



Continuing Professional Development Audit Report

2017-2019

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Summary

This CPD report describes the outcomes of the 6 disciplines of Clinical Physiologists the RCCP audited against our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Standards between April 2017 and March 2019.

3.1% of registrants were asked to submit their CPD profiles, with 64.5% of the CPD profiles submitted being accepted after their first assessment. Ordinarily, registrants who have not had their CPD profile accepted on the 1st assessment would be asked to re-submit for re-assessment, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic period coinciding with this deadline the RCCP Board decided to close the CPD audit for 2017-2019. The registrants who were not required to resubmit their CPD profile will be automatically included in the 2021 CPD audit.

Voluntary deregistration rates were minimal across the disciplines, overall being 4.6%. The majority of registrants who requested voluntary deregistration indicated that they were either retiring or non-practicing.

The number of deferrals granted by the Registrar was 8.7% and the number of successful extensions granted 2.9%.

Registrants are usually removed from the Register where there has been a failure to engage with the CPD audit process and in each case, we will have given the registrant several opportunities to comply before this decision is made. No registrants selected for audit will be removed from the Register in relation to the 2017-2019 audit whilst the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing. This decision will be reviewed in September 2020.

No appeals were made during the period covered by this report.

Our initial analysis shows that there are some variances in the assessment outcomes across the clinical physiology disciplines audited. There were just over 50% of audiologist's CPD profiles requiring resubmission following the 1st assessment, in contrast to other disciplines being more likely to be accepted on 1st submission. As there are large variations in the number of registrants sampled per discipline, statistical significance is difficult to infer. We will be keen to explore if there are any differences in the understanding of the CPD process or if there are any differences in working environments and/or access to CPD opportunities in this group to explain this variance. Cardiac physiologists also showed the higher percentage of non-compliance to the process (12%), which was much higher than all other disciplines.

Although only 64.5% of CPD profiles submitted for audit were accepted, this figure would have been expected to increase should these registrants have been given the opportunity to resubmit had the COVID-19 pandemic period not coincided with this audit cycle. The RCCP Board took the decision to close the 2017-2019 audit prematurely to ease the pressure on our registrants who were all assisting with the pandemic response.

The quality of the CPD profiles assessed varied with some being of a high standard but others requiring improvement. The accepted profiles continue to demonstrate good reflection and solid links between continuous learning and the associated benefits to professional practice, the service and service users.

Introduction

About us

We are the Registration Council of Clinical Physiologists. We are a voluntary registration body accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) and our main aim is to protect the public. To do this, we keep a Register of professionals who meet our standards for their training and education; professional skills; behaviour and health. We can take action if someone on our Register falls below our standards.

The RCCP register covers six disciplines in the clinical physiology professions:

- Audiologists (including Hearing Therapists and Educational Audiologists)
- Cardiac Physiologists
- Respiratory Physiologists
- Neurophysiologists
- Gastro-intestinal Physiologists
- Sleep Physiologists

Educational Audiologists are a new sub-group under audiology admitted to the Register in 2019 and so were not included in this audit cycle.

Our main functions

To protect the public, we:

- set the Standards for the Education and Training, the Standards of Proficiency (SOP), and the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics of registrants;
- keep a public register of professionals who meet those standards;
- accredit training programmes for professionals who can register with us; and
- take action when registrants do not meet our standards.

Continuing professional development and the RCCP

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the way in which our registrants continue to learn and develop throughout their careers, so that they keep their knowledge and skills up to date and are able to practise safely and effectively. We set our CPD Standards that every registrant should meet, to ensure that their activities are effective.

Practitioners registered with RCCP have the potential to cause harm to patients. To reduce the risk of harm, registrants are required to demonstrate that they are fit to practice, both in terms of their competency and conduct. RCCP has a responsibility to ensure that registrants maintain fitness to practice and continue to meet its standards. This is carried out through monitoring the Continuing Professional (CPD) Development activities that registrants undertake and is important in supporting a culture of continuous learning and improvement, as well as ensuring a high level of professionalism of our registrants.

The RCCP audits CPD records every two years, which is in line with similar audits conducted by other accredited registration bodies and healthcare professional statutory regulators. We do this by taking a random sample of registrants and ask them to provide us with information about their CPD to demonstrate that they have met our CPD standards over a 2-year period.

The CPD Standards

The 5 RCCP CPD standards that every registrant must meet are:

Standard 1

Maintain a continuous, up-to-date and accurate record of their CPD activities;

Standard 2

Demonstrate that their CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to current or future practice;

Standard 3

Seek to ensure that their CPD has contributed to the quality of their practice and service delivery;

Standard 4

Seek to ensure that their CPD benefits the service user;

Standard 5

Upon request, present a written profile (which must be their own work and supported by evidence) explaining how they have met the standards for CPD

Registrants are also asked to provide a <500word summary of their roles and responsibilities and provide a current professional development plan using SMART goal methodology as part of the CPD profile submission.

Failure to comply with RCCP CPD requirements can lead to a registrant's suspension or removal from the Register.

The CPD audit process

This report describes the outcomes of the audit for the 6 disciplines of clinical physiologists who were asked to submit their CPD profile between April 2017 and March 2019. It includes information about the audit process and data showing the outcome of the audit.

Registration and CPD

Registrants must renew their RCCP registration annually at a fixed renewal date (1st May). Each time a clinical physiologist renews their registration, they must sign an annual renewal declaration to confirm that they continue to meet the **RCCP Standards**, which include the:

- Standards of conduct performance and ethics
- Standards of Proficiency for their profession; and
- Standards for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is also linked to reactivation of registration. This means that each time a professional re-joins the Register they are given a period of up to 6 months to demonstrate how they continue to meet the CPD Standards.

Selection

We select 3% of registrants randomly to participate in the CPD audit and this random sample is generated by the RCCP database.

A registrant has to be on the Register for a full two years before they are selected for audit. This allows them time to undertake CPD which meets our requirements. It also avoids selecting those new to their profession or those returning to practice after a career break.

The selection is random because CPD is an ongoing requirement for all registrants. A random selection ensures all registrants have an equal chance of being selected for audit. This also means that a registrant could be selected to participate in an audit more than once in their professional career or, indeed, in consecutive audits.

In addition to the 3%, any deferrals from a previous audit are automatically included in a subsequent audit and registrants may be automatically included in an audit following a fitness to practice investigation.

Sample size

The sample size we chose is in line with other similar accredited registration bodies or statutory regulators and is a generally accepted sample size to be confident of successfully picking up instances where registrants are not meeting our CPD standards.

Assessing the profiles

RCCP CPD assessors

We have appointed a number of registrant CPD assessors who work as voluntary RCCP Associates to undertake the assessment of CPD profiles. They work in a similar way to the other Associates who assist with the assessment of applications, fitness to practise panels and approving education and training programmes.

All of our CPD assessors are appointed after a rigorous recruitment process, they receive appropriate training before they commence the assessment process and have annual training updates. CPD profiles are assessed electronically.

The assessors review the profiles and accompanying evidence before reaching their decision, which is documented on an RCCP assessor feedback form. Assessors can seek the advice from the Deputy Registrar or Registrar in borderline cases.

Assessment outcomes

Assessors can recommend a range of outcomes from the following list:

- The profile meets the CPD standards

- The registrant needs to provide further information. This may happen if, for example, evidence is missing, or the assessors need to know more about a CPD activity. The registrant will be given some time to re-submit their CPD profile (usually 30 days)
- The profile does not meet the standards

Deferrals

We recognise that, due to unavoidable circumstances, some registrants may need to defer their CPD profile submission. For example, they may not be able to complete a CPD profile as a result of illness, family or personal circumstances or maternity leave. A deferral is a mechanism for those who cannot complete their CPD profile due to circumstances beyond their control with the opportunity to stay Registered.

Registrants who would like to defer must write to us as soon as possible, giving their reasons for deferring and evidence to support it. Anyone accepted for deferral is automatically included in the next CPD audit cycle.

Extensions

Some registrants are also given an extension whereby they are allowed an additional agreed period (typically 2 months) to submit their CPD profile following the original deadline. Acceptable criteria may be for example evidence of a recent short-term illness, recent personal circumstance. An extension is a mechanism for those who cannot complete their CPD profile by the specified deadline due to circumstances beyond their control to have the opportunity to submit within the given CPD audit cycle and stay Registered.

Appeals

Those selected for audit are given up to three months in which to submit a CPD profile, which demonstrates how they have met the CPD Standards. Registrants are sent information to help them complete their CPD profile. Several reminders are sent if a portfolio is not received within the timescale.

A registrant who fails to provide a CPD profile within the allowed timeframe or whose submitted CPD profile is rejected following re-submission may be removed from the Register. The CPD process has been designed so that removal should only occur in those cases where a registrant has completely failed to undertake CPD or engage with the RCCP CPD process.

A registrant who is removed from the Register for not meeting the CPD standards has 28 days in which to appeal against the decision.

Any appeal will be heard by an appeals panel, made up of a member of the RCCP Professional Standards and Education Committee (who acts as Chair), a registrant from the discipline concerned and a lay person. Appeals are dealt with based upon the documents alone.

Audit Results

There were 5558 clinical physiologists registered with RCCP at the time of the CPD audit selection. 173 registrants CPD profiles were requested, representing a sample size of 3.1%.

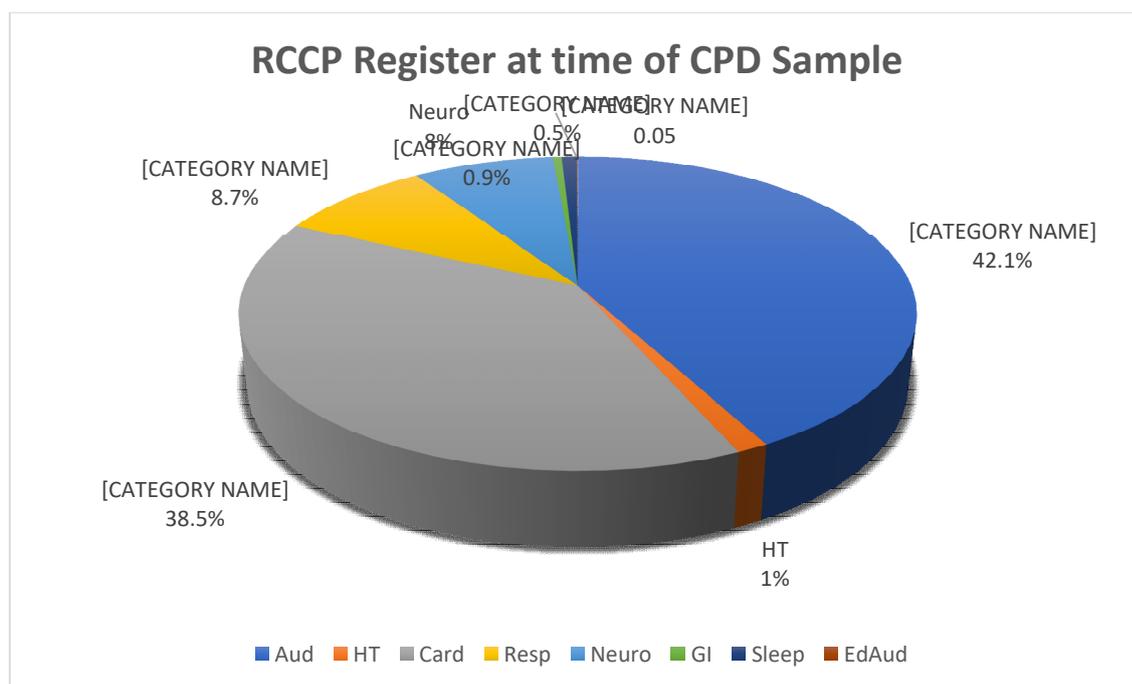
12 registrants were automatically included in the 2017-2019 audit where they were successfully granted a deferrals during the 2015-2017 audit. 14 deferrals were granted in 2017 with 2 of these registrants voluntary deregistering in the period prior to this current audit.

2 registrants were also included in the 2017-2019 audit following a fitness to practice investigation determination in 2019.

At the time the CPD audit sample was taken, the Register consisted of the following discipline breakdown (table 1), expressed as a percentage in pie chart 1 below:

	Audio	HT	Cardiac	Resp	Neuro	GI	Sleep	EdAud	TOTAL
Registrants	2340	72	2140	484	444	28	47	(3)	5558

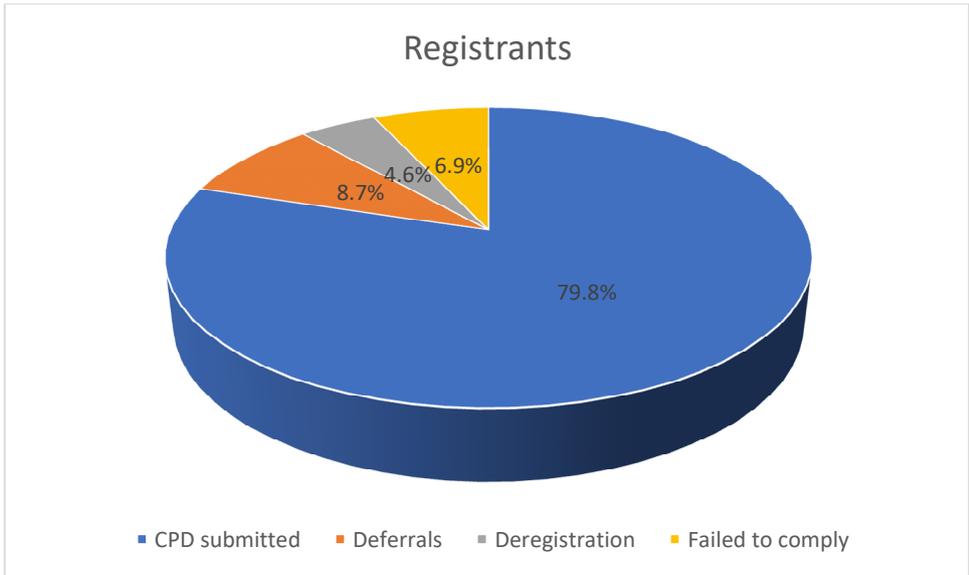
Table1: Registrant discipline breakdown at time of the CPD audit sample for 2017-2019



Pie Chart 1: Total Register as a percentage per discipline at the time of the CPD audit 2017-2019 sample.

Educational Audiologists (EdAud) were excluded from the 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle as they were a newly admitted discipline to the Register in 2019.

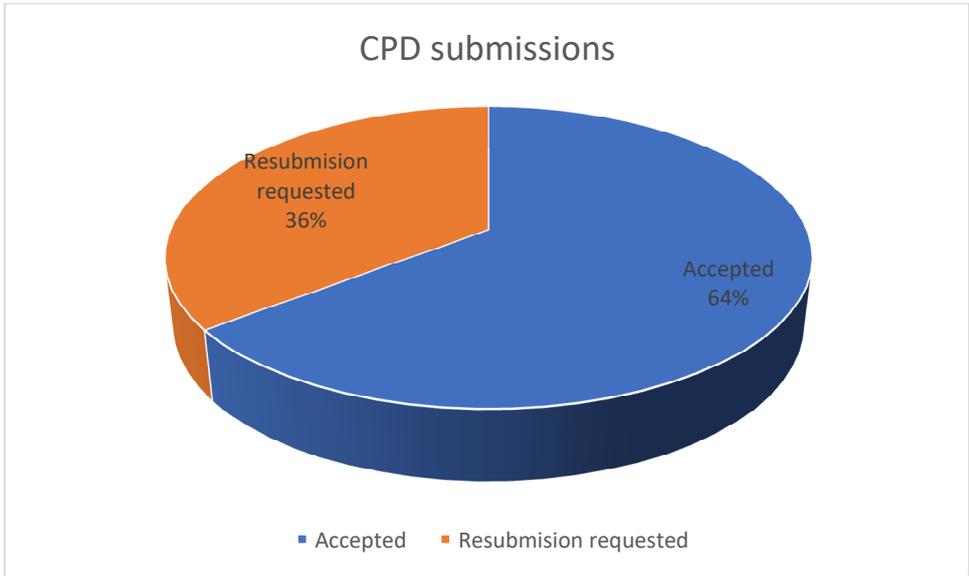
Of the 173 CPD profiles requested, 138 were submitted (79.8%), 15 registrants were successfully granted a deferral (8.7%), 8 registrants requested to be voluntary deregistered (4.6%) and 12 registrants failed to comply with the CPD audit process (6.9%) as detailed in pie chart 2 below.



Pie Chart 2: Percentage registrant CPD profile compliance for the 2017-2019 audit

5 extensions were successfully granted (2.9%), 4 registrants from the audiology discipline and 1 registrant from neurophysiology, the reasons cited were short-term illness (4) and for personal circumstances (1).

Of the 138 submitted CPD profiles, 89 were accepted (64.5%) and 49 required resubmission (35.5%).



Pie Chart 3: Percentage of CPD profiles accepted against resubmission requested.

Summary of CPD Audit Results for 2017-2019 by discipline

Table 2 below summarises the number of CPD profiles requested for the 2017-2019 CPD by clinical physiology discipline, where audiology and cardiac physiology are the largest groups sampled, in keeping with their total % on the Register as shown in pie chart 1.

DISCIPLINE	Audiologists	Hearing Therapists	Educational Audiologists	Cardiac physiologists	Respiratory physiologists	Neuro physiologists	Gastro-intestinal physiologists	Sleep physiologists	TOTAL
CPD REQUESTED	67	5	0	67	16	13	3	2	173

Table: 2 Summary of CPD requested for 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle

The CPD profiles were assessed against the RCCP CPD Standards by 18 assessors summarised in table 3 below:

DISCIPLINE	Audiologists	Hearing Therapists	Educational Audiologists	Cardiac physiologists	Respiratory physiologists	Neuro physiologists	Gastro-intestinal physiologists	Sleep physiologists	TOTAL
CPD Assessors	5	1	0	5	3	2	1	1	18

Table 3: CPD assessor numbers per discipline for the 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle

Table 4 below summarises the CPD outcomes and compliance for the 2017-2019 CPD audit by discipline

CPD OUTCOME	Audiologists	Hearing Therapists	Educational Audiologists	Cardiac physiologists	Respiratory physiologists	Neuro physiologists	Gastro-intestinal physiologists	Sleep physiologists	TOTAL
Accepted¹	29	2	0	39	9	8	0	2	89
More work required²	31	1	0	12	3	0	2	0	49
Voluntary dereg³	0	1	0	4	1	1	1	0	8
Deferrals⁴	6	0	0	4	2	3	0	0	15
CPD evidence not provided⁵	1	1	0	8	1	1	0	0	12
TOTAL	67	5	0	67	16	13	3	2	173

Table 4: Summary of audit outcome by discipline for the 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle

CPD Outcome summary:

- 1- *The registrant provided a CPD profile and the profile was assessed to meet the CPD standards.*
- 2- *The registrant provided a CPD profile and the CPD assessor requested resubmission.**
- 3- *The registrant requested voluntary deregistration.*
- 4- *The registrant requested and provided evidence to the RCCP for a deferral criteria and will be automatically selected for the 2021 CPD audit.*
- 5- *The registrants did not respond to the requests from RCCP to supply CPD.*

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the CPD audit was closed in March 2020. 49 registrants would ordinarily have been asked to resubmit their CPD profile but this request was cancelled following the Government lockdown measures introduced on 23rd March 2020, in keeping with our regulators decisions. These registrants will be automatically included in the 2021 CPD audit cycle (although with the option to resubmit voluntarily in within 2020).

Non-compliance

12 registrants (6.9%) failed to comply with the 2017-2019 audit process, a larger number being cardiac physiologists. 2 of these non-compliant registrants were previous deferrals from the 2015-2017 audit cycle (1 respiratory physiologist and 1 cardiac physiologist).

No removals will be sanctioned during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis following the 2017-2019 audit premature closure. These registrants and their employers will be written to and given notice of pending removal and a final decision made following any national notification of the pandemic crisis ending.

Deferrals

There were 15 registrants (8.7%) who were successfully granted deferrals who will be automatically included in the next CPD audit (2021), the same number to that agreed in 2017. Table 5 below summarises the reason for deferral being granted for these 15 registrants.

Reason for deferral	2017-2019
Maternity leave	9
Ill health	5
Career break	1

Table 5: Reasons agreed for successful deferrals for the 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle

CPD Audit trends

Table 6 summarised CPD audit trend outcomes over the last 3 CPD audit cycles.

	2015	2017	2019
Accepted	84.5	78.0	65%*
Request to deregister	2.5	4.2	4.6%
Deferred until next audit	5.4	9.5	8.7%
Removed from the register – CPD not submitted	7.6	8.3	0.0%

Table 6: Summary of audit trends over the last 3 CPD audit cycles

*The percentage of accepted CPD profiles after the initial CPD assessment was lower in this current audit in comparison to previous years. This is likely to be the result of the cancelled CPD profile resubmission due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis for 49 (35.5%) of the CPD submissions. Voluntary deregistrations have remained fairly stable over the last 3 CPD audit cycles.

Assessor Feedback

Assessor key recommendations following the 2017-2019 audit cycle included that registrants:

- provide evidence for any CPD example and where not available to complete the RCCP CPD template form.
- provide more detailed reflection in relation to professional practice, benefits to service delivery and benefits to service users
- use [SMART criteria](#) for professional development plans
- do not rely on mandatory training examples as an example of CPD unless there is clear evidence and learning i.e. from a complaint/incident.

CPD Audit Challenges and Learning outcomes

Challenges

There were a numbers of administrative and technical challenges during this 2017-2019 CPD audit cycle, most of which were related to our current database, which is due to be replaced in 2020. This experience will provide valuable input into the new database being developed, where we were unable to fully interrogate the registrant database to provide greater detail in relation to our full registrant profile (e.g. age, gender, location, duration of registration) with any ease.

Learning Outcomes

- The new database will include a number of additional searchable fields to provide a more detailed assessment of the sample assessed against the total Register.
- There was evidence to suggest that some registrants may not keep an up to date CPD record that is readily available on request, a requirement of RCCP registration. The RCCP are exploring the possibility of introducing on-line CPD repository as part of the new database and website upgrade to enable registrants to compile and continuously update their CPD record with ease. In the meantime, through communication with our registrants, we will continue to encourage them to keep their own records, particularly because it enhances their audit experience.
- Assessor feedback was of a high quality, there were accepted differences in style but also differences in decision making against the CPD Standards requiring discussion. Future recommendations will include the consideration of assessors working in pairs and reaching a joint decision, necessitating the recruitment of a larger pool of assessors.
- The CPD standards are the same for all the disciplines we register and as such we may consider introducing 'cross-discipline' assessment. The primary assessor would be from the same discipline as the registrant, as this is important for trust and confidence in the CPD auditing process. The secondary assessor would be from another discipline.
- This audit has found a reasonably high number of registrants who did not demonstrate that they had met the standards on their 1st assessment. We will review the CPD standards, associated guidance and communications materials prior to the next CPD audit and make any changes as required. We plan to provide registrants with a variety of good examples of anonymised CPD submissions.

- Deferral and extension guidance will be updated to ensure that registrants are more aware of the basis for these requests and what evidence is required to support any request.
- We will continue to listen to and learn from any CPD assessor or registrant feedback.

This report will be available on our website and shared with our stakeholders and in particular, will be sent to all trusts/employers identifying those who have been removed from the Register owing to their failure to comply with the CPD audit as part of our commitment to public protection.

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