

CPD FAQs

Q. What is the difference between scheduled and unscheduled learning cycle?

A. If you have decided to actively access a learning material to find out more information on any given topic, the learning activity immediately becomes a **scheduled** learning cycle. Assessors frequently report that pharmacists' misreport this when completing their CPD portfolios – for example, they incidentally encounter a new drug, read up on it and record this an **unscheduled** cycle. In fact, from an assessment perspective, the act of seeking further information to remedy a learning need renders the activity **scheduled**.

A learning cycle is only unscheduled if you passively acquire information – perhaps through noting an article when perusing an industry magazine, or in a conversation with a peer. These situations are much less frequently encountered than scheduled learnings.

Q. I completed a training day as advised by my employer. Would this be an unscheduled cycle?

A. This is a **scheduled** learning cycle as learning needs have been identified. They may not be learning needs that you identified for yourself, but undertaking a task with the intention of learning or developing from it renders a learning cycle scheduled.

Q. If I plan to attend a conference, and then learn something new at a session I hadn't identified as a learning need, should this be recorded as unscheduled learning activity?

A. This is a **scheduled** learning cycle. By undertaking a task with the intention of learning or developing from it, the learning cycle becomes scheduled.

Q. Can I use one learning activity for more than one learning need?

A. Generally, the answer to this is no as this would result in claiming the time taken to complete the one distinct learning activity more than once. However, if by “one activity” you mean a conference where you attended separate sessions on a range of topics, each session can be used as a separate cycle to address a different learning need.

E.g. you attend a plenary session on a new medicine, and a lunchtime session on management styles – these are two distinctly different learning needs and so can be used for two different cycles.

Q. Can I have different types of activity for one learning need?

A. Yes.

For example, you may attend a webinar and then choose to undertake some self-directed learning to deepen your knowledge. This can be added into the activity section of your portfolio and remember to record the extra time also.

Q. Say my portfolio is selected for assessment, does not meet the standard and I am required to resubmit. Can I use one of my cycles previously submitted that did not pass (maybe for something trivial such as using the wrong tense in the evaluation), in the resubmission, with the correction made?

A. No. If you are required to resubmit a portfolio after having been assessed as not meeting the standard with your first submission, the cycles you submit must be ones that have never previously been submitted. This is irrespective of the reason why your initial submission did not meet the standard.

Q. Say my portfolio is selected for assessment and does not meet the standard, and I am required to resubmit. Can I submit the cycles that I use for resubmission in my annual submission due the next year?

A. Yes. It is permissible that cycles used for resubmissions can contribute to your full portfolio for the year ahead.

Q. What are the criteria for full/partial exemptions?

A. If you have extenuating circumstances, you may be granted a full or partial exemption by the registrar from CPD requirements. The criteria are outlined in full [here](#). It is advisable to take some time to familiarise yourself with the criteria. Almost all requests made for extenuating circumstances are granted full/partial exemptions*.

**PSNI Annual report 23/24, 100% of applications made for extenuating circumstances were granted (n=209)*

Q. If I am unemployed/career break and not eligible for an exemption, how can I be expected to evaluate or apply my learning in current practice?

A. 75% of learning cycles must be evaluated in current practice. If you are on a career break or out of the workplace, you can still apply and evaluate your learning by the following means:

- Materials you may have produced
- Information leaflets
- Critical reviews
- Policies or position statements

- Documents about national or local processes
- Reports (for example, on project work or audits or reviews)
- Business plans
- Procedures
- Guidance materials
- Guidelines for dealing with service users
- Action plans
- Presentations you have given
- Articles for journals — Research papers, proposals, funding applications
- Induction materials for new members of staff
- Contributions to the work of a professional body
- Contributions to the work of a special interest group

Q. If there are problems with submissions and the CPD deadline is extended past 31 May, as has happened in previous years, can learning cycles that have been completed from 1 June onwards be included in my full portfolio for the next CPD year?

A. Should this happen, CPD cycles recorded **after** 31 May deadline and **before** the extended deadline will be eligible for inclusion in **either** year's submission, **but not both**.

Q. If you work across two or more sectors, do you need to complete a certain number of cycles relating to each?

A. No. It is at your own discretion if you complete all your learning in one, or all.

Q. Say my employer provides online training. How do I record this as the assessor will not be able to access the learning platform?

A. If your employer provides in house training, please record details of the training to include full title, forum (i.e. whether it is online, in person or self-directed) and indicate that it is employer provided material. This will be sufficient.

Q. What if my learning needs have not been fully met?

A. If your learning needs have not been fully met, you have two options:

- To undertake a further activity within the same cycle, and increasing the number of hours for the activity
- To state in your evaluation that your learning needs have not been fully met/further learning needs have been identified and link to a new cycle, giving the full name of the cycle.

Q. Can more exemplars for those in non-patient facing/clinical roles be added to the website?

A. The Society have updated the CPD section of the website to include more of these, as per feedback in previous years. These can be viewed here - [CPD Resources – Pharmaceutical Society NI](#).

Q. Some CPD resourced from the Society indicate that time taken to write notes subsequent to attending a learning event are not eligible for inclusion in ‘time taken’ to complete the CPD learning activity. Writing notes is how I learn and revise a topic. How should I record this?

From an assessment perspective, ‘note taking’ does not constitute a standalone learning activity, and so should not be itemised and given a time allocation within the ‘action’ domain. The total time dedicated to the learning activity, to include making notes and revision, should be noted as one activity. Making notes and revising material is eligible for inclusion within a cycle but should not be itemised. This is so that it is clear to assessors that the time allocation has been spent solely on learning activity and not conflated with ‘writing up’ time.