

The benefits of change:

an update on continuing professional development

As members face the changes that currently are being effected to update the Institute's CPD scheme, Executive Head of Education Alan Wainwright reflects on the process.

At the time of writing, the Institute's Education staff are busy validating CPD portfolios submitted before 13 May as part of the move to the new IBMS CPD scheme in the summer of 2016. Members unable to achieve 250 credits under the current CPD scheme but who have 24 activities across three of the five new CPD categories when we move to the new scheme will be eligible immediately for a CPD diploma, provided there is a short reflective statement for each of the 24 activities. It is amazing to see how many CPD records have been lying dormant, how many potential diplomas have gone unclaimed, but also, reassuringly, how seriously members do take their CPD.

Benefits of moving to the new system

- Using categories rather than codes and credits for the new CPD scheme will make it quicker and easier for members to add CPD activities to their CPD portfolios.
- Using categories will also make it easier for members to use activities recorded in their IBMS CPD portfolio as evidence that they have met Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and Science Council CPD standards.
- Members will be able to track how their CPD activities are meeting HCPC and Science Council CPD standards as they complete their IBMS CPD diploma.

- The move to categories will also encourage members to complete a broad range of activities that will enhance their knowledge and skills, with a shift in focus towards identifying and achieving learning outcomes.

Understandably, the new system may take time for members to get used to the new requirements, but the changes were made in response to feedback from members and crucially the two elements that were not seen as beneficial: points and codes.

Points mean prizes, or so it seemed for the past 25 years, but the argument against this philosophy is simply that it detracts from the learning process, which is where the value of CPD really lies.

Codes were intended to help assign CPD activities into a category for recording the learning experience (professional, self-directed etc) but the system of codes had become progressively more complicated and, despite attempts to make it more intuitive, the fundamental issue appeared to be "which category do I assign my CPD to?"

To make matters worse, codes were perceived as being restrictive because if a category did not have a designated code it led to confusion. Clearly, a code for every eventuality was not possible but there seemed to be a reluctance to use a generic code. In addition, members wanted to see their CPD

linked directly to the HCPC standards so that they could be confident that their CPD met the HCPC requirements if they were audited.

The death knell of points and codes had sounded and, with the decision made to remove them, the question turned to whether or not the changes would simplify the process without detracting from the aim of the IBMS CPD scheme: to enable members to demonstrate their commitment to capturing a record of a continual process of professional development and recognise this with the award of a CPD diploma.

To illustrate how the changes to the Institute's CPD scheme will work, the first step is to understand that CPD can be recorded in one of five categories that mirror those of the HCPC (Table 1).

The only decision anyone has to make is into which category their CPD activity best fits (and this is an individual choice) and ensure that at least 24 activities (plus a reflective statement) are in at least three of the five categories if they wish to be eligible for a CPD diploma.

Reflecting on change

Will this improve the quality of CPD? Well, up until now it was tempting to regard CPD as a running total of points which could simply reflect *passive* engagement with a learning opportunity (eg attending a lunchtime meeting but not really listening). In future the requirement for the CPD diploma award will be for a reflective statement for each of the 24 activities chosen (there may be more recorded without reflective statements). This will demonstrate that there has been an *active* commitment to learning from the CPD experience.

At this stage, please note that in working towards a CPD diploma, individuals can record as many activities as they wish but only 24 are required for the award of the diploma and these must have an accompanying reflective statement. Any other CPD activities can contribute to the full record of your CPD beyond the requirements for the diploma.

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Table 1. The link between CPD codes and the new categories.

New IBMS CPD category	Old IBMS CPD code	
Work-based learning	WR	Work-related activities
Professional activity	PA	Professional activities
	IBMS	IBMS professional activities
	PRB	Professional and regulatory bodies
	PUB	Publications
Formal education	FE	Further education
	QUAL	IBMS qualifications
Self-directed learning	CA	IBMS credited activities (JBL and JBL reflective learning)
Other		

Will the reflective statement requirement be a barrier to people going for a diploma? For some, undoubtedly yes. Will the reflective statements contribute to the quality of CPD? It should, but some thought must go into it. This means thinking about why the activity was chosen. What was the aim of the learning experience? Was there a gap in knowledge to be filled? Was this achieved? What are the benefits of doing this?

Putting learning into context is very much down to the individual, but it helps if it informs professional practice. This may depend of different factors: the experience of the individual, motivation, interest, opportunities. Ultimately, in the context of professional

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practice, the two key questions to ask (and these are related to the HCPC standards for CPD and the reason for doing CPD) are: What did I get out of it and how will this help me improve my work to the benefit of others?

It's personal

To demonstrate this I would like to share a CPD experience of my own. A colleague sent me a link (www.aaptuk.org/go/media:news:355) which featured an AAPT Council member (Michelle Lancaster) as part of Patient Voices. You might want some tissues handy!

I knew something about the work of Anatomical Pathology Technologists from my days working in cellular pathology and later as a pathology manager, but listening to this short commentary gave me a whole new perspective on how people can feel about their job, and the impact that a good role model can have on someone in training. It made me think about what lessons we could learn ourselves and the messages our trainers should be getting across to those in their professional care. It was also very moving and this brings

me to another point about CPD – it's personal.

One person's CPD will not be the same as that for another, and one person's reflective statement on an activity may not be the same for everyone. Of course, there may be similarities in a professional context but it is the start and end points that are most likely to be different and this informs the value-added outcomes of CPD. It is for you to decide the 'best fit' category. It is for you to decide what has been learned and how you use the information.

You are in control of your own CPD. This sounds good, but there is a caveat. If you are registered with the HCPC or Science Council, there are standards for CPD that have to be met. If you are audited you must demonstrate you meet these standards. If you want your CPD to be recognised by the IBMS there are no standards but there are criteria. These must be fulfilled for your efforts over two years to be recognised by the award of a CPD diploma.

Give it a try

The CPD scheme is freely available to members. It is there to help you, although I accept it is not embraced by everyone. It's down to personal choice and we have a workable solution for the majority. I compare it to my preference for a paper diary, rather than using an electronic one. All I can suggest is that you give it a try and help to inform future changes. If nothing else, reflect on it and add it to your list of CPD activities (professional or self-directed learning – it's up to you).

If you have any questions about the IBMS CPD scheme, please visit the IBMS website (www.ibms.org/cpdchanges) or make contact by email (cpd@ibms.org).

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