

3.1 Professional Development Programs

3.1.1 Professional Development Programs

The ACD is committed to encouraging participation in professional development activities amongst its Fellows. In 1993, the Council of the Australasian College of Dermatologists made a decision to formalise this commitment by developing a structured Continuing Medical Education (CME) program. In the early years only a limited number of College-run meetings and specific international dermatology conferences were recognised as suitable for inclusion in the program. Over time the program has been expanded to incorporate the diverse range of educational activities, both clinical and non-clinical, which contribute to a dermatologist's professional development and has been renamed the Professional Development (PD) Program to reflect this.

The Program is based on accepted principles of adult education, and assumes Fellows' willingness to review their own performance in practice, and the ability to monitor their own educational needs. It aims to provide participants with a formal structure to:

- monitor their own participation in professional development activities; and
- demonstrate their commitment to the review, maintenance and enhancement of their professional skills to patients, peers, regulatory bodies and the community.

The duration of the PD cycle is three years. The current cycle commenced on 1 January 2006 and will conclude on 31 December 2008. The requirements of the cycle which concluded on 31 December 2005 are attached (Attachment 38a) to provide historical information about the program. Please note that this cycle was extended from 3 years to 5 years (with a pro rata increase in requirements) to allow sufficient planning time for the following cycle.

The 2006-2008 PD Program requires a minimum of 300 points to be accumulated over a three-year cycle. Participants must gain at least 50 points per year, and no more than 150 points per year will be counted towards the total.

A wide range of activities are eligible for points. These are grouped into three broad categories:

- Category A: Practice-based activities - no minimum requirement.
- Category B: Meetings and other formal activities - minimum 50 points per triennium.

- Category C: Personal Reading and Study - maximum 150 points per triennium.

In each category, there are a number of types of activities which are eligible for points. These are outlined in the table below and described in greater detail in CPD Program Handbook (Attachment 39) which is provided to all participants in the Program.

Table 21
Professional Development Program Summary

TOTAL OF 300 POINTS REQUIRED PER THREE-YEAR CYCLE MINIMUM OF 50 AND MAXIMUM OF 150 POINTS TO BE ACCRUED ANNUALLY		
CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C
PRACTICE-BASED ACTIVITIES No minimum requirement e.g. Individual practice review College practice review activities (in development) Clinical risk management reviews Hospital quality assurance/audits Clinical audits Peer review of procedural skills Practice visits (in development)	MEETINGS AND OTHER FORMAL ACTIVITIES Minimum of 50 points per triennium e.g. Meetings and conferences Skills workshops Small groups learning Clinical attachments Case conferencing Higher education courses Journal quizzes Presentations Educator activities Publications, editing and reviewing Relevant College subcommittee work	PERSONAL READING AND STUDY Maximum of 150 points per triennium e.g. Medical reading Internet searches Audio visual materials Reading poster presentations at the College ASM

3.1.2 Voluntary or Compulsory Participation

Participation in the PD Program is voluntary. In the last complete PD cycle, 97% of Fellows participated in the Program, with 59% fulfilling all program requirements.

In recent years the College has sought to encourage participation in the PD program by:

Involving participants in program development

College has increased the profile of PD, and ensured that there are opportunities for Fellows to give feedback and contribute to the development of programs. It is felt that increasing 'ownership' of the program by Fellows will encourage acceptance of program requirements and consequently improve participation rates.

Increasing the flexibility and relevance of the program

The program seeks to be relevant to all participants by being non-prescriptive in terms of the activities undertaken. Participants are encouraged to identify their own learning needs and to participate in activities which will meet these needs.

The program also has scope for participants to accrue points through a range of activities which they can organise according to their own interests and circumstances. For example, they may develop their own small group learning activities, such as journal club meetings or case review meetings; they can develop their own practice review activities; they can organise clinical attachments to update or learn new skills; and they can claim points for case-conferencing with colleagues.

Simplifying administrative requirements

Administrative requirements are often cited as a barrier to PD Program participation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Fellows, whilst participating in PD activities, neglect to record their participation with the College. For this reason, the College has developed several methods for Fellows to self-record their participation via on-line, MS Word or paper based diaries. Fellows need only submit an annual return to the College.

Providing clearer information about the program

A new program Handbook was prepared for the current PD cycle with improved design and layout which sought to clarify the benefits of PD participation for both Fellows and the profession, and provided detailed information about the requirements of the program.

Informing participants about their progress

Fellows are able to access information about the program and their PD point balance via the College website and are sent regular reminders detailing their progress towards meeting program requirements.

Those Fellows who have not met program requirements at the end of the program cycle are contacted in writing by the Honorary Secretary. They are given a three month 'grace period' in which to complete requirements.

Awarding a Certificate of Completion to Fellows who meet requirements

Those who meet all requirements are forwarded a certificate of completion.

3.1.3 Access to Professional Development Program

The ACD training program is open to all Fellows of the College as well as the following:

- HIC-recognised dermatologists who have paid the CPD levy to the ACD;

- Overseas trained dermatologists currently undertaking supervised clinical assessment by College, or who are in declared Area of Need positions in dermatology; and
- HIC-recognised dermatologists occupying acceptable academic positions in tertiary academic institutions approved by the College Board of Directors.

3.1.4 Evidence That the Professional Development Program Helps to Maintain the Knowledge, Competence and Performance of Those Who Participate in Them

The College acknowledges that published literature on the impact of CPD on medical practitioner performance is not conclusive. Due to the College's limited resources we are unable to undertake the rigorous research necessary to demonstrate outcomes in terms of improved competence and performance.

College has, however, attempted to incorporate those elements of CPD which are best supported by the literature, such as interactive activities, practice-based activities and audit with feedback, into the program.

From a qualitative perspective, 67% of PD participants who responded to a survey in 2005 believed that participation in a formal PD Program improves their effectiveness as a dermatologist.

In addition, more Fellows from the ACD enrolled in the LEAP program than from any other College.

3.1.5 Requirements for More Formal Assessment of Ongoing Competence and Performance of Fellows of the Training Organisation

The College currently has no requirements for assessment of ongoing competence or performance of its Fellows. The PD Program is seen as a mechanism to encourage lifelong learning rather than a mechanism for measuring the competence of Fellows.

3.1.6 Documentation

If requested, State Medical Boards are provided with evidence of Fellows participation in the College PD Program. However, the College does not produce documentation relating to ongoing competence or performance of its Fellows.

3.1.7 Evaluation of the Professional Development Program

Whilst the program has been informally evaluated since its inception, the first formal evaluation was undertaken in 2005. This evaluation is outlined in the evaluation report (Attachment 39). It is anticipated that in future each cycle of the PD Program will be formally evaluated.

3.1.8 Criteria and Process for Evaluation

The criteria for the most recent evaluation were:

- Consistency with both the general adult learning literature and the medical education literature;
- Consistency with the standards of regulatory bodies;
- Acceptability to participants.

The process is described in the evaluation report.

3.1.9 Changes Resulting From the Most Recent Evaluation

The key changes are:

Increased flexibility

Flexibility is a key point of the new program. It recognises that the interests, needs and learning preferences of participants vary widely. The Program outline lists a range of activities that are eligible for points. However, participants should note that point allocation is not limited to these activities. Rather, points can be claimed for any professional development activity relevant to an individual dermatologist's practice.

A new emphasis on education at the practice level

Doctors can learn much from their daily work, but this is often an untapped learning resource. Practice-based learning is particularly useful because, unlike other forms of PD which focus largely at the level of knowledge or skills, practice-based activities concentrate on what doctors actually do. In recognition of this, a new category - Practice Review - has been added to the Program. Whilst a number of Fellows already undertake these kinds of activities, there is no requirement to do so.

Encouragement for participants to develop their own educational activities

Some participants have commented that they have difficulty accessing relevant educational activities. The new program has scope for participants to accrue points through a range of activities which they can organise according to their own interests and circumstances. For example, they may develop their own small group learning activities, such as journal club meetings or case review meetings; they can develop their own practice review activities; they can organise clinical attachments to update or learn new skills; and they can claim points for case-conferencing with colleagues.

Streamlining of administrative requirements

College aims to limit the administrative load associated with participation in CPD, whilst at the same time collecting adequate information to satisfy regulatory authorities. Previously, participants were required to complete claim forms for all activities for which they wished to claim points and send these, along with verification, to the College office.

In the new triennium, recording will move to an honour system, where participants track their own participation. Participants may record their participation on the online PD logbook accessed via the College website or record their activities in the paper logbook at the back of the PD Program handbook or an electronic copy of this downloaded from the College website. They can transfer this information to their records via the website at their convenience, or for those who prefer not to use the Internet, can send an annual return to the College office.

In all cases, participants should retain verification of their participation. Details of what should be kept are listed under each category in the program outline. This must be kept for a period of 12 months after the completion of the current CPD cycle. For the program to maintain credibility with external agencies, verification of participation must be conducted. As is accepted practice in many other medical colleges and professional associations, a small percentage (10%) of participants will be asked to provide documentation to support their PD claims at the conclusion of the cycle. Randomly selected participants will be notified in writing and asked to provide supporting documentation. Unless selected for verification, participants are not required to submit documentation to College.