

## Feedback received from CPD Assessors for cycle year 2008/09



**Dr. Deirdre McAree recently conducted an assessment of the feedback received from the PSNI's CPD assessors. Below she provides a digest of the results.**

Assessors acting for the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland are all qualified pharmacists from various spheres of practice. The experiences they gain as a result of assessing CPD portfolios help to inform the Society and its policy decisions on CPD. Their feedback is therefore an invaluable source of information on which decisions can be made in order to make improvements to the system. I recently presented the Education Committee with a report summarising assessors' feedback and concluded with recommendations for future actions.

An evaluation questionnaire collected feedback under the following headings:

- What has gone well on this round of assessing?
- What observations have you made as a result of assessing?
- Feedback on online and paper-based portfolio assessment
- What has not gone so well?
- Recommended changes to improve the system for assessors and pharmacists

A selection of assessor comments included:

*"General Standard appears to have improved – most portfolios were*

*excellent".*

*"Is it worth giving pharmacists any guidance on an average number of cycles in a portfolio? (Some portfolios had a very large number of cycles and they might have been able to submit fewer)".*

*"Several pharmacists inflated their learning time by including time spent on subsequent outcome (e.g. preparation of SOP, presentation) I have also noted confusion about what constitutes an unscheduled cycle. A number of pharmacists seem to use unscheduled cycles for learning conducted outside of a formal course even when learning needs have been identified."*

*"Paper based – time to withdraw facility allowing paper submission or would that be too draconian?"*

*"It would be useful to have an agreed or recommended minimum (& maximum?) number of cycles. One pharmacist submitted 1 x 25 hour unscheduled cycle and 5 hours CPD completion!"*

*"I think for some pharmacists – using facilitation could easily turn an Option 4 to an Option 1 before they submitted their portfolio".*

### Conclusions

Feedback from PSNI CPD assessors suggests that the standard of cycle documentation is improving for many pharmacists, with online portfolios being the preferred format for assessors due to fewer difficulties deciphering handwriting. There are however a number of issues which could be addressed in order to improve the system for assessors e.g. improvements in the space (number of characters) available for assessors to provide feedback using the online system.

A number of suggestions made by assessors may be helpful in order to improve pharmacists' experiences of CPD assessment. These include further guidance on the number of cycles to be submitted and information for those pharmacists who wish to continue submitting paper-based portfolios. It would also appear that ongoing support and reinforcement of key messages regarding the documentation of CPD



**The 4 stage CPD cycle: Reflection, Planning, Action, Evaluation.**

cycles would be beneficial for pharmacists. This should include information on documenting unscheduled CPD cycles as some pharmacists appear to have been confused about this.

### Recommendations

As a result of this work, the following recommendations have been made in order to improve experiences of CPD assessors and registrants in Northern Ireland:

- ⇒ A proposal should be brought forward to the Education Committee regarding CPD cycle numbers with a view to a suggested maximum per annual portfolio.
- ⇒ A proposal should be brought forward to the Education Committee regarding paper-based CPD portfolio submissions.
- ⇒ Further support and training should be made available to those pharmacists who require assistance in order to document their CPD to meet the standards set by the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland.

### Key messages

Overall, assessors' have reported improvements in the standards of CPD portfolios they assess.

Some improvements to the online CPD assessment site should result in an improved experience for assessors, and ultimately benefit pharmacists through enhanced feedback.