Mixing up your learning activities

In a previous paper we asked you to think about personalizing your learning through activities that best suit your learning style[1] here we are going to look at different types of learning activities. As part of the Health Professions Council's (HPC) requirements, for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), we need to engage in a mix of learning activities.

"Standard 2 – A registrant must demonstrate that their CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to current or future practice."[2]

The idea behind using a range of activities to support your learning is that it is designed to encourage you to participate fully in your own development and add a richness to your learning. If all you ever do is go to a conference every year, go to hospital work related staff development and regularly read the Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine you will have a limited range of activity.

Your personal development plan, together with your appraisal, should help you to know what you need to work on for your CPD for your current and future practice. There may be some obvious choice of learning activities available locally or nationally but several types of activity require us to be self-motivated so we develop our own learning.

Main types of activity

The HPC lists four main types of activity that can help support your learning and professional development, CPD activities could include the following[3]:

Work-based learning for example, reflecting on experiences, considering feedback from service users, being a member of a committee and so on.
Professional activity for example, being a member of a specialist interest group, mentoring or teaching others, being an expert witness, giving presentations at conferences and so on.
Formal education for example, going on courses, doing research, distance learning, planning or running a course and so on.
Self-directed learning for example, reading articles, reviewing books and articles, updating your knowledge through the internet and so on.
Other activities for example, public service.

These aren't the only types of activities or categories that could be used but they do help you know what kind of activities the HPC or Institute of Medical Illustrators is looking for when it comes to audit your CPD. Some of your learning activities may fall into one category or an event like a conference may include several different types of learning activity all in the one event.

Task 1 Using the list of activities listed for a conference put alongside them the type of activity a few are done for you as examples:

Conference activity	Type of activity
Keynote lecture	
Speed networking	
Lecture from scientific programme	Formal education
Workshop	
Visiting the trade show	
Giving a paper as lecturer or new voices	
Presenting a workshop	
Member of the organizing team	Professional activity
Helper on the front desk	

Types of learning

Work-based learning
CPD Quality in NHS states that "All health organisations need to develop a learning culture with work based learning at the heart of this."[4] (Department of Health 1999 p 11) That is fine but what is work-based learning and what does it involve in practice? It is probably best if I give two examples:

Example 1
The Graduate Certificate or BSc in Clinical Photography asks students to take a series of photographs for an open day to be used on a poster. This task is undertaken in one of the hospital departments or while on placement in liaison with staff. Students then go on in their writing to critically appraise what they did. This is work based learning as it is taking place in the workplace but it is also formal learning as it is part of a structured programme.

Example 2
The commoner type of work-based learning takes place every day. For example; as an illustrator you might discuss the provision of a new patient leaflet with a ward sister and during this learn more about what they do in their department and the patients' needs from a leaflet. This new knowledge could then be applied in a job for a different department and then included with reflection in your CPD.

Professional activities
These are activities that support your and other people's professional development. Table 1 gives a list of suggested activities. In terms of medical illustration this can include professional activities for the Institute of Medical Illustrators, Medical Artists' Association, Health Sciences Communications Association, the Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine, as well as other professional bodies you may join e.g. Association for Learning Technology, British Institute of Professional Photographers, British Association of Retinal Screeners.

Formal learning/ education
This is the type of learning we all tend to think about as we are used to it having gone through school and college or university. It may bring back fond or not so fond memories. The type of learning that 'formal' covers is much broader than you may realise. Any learning that you undertake including work-based, even your own self-directed learning, could be 'formalised' or accredited. Not everybody wants to gain further qualifications but for staff in a department who are unqualified or in a pre-registration status this has to be the way forward if they want to progress in their career. If you want to know more about how this works you should look at the paper 'Qualifications - credit where credit is due'[5].

> "Not all CPD leads to an academic qualification. However, when it does, education consortia and postgraduate deans should ensure that qualifications allow people to take small steps, in combinations of learning that suit them best."[6]

Self-directed learning
This is learning that we set ourselves it should lead you where you want to go towards your current and future career plan. This is probably the most difficult type of learning as it requires us to be self-motivated and proactive. It also requires planning otherwise the learning is likely to be haphazard and when we need to state what the outcomes or benefits are for our practice we can't pull what we have done together into any form of words.

As Table 1 from the HPC suggests self-directed learning includes reading and updating your knowledge but most importantly adds 'Keeping a file of your progress' if you are reading and adding material around a specific topic you need to learn more about, e.g. Diabetes and retinopathy or a dermatological condition and its photography, you will include copies of the papers but also your

notes and reflections on them, how they can help your practice and benefit your service users this could lead to you showing how your practice has improved and possibly this self-directed study could lead to you writing a paper or giving a presentation.

Other
This allows for any other learning that will support your development, HPC suggests public service and voluntary work.

Work based learning	Professional activities	Formal/ educational	Self-directed learning	Other
Learning by doing Case studies Reflective practice Audit of patients Coaching from others Discussions with colleagues Peer review Gaining and learning from experience Involvement in the wider work of your employer (for example, being a representative on a committee) Work shadowing – Secondments Job rotation Journal club In-service training Supervising staff or students Visiting to other departments and reporting back Expanding your role Significant analysis of events Filling in self-assessment questionnaires Project work Evidence from learning activities undertaken as part of your progression on the NHS Knowledge and Skills framework	Involvement in a professional body Membership of a specialist interest group Lecturing or teaching Mentoring Being an examiner Being a tutor Branch meetings Organising journal clubs or other specialist groups Maintaining or developing specialist skills (for example, musical skills) Being an expert witness Membership of other professional bodies or groups Giving presentations at conferences Organising of accredited courses Supervising research Being a national assessor Being promoted	Courses Further education Research Attending conferences Writing articles or papers Going to seminars Distance learning Going on courses accredited by a professional body Planning or running a course	Reading journals or articles Reviewing books or articles Updating your knowledge through the internet or TV Keeping a file of your progress	Public service Voluntary work

Table 1[7] - Examples of CPD activity for the Health Professions Council's Continuing professional development and your registration.

Task 2 Looking at the activities you have undertaken over the last year or plan to do over the next year write a heading or title for the activity under each heading.

Work based learning	Professional activities	Formal/ educational	Self-directed learning	Other

You should demonstrate for an audit that you have undertaken at least 3 of the types of activity.

"3. You do not need to send the full record of all your CPD activities. In fact, we strongly encourage you not to. You should, however, send a summary of your CPD activities over the last two years, demonstrating that you have undertaken at least three of the five types of activity. The one type of activity most people fail tom record is self-directed learning, so ensure that you record and reflect on any relevant journal articles, books or internet articles you have read. Your summary should then be backed up with one or two examples of each activity type, with your documentary evidence and reflective writing. So about half a dozen full examples should be more than sufficient. Copies of documentary evidence are preferred."[8]

So tabulating what activities you are doing or have done can help you plan your CPD and prepare for submitting your CPD portfolio for audit. For more information about learning activities look at the Institute of Medical Illustrators website's CPD section (http://www.imi.org.uk//edu-cpd/cpd.asp.

[1] Bryson, D. (2009) Personalising your learning. Journal of Visual Communication in Medicine 32(3 & 4): 105-107.

[2] Health Professions Council. (2008) Continuing professional development and your registration. London: Health Professions Council, April, pp:7. [URl http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10001314CPD_and_your_registration.pdf accessed March 2010]

[3] ibid pp:8-9.

[4] Department of Health. (1999) CPD: Quality in the new NHS. London: Department of Health Publications, p 11. [URl http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/20/12/04012012.pdf]

[5] Bryson, D (2001) Qualifications - Credit where credit is due. Journal of Audiovisual Media in Medicine 24 (Suppl): S25 - S28.

[6] Department of Health. (1999) CPD: Quality in the new NHS. London: Department of Health Publications, p 14. [URl http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/20/12/04012012.pdf]

[7] Health Professions Council. (2008) Continuing professional development and your registration. London: Health Professions Council, April, pp:27-28. [URl http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10001314CPD_and_your_registration.pdf accessed March 2010]

[8] Personal Communication. (2010) General points on CPD audit. Institute of Medical Illustrators, CPD Audit Team.