ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN
COLLEGE OF SURGEONS RACS

FELLOWSHIP AND STANDARDS

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

GUIDE TO CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATIONAL [CME] ACTIVITIES MANUAL 2017

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Changes to the CME Approval Process 2017

After a comprehensive review of the College's Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, a number of changes have been made to simplify and streamline the program for Fellows and activity providers. These changes include:

- **Approval for two years**: applications will be approved for two years, provided the program and content remains the same.
- **Approval for one year**: Conferences and scientific meetings where content varies from year to year will require annual approval.

- **Points per hour**: Most activities will attract 1 point per hour.   [Please refer to CPD Guide]

- **Categories for 2017 onwards**
    - ○ Category 1:   Surgical Audit & Peer Review
    - ○ Category 2:   Clinical Governance & Quality Improvement
    - ○ Category 3:   Maintenance of Knowledge & Skills
    - ○ Category 4:   Reflective Practice

    Further information can be found on the College website:
    RACS, Continuing Professional Development Program 2017

- **Attendance**: To support Fellows to complete their CPD, CME Providers are required to upload a list of RACS Fellows, who attend their activities, within two weeks of the activity taking place. This information is uploaded into the surgeons' CPD Online and considered 'automatically verified'. Fellows will no longer be required to provide a certificate of attendance to support their participation in these activities. A template for uploading attendances is available on the Provider Portal.

    Application: An online application is on the Provider Portal after log in.

- **CME webpage**: The CME webpage has detailed instructions on how to make an application. A list of approved educational activities is on the portal after log in.

- **The CPD Approval logo** is available to use for advertising an approved activity.

If you have any feedback or suggestions for further improvements, please contact the CME Officer at cme.approval@surgeons.org

1. PURPOSE OF GUIDE

This guide is for Providers of education activities who wish to have their activities recognised in the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program.

The guide will assist you to:

- Plan your CPD activities to ensure they meet the needs of surgeons and incorporate adult learning principles;

- Understand the criteria for recognition of an education activity within the CPD Program;

- Complete the application process

1.1. Approval Process

Approval is obtained by submitting an online application via the Provider Portal to the Professional Standards Department for consideration. Activities that meet the criteria detailed in this guide are recognised by the allocation of CPD points. Fellows who participate in approved education activities can count these CPD points towards their CPD Program annual totals. Approved activities are awarded 1 point per hour. Please refer to Section Six for further information and links to the application form.

1.2. CPD Program Overview

The CPD Program comprises a number of elements including surgical audit and peer review, clinical governance, maintenance of knowledge and skills and reflective practice. Activities recognised in the CPD Program generally focus on maintenance of knowledge and skills.

Fellows are required to participate in the program annually and are encouraged to participate in activities that relate to their specific scope of practice.

Further information regarding the framework of the [RACS CPD Program](#) can be found on the College website.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF AN EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Participation in CPD is mandatory for all active Fellows of the College. Ongoing CPD can incorporate the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable competent practice and include topics beyond traditional clinical medical subjects including managerial, social and personal skills (Peck et al, 2000: 432). The RACS CPD framework specifically encourages Fellows to participate in a range of activities that develop skills in clinical and non-clinical areas.

The College aims to facilitate safe, comprehensive surgical care of the highest standard to the community. All College training and development programs aspire to certify specialist surgeons with the following competencies:

- **Collaboration**: Work in collaboration with members of interdisciplinary teams where appropriate

- **Communication**: Develop rapport, trust and ethical therapeutic relationships with patients and families; Accurately elicit and synthesis relevant information from patients, families, colleagues and other professionals; Accurately convey relevant information and explanations to patients and families, colleagues and other professionals; Develop a common understanding (with patients, families, colleagues and other professionals) on issues, problems and plans

- **Health Advocacy**: Respond to individual patient health needs; Promote health maintenance of patients; Respond to the health needs of the community; Promote health maintenance of colleagues; Look after their own health; Advocate for improvements in health care

- **Judgement**: Clinical Decision Making: Provide compassionate patient-centred care; Perform a complete and appropriate assessment of a patient; Organise diagnostic testing, imaging and consultation as appropriate

- **Management and Leadership**: Allocate finite healthcare resources appropriately; Manage and lead clinical teams; Manage their practice and career effectively; Serve in administration and leadership roles as appropriate

- **Medical Expertise**: Establish and maintain clinical knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to their practice

- **Professionalism**: Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession and community through ethical practice; Recognise medico-legal issues; Demonstrate a commitment to their patients, profession and community through participation in profession-led regulation; Manage medical indemnity and risk

- **Scholar and Teacher:** Assume responsibility for their own on-going learning; Critically evaluate medical information and its sources and apply appropriately to practice decisions; Facilitate the learning of patients, families, trainees, other health professionals and the community; Contribute to the development, dissemination, application and translation of new medical knowledge and practice

- **Technical Expertis**e: Safely and effectively perform appropriate surgical procedures

Providers may wish to review these competencies when developing their learning objectives and consider how their activity is situated within a broader framework of professional and personal development.

2.1. Guiding principles for College recognition are:-

2.1.1. To encourage Fellows, Trainees, International Graduates (IMGs) and prevocational doctors to extend their skills by providing access to a range of education activities that have been recognised by the College and therefore deemed educationally sound, appropriate and relevant.

2.1.2. To provide a quality assurance process to ensure compliance with College education standards when reviewing and recognising activities for the purposes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Education activities recognised in the CPD Program generally focus on maintenance of knowledge and skills and performance review.

2.1.3. To encourage education providers to engage with the College to have their educational activities accredited or share their eLearning modules and web resources for recognition by the College.   .

PLANNING YOUR EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Education activities are most effective when they:

- Address the education needs of surgeons

- Have clearly stated and measurable learning objectives

- Are evaluated to determine how well the learning objectives have been met

2.2. Where do I start?

First decide who you need to help plan your activity. To address the education needs of surgeons, a RACS Fellow should be included in the planning process. The diagram below outlines a simple four-step model that may help you to plan your activity.
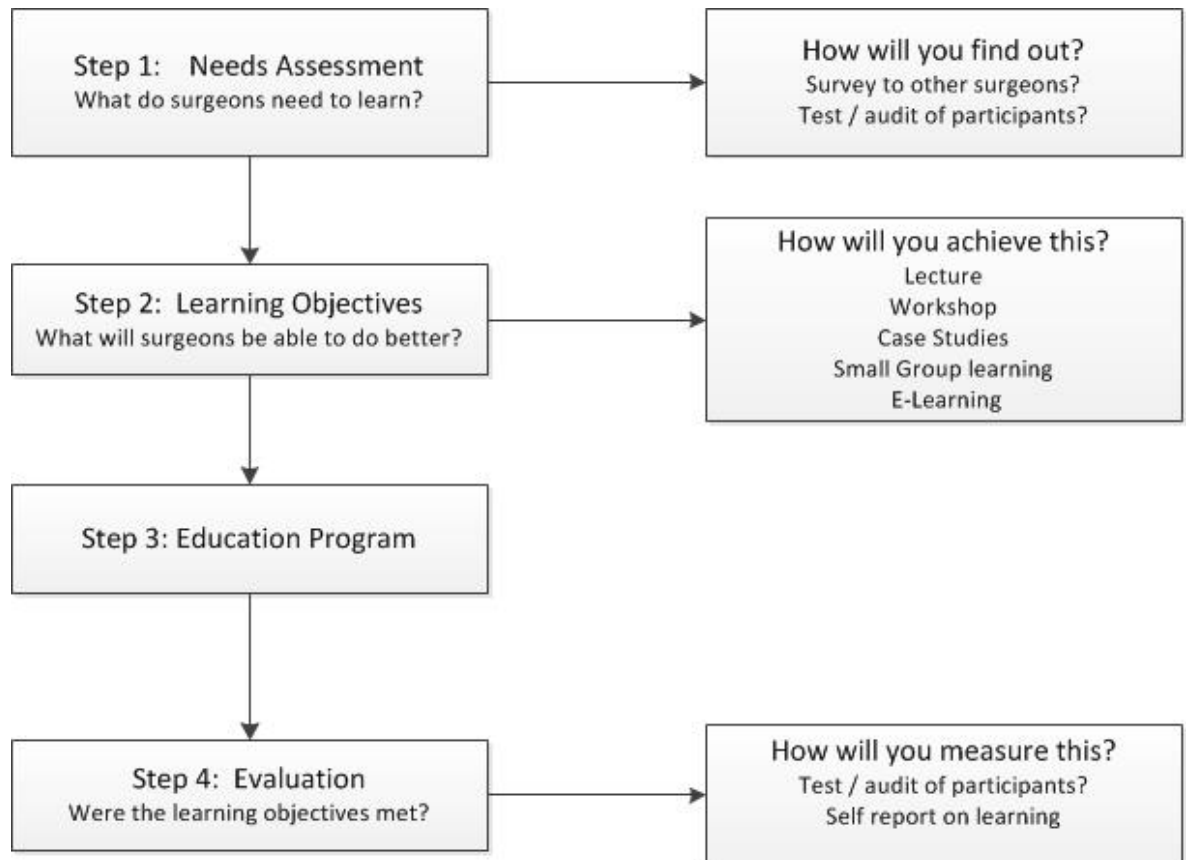
2.3. Step 1 – Needs Assessment: What do surgeons need to learn?

2.3.1. What is a needs assessment?

The purpose of a needs assessment is to discover what surgeons need to learn. That is, what knowledge, skills, attitudes or changes in practice behaviour do surgeons need?

2.3.2. Why is conducting a needs assessment important?

Research has shown that education activities based on learning needs are more effective in delivering sustainable education outcomes for participants.

A needs assessment is done to discover what surgeons need to learn and can have the following purposes:

- To identify topics relevant to surgeons and their patients

- To determine the specific aspects of these topics that need addressing

- To identify the learning needs of individual participants

2.3.3. How do you conduct a needs assessment?

There are many methods for conducting a needs assessment.

The first step is to identify your topic(s). You may use a questionnaire or survey and/or focus groups to identify topics relevant to surgeons. Surgeons, other health professionals and consumer group representatives can all 'have a say' through this process.

Other sources of information include various expert bodies, such as RACS, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the Australian Safety and Efficacy Register of New Interventional Procedures – Surgical (ASERNIP-S), and the Department of Health and Ageing in Australia and the Ministry of Health in New Zealand. Publications of research results in medical journals and reports are a further useful source.

The next step is to identify which specific aspects of the topic should be covered. You should consider what knowledge; skills, attitudes and behaviour are relevant to the topic and use your needs assessment to tell you which areas you will need to concentrate on. You may use a survey or pre-test of individual participants to identify their specific learning needs.

Bradshaw (1972) identified four types of need:

- normative need – what an expert group considers as need

- felt need – need expressed by those asked about their need

- expressed need – need expressed by the use of services

- comparative need – need identified by comparing one group with another.

A quality needs assessment establishes the learning need of surgeons from a number of different perspectives and may also address different types of need.

2.4. Step 2 - Learning Objectives

The stated aim or purpose of an activity provides participants with an overview of its intended outcome. The learning objectives provide specific information about it.

In other words, learning objectives can be described as specific statements of intent. They should state what the education activity will teach in specific, achievable, observable and measurable terms.

Participants need to know what they will gain from attending an education activity. Learning objectives describe what participants will be able to do at the end of the activity, that is, what knowledge/skills they will gain and/or what change in attitudes/behaviour may occur.

Learning objectives are the pivotal point in the process of developing education activities as they:

- Are informed by the needs assessment

- Determine the format or program

- Are measured by the evaluation

2.4.1. Why are learning objectives important?

Writing down the learning objectives provides educators and participants with a 'road map' to follow. Having clear learning objectives ensures that teaching is both relevant and responsive to the demonstrated need(s). They also serve as a guide to learning instruction and evaluation.

2.4.2. How do you write learning objectives?

The information from your needs assessment will lead you to set clear, realistic and timely objectives for learning. Try to be as specific as possible when setting down learning objectives. They should be written from the perspective of the participant not the teacher. Consider the SMART approach to writing learning objectives

S	Specific	Is our learning objective very clear?
M	Measurable	Is our intended learning able to be measured?
A	Achievable	Is our learning objective able to be achieved by learners?
R	Relevant	Is our learning objective needed by our client and learners?
T	Time Limited	Is our learning objective going to be limited to a set time frame?

2.5. Step 3 - Conducting your education activity

2.5.1. Teaching and learning strategies

There are many different teaching and learning strategies that may be used to deliver education programs. Each strategy has advantages and also limitations. Some strategies are appropriate in certain situations but not in others. Those planning an education program should consider which teaching strategy/strategies will be the most appropriate after taking into consideration the results of the needs assessment, the learning objectives, the content and the skills of the facilitator.

2.5.2. Format

The strategy/strategies used during the education activity should relate to whether or not you are trying to impart knowledge, improve skills, change behaviour or attitude - or it could be a combination of these.

Learning new practical skills is much easier if there is the opportunity to practice and get feedback, so hands-on or practical workshops are recommended.

Blended learning combines online delivery of educational content with features of face-to-face interaction and live instruction to personalise learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student to student.

Lack of knowledge is rarely the sole cause of problems in practice. The application of knowledge to real life cases is often a difficult area to address. Small group discussions with relevant case studies or consideration of patient management problems are more useful to improve problem solving. E-learning activities that involve case studies and discussion forums could also be considered.

Lectures or articles may be useful to expand or provide new knowledge. Adequate time for questions lets the audience make sure the information they receive is clear and relevant.

Cantillon & Jones (1999) noted that the most effective methods of continuing medical education include learning linked to clinical practice, interactive education meetings, outreach events, and strategies that involve multiple education interventions. The least effective methods are also the most commonly used in continuing medical education – namely, lecture format teaching and unsolicited printed material, including clinical guidelines.

2.5.3. Active involvement

Adult learning theory suggests participants should be actively involved in their own education, since they are often their own best teachers.

For example, surgeons with appropriate expertise or training can:

- present surgical topics in lectures or articles

- chair sessions and deliver lectures in a relevant surgical context

- design patient management problems

- facilitate groups of surgeons working through problem-based case studies

- teach practical techniques or procedures.

2.5.4. Timing

The primary purpose of CPD is to improve patient care. Recreation and social interaction must not detract from the education component of CPD, which should be allocated a significant proportion of hours when participants are alert and receptive.

2.6. Step 4 - Evaluation

2.6.1. What is an evaluation?

The primary purpose of evaluation is to review to what extent the learning objectives have been met. Evaluation is an integral component of planning and developing an education activity, and is an essential element in the reflective learning process.

Therefore, as part of the process to develop relevant and quality education for surgeons, the evaluation tool should be adjusted as the actual activity is being developed.

2.6.2. Why is evaluation important?

For participants – learning is more effective if participants are given the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt and what further information on the topic they may need.

For you as provider – it is important to assess whether or not the education activities you held were successful. This information is useful to help you plan future education activities.

Evaluation of an education activity should focus on the learning of the surgeon:

- to what extent have the stated learning objectives been met?

- what additional learning insights has the surgeon experienced?

- how will this new learning change the surgeon's day-to-day practice?

- what else does the surgeon need to know in relation to this topic?

- how does the surgeon intend to access this further learning?

2.6.3. How can evaluation be done?

Providers can select from a number of evaluation methods including:

- case studies/problem solving methods

- role plays

- practical demonstration of skills with feedback

- small group discussion for identification of the main learning points, and how these may be used in participants' own practices

- audit of patient medical records

- group discussion about the specified learning objectives and consensus about content and achievement

- assessment of individual participants' perception of how well the activity achieved the learning objectives, using questions designed to relate to each specific learning objective

- questions testing knowledge, e.g. MCQs, true/false answers.

Your evaluation method(s) should reflect your learning objectives. There is little point asking questions that do not relate to the learning objectives. You will also need to choose the most appropriate evaluation method for the format of your activity.

For example, a workshop covering suture techniques will be better evaluated by practical assessment than by a knowledge-based quiz. Similarly, it would be better to evaluate a small journal club meeting by group discussion of the main learning points and their applicability in practice than by using case problem solving or a written survey.

In summary, consider:

- an integrated evaluation process vs 'tag-on-the-end' questionnaire
- time for reflection to inform learning vs content overload
- ongoing application to practice vs short-term information

The Professional Standards Department welcomes reports of evaluations of approved education activities.

3. APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

In order to be eligible for points in the CPD Program, education activities must satisfy a number of criteria that have been approved by the Professional Development and Standards Board. The majority of these criteria are based on principles of adult learning and research evidence on the effectiveness of continuing professional development.

3.1. Criteria

3.1.1. The primary purpose is to improve quality of patient care

The purpose of CPD is to help participating surgeons provide better care according to current acceptable standards and therefore improve the health outcomes of their patients. Education activities should focus on aspects of quality that lead to improved patient care and health outcomes.

The criteria used to assess education activities for approval in the CPD Program are summarised below:

Details of any commercial interest or sponsorship should be included in the application.

3.1.2. Surgeons participate in the planning process

Surgery is a distinct medical discipline. The surgical perspective should be included in the whole planning process (i.e. selecting topics, setting learning objectives, planning content, deciding on evaluation) in order to make CPD for surgeons relevant. When CPD is designed for a multi-disciplinary audience, the perspective of all groups of participants should be presented in the planning process.

3.1.3. A learning assessment is conducted

Identified education needs of surgeons have been documented.

Evidence from research literature/government/professional publications has been cited. Evidence from community sources has been reviewed.

The needs assessment determines the specific topic(s) and learning objectives for the event.

3.1.4. There are clear and detailed objectives

The objectives are clearly stated and circulated to all participants before the meeting.

3.1.5. The content demonstrates high clinical and ethical standards

The activity is free of commercial bias for or against any company, device, product or service.

If the activity contains reference to commercial products and/or services, objective information based on generally accepted scientific methods is presented.

Where commercial sponsorship is obtained, there is clear separation between the education and any promotion of products and/or services.

Presenters declare prior to their presentation if they have received commercial support or if there is any conflict of interest.

The activity reflects critical appraisal of valid evidence about ways to improve patients' health outcomes.

The activity does not promote theories, techniques or products that are not supported by scientific evidence or generally accepted by the medical profession.

3.1.6. A copy of the timed program is uploaded with the application

The program is distributed to prospective participants prior to the event.

The program documents the title, topics, learning objectives, speakers, timetable and details of any commercial interest or sponsorship.

3.1.7. The learning environment promotes fulfilment of the objectives

The learning objectives determine the specific content and format of the event.

The format is conducive to achieving the learning objectives.

Surgeons are involved in conducting the activity.

3.1.8. The education activity is evaluated

A copy of the evaluation tool is uploaded with the application.

The learning objectives have been addressed in the evaluation tool.

3.1.9. A certificate of attendance is issued to all participants.

3.1.10. Upload the list of Fellows attending the activity within two weeks

The list of Fellows attending the activity is uploaded to the Provider Portal within two weeks using the template supplied.   To assist Fellows in completing their diary the College will populate their records with completion of approved activities.

Approval of activities is conditional upon Providers uploading the list of attendees to the Provider Portal for uploading to the Fellows CPD online diary. Failure to return this information within two weeks will result in the approval being terminated. Future applications from those who have failed to adhere to this requirement may be impacted.

These activities will be considered 'automatically verified' and Fellows will no longer be required to provide a certificate of attendance to support their participation in these activities.

3.2. Approval of e-learning activities

The uptake of e-learning as a method of maintaining knowledge and skills is becoming increasingly popular. There is no separate criterion for e-learning activities and must meet the same criteria as other types of activities.

All content must be evidence based and include suitable references or additional reading. Providers of e-learning should also ensure that their activities retain their currency and relevance. Materials should encourage the learner to employ methods of active adult learning and should be easy to use.

The College's CPD Program encourages Fellows to participate in a broad range of education activities that relate to their scope of practice and it is recommended that Fellows participate in activities that employ a range of education methods and not rely solely on e-learning activities for their CPD.

E-learning activities should not generally be longer than 3 hours in duration. E-learning activities likely to require more than three hours to complete should be divided into shorter

modules and each module accredited individually. Where an activity requires prior learning, providers can nominate a module/s as being a pre-requisite to participation in other modules.

4. CREDIT POINT ALLOCATION

4.1. One point per hour

All approved education activities including conferences, workshops and e-learning attract one point per hour. All applications must include specific learning objectives, an example of the evaluation tool proposed and a program detailing start and finish times.

5. HOW TO APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Providers are required submit the online application with relevant supporting evidence via the Provider Portal following the steps below.

To access the CME Provider Portal for the first time,
1.   Go to ProviderPortal.Surgeons.Org/Provider/
2.   "Create Account" - this is your personal log on to the RACS system.
3.   Contact cme.approval@surgeons.org to advise that you have created your account and advise the details of your Provider [the organisation conducting the activity]
         A link between you and your organisation will be created in the portal.
4.   Receive access confirmation
5.   Log on to the Provider Portal ProviderPortal.Surgeons.Org/Provider/

- When lodging your application you will need to add all the dates
- For documents to be uploaded: please keep document names short
- Upload a timed program and an evaluation form
- **You will need to collect the Names and RACS ID numbers for any RACS Surgeons, who attend your activity, to be uploaded to the Provider portal after your activity.**

You can now start managing – creating, submitting, copying - your activities!

The CME Provider Portal will allow you to securely manage and track your CME applications online. You will also be able to easily upload RACS Fellow's attendance at your events.

Other features include:
- Simplified process of uploading supporting documents
- Copy function to simplify repeat activity applications
- Easy access to activity due dates for re-application
- Email alerts
- Better promotion of your events through the RACS Portfolio
- Upload by Provider of attendance which will auto populate the Fellows CPD diary
- Use of the CPD Approval logo for publicity of your approved activity

To ensure your application is processed before an activity, you should submit your application at least 4 weeks before the activity is held. Most applications are reviewed within three weeks of submission but some may take longer if we need to ask for further information or if they are referred to the Professional Development and Standards Board.

Providers who submit applications that are not approved will be informed by letter and given an outline of the reasons for the activity being declined approval. If you feel that the decision not to approve an activity is unfair please contact the Professional Standards Department.

Providers should note that the College Coat of Arms **must no**t be used on advertising or other material about an activity unless it is a collaborative program with the College.

Providers who wish to offer their education activity to surgical trainees can also apply to have the activity recognised by the RACS Surgical Education and Training (SET) Program. Further information is available at: http://www.surgeons.org/education-training-providers/course-cpd-accreditation/course-accreditation/

6. NEED HELP?

If you have any questions please call the Professional Standards Department

+61 3 9276 7425 or cme.approvals@surgeons.org

7. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

7.1. Policies and Position Papers

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program – Approval of Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Surgical Audit Policy
- Surgeons and Trainees Interactions with the Medical Industry Policy
- Live Transmission of Surgery Policy
- Telementoring and Teleassessment of Live Surgery Position Paper
- College Coat of Arms Policy

7.2. Manuals and Guides

- Continuing Professional Development Program Information Manual (2017)

7.3. Website resources

- Current Listing of Approved Educational Events listed on the RACS Portfolio after log in
- Nine RACS Competencies
- RACS CPD Approval logo available on the Provider Portal after log in

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