**Q&A: Learning credits**

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QUESTIONS

What is a learning credit and how are they accumulated?

The RCGP has developed a credits system to record the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities of GPs. The credits system provides a mechanism for GPs to record their CPD based on the time spent on the activity and the impact it has on the doctor, their patients and the service. Credits are self-assessed and verified at appraisal.

At its simplest, each recorded hour spent on a CPD activity, which can include planning, accompanied by a reflective record will count as a credit. However, it is possible to increase credits by demonstrating the impact (implementation) of learning on practice. Demonstrating impact is rewarded by a multiplication factor of two applied to time spent.

For further information, please refer to the Guide to the RCGP credit-based system for CPD which is available here.

For additional detail we have a Toolkit on Impact Credits. This is available on the RCGP Revalidation: Guidance for GPs page.

What are the ways in which Impact can be demonstrated?

To claim points for impact, a GP needs to demonstrate evidence of change (for patients, the individual, the service or others e.g. NHS locally or nationally). There are numerous ways to demonstrate this which may include:

- Performing an audit with evidence of change (e.g. If the learning point was the use of B Blockers in heart failure an audit can provide evidence of implementation of learning with improved patient care)
- Writing up a case report demonstrating how the newly acquired knowledge has been applied in practice (e.g. submitting a case report on management of a patient with newly diagnosed atrial fibrillation using the recently acquired knowledge from a learning activity)
- Developing a protocol with evidence of applying this in practice (e.g. implementation of a new protocol for use of antibiotics in a practice with evidence of reduction in prescribing antibiotics following implementation)
- Improvement in patient survey or colleague survey results following learning activities or practice development (e.g. following completion of communication course, or leadership course)
- Developing and implementing a new service in the practice following a learning event (example joint injections, insertion of contraception devices)
- Taking on a new role following training and documentation of learning points (example undergraduate tutor, staff appraisals)
- Evidence of changes in the practice as a result of SEAs (e.g. implementation of anticipatory care planning for palliative care patients following an event where treatment was delayed).
  - A case report describing the implementation of the new changes with positive feedback from a family is an example of impact
For further information see the Impact Credits toolkit on the RCGP Revalidation: Guidance for GPs page.

Are learning credits mandatory?

The credit system is not mandatory but provides a simple way of recording CPD and is used by all the Royal Medical Colleges.

If the credit system is not used then the GP has to decide how they will show their appraiser that they are keeping up to date.

Can mandatory training count towards learning log?

Yes, as long as learning is demonstrated through a reflective note. We would encourage a GP to try and demonstrate implementation of learning in practice, in which case credits can be doubled.

I am undertaking a Diploma which involves 10 hours of study a week and will equate to 1200 hours of learning. Should I record all these hours as credits?

Your learning should reflect the scope of practice and you should select 50 representative credits for discussion with your appraiser each year. It might be the case that in one particular year, your CPD will be orientated towards a particular activity, such as a Diploma. However, you might agree with your appraiser that you should diversify the range of your learning activities the following year and concentrate on other areas.

If I attend a two day conference, should I claim time credits for the duration of that conference?

We would advise that you record the parts of the conference which you consider valuable CPD as separate learning episodes, each with a reflective record. You may choose to claim impact credits for these learning episodes at a later date.
SCENARIOS

I have not managed to collect 50 credit points this year and I am due for revalidation next month. Does this mean I will not be able to be revalidated?

The GMC have stated that the PDP and CPD activities must be appropriate and relevant to the specific needs and scope of a doctor’s area of practice. The GMC advice indicates this will usually be informed by speciality specific guidance from the Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties.

http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Supporting_information_for_appraisal_and_revalidation.pdf

The Academy of Royal Colleges (which includes the RCGP) has suggested that a doctor should normally achieve 50 CPD credit points on an annual basis.


GPs are encouraged to complete 50 credit points, however if this has not been possible this year due to exceptional circumstances, then you should discuss this with your appraiser. You should record the number of credits you have achieved and submit evidence that you are engaging in CPD. You can still be recommended for revalidation this year if your appraiser is satisfied you are engaging in CPD, with a plan to make up for the points in coming years. Remember you can include practice based activities example SEAs, audits and case discussions when collecting points.

I have completed some on line modules in 20 minutes, but the certificate I receive has 1 credit attached to it. How much credit can I claim?

Credits claimed for learning activities will depend on the experience of a GP. Some GPs will take longer to complete them as they will do more reading and reflection, especially if this is a learning need. Other GPs may complete activities in a shorter time, especially if they are up to date in these areas and there is no additional learning. On line providers are encouraged to say “estimated credits for module”, or ask the GP how much time they have spent on completing the module. You should only claim for the amount of time spent on a specific activity. So for example you can claim one credit for completing three short learning activities, or one 20 minute activity with impact and another with no impact. The points will be verified at the appraisal interview. It is a probity issue to not claim for the actual time spent.
Our practice has regular weekly educational meetings where audits, SEAs, complaints and cases are discussed. We occasionally invite outside speakers to give a talk to the GPs in the practice. Each meeting is around an hour and I attend all of these. Will this satisfy my CPD points for this year?

Practice based meetings are important methods of keeping up to date and credits can been claimed for attending these meetings. To justify the points claimed you are encouraged to document the date of the meeting, the duration and what was discussed with reflections on the main learning points and documenting any implementation of learning on your practice. This can form part of a GP’s CPD portfolio but it is important to use a variety of learning methods including personal learning, courses and conferences as well as peer group learning.

I am the main trainer in the practice and am responsible for delivering regular tutorials to our GP trainees. Can I claim credits for preparing for tutorials?

Preparing for tutorials are important learning activities, however this will depend on what preparation was involved. If you are updating your knowledge on latest guidance and spend a significant time doing this and are able to reflect on the main learning points then credits can be claimed according to the time spent. If you are delivering the same tutorial or have sufficient knowledge to deliver the tutorial then it would be difficult to justify credits. If during the tutorial you are made aware of new evidence that will have an impact on patient care, then this can be submitted with preferably with evidence of implementation of learning in practice.

I receive CPR training every year as part of QOF requirements. Can I claim credit points for attending such training?

Attending CPR training is a learning activity and credits can be claimed for this.

I read medical journals on a weekly basis and update my knowledge regularly as a result. I probably spend over 100 hours doing this. Can this qualify for my 50 credit points?

Unstructured reading is an important way of keeping up to date and can be used as part of your CPD credit portfolio accompanied by a reflective record. You are encouraged to also demonstrate implementation in practice. It is important that you show a blended approach to learning using a variety of learning methods such as personal learning, peer group learning and courses and conferences.