The new PLAN quality improvement activity in the RACGP’s QI&CPD Program gives GPs the opportunity to reflect on continuing professional development that will benefit them, their practice and their community.

The good GP, as they say, never stops learning. The RACGP’s Quality Improvement and Continuing Professional Development (QI&CPD) Program is designed to support GPs throughout Australia to provide the best possible care for patients and communities.

‘Since its inception, the RACGP’s QI&CPD Program has always recognised the need for self-reflection to improve the quality of everyday clinical practice by promoting the development and maintenance of general practice skills and lifelong learning,’ RACGP President Dr Bastian Seidel said.

As part of the RACGP’s dedication to continually evaluate and improve the QI&CPD Program, the upcoming 2017–19 triennium will include an increased focus on reflective learning practices with the introduction of the planning learning and need (PLAN) Category 1 quality improvement (QI) activity.

A mandatory online activity, PLAN is an evidence-based approach to continuing professional development (CPD) that enables GPs to identify significant areas of general practice learning needs. This provides the capacity to structure ongoing learning in accordance with GPs’ personal requirements and the services necessary to meet the evolving needs of their patients and community (refer to breakout on page 8 for more information).

PLAN recognises that learning needs change with many factors, including the evolving nature of general practice and medical care, career history and clinical experience, practice demographics, and significant life events such as leave from practice (eg parental leave).

‘The PLAN activity has been developed to further support GPs on their educational journey by providing improved capacity to structure their ongoing learning,’ Dr Seidel said. ‘This will enable GPs to self-identify priority areas of learning need in accordance with their personal aspirations and needs of their patients and their community.’
**Steps to complete the online PLAN activity**

**Step 1**  
Login to myRACGP
→ select myCPD
→ select PLAN

**Step 2**  
Complete practice profile analysis and self-assessment

**Step 3**  
Review the report generated from step 1

**Step 4**  
Identify five key areas for improvement from the report

**Step 5**  
Complete activities relevant to the five key areas

Reflect and plan ahead

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**Step by step**

PLAN has been developed to provide GPs with a user-friendly CPD experience that does not add to their existing workload. The activity is broken into five steps:

1. Complete a practice profile and self-assessment
2. Review the report generated in the first step
3. Identify five key areas for improvement from the report
4. Complete activities throughout the triennium that are relevant to the five key areas
5. Reflect and plan ahead

According to Dr Janice Bell, GP and Chair of the RACGP Expert Committee – Post Fellowship Education who was involved in the development of PLAN, its fundamental concepts have been in the works for more than 10 years. The RACGP has used that time to ensure it delivered members the best possible CPD structure in a vital area of the healthcare profession.

‘Education is incredibly important for GPs because it’s not just about making yourself a better doctor; it’s also about keeping the community and patients safe. Education is high stakes for GPs,’ she told *Good Practice*.  

‘Therefore, planning your learning is even more important than any other education endeavour.

‘It’s one thing to say learning plans are a good idea, but it’s quite another to have one that’s easy to use, meaning people will use it and get benefit from it.

‘So while the RACGP could have made PLAN mandatory 10 years ago, we didn’t because we didn’t have a mechanism to make it really user-friendly, and now we do.

‘PLAN is online, it’s very simple to work your way through it, it’s very simple to add in the CPD activities you do that address the different learning areas that you have identified, and you can stop and start at any time without losing your data.’

The timing of PLAN’s implementation is also fortuitous in that it comes shortly after the Medical Board of Australia’s interim paper on revalidation, released in August, which requested that representative healthcare organisations such as the RACGP bolster their professional development strategies.

‘PLAN gives us that strengthened CPD program and that is why we made it compulsory,’ Dr Bell said. ‘Now we know that everyone will be thinking about the education they do in relation to their practice and their performance.’

**On reflection**

One of the most important aspects of PLAN is an emphasis on reflective learning. As GPs’ learning from CPD becomes applied to practice, reflective learning enables them to test how relevant, useful and appropriate their learning is to their everyday practice, and to revise any learning needs accordingly.  

Reflective learning practice requires ongoing observation and evaluation of professional skills and community needs through a process of critical thinking.  

By taking the time to create a practice profile and undertake a self-assessment, PLAN allows GPs to consider what skills are needed beyond those they wish to develop for their own professional aspirations.

‘GPs might even consult their peers as they consider their education needs, and I think that is the most powerful underpinning of the strengthened CPD program,’ Dr Bell said.>

Dr Janice Bell describes GPs’ education as ‘high stakes’ and feels the new PLAN activity will ultimately help them deliver the best care for their patients and communities.
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning ahead

A planning learning and need (PLAN) quality improvement activity is designed to help GPs structure and document their learning according to the needs of themselves, and their patients and community.

A PLAN activity documents:
- what the GP needs to learn
- why they need to learn it
- how they are going to learn it
- evidence they have achieved their learning goals.

The PLAN activity is mandatory in the 2017–19 triennium and is completed online through the myRACGP member portal (www.racgp.org.au/myracgp).


QI&CPD 2017–19 Program requirements

A minimum of 130 QI&CPD points is required for the 2017–19 triennium. This must include:
- one PLAN quality improvement activity
- one Category 1 activity
- a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course.


A welcome progression

With the topic of revalidation in general practice a continually sensitive one, Dr Bell believes it is important to note that PLAN is not a reaction to that issue.
The NEW edition of the Red Book is out now

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