



Learning Plan

INTRODUCTION

The Medical Board of Australia (MBA) and the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) requires all medical practitioners to undertake a structured approach to their continuing professional development (CPD) by completing an annual learning plan.

DEFINITION

A learning plan (also known as a personal or professional development plan) is a tool that supports planning of professional development goals and reflection on CPD activities undertaken in pursuit of these goals.

MINIMUM STANDARD

- A learning plan must be completed for each CPD year.
- The learning plan must reflect the areas of practice (scope of practice), as defined by each individual surgeon including operative and non-operative practice types.
- The learning plan should identify 1-3 surgical competencies that will be the focus of CPD participation in that year.
- At the end of the CPD year, the surgeon is required to review and reflect on their learning plan*.

*Surgeons in Aotearoa New Zealand are required by the MCNZ to undertake this review through a structured conversation with a peer including a discussion of outcomes from CPD activities undertaken, learning aspirations, reflection on practice and career stage and intentions.

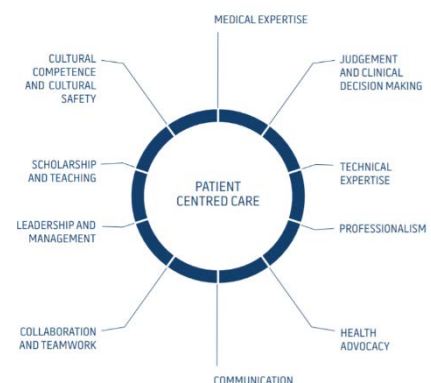
HOW TO COMPLETE A LEARNING PLAN

For the purposes of the RACS CPD Program, the learning plan must be aligned with a surgeon's Area of Practice and the RACS surgical competencies.

Surgical Competencies:

There are ten surgical competencies which underpin all aspects of Fellowship training and provides a framework for the assessment of practising surgeons.

Surgeons are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the [Surgical Competence and Performance Guide](#) when planning their CPD goals each year and ensure they incorporate activities that reflect these communities into their learning plan.



Area of Practice:

A learning plan should be reflective of a surgeons Areas of Practice (scope of practice), as identified by individual surgeons. If a surgeon has a very broad Area of Practice, it may not be possible for each area to be addressed every year and a surgeon may elect to focus on specific areas across multiple CPD periods.

Plan, Participate and Reflect:

A learning plan should be written at the start of the CPD year, reviewed throughout the year and then reflected on at the end of the CPD year. The learning plan cannot be finalised until review and reflection has been completed.

When developing a learning plan, surgeons may wish to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, or gaps in their knowledge. It is recommended that surgeons follow the 'SMART' process for goal setting-specific, measurable, achievable, relevant (to area of practice) and timely¹.

Surgeons should seek out activities and education that are reflective of their learning goals. During the year there may be circumstances which limit attendance at planned events, or a need to prioritise attendance at other activities. The learning plan can be adjusted throughout the year or this may be a valuable point of reflection at the end of the CPD period.

At the end of the CPD year, surgeons are required to finalise and reflect on their goals and learning. Surgeons in Aotearoa New Zealand must complete undertake this reflection through a structured conversation with a peer, with the information gathered from this discussion used to inform the development and maintenance of their learning plan. Surgeons in Australia are required to self-evaluate their CPD at the end of the year.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- RACS CPD Guide
- RACS CPD Participation and Compliance Regulation
- [RACS Surgical Competence and Performance Guide](#)
- Doran GT. There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives. Management review. 1981 Nov;70(11):35-6.
- Rimmer A. How do I prepare a personal development plan? Bmj. 2018 Nov 13;363.
- [Medical Board of Australia: Registration Standards](#)
- [Medical Board of Australia: Good Medical Practice](#)
- [Medical Council of New Zealand: Good Medical Practice](#)
- [Medical Council of New Zealand: Professional Development](#)

¹ Doran GT. There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives. Management review. 1981 Nov;70(11):35-6.