the standard and information for providers on the accreditation of activities.

The Board has developed a CPD provider manual to assist approved and non-approved (CPD) providers in the provision of accredited CPD activities for the optometry profession.

Requirements

The Board's registration standard states the CPD requirements for all optometrists who hold general or limited registration. All optometrists should review this document to ensure they understand the requirements.

As of 1 December 2013 a revised version of the Board's CPD standard applies. This allows for the accumulation of the required CPD points over two consecutive registration periods.

The registration standard does not apply to optometrists who hold non-practising registration or students registered with the Board.

The CPD requirements represent the minimum level of CPD that is expected by the profession and which may also reasonably be expected by the public. Optometrists are encouraged to monitor their own learning needs and exceed these requirements where necessary.

1. I completed more points than the minimum of 40 points in 2012. Can I count this towards my 2013 requirements?

Yes. You need to complete 80 points over two consecutive registration periods. If you completed 60 points in 2012, you will need to complete 20 points in 2013 to ensure a total of 80 points over the two registration periods of 2012 and 2013. You will then need to complete 60 points again in 2014. Optometrists are encouraged to undertake CPD each year to avoid heavy loads in alternate years.

2. How will the Board know if I have met the CPD registration standard requirements?

All optometrists will be required to make a declaration when they renew their registration that they have met the CPD standard over the previous two registration periods. You do not need to provide any records at this time.

You only need to produce records to support this declaration if you are selected through a random audit or if required by the Board in the course of investigation of a complaint.

3. I have an endorsement for scheduled medicines. I am required to obtain 40 of the minimum 80 points over two years by undertaking activities related to this endorsement. How do I know what these are?

The Board has developed a definition of CPD activities for endorsement for scheduled medicines. This is published at the 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website. Providers of accredited CPD can also advise if an activity has been accredited as education relevant to scheduled medicines endorsement.

4. I am a newly registered optometrist. Do I have to meet the standard?

Yes. All newly registered optometrists are required to meet the CPD requirements from when they are first registered. This includes newly-graduated optometrists in their first year of practice.

5. I have only been registered for part of the registration period. Do I have to complete the full quota of CPD?

CPD needs to be completed at a pro rata rate for the period that you are registered.

6. What happens if I cannot meet the requirements?

The Board is of the view that the absence from practice provision, the time period and range of activities is broad and flexible enough for all optometrists to meet the requirements.

Sections 5 and 6 of the CPD guidelines describe the absence from practice and exemption provisions.

Question 7 below outlines what you need to do to notify the Board of an absence from practice.

Question 8 below refers to the process for application for an exemption.

Evidence of your past history of undertaking CPD activities will be viewed positively by the Board when assessing applications for exemption.

7. I am about to go on a period of family leave. I will have an absence from practice for up to 12 months. Do I have to complete the CPD for this period? Do I need to let the Board know?

The standard allows for an absence of practice of up to 12 months. You are not required to complete CPD for the period that you do not practice.

You need to complete the CPD at a pro-rata rate for any part of a registration period (1 December to 30 November) that you do practice. Remember that you are able to meet your CPD requirements over two consecutive registration periods so if you do not practice for one registration period (no CPD requirements) you will be required to complete 40 points in the following 12 months. Or if you do not practise for 6 months in the two registration periods you need to complete a minimum of 18 months worth of CPD requirements.

The guidelines request that you let the Board know of any absence from practice.

You should email AHPRA using the [online enquiry form](#) to notify them of your absence from practice.

The email should contain the following text:

*My name is <<name>> and I am an optometrist with registration number <<number>>.
I am taking an extended period of <<type of leave>> from <<start date>> to <<end date>>.
I understand that I do not need to complete CPD for this period of time that I am not practising the profession but do need to complete CPD requirements at a pro-rata rate for time I do practice across the two registration periods.*

AHPRA will confirm receipt of your email. You should keep a copy of this confirmation.

You can then tick 'yes' to declare you meet the CPD standard when answering the CPD question on the annual renewal form as the absence from practice does not require further assessment.

If your absence from practice is up to 12 months, there is no need to change your registration type from general to non-practising registration for the purpose of CPD requirements. You should also review the Board's *Recency of practise registration standard*.

8. What if I have an absence from practice greater than 12 months?

In considering this question, you need to review both the Board's CPD registration standard and Recency of practice registration standard (published under the 'Registration standards' tab of the Board's website).

For a temporary absence of practice of up to 12 months, you do not need to meet CPD requirements.

If you have an absence from practice of over 12 months and hold general registration you are required to complete the full quota of CPD (even if you are not practising).

The minimum recency of practice requirements is 450 hours over three years.

If you are *not able* to maintain the recency of practice requirements, you should consider changing from general registration to non-practising registration.

Optometrists holding non-practising registration are not required to complete CPD requirements.

If you decide to return to general registration at a later date, you may need to meet additional requirements under the Recency of practice standard.

9. How do I apply for a full or partial exemption for hardship or other circumstances?

It is important that before any exemption is made that you read the Board's CPD guidelines and consider alternatives including the capacity to accumulate the points over two registration periods and the full range of activities available to meet the requirements.

For consideration of any exemptions you need to write to the Chair of the Board at the address listed below:

c/- AHPRA
GPO Box 9813
IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY

You should include your AHPRA registration number, the extent of the exemption, the reason for your application and any additional information such as medical certificates to support your application. You should also include evidence of CPD completed over the previous two years (see templates published at 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website).

All applications for exemption must be made in time to allow consideration before your renewal of registration. They should reach the Board no later than 1 October and before you renew your registration.

AHPRA will notify you of the outcome of your application. You should not presume an exemption has been granted until you receive notification.

10. The CPD registration standard requires optometrists to have completed training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation in the past three years. Why has the Board included this requirement?

Protection of the public has been foremost in deciding the final requirements for CPD.

CPR is considered to be an essential part of first aid to anyone who has experienced sudden cardiac arrest. Sudden cardiac arrest is synonymous with clinical death. Without intervention, there is virtually no prospect of survival.

Participation in training courses is known to increase bystander CPR and improve the outcomes of victims.¹

11. How do I find an approved CPR provider?

Training courses registered on the Training.gov.au website under training components listing the units of competency for 'perform CPR' are nominally approved by the Board. This includes the familiar providers such as:

- Australian Red Cross
- Surf Life Saving Australia
- St John Ambulance Australia
- Royal Life Saving Australia

¹ Guideline 9.1.1 *Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training*, Australian Resuscitation Council, February 2007

To find a provider go to Training.gov.au click on 'training components' under the search page search for 'Perform CPR', select the current unit, select find RTOs approved to deliver this unit. Then modify search and select the relevant state or territory as needed).

12. The registration standard states that I must have completed training in CPR within the past three years but the certificate I obtained from an approved provider is only valid for 12 months. Why is there a difference?

The Board has developed the requirement of 'within the previous' three years for the purpose of the registration standard. The Board understands that to meet this requirement that some certificates may show a date greater than 12 months.

Optometrists are reminded that the CPD requirements represent a minimum level of CPD that is expected and which may reasonably be expected by the public. Optometrists are encouraged to exceed requirements.

The Australian Resuscitation Council recommends that CPR skills are re-assessed at least annually².

13. I live in a rural area and it is difficult for me to access CPR training. What alternatives are there for me?

The CPR training requirements are to be met once every three years.

CPR training is provided at an increasing number of accredited optometry conferences.

CPR training is also a requirement for some other professions such as teachers and of other health professions. Optometrists living in rural and remote areas are advised to link in with training opportunities by approved providers with other professionals or health services in their communities.

It is important that the training is provided by someone trained and certified as competent to do so.

Accredited and non-accredited CPD activities

The Board has outlined a range of CPD activities from which optometrists can choose and a range of means to meet the CPD requirements. These activity types are described in the guidelines.

Optometrists are able to meet the CPD requirements by undertaking accredited or non-accredited CPD activities.

Accredited CPD activities are those that have been approved for the purposes of this standard as meeting the criteria in Appendix A of the CPD guidelines on continuing professional development for endorsed and non-endorsed optometrists. The Board has established a CPD Accreditation Committee to oversee this process and the ongoing suitability of the criteria used. The OAA administers this accreditation process on behalf of the Board.

A list of accredited activities with the associated points is published on the public section of the Optometrists Association Australia's website. Activities will be advertised with the number of points available for completing the activity. The Board has developed a logo to indicate the number of points available under a CPD activity for providers to use in different publications.

If an optometrist undertakes an accredited CPD activity then the provider will forward the optometrist's details to the Optometrists Association to be added to member's CPD record. This record keeping service is a membership service of the Association and does not abrogate individual optometrist's registration requirements (refer to [Record keeping](#) section below).

Optometrists may choose to undertake **non-accredited activities** that may sit under any of the CPD groups. An optometrist undertaking non-accredited activities is responsible for allocating the points applicable to this activity using the criteria listed in table A1 of guidelines.

² Guideline 7 *Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*, Australian Resuscitation Council, February 2006

When deciding what CPD activities to undertake, optometrists should first consider their personal CPD needs and desired learning outcomes and undertake CPD activities to meet these needs.

You *do not need to get prior approval* from the Board before undertaking non-accredited activities; however you need to maintain records of any activities in accordance with the registration standard requirements. (Refer to [Record keeping](#) section below.)

The Board has published a list of non-accredited activities at the 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website to indicate those activities that would be generally eligible to meet the requirements. However, the Board ultimately retains the right to determine, in the event you are subject to a random audit, whether an activity meets the standard.

Whether undertaking an accredited or non-accredited activity an optometrist can only count points from a particular activity once in a registration period.

In the event of an audit of CPD compliance, any of these activities undertaken in good faith will be assessed. If any deficiencies were identified in this assessment then the Board would work with you to develop a plan to meet these gaps. This would not have any effect on your ability to practice.

14. What should I consider when choosing CPD activities?

Individual optometrists will have different needs for their CPD. You should consider the following when planning your CPD activities:

- Areas of knowledge you would like to improve.
- Identified gaps in your competencies as an optometrist.
- Topics of particular interest or specialisation.
- The accreditation status of the CPD provider and their ability to provide you with quality education.
- The experience, expertise and qualifications of the presenter(s).
- The location, date and time of the activity and whether it is available online.
- The format of the activity and whether it includes opportunities to interact with your peers.

15. I wish to attend an overseas conference. Can I count this toward my CPD requirements?

Yes taking into account the following information.

As for all of CPD activities, you first need to consider your personal CPD needs and desired outcomes and undertake CPD activities to meet these needs.

You do not need to get prior approval from the Board for these activities however you need to maintain records of any activities in accordance with the registration standard requirements.

You are responsible for calculating the points earned through attendance and for maintaining the necessary records. (Refer to [Record keeping](#) section below.)

16. Do CPD activities need to be optometry based?

No. CPD activities can come from a variety of disciplines but the optometrist needs to be able to show, in the event of an audit how these activities link to their learning needs. An example of a non-accredited activity may be face to face activities on developments in the management of diabetes.

17. Do academic activities include participation as a student or delegate?

No, participation as a student or delegate falls under face to face or independent learning. Academic activities only apply to lecturers, tutors, clinical supervisors and other educational facilitators.

18. I am undertaking a medical degree. Can I count this towards my CPD?

Not automatically. As for all CPD activities you first need to consider your personal CPD needs and desired outcomes and undertake activities to meet these needs.

Within any post graduate training in a health-related discipline, including medicine, activities pertaining to vision and the eye would generally fall under the face to face activity type OR independent learning.

19. I am undertaking a post graduate therapeutic certificate, can I count this towards my CPD requirements.

Yes. The content will provide you with two registration periods of CPD in the face to face activity type. Your academic transcript will suffice for record keeping requirements in the event of an audit. In the event of being part way through any optometric post-graduate course, such as the therapeutic certificate, your record keeping should reflect the learning to date.

20. Are there any specific requirements or restrictions on CPD workshops?

As per table A1 of the guidelines, practical, small-group workshops should have a presenter to optometrist ratio of no more than 1:20. Workshops should be designed to provide an intensive, intimate learning experience for participating optometrists. Therefore sessions that include the provision of a meal will not be considered a workshop.

Record keeping

Requirement 6 of the CPD registration standard and Table 4 of the CPD guidelines specify the record keeping requirements. Optometrists should be familiar with these requirements. The Board has published a CPD record template at the 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website.

An optometrist does not need to provide these records each year at renewal but may be asked to do so in the event of an audit or if required by the Board in the course of investigation of a complaint.

If an optometrist undertakes an accredited CPD activity then the provider will forward the optometrist's details to the Optometrists Association to be added to a member's CPD record. This record keeping service is a membership service of the Association and does not abdicate an individual optometrist's registration requirements.

Records may also be provided directly to you by other approved providers.

Providers

A range of organisations and individuals provide CPD activities.

The national office of Optometrists Association Australia undertakes the CPD accreditation process on behalf of the Board. The Board maintains oversight and final approval of all CPD accreditation matters.

The Board has established an appeal process for providers whose activities are not granted accreditation.

Providers of accredited CPD activities need to adhere to the conditions of the accreditation. Accreditation status can be removed at any time if there is a breach in these conditions.

The Board has also established criteria for approved CPD providers. All CPD activities conducted by approved providers are considered accredited.

The criteria for approved provider status are listed in Appendix C of the guidelines. The current list of approved providers is listed in Appendix B of the same document.

The Board relies on the integrity of this accreditation process to assist optometrists in meeting their CPD requirements. Concerns on the quality of accredited CPD activities should be directed to the provider in the first instance and the Board's CPD Accreditation Committee at CPD_optometry@ahpra.gov.au.

21. How do I become an approved provider?

You need to review the criteria as listed in Appendix C of the guidelines.

You then need to make a submission, addressing all the criteria to the Board for approval.

All correspondence regarding this should be forwarded electronically to CPD_optometry@ahpra.gov.au.

Or marked 'for addressee only' and forwarded to:

CPD Accreditation Committee
Optometry Board of Australia
c/- AHPRA
GPO Box 9958
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

22. Do you need to be an approved provider to provide an accredited CPD activity?

No. An approved provider status provides optometrists with an indication of the status of the provider who is an entity whose main function is as a recognised provider of optometric education with a proven track record of providing high quality CPD to optometrists. An organisation may apply for accreditation of an activity without holding approved provider status.

23. How do I apply for accreditation of an activity?

Appendix A of the guidelines lists the criteria for CPD activity accreditation.

The national office of Optometrists Association Australia administers and accredits the CPD program on behalf of the Board in line with the criteria listed in Appendix A.

You need to submit an application for accreditation to the Optometrists Association Australia.

To obtain an application form please email cpd@optometrists.asn.au.

24. The guidelines state there must be a 70% pass mark for assessments. Is it possible to reduce this to reflect the number of questions asked?

No. The Board expects all CPD assessment, regardless of numbers of questions, to meet this minimum pass requirement.

25. What if an optometrist does not meet the 70% pass rate?

Section A6 of Appendix A of the guidelines lists the actions that must be taken in the event that the 70% pass rate is not met.

26. What information is available to guide me in the development of quality CPD activities?

The Board has published a CPD provider manual to assist providers. This is published under the CPD section of the at the 'Continuing professional development' section under the 'Registration standard' tab of the Board's website.

27. I provide CPD activities and I am also an optometrist. Am I able to count the preparation time and delivery time towards my own CPD?

Preparation time can be considered as Independent learning. However, only optometrists who teach undergraduate or postgraduate optometry students are able to earn points for the delivery time of presentations under the 'academic' activity type.

28. Are there any specific requirements or restrictions on CPD workshops?

As per table A1 of the guidelines practical, small-group workshops should have a presenter to optometrist ratio of no more than 1:20. Workshops should be designed to provide an intensive, intimate learning experience for participating optometrists. Therefore sessions that include the provision of a meal will not be considered a workshop.