What is a Professional Development Plan (PDP)?

A Professional Development Plan (PDP) is a method of describing:

- what you need to learn
- why you need to learn it
- how you are going to learn it
- how you will know when you have learned it
- in what time frame you are going to learn it
- how your intentions link to past and future learning

They may also be known as a Personal Learning Plan or a Personal Development Plan; in this guide the term Professional Development Plan or PDP will be used throughout.

A PDP is a core component of the College’s CPD Program, and you must develop a PDP every year in your My CPD record as part of your annual CPD requirements. A key feature of the PDP is that it is cyclic in nature and involves a process of self-reflection, planning, doing, and reviewing.

The PDP is an active, “living” document; it can, and should, change during the CPD year as your learning needs change.

While your PDP is a very personal statement of your learning needs, it can also reflect the development needs of your workplace, multi-disciplinary team or broader organisational goals. Professional development should always be connected with your work and your scope of practice rather than a solitary pursuit that has little or no relevance to your day-to-day practice.

Why should I have a PDP?

Having a plan means that you will make the most of opportunities. Targeted CPD activities should assist in enhancing strengths, addressing issues and to take advantage of opportunities for improvements in all aspects of practice.

If you are employed in the public sector you may already be required to have a PDP, and the College encourages you to use this for your CPD program if appropriate.

Literature supports the use of PDPs as a tool for adult learning across a multitude of sectors, including post graduate medical practitioners, noting them to be “consistent with approaches which develop ‘deep’ learning and with assumptions made about adult learning.”

2 Challis, M. 2000, AMEE Medical Education Guide Number 19: Personal Learning Plans
There are rapid changes in mental health knowledge, and the public expects psychiatrists to keep abreast of advances in treatment. Developing a PDP is evidence to the public of a thoughtful approach to ongoing learning that will improve the care they receive.

From a regulatory perspective it is evident that there is an increasing expectation that medical practitioners will have a PDP, and many registration authorities require a PDP as part of their standards for CPD. The Medical Board of Australia (MBA) has clearly stated its intention to revise the CPD registration standard to include a requirement for an annual PDP that is related to your current scope of practice, or an intended scope of practice.  

How do I make a PDP?
The PDP process is generally considered to be a four-stage cycle (Figure 1 on page 5): Think – Plan – Do - Review. The steps are described below for an annual cycle, which is in line with the College’s annual CPD program.

However, your needs may change during the year if you change employment, start work in a new area of practice, or begin other professional activities such as teaching or administration. In these circumstances you may need to start the cycle again. The College encourages a flexible approach to PDPs to accommodate the changes in practice and circumstances unique to each psychiatrist, and you are able to add as many PDPs as you need during the CPD year.

Think
During this phase you should consider your strengths and experiences as a practitioner, your concerns, shortfalls and any input from feedback such as peer review groups and practice audits. If you have undertaken a 360° feedback or multisource feedback in a previous CPD year, the qualitative feedback might indicate areas that you could improve on through your CPD.

It is important to note that your learning goals do not need to be confined strictly to clinical practice and expertise – you may have goals relating to scholarship or leadership and these can be included in your PDP. For example, consider models of excellence in practice and resources such as the CanMEDS Roles, which are described in detail on page 8 of this guide. You may identify additional roles which you could develop further, and this can inform your learning outcomes. You should consider your current scope of practice, and any plans you may have to expand or change your scope of practice.

The RANZCP Fellowship Competency Statements may also provide you with insights into areas for improvement, for example in the area of the application of information and communication technology or teaching skills.

Consider information gained from learning activities undertaken previously – is there more that you need to do so that learning may be incorporated into your practice?

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4 Medical Board of Australia, 2017, Building a Professional Performance Framework.
Plan
Formulate learning outcomes which describe what you want to learn and consider how these outcomes align with CanMEDS roles. Learning outcomes are succinct, objective statements that are often most effective if they are developed in the “SMART” format:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time bound

More information on writing learning outcomes and the SMART format is on page 6 of this guide.

Consider how these learning outcomes will be achieved, what activities may be useful, when and where they will be undertaken and who will be involved. Learning activities are not restricted to attendance at conferences, reading of journals, or formal education. Evidence suggests that learning is most effective when it is interactive and relates closely to your everyday work. It is likely that there are activities you undertake at work with others which can form part of your CPD program, for example working on treatment protocols, or preparing an orientation manual for locum psychiatrists new to your service.

Plan a program for the activities with a timeline for completion over the year, noting when relevant conferences or workshops are scheduled so that you can make arrangements for any necessary leave well in advance.

Document your plan and upload it to My CPD, the College’s online system for managing your CPD. Remember that PDPs are flexible and if you need to modify or change your PDP you can upload another to My CPD.

Do
Participate in the activities as planned. Record the time spent on My CPD, the College’s online system for managing your CPD.

Upload any supporting documents and certificates for each activity on My CPD, along with a reflection on how the activity has contributed to your learning outcomes. These records of activities, events and attendance will be used if you are selected as part of the annual audit of CPD records conducted by the College, or for New Zealand members, if you are selected for audit as part of the Medical Council of New Zealand’s recertification audits.

Evaluate each activity and note any application of new learning toward practice improvement.

Review
At the end of each calendar year, review your progress toward achievement of the learning outcomes you identified in your PDP. It can be helpful to document what was effective learning for you and what didn’t work well.

Consider your current training needs – begin the THINK, PLAN, DO, REVIEW cycle for the following year.
Figure 1: The 4-step planning cycle

- Reflect on Current Practice
- Reflect on Gaps in Practice
- Reflect on Models of Excellence

**Identify possible areas for practice improvement**

Think

Plan

Do

Review

Choose a manageable number of priority areas for an annual program

*Identify specific learning outcomes for the PDP and develop a program for activities*

- **Review the PDP**
  - Reformulate the PDP for the following year, expanding or contracting learning outcomes and planning new CPD experiences

- **Implement the PDP**
  - Participate, evaluate, record and apply learnings
What are Learning Outcomes?
Learning outcomes are succinct statements of what you want to learn. There is no set requirement for the number of learning outcomes that you have in your PDP, nor are you required to have a learning outcome for every CanMEDS role. Too many learning outcomes will become a “wish list” rather than a plan for your learning.

Writing these is in itself a skill, as the natural inclination is to move to describing the process or activities you will use to achieve the outcome. “Attending the RANZCP Congress in 2020” is not a learning outcome – but it may well be one of the activities you use to achieve your learning outcome of “Developing a treatment protocol for xyz by the end of 2020” or “by the end of 2020 demonstrate understanding and expertise of rTMS as a treatment modality.”

A SMART objective is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

With a very broad and general objective such as “Improve my computer skills” it is very difficult to demonstrate whether you have achieved it. What do “improved computer skills” look like? This objective isn’t specific, nor is it measurable. There is no timeline to the outcome, so little incentive to complete the learning. Learning how to play online games may be improving computer skills, but may not be relevant to your work, and becoming an expert computer programmer may not be attainable for a psychiatrist working full time in a very busy private practice.

A better SMART objective relating to the use of computers would be “by the end of this CPD year I will demonstrate basic proficiency, including making graphs, in the use of spreadsheets to manage patient data for a clinical audit”.

Figure 2: SMART objectives

- **S** Specific: State exactly what you want to accomplish (Who, what, where, why)
- **M** Measurable: How will you demonstrate and evaluate the extent to which the learning outcome has been met?
- **A** Achievable: within your ability to achieve the outcome, but still a challenge.
- **R** Relevant: How does the goal tie into your key responsibilities? If appropriate, is it aligned to your health service objectives?
- **T** Time-bound: set a target date, the "by when", including deadlines, dates and frequency

The use of the SMART approach to writing your learning outcomes can utilise Blooms’ taxonomy and associated verbs described in Figure 3 on page 7. Higher order learning is encouraged in the CPD program, so it would be appropriate for learning outcomes to align with the ‘analyse’, ‘evaluate’ and ‘create’ levels of the hierarchy.
Figure 3: Bloom’s taxonomy

- **Remember**
  - Recall facts and basic concepts
  - define, duplicate, list, memorise, repeat, state

- **Understand**
  - Explain ideas or concepts
  - classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognise, report, select, translate

- **Apply**
  - Use information in new situations
  - execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch

- **Analyse**
  - Draw connections among ideas
  - differentiate, organise, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test

- **Evaluate**
  - Justify a stand or decision
  - appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique, weigh

- **Create**
  - Produce new or original work
  - design, assemble, construct, confecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate

What are the CanMEDS roles and how do I use them for my PDP?
The CanMEDS roles are described in the CanMEDS framework, which outlines the competencies required for medical practitioners to meet the health care needs of the community. They were developed by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and formally adopted in 1996.

The RANZCP 2012 Fellowship program is based on the competencies described in the CanMEDS framework, and the CPD program encourages the use of the CanMEDS framework by participants.

There are six core roles – Professional, Communicator, Collaborator, Leader, Health Advocate, and Scholar – that are integrated into the role of the Medical Expert.

Figure 4: CanMEDS framework

A description of how the RANZCP applies the CanMEDS roles to the competencies expected of Fellows can be found at on the College website in the training pages.

Your learning outcomes are very likely to relate to one or more of the CanMEDS roles. It is not mandatory for you to link your PDP to the CanMEDS framework, but you may find it helpful to structure your learning.

Examples of learning outcomes for each of the roles are shown in Figure 5 on page 9.
**Figure 5: Examples of Learning Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicator</td>
<td>Develop a presentation for the general public on the topic of stigma and mental health by the end of the year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td>Develop improved referral networks with local allied health professionals by June 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Participate in the review of the XX Mental Health Service</td>
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<td>Health Advocate</td>
<td>Increase knowledge of Veterans’ and ADF mental health issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholar</td>
<td>Develop advanced level understanding of psychopharmacological prescribing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Apply the principles of reflective practice by actively and consciously reflecting on how learning activities have changed my practice by recording in My CPD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Expert</td>
<td>Conduct a clinical audit of my patients with mood disorders using the RANZCP clinical practice guidelines and audit tools</td>
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</table>
How do I record my PDP?
There is no set format for a PDP – you should choose a method that suits you. Psychiatrists employed in the public sector may have a PDP that is developed as part of their employment. This can be used as your PDP for the College CPD program, and a copy can be uploaded to your My CPD record.

A range of templates is included as appendices to this guide – you can choose to use, or adapt one of these to suit your needs.

Further reading and references
Tasker, F 2015 “How to prepare a personal development plan” BMJ 2018: 351:h4603
The PDP form summarises the learning outcomes, enabling the planning, recording and reporting of your activities completed across all CanMEDS Roles and the application to practice and quality improvement for easy reference throughout your CPD year.

My scope of practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>CanMEDS Role</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
<th>Application to practice and quality improvement</th>
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A completed copy of this form should be uploaded to My CPD for audit purposes.
Continuing Professional Development – Professional Development Plan

Name: _______________________________ Signature: _______________________________ Date: __________

Learning Outcomes and activities to support them

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<th>#</th>
<th>Learning Outcome:</th>
<th>CPD activities</th>
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Timeline

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</table>
Continuing Professional Development – Professional Development Plan

Name: ___________________________ Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________

My scope of practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Success criteria</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do I want to be able to do or do better?</td>
<td>How will I review and measure my improvement?</td>
<td>What methods will I use to achieve my learning outcomes?</td>
<td>How will I practise and apply what I learn?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 4

Continuing Professional Development – Professional Development Plan

Guidance for Professional Development Plans

Page 13 of 14
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CanMEDS Role</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Completion Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholar</td>
<td>Demonstrate research skills by writing a literature review for publication on gender dysphoria</td>
<td>Research Writing</td>
<td>Professional reading</td>
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<td>Attend sessions at Congress in May</td>
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<td>Attend gender dysphoria conference in April</td>
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<td>Drafting of paper</td>
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<td>Medical Expert</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
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