



ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND

# Information for Retired Doctors for Professional Competence

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Suggestions as to how you can achieve the minimum requirements.....	4
Define your scope of practice.....	4
Relate your scope of practice to PCS requirements .....	4
Conduct a Clinical (Practice) Audit.....	5
Engage in all CPD Categories.....	6
External (Maintenance of Knowledge and Skills).....	6
Internal (Practice Evaluation and Development .....	7
Personal Learning .....	8
Research or Teaching .....	9
Record your Professional Competence claims.....	10
Do you need help?.....	10
Appendix 1: Define your Scope of Practice for your Personal Development Plan.....	11
Appendix 2: Medical Council 8 Domains of Good Professional Practice .....	12
Appendix 3: Further Reading: .....	13

## Introduction

The Medical Council has agreed that retired medical practitioners are subject to the same professional competence requirements as all other practising doctors. This means that any retired doctor wishing to retain registration for the purpose of practising medicine is obliged to fulfil their statutory duty to maintain professional competence.

There are no special requirements for doctors working less than full-time, or on an occasional basis. Once registered with the Irish Medical Council, a doctor has the right to practise medicine. From the public perspective, the responsibility to maintain professional competence must apply to all doctors, regardless of their working arrangements. Therefore, all doctors on the register have a duty to maintain professional competence by enrolling in a professional competence scheme and engaging in maintenance of professional competence activities as defined by the IMC.

There are two scenarios for retired doctors:

- Fully retired in that the retired practitioner no longer sees patients and are not engaged in any activity that requires registration with the Medical Council
- Occasionally see patients or are engaged in activities that require the practitioner to be registered with the Medical Council, e.g. teaching, tutoring, medico-legal work, professional advisor etc.

If the first scenario applies and a practitioner has completely retired from practice and does not intend to do any medically related work in the foreseeable future, then it will be difficult to meet the Professional Competence requirements as set out by the Medical Council.

Practitioners who this scenario applies to may wish to consider [voluntary withdrawal from the Register](#). The current guidance furnished by the Medical Council can be found on the [Medical Council website](#) and it might be useful to contact the Medical Council Professional Competence Scheme section to discuss this, by email to [pc@mcirl.ie](mailto:pc@mcirl.ie) or by phone to (01) 498 3100

If the second scenario applies and a practitioner is involved in medically-related activities such as advisory, academic or medico-legal work, then the Medical Council state that retired practitioners will be obliged to fulfil their statutory duty to maintain professional competence. In which case, practitioners need to work within the current system to accumulate sufficient credits.

The categories that often cause difficulty for retired doctors are the **Internal CPD Category** and the **Clinical Audit**.

## Suggestions as to how you can achieve the minimum requirements

### Define your scope of practice

A key point to remember is that the Professional Competence Scheme framework is based on **self-directed learning** and that the activities you record must **reflect your current scope of practice**. Some activities may not be immediately identifiable as attracting CPD credit, but if you have clearly [defined your scope of practice](#) it should be relatively simple to map what you do in your practice to the Professional Competence scheme framework.

See [Appendix 1 – Define your Scope of Practice for your Personal Development Plan](#)

### Relate your scope of practice to PCS requirements

A total of 50 CPD credits are required per year within the four **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** categories:

- External (maintenance of knowledge and skills) - minimum 20 credits per year (required)
- Internal (practice evaluation and development) - minimum 20 credits per year (required)
- Personal Learning - minimum 5 credits per year (required)
- Research or Teaching -2 credits per year (desirable)

Don't forget that you must also record at least one **Clinical (Practice Audit)** every year.

The Professional Competence year runs from 01 May to 30 April, and any claims must be for activities that took place within that period.

Each claim you make must reflect **one** of the [Medical Council's 8 Domains of Good Professional Practice](#).

Doctors are best placed to choose the activities that reflect their educational needs and will be expected to make a judgement on the value of a particular activity based on their [scope of practice](#). They are expected to map their activities against the relevant Domain of Good Professional Practice and ensure that the activities undertaken during the course of a five year cycle encompasses all eight domains.

See [Appendix 2 – Medical Council's 8 Domains of Good Professional Practice](#)

## Conduct a Clinical (Practice) Audit

An audit does not need to be a *clinical* audit. Rather, you should audit whatever activity you are currently engaged in. While the audit would ideally consist of measurement, comparison with standards, an intervention and re-evaluation, this may not be practical for all.

For example, if you are involved in medico-legal work related to your role as a doctor, you could do an audit around this, comparing your activity to best practice guidelines.

This activity may also provide an option to link up with your former colleagues.

The following suggestions may be adaptable to an individual's requirements:

- Quality Improvement project
- Measurement of individual compliance with guidelines / protocols
- Medico-legal practice audit
- Skills analysis
- Self-assessment
- Teaching role: An evaluation of teaching role
- Examining: An evaluation of examining role

### Evidence of Participation

The Clinical (Practice) Audit form in your ePortfolio for Professional Competence is designed to allow all audits to be recorded in a consistent way that is compatible with the Annual Verification Process. It is not necessary to attach any additional documents to the form.

### Further information about audit:

Viewing the following guides may also suggest some audit topics that are appropriate for you.

- [RCPI Guide to Clinical \(Practice\) Audit for Professional Competence](#) -
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine:
  - o [Clinical \(Practice\) Audit on the Management of Lower Back Pain](#)
  - o [Clinical \(Practice\) Audit on Ethics in Occupational Health](#)
  - o [Patient Experience Survey example](#)
- Faculty of Public Health Medicine
  - o [Clinical Audit / Quality Improvements Guidance](#)

*These documents can be downloaded from [www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie) through our Professional Competence/Resources section.*

[HSE Guidance for Clinical Audit](#) – the HSE has provided a guide for Clinical Audit which can be downloaded from [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie) through its Quality and Patient Safety section

[Medical Council Guidance for Clinical Audit](#) – the Medical Council has made a series of videos on this topic available on [www.medicalcouncil.ie](http://www.medicalcouncil.ie) through its News & Publications section including a video with [information on undertaking an audit if not in practice](#) .

## Engage in all CPD Categories

### External (Maintenance of Knowledge and Skills)

In most cases, accumulating the required 20 External CPD credits is relatively straightforward. Credits in this category are calculated as 1 hour = 1 credit. Credits in this category are calculated as 1 hour = 1 credit.

Below are examples of activity which are relevant to this category:

- Regional, national or international scientific meetings relevant to your scope of practice
- Educational activities organised by your training body, college or medical society
- Courses, workshops or seminars, diploma or other courses, including online learning, that are relevant to your scope of practice
- The annual RCPI St Luke's week programme contains a range of day-time and evening activities that attract CPD credit.
- Year round, the [RCPI Postgraduate Medical Education Centre](#) delivers a wide range of live educational activities, including the Masterclass series which is also available to attend at [webcast centres](#) around Ireland
- Doctors enrolled on one of our Professional Competence schemes have automatic access to [RCPI Moodle](#). We offer a range of online learning courses; some can be completed independently and in your own time, while others offer a blended approach, combining online modules with practical group workshops
- There are many other educational meetings / lectures around the country approved by the six RCPI training bodies

**Tip:** You may claim CPD credit in this category for any educational activity that is relevant to your scope of practice, regardless of whether or not it is CPD approved. You simply need to indicate its relevance to you through the Reflective Notes section of your ePortfolio form and provide evidence that you attended.

### Evidence of Participation for External CPD:

Evidence of Participation for an External CPD Claim must carry your name and the name of the organising body and confirmation from the organiser that you did attend.

Invitations, programmes and agendas merely indicate an intention to attend.

## Internal (Practice Evaluation and Development)

The Internal category may be the most challenging and 20 credits annually are required. Credits in this category are calculated as 1 hour = 1 credit.

Retired doctors can achieve Internal credits by:

- Involvement with your RCPI Training Body, for example:
  - Exam question setting/writing
  - Mentoring SpRs /recently appointed consultants
  - Participation in committees
  - Hospital/training site inspections
  - Meetings in connection with research projects
  - Meetings in connection with national guidelines or policies
  - Training/orientation sessions in connection with hospital/training site inspections, SDR reviews, AVP reviews, examining, teaching, mentoring, trainee assessment
- Involvement in volunteer or outreach activities
- Forming a Journal Club with other retired doctors. Articles relating to your activities could be discussed
- If you are teaching or acting in a professional advisory capacity , then the meetings, presentations or reviews that relate to that role can be recorded in the Internal category
- Peer review groups
- Meetings to discuss patient incident reviews or medico-legal cases
- Chart reviews which commonly occur in medico-legal practice\*\*
- Attending case presentations
- Attending meetings that relate to practitioners current role
- Re-certification examinations such as:
  - Advanced Cardiac Life Saving (ACLS)
  - Advanced Paediatric Life Support (APLS)
  - Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics (ALSO)
  - etc..

**Tip:** Some activities which have been approved for External CPD may equally fulfil the Internal CPD category, depending on your scope of practice, and it is appropriate for you to record them in the Internal CPD category. Examples of courses available through **RCPI Moodle** that fit this scenario are:

- [Medication Safety](#)
- [Patient Safety](#)
- [Principles of Antibiotic Use](#)
- [Healthcare Associated Infections](#)
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If you take this approach and identify an activity more usually seen as External as falling into the Internal CPD category, you should clarify your reasons in the reflective notes section of your ePortfolio form.

### **Evidence of Participation for the Internal CPD category:**

An evidence document for an Internal CPD claim must carry your name and the name of the organising body, and confirmation from the organiser that you did attend. The document should not contain other names or confidential information.

If the meeting time for an Internal CPD activity is greater than 1 hour, information about the start and finish times should also be included.

If you are attending a series of recurring meetings, your ePortfolio for Professional Competence enables you to record a summary of attendances on a single form.

If you organise a Journal club, you can find information on how to track attendance and provide evidence documents for Internal CPD activities in the Forum guide to [Verification of Internal CPD](#). You can download this document from [www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie) through our Professional Competence/Resources section.

### **Personal Learning**

Accumulating Personal Learning CPD credits is relatively straightforward. Personal Learning including reading journals etc. should also be easy to achieve.

Below are examples of activity which are relevant to this category

- Self-directed education (eg Journal reading)
- E-learning including
  - [RCPI Player](#) - RCPI has an extensive library of lectures delivered at our courses and events that can be accessed on [www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie) through our Courses and Events section.
  - Online journals, reviews, podcasts etc.
- Personal reading

### **Evidence of Participation for the Personal Learning CPD category**

As personal learning activities are largely unverifiable, no evidence documents are required for this category, along with a brief reflective note outlining the activity and learning achieved for each claim. This would be helpful in the case of a verification process being conducted.



## Research or Teaching

The Research or Teaching CPD category is not mandatory, however, activity in this category is desirable and many of you will be able to accumulate many credits.

Below are examples of activities which are relevant to this category

- Article publication
- Contribution to a guideline or policy
- Poster presentation
- Postgraduate examiner or teacher
- Undergraduate examiner or teacher\*
- Lecturer
- Research

\*Undergraduate teaching or examining does not attract CPD credit unless there is a clear learning benefit for you. You should demonstrate the specific learning you gained in the Reflective Notes section of your ePortfolio form.

You may claim a standard 5 credits in this category for the first-time preparation and delivery of a publication, a lecture or a poster presentation.

### **Evidence of Participation for the Research or Teaching CPD category**

**Publications/Guidelines/Policies:** Entering the PubMed (or equivalent) reference within your reflective notes on the relevant ePortfolio form is sufficient evidence for a publication. It is not necessary to provide the entire publication.

**Examining/Lecturing:** A certificate or other acknowledgement of your attendance as an Examiner /Lecturer on the day of the activity, from the relevant Postgraduate Training Body

## Record your Professional Competence claims

It is very important that you regularly record your Professional Competence activities in your [ePortfolio for Professional Competence](#).

The information you enter in your ePortfolio forms will determine your [Annual Statement of Participation in Professional Competence](#) which the Medical Council may request from you as satisfactory evidence of engagement in Professional Competence.

### Do you need help?

If you need advice on Professional Competence or what to record in your ePortfolio, please contact the RCPI Professional Competence Department, which is open Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 GMT at + 353 1 863 9739 or [professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie](mailto:professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie).

To access your ePortfolio simply go to the RCPI website ([www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie)) and click on Login (top of the screen above Search). Enter your username and the password you use for RCPI Online Services. You will then see a link to open your ePortfolio on the top right hand side of your screen.

If you have forgotten your password you can use our [Forgot Password service](#).

If you need help logging in to RCPI Online Services or the ePortfolio, you can contact the RCPI Helpdesk, which is open Monday to Friday 08:00 – 18:00 GMT on Free phone 1800 303 574 (ROI only) or +353 1 863 9721 or [helpdesk@rcpi.ie](mailto:helpdesk@rcpi.ie).

## Appendix 1: Define your Scope of Practice for your Personal Development Plan

Before you begin each Professional Competence year, it is worthwhile to think about the activities you will engage in during the coming year and how they might map to your Professional Competence requirements.

Using this matrix will help you create a structured definition of your practice that you can update as and when your circumstances change, and use to prepare your Personal Development Plan each year.

<b>Area of Practice</b> (tick all that apply)	Clinical/Laboratory/ Private Practice Administration/Governance Teaching, examining, mentoring etc. Advisor Volunteer Other [describe "Other"]
<b>Practice Environment</b> (tick all that apply)	Hospital/Laboratory Academic State Body Other Environment with/without Peer Support [describe "Other Environment"]
<b>Non-Clinical Roles</b>  <b>Examples include:</b>	Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education/Examiner Protocol Development Examiner Assessor Reviewer/Editor Editor
<b>Type of Practice</b> (tick all that apply)	Full-time/Part-time Retired Other...[describe "Other"]
<b>Consider how the activities you engage in relate to your area(s) of practice</b>	It may be possible to assign some to a CPD category where you have previously found difficult to fulfil.

## Appendix 2: Medical Council 8 Domains of Good Professional Practice

The Medical Council has defined 8 domains of good professional practice. Your Annual Statement of Participation in Professional Competence must show that you have engaged in activities that reflect all 8 domains over a five-year period.

These domains describe a framework of competencies applicable to all doctors across the continuum of professional development from formal medical education and training through to maintenance of professional competence. Since they describe the outcomes which doctors should strive to achieve, doctors should refer to these domains throughout the process of maintaining competence in line with the Standards. For example, the domains can be used to assess needs and plan maintenance of professional competence, and they can be cross-referenced with specific activities for maintenance of professional competence.

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### PATIENT SAFETY & QUALITY OF PATIENT CARE

Patient safety and quality of patient care should be at the core of the health service delivery that a doctor provides. A doctor needs to be accountable to their professional body, to the organisation in which they work, to the Medical Council and to their patients thereby ensuring the patients whom they serve receive the best possible care.

#### RELATING TO PATIENTS

Good medical practice is based on a relationship of trust between doctors and society and involves a partnership between patient and doctor that is based on mutual respect, confidentiality, honesty, responsibility and accountability.

#### COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Medical practitioners must demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills. This enables the exchange of information, and allows for effective collaboration with patients, their families and also with clinical and non-clinical colleagues and the broader public.

#### COLLABORATION & TEAMWORK

Medical practitioners must co-operate with colleagues and work effectively with healthcare professionals from other disciplines and teams. He/she should ensure that there are clear lines of communication and systems of accountability in place among team members to protect patients.

### MANAGEMENT (INCLUDING SELF-MANAGEMENT)

A medical practitioner must understand how working in the health care system, delivering patient care and how other professional and personal activities affect other healthcare professionals, the healthcare system and wider society as a whole .

#### SCHOLARSHIP

Medical practitioners must systematically acquire, understand and demonstrate the substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of the field of learning in their specialty, as part of a continuum of lifelong learning. They must also search for the best information and evidence to guide their professional practice.

#### PROFESSIONALISM

Medical practitioners must demonstrate a commitment to fulfilling professional responsibilities by adhering to the standards specified in the Medical Council's "[Guide to Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Medical Practitioners](#)".

#### CLINICAL SKILLS

The maintenance of Professional Competence in the clinical skills domain is clearly specialty-specific and standards should be set by the relevant Post-Graduate Training Body according to international benchmarks.

## Appendix 3: Further Reading:

It is very important that you review and become familiar with the [Medical Council Information for Retired Doctors](#)

The [Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies Professional Competence FAQs](#) are also a vital source of information for you, your employer and anyone who wants to secure [CPD approval for their educational events](#).

For more information about Professional Competence please visit [www.rcpi.ie](http://www.rcpi.ie)

If you have any questions regarding Professional Competence please contact [professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie](mailto:professionalcompetence@rcpi.ie)