

Education and Training Committee, September 27th 2007

CPD Assessors' Day – report to ETC

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

CPD audits begin in 2008 for the chiropodists and podiatrists, and operating department practitioners. To ensure that HPC is ready for the audit process, a major project is being carried out, in order to prepare HPC operations, including resources, IT infrastructure, standard letters, and other areas.

As part of the work being undertaken to support this, a trial CPD assessment day was held in June. At this day, existing Registration Assessors were invited to submit CPD profiles, and other Registration Assessors attended in order to be trained in the CPD standards, and to take part in assessments.

The results of this day have been written up into a report for the CPD project team, and it was considered that this report would also be of interest to the Education and Training Committee, many of whom have been very involved in refining the Council's proposals for linking CPD with registration.

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Background information

None applicable.

Resource implications

Time spent preparing for CPD audits forms part of the workplans for the relevant departments for this financial year.

Financial implications

The CPD project forms part of the HPC budget for this financial year.

Appendices

CPD Assessors' day feedback

Date of paper

14th September 2007

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2007-09-14	a	POL	PPR	CPD Assessors day ETC coversheet	Final DD: None	Public RD: None

CPD Assessors' day report

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Introduction

On 27th June 2007, we held a CPD mock assessment day. This was organised jointly by Mark Potter, Customer Services Manager, and Rachel Tripp, Director of Policy & Standards, and the day was intended to form part of the resource planning for the implementation of the CPD project.

We invited Registration Assessors (health professionals who are partners of the HPC, and who undertake the assessment of international and grandparenting applications) to participate in the day, asking if they would be willing to either:

- submit their own CPD profile for assessment; or
- attend the day, and participate in 'mock' CPD assessments.

As with other work that partners undertake on our behalf, we offered to pay the Registration Assessors for the time that they would spend on this for us.

We were very grateful for an excellent response from Registration Assessors ('Assessors'), who were keen to participate in the process. This meant that we could invite profile submissions from ten Assessors from a range of professions, and invite ten different Assessors to attend the day itself. This had the benefit of ensuring that no participant in the day had to be involved in the assessment of their own profile.

We also deliberately decided not to use the sample CPD profiles for this assessment day (the sample profiles have been produced in partnership with the professional bodies, and published online for use by registrants www.hpc-uk.org/registrants/cpd/sampleprofiles/). The sample profiles have in some cases been through several drafts with the professional bodies, the Policy department and Council members' input, to ensure that they were easy to assess and clearly addressed the standards. We felt that it would be more helpful for this exercise to run mock assessments on profiles that had not had this detailed input, to get some indication of what the experience of assessing a 'fresh' profile straight from a registrant might be like.

Aims

The day was originally conceived as part of the work undertaken by the CPD project group. (This is a cross-departmental project group, run by Richard Houghton, Registration Manager, and project managed by Claire Phillips. The group is working to prepare for the CPD audits which begin in July 2008.)

The group wanted to undertake a piece of work to determine how long the assessment of a profile might take, in order to feed this information into planning for CPD Assessors' fees, assessment days, and other operational arrangements.

However, during the planning for the day, it became clear that we could also gain other pieces of information from it, including indications of:

- what training is needed for CPD Assessors, and feedback on the training;
- what forms we might provide to aid CPD Assessors in structuring their decision-making and their feedback;
- how CPD Assessors might find the experience of assessing profiles against the CPD standards;
- whether multi-professional assessment could be viable or useful;
- information we could provide to registrants who are audited, on 'common mistakes' that they might make, or ways that we could structure our audit information to make it clear what we require and why.

Having received the profiles for assessment, with supporting evidence, we made the decision to experiment with photocopying the profile (pro-forma including statement current practice, and personal statement addressing the standards), but to keep only one copy of the supporting evidence, which in some cases was quite substantial. We decided we would also ask the Assessors

We deliberately designed the day to be as open and discursive as possible, and were keen to create a format that allowed us to benefit from the Registration Assessors' experience, both as registrants, and as 'mock' CPD Assessors for the day. We emphasised throughout to participants the importance of feedback, and queries, and were keen to stress to those taking part that they should ask questions, volunteer information, and enter into a debate which would help to shape the operational project.

Format of the day

The Policy and Standards team has been involved for some time now in delivering a range of CPD talks, presentations, training, and workshop sessions to registrants and other groups. We therefore decided to adapt this existing material into a training package for the morning which included the history of the CPD standards, the standards in detail including assessment criteria, and an exercise in summing up the main requirements of the standards. The afternoon was then dedicated to assessment sessions which were undertaken first individually, then in pairs, with time also allowed for group feedback and discussion, questions and queries. Most participants were given a profile from their own profession first, and then moved on to profiles from other professions. The assessment sessions were scheduled so that the time allowed for each one was incrementally decreased, to allow for what we hoped would be increasing familiarity with the standards, and also to test the time required for an assessment. We asked participants to fill in an assessment form for each profile that their pair assessed.

The full agenda for the CPD assessors' day is appended to this paper.

Collecting feedback

This feedback paper includes the questions raised and the discussions that were had during the day, but is particularly based on the feedback forms that

we distributed to Assessors. We emphasised to those taking part how vital their feedback was to the success of the day, and we were very grateful to participants, who in many cases spent some time writing detailed feedback and notes for us.

The majority of the rest of this paper summarises the outcomes from the day, and our conclusions.

Feedback and our conclusions

Training

We asked participants to let us know whether the morning session that we provided had adequately prepared them for the experience of assessing CPD profiles, or whether they felt that additional information was needed.

Feedback from participants consistently said that the morning session was enough to prepare them. Comments included:

“Can’t think of anything else that would have helped more.”

“It helped set the scene”

“I personally felt that it did prepare me for assessing the profiles.”

“The practical session was particularly useful afterwards, so that the theory could be applied.”

Conclusion

We concluded that registrants who are already registration assessors (eg: who already know role of HPC, who have experience of drawing out evidence to meet standards, and who have received training on the importance of reasoning and reasoned decisions, etc.) require around 2 hours’ training to become confident with CPD standards, which was what we provided on the day,

However, our recommendation to the project team is that we should probably allow an extra 2 hours’ training, to look at two sample profiles, to carry out a practice assessment, become more familiar with assessment, and deal with additional questions and queries.

Multi-professional assessment

We asked the Assessors for their comments on how they had found the experience of looking at profiles that were not from their own profession. Despite initial scepticism and concerns in the morning, from trainers and assessors, the overwhelming feedback from assessors was that they were surprised to find multi-professional assessment worked, and they could do it relatively easily.

Comments included,

“No problem at all, which surprised me.”

“Maybe surprisingly, I actually don’t think it mattered which profession I was looking at.”

“Looking at other professions was a useful exercise.”

“None were from my profession, but I did not find that a problem.”

“Very interesting, see advantage in assessing other professions. May ensure objectivity.”

“Interesting. I feel it is very useful to have a multi-professional approach to ensure standardisation.”

We discussed with Assessors the possibility of using the model of ‘assessment days’ (previously trialled during grandparenting, where assessors are invited together to carry out assessments rather than information being sent out to individuals to complete in their own time). We also discussed whether we could then use a mixture of registrants from different professional backgrounds, say the majority from the profession being audited, with some CPD Assessors from the last audit group, and some CPD Assessors from the next group to be audited. This would help to ensure consistency of decision-making, would add to the quality of training as some Assessors would already have undertaken assessments, and would also help to mitigate the risk that knowledge might be ‘lost’ in the two years between professional audits.

This idea was very positively received, with the only concern from one person being that you then lose the advantage of being able to undertake assessment work at home, and fit it around other commitments.

Conclusion

We recommend that if we that we should use a mixture of registrants from different professional backgrounds.

Our initial suggestion (which may be further refined) is that the split for an assessment day might be 60: 20: 20

60% from the profession being audited.

20% from the last profession to be audited.

20% from the next profession to be audited.

Length of time needed to assess profiles

This was a vital question that we needed to address in order to facilitate planning for the assessments. Based on information from our experience of the assessment of International and Grandparenting applications, our initial estimate was a minimum of twenty minutes per profile.

Comments that we received from the Assessors were:

Three assessors said 15 – 20 minutes.

Two said 20 minutes.

One said 20 – 30 minutes, “maximum”.

One said 30 minutes.

One said 30 minutes – 1 hour.

Two assessors replied that the time taken would depend on the quality and clarity of the CPD profile submitted, and the partners involved,
“Varied on amount of information and familiarity with the task – it will become quicker as ... partners become more familiar with the task”
“If the profiles are presented well, 20 minutes. If not, 60 minutes.”

Conclusion

From looking at this spread of responses, from observing the assessments that were made and talking to assessors at the end of the day, we are comfortable with recommending that 30 minutes should be allowed per profile, for operational planning. We believe that this is a suitably conservative estimate, to give a reasonable assurance that a backlog does not develop.

Draft assessment form

We drafted an assessment form by adapting the existing form used by Registration Assessors when considering an International application. We asked Assessors for their feedback on how useful they found this form, and for their ideas on how it could be improved to help them in their assessment decisions.

Overall the assessment form was well-received, with comments that included, "Clear structure to assess by"
"Form is very clear. Why change something that works?"

One assessor suggested that we, "list the five standards to tick in 1.1"

Conclusion

We will use the form that we drafted, subject to further minor amendments. And we will add the check list suggested above,

Photocopying

On the day, we provided two copies of the profile, but only one copy of the supporting evidence. We then asked the Assessors whether they could effectively assess the profile whilst sharing the evidence.

All the Assessors responded that they could, and supported only having one copy of the evidence. "*With large forms [eg: large quantities of supporting evidence submitted], photocopying evidence would create a mountain of paperwork.*"

Conclusion

We recommend that when we receive registrants' profiles, we should make an additional copy of the profile itself, but not the supporting evidence.

Other issues

In addition to the questions that we raised in our feedback form, various other topics were discussed during the day

Evidence

Some assessors concerned about the validity of evidence, and wondered whether we should require that some pieces of evidence (eg: a record of an appraisal) should be signed by the registrant, and counter-signed by the supervisor.

We confirmed that, as with an international assessment, the onus of responsibility for the validity of the information provided falls upon the individual completing the form (in this case, the audited registrant). Because of this individual responsibility, we do not want to require that some pieces of evidence are counter-signed, particularly because some registrants may be self-employed and not have easy access to a counter-signatory. However, registrants may wish to get some pieces of evidence counter-signed, and the Assessor must make a reasonable decision about the validity of evidence submitted, in the context of the whole profile and other information provided. We emphasised that, as with international assessments, partners are always encouraged to inform us if they are concerned that evidence may not be valid. The assessors suggested that profession-specific knowledge may be useful at this stage.

Additional guidance for registrants

From their experience of looking through the profiles, the Assessors had several very helpful suggestions of additional information that could be provided for audited registrants, to help them to submit information that was clear, and addressed the standards. Their suggestions included:

- a check-list for registrants to complete
- suggested minimum font-size for legibility
- information to attempt to prevent registrants from supplying too much evidence (eg: you do not have to send in all of your evidence, summary sheets of presentations are fine, an A4 sheet for each slide is not required)
- clear guidance for registrants to connect their evidence to CPD standards 3 & 4 in their personal statement
- guidance that registrants should date their supporting evidence
- give examples of good practice in writing profiles
- indexing and cross-referencing makes the profile easier to navigate
- “for the role, good to define who your service-users are”

We discussed the legibility of profiles, and whether registrants might hand-write their profiles or complete them electronically. Assessors preferred word-processed profiles, although appreciated that we couldn't require registrants to complete their profile on a computer as many may not have IT access, or be confident in using IT in this way. We suggested that when we write to registrants to inform them that they have been selected for audit, we could inform them that the profile was available online for them to download and complete. This was very positively received.

We also discussed after the day the fact that not all profiles had included a summary of all of the CPD undertaken, as evidence to show that they met standard 1 (this is made clear in the assessment criteria). We suggested that in the empty 'table of evidence' which we provide for registrants to complete, we should include text to show that this is required.

For example:

Evidence number	Brief description of evidence	Number of pages, or description of evidence format	CPD Standards that this evidence relates to
<i>Example</i>	<i>Eg: 'Case studies' or 'Critical literature review'</i>	<i>Eg: '3 pages', 'photographs', or 'video tape'</i>	<i>Eg: Standards 2 and 4</i>
1	[Your first piece of evidence should be a summary of all of your CPD activity, to show that you have met Standard 1. See guidance notes for more information.]		1
2			
3			
4			

Evidence that does not cover full 2 years

Some assessors were concerned that if a profile did not contain evidence of CPD which covered the full two years' registration cycle, then standard 1 (which requires a record of CPD to be 'continuous') would not be met.

However, we discussed as a group the fact that standard one is a requirement of a CPD record (that it should be updated regularly) and not a requirement to do a certain amount of CPD, say, per month. In particular, registrants who work part-time, or on a temporary basis, or those who take a break in practice for any reason, would not necessarily be able to show that they had undertaken CPD over the whole of the two year period. We concluded that the standards require the link to benefits to practice and to service users, not a particular amount or frequency of CPD.

Providing feedback to registrants?

The question of whether registrants who have participated in the audit, and whose profiles meet the standards, should be given feedback, arose consistently throughout the day, with varying opinions expressed.

Some assessors were very positive about the idea, and commented, "Personally I'd like to give some feedback."
 "The form could include a feedback section, separate from the assessment."

Others were concerned that providing this kind of feedback would not be part of HPC's role as a regulator, assuring threshold standards. They were also concerned that providing feedback should only be part of a process where someone has the opportunity to act on that feedback and improve, and that this process was not relevant to a random audit process. Others commented

that since a registrant may not be audited again, the feedback provided may not be used, although others felt it could then be shared with colleagues who might be audited in the future.

One solution that was discussed was to write up a brief report of assessors' comments on profiles (anonymised, with general comments on trends or common positive or negative points) and to publish this online. This would be similar to the approach. This could then be accessed by those who had been audited.

Registrants not applicants

There was some discussion about the fundamental difference between dealing with an applicant via the international registration process, rather than dealing with a registrant. We felt that this issue particularly arose because of the professional experience of the Assessors in dealing with applicants to be registered. Specifically, we discussed how when examining an application to be registered, the onus falls on the applicant to prove to the assessor that they meet the HPC's standards. In the case of an existing registrant, that person has already demonstrated that they meet the Standards of Proficiency (either through completing an approved course, or by assessment) is subject to the fitness to practise process if necessary, and has confirmed at renewal that they meet the standards of CPD. Hence the assessors' working assumption is that the individual meets the standards of CPD, and the CPD profile should be approached positively, in order to find evidence that the standards are met. Although this appears to be a minor point around mindset, it was nonetheless an issue that the Assessors found helpful to talk through, and bring to their assessment exercises.

Link to FTP

One assessor asked what should be done if a CPD profile describes practice which is clearly unsafe. We considered that this was unlikely to happen, but also felt that we should speak to our colleagues in the fitness to practise department to set up a process for referral, perhaps accompanied by criteria, to ensure that if this is the case, we can take appropriate action.

Considerations

We are aware that the conclusions we have drawn are subject to a number of caveats. One of these is that because our participants were Registration Assessors, they were an audience of health professionals who were already familiar with HPC, used to making assessments against standards, and individuals who are experienced and senior in their professions. We have borne this in mind whilst considering the time required to train assessors, and also in our slight, conservative, over-estimation of the time required to assess a profile, since we consider that profiles received from assessors are perhaps more likely to meet the standards. Interestingly, however, after one assessor could not submit a profile, one was substituted at the last minute by a recent graduate who was not an assessor, and this profile was widely considered to clearly meet the standards)

We are also aware that the very small number of people participating in the day means that definitive statements cannot be made as to future requirements. However, we do feel that we have benefited from a wide range of professions, backgrounds, and approaches, and feel that this was borne out during the discussion about the standards. We will therefore keep these conclusions under review as preparation continues, and once assessments have begun, and will revisit them if necessary.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the Registration Assessors who sent in CPD profiles for assessment, to those who attended the day and participated so positively in the tasks and gave us their feedback, and also to those Registration Assessors who volunteered to take part, but whose assistance we did not need due to the high level of response. Without these health professionals' participation, this exercise, which we have found very helpful and instructive, could not have taken place.

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19th July 2007