

CPD for Beginners

What to record and how to record it

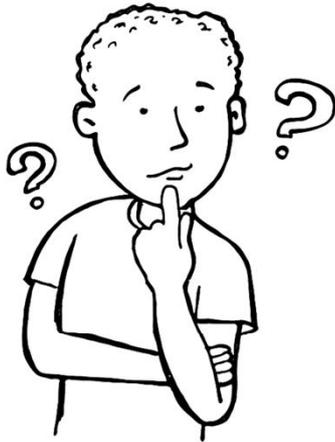
...a personal perspective

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I (Dr Lesley Stanley) am currently Chair of the Panel of the UK Register of Toxicologists (UKRT). The following slides and notes do not, however, represent formal advice on behalf of the UKRT or its Panel; rather, they summarise what I have learned from completing my own CPD portfolio over a period of 10 years and assessing other people's returns over the last 6 years.

This advice is not specific to the UKRT CPD scheme but it is largely based upon my experience of working within this scheme. Other reputable schemes exist, and the information provided here should not be taken to recommend one scheme over and above another.



WHAT TO RECORD

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What should a CPD record contain?

- Evidence that, during the year in question, you have:
 - Gained more knowledge and/or a better understanding of toxicology
 - Acquired skills to help to perform better in your professional role
 - Contributed a toxicological perspective to discussions whose main focus is in other subject areas

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The purpose of your CPD record is to demonstrate that you are actively engaged in the profession of toxicology. There are three key elements to this: learning more about toxicology, developing the additional skills you need to function as a professional toxicologist and making a contribution to the wider community from the toxicological perspective. When completing your annual CPD return you should therefore think about your activities under all three of the headings above.

If you are in any doubt as to whether to include a particular item just go ahead and do so: you will never be penalised for including extra information but a lack of variety in the activities recorded can lead the Panel to query a return.

Try to include...

- A mixture of job-related and extracurricular activities
- Various types of activities
- Evidence that you have:
 - Improved your toxicological knowledge/understanding
 - Developed key professional skills
 - Made a contribution to the wider toxicological community
- Signs of enthusiasm!

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When assessing a CPD return the Panel looks for a wide variety of activities. These should include both job-related and extracurricular activities. The former can include, for example, background reading in preparation for writing a report, journal clubs and departmental seminars while external activities like conferences, attending public lectures and reviewing journal papers would fall under the heading of “extracurricular activities”.

Try to include as wide a range of activities as possible. Obviously, items such as conferences and formal training courses carry a lot of weight, but any experience which has led you to gain new toxicological knowledge, acquire a new professional skill or think more deeply about a particular toxicological issue can be included, as long as it falls under one of the three headings mentioned on the previous slide and highlighted again here.

Finally, do try to make it look as if you have enjoyed your CPD activities during the year. A bit of humour does not go amiss and it certainly brightens up the assessor’s day – it can be quite tedious churning through long lists of CPD activities and it is a great relief to get the chance to smile once in a while!

Remember:

Your employer is responsible for job training but you are responsible for your CPD

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Please be aware that your CPD record is your own responsibility. The UKRT Secretariat receives a lot of plaintive emails along the lines of “I haven’t been able to do any CPD this year because my employer has cut down on attendance at conferences and training courses” and, frankly, these get very little sympathy from the Panel. After all, many people on the Register are freelance consultants and nobody else is organising and paying for their CPD.

While your employer is, indeed, responsible for making sure you are properly trained to do your job, this is quite separate from CPD, which comprises the things you have done for yourself, as a professional person, in order to develop your knowledge of toxicology and your standing as a toxicologist. There are many opportunities to do this outwith the workplace, and it is not unreasonable to expect to spend an average of just under an hour a week (which is all that is needed under the UKRT system) in order to keep up to date. Many activities are free of charge – in particular, many companies and organisations now offer a range of free webinars which are an excellent way to top up your CPD credits – and even watching a relevant programme on TV can be counted as long as you record it appropriately.

What we do not like to see.....

Activity	Details	Number of hours	Credits claimed
BTS Annual Congress	Attended BTS Annual Congress in Solihull, 19-22 nd April 2015	21	21
Private Study	Read journal papers for an average of 1 hour per week	50	50
Journal club	Departmental journal club, meets every Friday for 1 hour	50	50

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The point of this slide is not to suggest that attendance at the BTS Annual Congress is not appropriate CPD – far from it, this is a very important meeting and will always be recognised by the Panel.

The point is, rather, that a CPD record containing only a conference, some unspecified private study and attendance at a few journal club meetings would not meet the UKRT's assessment criteria even if it scored enough credits to get a CPD certificate from the online system.

When assessing CPD returns, the Panel looks for a wide variety of activities and sufficient detail on each activity to allow it to form a view as to what the applicant learned and how s/he benefitted from it.

We would rather see an item where reading a single paper was recorded as one credit's worth of private study, with sufficient detail for an assessment, than 50 hours' worth of unspecified journal reading (which would be capped by the system anyway).

Likewise, while a reflective note about a particularly interesting journal club meeting would be welcomed, just saying "I go to the Friday lunchtime journal club every week" is not sufficient.



HOW TO RECORD IT?

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...will depend to some extent on the system specified by the scheme of which you are a member

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There are a number of highly respected systems for recording CPD: these include those provided by the Royal College of Pathologists and the American Board of Toxicology (for the achievement of Diplomate status). The UKRT recognises these systems as long as the appropriate documentation is provided (please check with the UKRT Secretariat for more information on this).

The scheme used by the UKRT is provided by the Royal Society of Biology. This entails submitting a CPD return via an online system which allocates CPD credits to each activity and returns a certificate after 12 months, subject to accumulation of a sufficient number of credits. In order to ensure consistency and maintain the high professional standards expected of Registered Toxicologists, the CPD returns of each toxicologist on the Register are reviewed every five years by the UKRT Panel prior to approving re-registration. This is a rigorous review and the Panel is currently rejecting as many as 1/3 of re-registration submissions due to insufficient variety of CPD and/or level of detail. Please be careful to include a wide range of activities and record them in sufficient detail in order to avoid becoming one of this number.

General principles

- Provide plenty of detail
- Keep the evidence
 - Hard copy and electronic, as appropriate
- Reflect on the benefit you have gained
 - Use reflective notes!

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In order to assess a CPD return the Panel needs to see enough detail to be able to judge what the content of each item is and how the applicant benefitted from it. It is not necessary to write an essay for each item - a few sentences will be sufficient, but these must capture both what the activity was and how your professional practice has benefitted from it.

N.B. Although the box headed "My Review" is labelled as optional in the Royal Society of Biology online system, the Panel expects to see this box completed for every item of a UKRT CPD return as this is the place to record your reflections on the activity and how your practice has benefitted from it.

Please keep all your evidence (including conference programmes, attendance certificates, reflective notes etc) in electronic and, where appropriate, hard copy format. This will not be required for an initial submission, but if your application is selected for audit (either because of a query about it or as part of a random sample for quality assurance) the Panel will need to see evidence to substantiate all the credits claimed. Even if it has been uploaded to the Royal Society of Biology system you should retain electronic evidence in a location you can access until after your re-registration application has been approved, since it may not be possible to access items via the online system after the end of the CPD year in question.

Where you have no third party evidence for a particular activity (e.g. for private study or because it was an unexpected learning opportunity), I strongly recommend the use of a Reflective Note (see next page) to capture the item and reflect upon it.

My rule of thumb....

..... for claiming CPD credits for private study,
on-the-job activities and unexpected learning
opportunities.....

one reflective note = one CPD credit

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CPD credits cannot be awarded for day-to-day work activities; however, where a work-related task has led to a valid CPD outcome (e.g. knowledge gained from background reading as part of preparation for a new project or a better understanding resulting from analysis and data interpretation while writing the discussion section of a study report) it is legitimate to claim a credit for the learning/reflection which has taken place.

In order to do this, I recommend completing a Reflective Note to capture the CPD benefit gained. As a general rule of thumb, I claim one CPD credit for each Reflective Note completed regardless of the number of hours the actual activity took. Effectively, the CPD credit is awarded for preparing the Reflective Note (i.e. an activity which is beyond the day-to-day job) rather than for just doing your job (which is not eligible for CPD credits).

The same applies when claiming credits for private study and unexpected learning opportunities: One Reflective Note = One CPD credit.

Credits

- Don't worry too much about the number of credits allocated for each individual activity (as long as you meet the requirements for the annual total)
- Think of your CPD record as the journal of your progress as a toxicologist
- You don't need a huge points score in order to demonstrate this, so....

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The Royal Society of Biology online system allocates CPD credits for different types of activity automatically and different categories are capped at different total credit levels, so it can be difficult to predict how many credits will be accumulated for a particular item. The only requirement in order to gain a CPD certificate after 12 months is to have accumulated a total of 50 credits, which is actually surprisingly easy to achieve.

When conducting a re-registration review the Panel does not look at credit totals (as long as the 50/year criterion has been met), but at the range and depth of professional development which has taken place.

I use my CPD record as a journal of my progress as a toxicologist. It can be very interesting to go back 5 or 6 years and see what you were up to way back then! This can also highlight areas where you need to get an update or revisit a topic from a few years back.

Don't overclaim!

....it just makes the assessors
suspicious

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This should be self-evident. I have seen claims of things like 400 hours of private study in a year, which makes me wonder how the person found time to do their job (let alone have a life!).



SO WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

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Evidence that you are developing as a professional toxicologist and (hopefully) enjoying the experience

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In other words....

CPD: It's toxicology, not rocket
science!

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