

Distance learning (e-learning) guidelines

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Introduction

The Federation approves and provides credits for various forms of digital learning. As with live events each hour of learning activity attracts 1 credit. The Federation is in the process of introducing half credits in order to facilitate the use of shorter formats of CPD. The CPD Diary still uses the term 'Distance Learning' as an overarching term for the various digital learning options, to describe the online application process and the credits for digital learning. This will be reviewed when the new CPD Diary is introduced in 2025.

Distance learning credits can currently be granted for:

- e-learning modules
- e-platforms
- e-libraries
- Archived versions of live-streamed events, webinars and lectures

The Federation aims to introduce distance learning credits for approved podcasts early in 2023.

e-learning modules are digital learning resources that usually incorporate an element of interactivity. Although originally CPD e-learning modules for physicians were expected to last approximately an hour, shorter formats have been introduced, often linked together in a short series.

e-Platforms consist of a group of e-learning resources such as e-learning modules and on-demand versions of streamed lectures that may have a common theme. Usually e-platforms will consist of at least 5 hours of CPD (5 credits), however, we will consider applications with fewer hours, especially where there are plans to expand upon the content at a later date (a minimum of 2 CPD credits must be provided). Organisations seeking approval for e-learning modules amounting to more than 5 hours (5 credits) should apply via the e-platform route, which is currently an offline application process.

An e-learning platform may take the form of a course. When an e-learning course is supplemented by live or live-streamed learning such as webinars (blended learning), we will consider such applications via the e-platform route. For more information about e-platforms and to make an application, please click [here](#).

e-Libraries are on-line information and learning services that provide access to current information about medical topics. The Federation gives higher priority to products that provide a record of the user's activity and/or include elements of active learning. For more information about e-libraries and to make an application, please click this [link](#).

Archived versions of live-streamed events, webinars and lectures. The Federation also offers approval for extended archived access to live-streamed events, webinars and lectures. More details relating to this can be found [here](#). Where extended archived access is approved, the event will attract distance learning credits in addition to credits for the live event.

Guidelines relating to the approval of e-learning modules

The guidelines that follow relate to the approval of e-learning modules. If you are applying for approval for up to 5 e-learning modules you can use the online Distance Learning application process. As stated above the approval process for e-platforms, e-libraries and archived events, webinars and lectures is currently via a different process, please click on the link in the relevant section above. The aim is to amalgamate all of the guidelines for digital learning products into a single comprehensive document in the future.

Providers

Eligible providers should be established providers of medical education, these could include:

- Universities or their departments
- NHS Hospitals
- Recognised UK specialist societies
- UK National medical bodies and associations

- Established international medical education providers with a reputation for high quality CPD

For e-learning modalities including e-learning modules, the Federation will not accept applications from pharmaceutical companies, device companies or other commercial organisations producing healthcare products. Neither will the Federation accept applications from foundations linked to these companies.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship should be in the form of an (unrestricted) educational grant, that is, a grant that allows the provider(s) freedom to choose the content and authors of the learning material. The grant should be paid directly to the institution or organisation that is providing the learning material. Providers should read the [guidelines](#) relating to Involvement of commercial organisations providing healthcare products. The key points are:

1. Where distance learning material has been sponsored by a commercial organisation providing healthcare products, it is appropriate for a simple disclosure statement to this effect early in the distance learning material. The font size should be no larger than 12.
2. The logos of sponsoring companies and product logos will not be allowed either on the part of the distance learning programme that lists the educational content or in the educational material itself.
3. The distance learning material cannot be hosted on a sponsor's website

Diversity and inclusion

1. **Educational faculty (authors).** The Federation requires providers to promote diversity and inclusion when selecting the faculty for their educational material. The faculty should adequately represent society. The Federation will not usually approve events where the faculty comes from a single gender or ethnic group unless there is a satisfactory reason for this.
2. **Educational content.** CPD providers should ensure that their learning material reflects the diversity of patients. The learning material should reflect the diversity in patterns of disease and symptomatology between certain patient groups and the differing response to certain forms of treatment.
3. **Learners.** The differing needs of learners should be considered when considering the structure and content of the educational material.

Approval Criteria

All products eligible for approval should fulfil the following criteria:

1. Target audience

The target audience must be identified and fall within the remit of the Federation. We approve products primarily targeted towards Consultant and SAS grade Physicians. Provided the product is appropriate for consultants and SAS grade physicians, the Federation will also approve educational material that is appropriate for trainees. Please see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialty> for Federation supported specialties.

2. Provide an educational needs assessment

Providers should upload a statement about educational needs. This might include a survey to identify needs, feedback from a live educational event, evidence of a lack of appropriate educational material relating to a particular topic/group of topics or evidence of a need for more e-learning for physicians.

3. Provide learning objectives which are appropriate for the target audience

The learning objectives must be stated. They should be explained in terms of the knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviours that the user would expect to acquire.

4. Provide high quality content and be well designed

The content must represent current evidence-based best practice and must be able to deliver the stated learning objectives. The educational product should be well designed and user-friendly. The content should focus on relevant clinical or non-clinical (professional) subject(s).

e-learning modules focussing on clinical issues could, for example, cover a particular disease, condition, treatment or patient management problem. For non-clinical issues the subject could focus, for example, on educational, leadership or academic skill(s) (e.g. teaching, appraisal, assessment).

5. Provide evidence that the authors or editors have appropriate specialist skills and knowledge

A brief biographical statement (a few lines) relating to the lead author or editor for each module should be uploaded. Please identify how the author(s) are selected. Where content is provided by 'medical writers' that do not have specialist skills and knowledge in the topic concerned, approval will not be granted.

6. Include active learning methods

There should be clear evidence of active learning techniques such as questions during the modules and/or encouragement to reflect on practice.

e-Learning modules should usually provide an effective method of assessment to demonstrate whether the user has achieved the learning objectives. This would typically consist of a set of self-assessment questions. The Federation recommends 10 questions for each CPD credit and there should be a threshold score that ensures a level of learning appropriate to the target audience.

7. There should be evidence that all legal, medico-legal and ethical considerations are met

These include: copyright, patient consent for clinical materials used, patient confidentiality and data protection.

8. Any support, sponsorship or involvement of a commercial organisation such as a pharmaceutical or device company must be declared in the product and must not influence the structure or content of the educational product

Any sponsorship must be in the form of an unrestricted educational grant and must also be declared on the application form. There must be no advertising in the educational material and commercial logos are not permitted.

The product will not be approved if there is bias towards use of any commercial product that does not represent current evidence-based practice. Generic names of pharmaceutical products must be used throughout rather than proprietary names, unless this is a regulatory prescribing requirement to use the proprietary name.

9. Any competing interest on the part of the provider must be declared.

A senior person from the provider organisation, usually a senior clinician, should complete a Declaration of Interest Form on behalf of themselves and the provider organisation. Where an application is for an individual e-learning module the form could be completed by the lead author or editor of the module. The same person should also complete a Programme Director's Declaration for the learning material.

10. Learner engagement and evaluation

There should be a mechanism for learners to provide feedback to the providers.

11. The provider's evaluation record for their other products must be satisfactory or, where not, reasons for unsatisfactory ratings must have been addressed

12. Upon successful completion of the product, the user should be provided with a certificate. This should usually state the user's name, results from the assessment section, CPD Distance-Learning Credits awarded, date of issue and CPD approval code.

Expiry date and suggested credits

1 credit equates to one hour of educational activity completed by the physician. When submitting e-learning modules for evaluation, providers should suggest the number of Distance-Learning Credits to be awarded and an expiry date for approval. Current and expected advances within the subject area should be taken into account when considering the expiry date. The expiry date must be no longer than two years after the date the product is approved for CPD. When CPD approval has expired, providers will have an opportunity to submit an updated version for CPD approval.

Review process

Federation review policy for e-learning modules

An evaluation of the product will be conducted by two Federation reviewers. One reviewer will have specialist expertise appropriate for the subject of the module(s), the other will have general experience of e-learning modules and will specifically look at the design of the module(s). The e-learning module will be reviewed against the criteria listed above. Once approved the module(s) will be approved for a period of up to 2 years.

Applications that are not approved by the Federation

Where an application is not approved, the provider will have one opportunity to address the reviewers' concerns and submit a revised application. If the revised application does not fully address the reviewers' concerns, a new application may be submitted at a later date, but this will be treated as a new application, requiring payment of an additional fee.

Appeals

If an application is not approved by the Federation, the applicant may appeal. An appeal must be made in writing within 2 weeks. The application will be reviewed by a CPD Director. This will be the Medical Director for CPD or one of the College CPD Directors. They may consult appropriate experienced specialists in relevant specialties if necessary. A decision will normally be reached within 4 weeks of the appeal being received. The decision of the CPD Director will be final.

Fees and payment

Administration and evaluation fees

An administration and evaluation fee is payable in advance for all distance-learning applications made to the Federation.

Our fee structure is on a per credit basis and takes into account whether the application is from a commercial organisation. Charges can be found [here](#).

The commercial fees apply where a commercial organisation provides distance learning materials or provides them jointly with a non-commercial organisation. They also apply where a commercial organisation produces the e-learning on behalf of a non-commercial organisation or where they host or provide the platform for educational material for a non-commercial organisation.

An income stream may be in the form of sponsorship, a subscription for access to the educational material that the provider offers or a fee for accessing individual modules.

Making payment:

- **Payment must be received for each application before we can process it for CPD approval. Your application is not complete without it. We strongly recommend that you make the payment by credit or debit card online. Cheques are no longer accepted.**
- If paying by BACS via your finance department we strongly recommend you ask for 'fast track' or 'urgent' payment unless you know that a routine request for payment will be actioned within 2 weeks. Delayed payment may result in delayed approval.
- If paying by BACS, please use the **Federation bank details** on the generated invoice on the CPD system. **You must include the CPD event code as your reference (i.e. 'CPD123456')**.
- Failing to provide the CPD code will result in delays to your application where the CPD team are unable to match the payment to the application. Unfortunately, when we receive a payment via BACS with no CPD code, we are unable to link it to the application and therefore we sometimes have to arrange for the payment to be returned to the payee.
- To help speed up the process, we recommend all Purchase Order and remittance documents are sent to cpdfedremittance@rcp.ac.uk

Terms and Conditions of CPD Approval by the Federation

Upon written confirmation of approval the provider will be asked to agree to the following:

- When indicating Federation CPD approval within the product and in any communications or promotional material, the following statement (or similar wording) must be used:
"This product has been approved for Distance-Learning CPD Credits by the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. The expiry date for CPD approval is *month / year*."
- The use of a logo for the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians or of any Royal College logo is not permitted.
- The product will automatically be removed from the electronic events database at the end of the approval period unless an application for reapproval has been received.
- A CPD activity code or codes will be issued to the provider upon approval. The activity code will be valid until the agreed expiry date
- A report summarising the results of evaluation of the product must be provided to the CPD office upon request.
- The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians reserves the right to withdraw CPD approval at any time, should it feel that any of the above terms and conditions has been contravened, in which case the provider must no longer communicate that their distance-learning product has been approved for CPD by the Federation.

International applications

Applications for distance learning approval can usually only be accepted where the educational material is in English and where the target audience includes UK physicians. The reason for this is that the Federation does not have a faculty of reviewers with detailed knowledge of health systems in other countries, or with expertise in languages other than English. The only exception will be that the Federation will consider accepting distance learning applications from countries outside the UK that have a large number of subscribing members and fellows of the UK Royal Colleges of Physicians. In that case the distance learning must also be in English and provided by an established provider of medical education with a reputation for providing high quality CPD. The submission must comply with all of the [guidelines](#) relating to Involvement of commercial organisations providing healthcare products.

Submitting an online application for e-Learning module(s)

You will need to complete the online application via the [CPD diary](#). If you do not have a provider account you will need to request one by contacting the CPD administration team on CPDApproval@rcp.ac.uk

Guidance on completing the form:

Step 1. ADD ACTIVITY TITLES AND CREDITS

Click on edit and add a title for your module/programme and the start date.

Step 1. Add Activity Title and Credits

Important: You must click Edit to enter your DL start date.

Please note the maximum length of approval for distance learning product is 2 years from date if when it is approved.

code	Start Date	Product/Module Title	Credits		
141292	01-04-2022	Type your title here	0	Edit	Delete

Add Module Title/credits

Suggested CPD Credits

1 CPD credit = 1 full hour of learning/educational content. Please round up for every additional 30 minutes and round down for everything less than 30 minutes. For example, 1 hour 30 minutes = 2 CPD Credits 1hour 15 minutes = 1 CPD Credit

Step 2. BASIC DETAILS

Enter details for the individual(s) who we should contact to discuss administrative and educational issues to do with the application.

Step 2. Basic Details

User Fee (£)	
Type	Clinical
Category	External
Contact Name	
Contact Job Title	
Contact Email	
Contact Tel	
Registered Organisation Name	CPD Test Provider (Commercial)
Organisation type	Commercial
	Do you form part of the Registered Organisation? Select 'No' if you work for another organisation such as a conference or event organising company
	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Organisation Website	
Kind of Activity	Distance Learning Activity

Edit

Fees to be charged to Users

Include any fees that will be charged to users for using the programme or accessing the module.

Step 3. PRODUCT FORMAT AND LOG IN DETAILS

Step 3. Product format and log in details

Important: For products of any other format, e.g. CD-ROM, please contact the CPD office on cpdapproval@rcp.ac.uk

User process: Please provide details of how we can replicate the process an actual User would experience when utilising your product. Alternatively you can upload this information via the file upload section in Step 7.

Website/Url	
Username	
Password	
Any special hardware or software requirements	
User Process	
Details of non-online product	
How long would you like your DL product to be approved for?	
<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	

- For online programmes which require a login: provide us with access details. (Website address, username and password etc.) If the website is still under construction or not yet live; a log in for a test/development area or temporary site is acceptable as long as it is nearing completion.
- NB: If you do provide us with a log in for a temporary area, please provide details of minor changes which may be made or additional information which will be included when the site is completed and launched.
- Provide evidence that interactivity between the User and the programme exists and describe how/where this is present.
- The expiry date should be no longer than two years after the date the work is approved for CPD.

NB: The clinicians who review the application for approval will sample the learning material but need to be able to access the *full process* a user would experience when accessing the e-Learning module(s), therefore the information provided needs to be accurate and sufficient for this purpose. It should also be possible to 'fast forward' or 'replay' the review material in order to assist the reviewer.

Step 4. ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Please provide 2 or 3 learning objectives associated with the programme.

The objectives should reflect measurable outcomes.

Include details about what the e-Learning material hopes to achieve, and how this will be put into practice.

For example, 'The user will be better able to evaluate the current treatment options for elderly patients with type 2 diabetes'

Step 4. Additional Details

The learning objectives should reflect measurable outcomes, and use action verbs such as "evaluate", "identify", "review", etc. For example, "To evaluate current guidance regarding the application of the Mental Capacity Act, in order to increase delegates' awareness of this topic".

Learning Objective 1	
Learning Objective 2	
Learning Objective 3	
How will this activity be evaluated?	
Competing interest	<p>In compliance with Federation guidelines, the provider/applicant confirms that all participants (speakers, chairpersons or other faculty) in this programme have disclosed any potential or actual competing interest. This includes any financial or other support that might cause bias.</p> <p>The provider/applicant accepts responsibility for ensuring that all potential competing interests relevant to the presentation/event are declared to the audience/participants prior to the CPD activity.</p> <p>Do you have any competing interests or potential sources of bias to declare?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p>
Competing interest declaration	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I/we agree that I/we have provided all of the requested information regarding competing interests of the organisation and faculty and have been accurate and truthful about the status of our organisation (Not-for-profit or For-profit).</p>
Audience Locale	PleaseSelect (Please note that events confined to individuals from one hospital or trust do not qualify for External CPD approval).

Step 5. TARGET AUDIENCE

You will need to confirm who your main target audience is for this module/programme. You must select the role and specialty this applies to. Please note the educational content of the programme should primarily be aimed at Consultant and SAS grade Physicians. Provided the product is appropriate for consultants and SAS grade physicians, the Federation will also approve educational material that is appropriate for trainees.

Please see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialty> for medical specialties that fall within the remit of the Federation.

Step 5. Target Audience

Please note that products aimed *primarily* at training grade physicians or non-medical health professionals do not qualify for External CPD approval.

No target audiences have been set for this activity yet. Please select one or more target audiences

Step 6. SPONSOR DETAILS

Please provide the names of any sponsors involved in the programme as well as the type of sponsorship they are providing. Sponsorship must be provided in the form of an (unrestricted) educational grant.

Step 6. Sponsor Details

Do you have any sponsors? Yes No

No sponsors have been recorded for this activity.

If you have one or more sponsors you should record them now.

Step 7. FILE UPLOADS (SUPPORTING INFORMATION)

It is mandatory to upload the following information:

1. Assessment criteria and pass rate
2. Needs assessment statement: a document outlining your needs assessment as outlined in section 2 of the approval criteria
3. Completed Declaration of Interest Form and Programme Director's Declaration (e-Learning version)
4. Evidence that key authors or editors have appropriate specialist skills and knowledge (a few lines for each) together with a brief statement about how authors are selected
5. Sample certificate of completion (you may wish to refer to our [sample certificate](#) as a template.)

You can use this section to upload any further information in a single document which you feel is relevant in support of your application. This may include:

- Further details regarding the content, the intended users and their specialities.
- Methods used to select information for inclusion in the programme (e.g. based on expert opinion, literature, research, etc.)
- Additional contact details where applicable
- Any other supporting documents

Step 7. File Uploads

Important: It is mandatory to upload the following information:

1. [Assessment criteria and pass rate](#)
2. [Needs assessment statement: a document outlining your needs assessment as outlined in section 2 of the approval criteria](#)
3. [Completed Declaration of Interest Form and Programme Director's Declaration \(e-Learning version\)](#)
4. [Evidence that key authors or editors have appropriate specialist skills and knowledge \(a few lines for each\) together with a brief statement about how authors are selected](#)
5. [Sample certificate of completion \(you may wish to refer to our sample certificate as a template.\)](#)

You can use this section to upload any further information in a single document which you feel is relevant in support of your application. This may include:

- Further details regarding the content, the intended users and their specialities.
- Methods used to select information for inclusion in the programme (e.g. based on expert opinion, literature, research, etc.)
- Any other supporting documents

No files have been uploaded for this activity.

[manage uploads](#)

Step 8. CLINICAL/NON-CLINICAL LINKS

Please link to a specific speciality or non-clinical topic that this module/programme covers e.g. Geriatric Medicine or Leadership etc.

Step 8. Clinical Links

This product isn't linked to any specialties yet. You can associate it with one or more specialties, but do try to be specific. Don't associate your product with all specialties unless there is a really valid reason.

[add new link](#)

Once you have completed your application and are ready to submit to the CPD team for processing, you will need to click on the button **'Send to CPD Admin and make payment'**

When you are happy that this information is complete, use this button to send it to the CPD admin team. It will then be marked as 'pending' and the CPD administrators will assign it to a reviewer. You will not be able to edit any information for this activity once you've sent it to CPD Admin.

[Send to CPD Admin and make payment](#)

MAKING A PAYMENT AND GENERATING AN INVOICE

If you plan to pay by credit or debit card, please follow the on-screen instructions.

If you wish to pay by BACS you can generate an invoice.

- If your organisation generates a purchasing order, please arrange for the purchasing order to be generated **before proceeding any further**
- Please include the purchase order details on the invoice you generate on the system.
- When generating the self-generated invoice on the system it will automatically include the details of the administrator making the application, so if you are sending the invoice to your finance department **please change the details to those of your finance team.**
- It is the providers responsibility to ensure the correct details are provided for the invoice. If they are not included, this may delay your payment and therefore your application.

Making payment

- **Payment must be received for each application before we can process it for CPD approval. Your application is not complete without it. We strongly recommend that you make the payment by credit or debit card online. Cheques are no longer accepted.**
- If paying by BACS via your finance department we **strongly recommend you ask for ‘fast track’ or ‘urgent’ payment** unless you know that a routine request for payment will be actioned within 2 weeks. Delayed payment may result in delayed approval.
- **If paying by BACS, please use the Federation bank details on the generated invoice on the CPD system. You must include the CPD event code as your reference (i.e. ‘CPD123456’).**
- Failing to provide the CPD code will result in delays to your application where the CPD team are unable to match the payment to the application. Unfortunately, when we receive a payment via BACs with no CPD code, we are unable to link it to the application and therefore we sometimes have to arrange for the payment to be returned to the payee.

Declaration of Interests Form (e-learning)

Date:

Name:

Professional details:

Main occupation:

Name of the employer(s):

Please declare any interests here:

Commercial

The existence of any significant financial activity or other relationship the senior clinician/provider organisation has with:

(a) manufacturer(s) of any commercial product and/or providers of commercial services discussed in educational material

(b) any commercial supporters of the activity

This will apply to any relationships that are in place at the time the submission or in the 36 months preceding the submission

Research & Publishing

Financial compensation received by the senior clinician for publishing publications from a healthcare company, organisation or marketing company

Educational Activities

Financial compensation received by the senior clinician in relation to training of health professionals or planning training packages

Ownerships and possessions in health care companies

e.g. Relevant stocks and shares owned by the senior clinician (e.g. pharmaceutical or medical device companies)

Expert functions in health care and health guidance processes

Other roles held by the senior clinician e.g. Board member in a development project, member of health board in the municipality

Signature:

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S DECLARATION (e-learning)

Name of educational product:

Provider organisation:

I declare that:

1. The educational material was developed under my supervision and I have overall responsibility for it. It represents a balanced perspective of the subject matter.
2. This educational material complies with all relevant ethical, medico-legal, regulatory and legal requirements applicable in the country where it is being held.
3. The event fulfils the Federation's Diversity and Inclusion criteria
4. I am aware of the source and form of any commercial funding received to support the educational material
5. Lead authors/editors will disclose any potential or actual conflict of interest.
6. All members of the committee overseeing the educational material have declared their conflicts of interest.

Signature:

Date:

If financial support has been provided from a commercial organisation other than the organisation submitting this application, please confirm whether any of the sponsoring organisations have influenced the structure or content of the programme **Yes/No/Not applicable (select appropriate option)**

Signature:

Date:

NB Both of the above sections of the form need to be signed even if 'Not applicable' has been selected

Full name (block capitals):

GMC Number (or other appropriate registration details):

Address:

Email:

Telephone: