Step by step guidance on producing your Personal Development Plan

Aims:
- To explain the importance of producing a personal development plan (PDP)
- To describe the elements of a PDP
- To give step by step guidance on how to produce an individual PDP

Objectives and Outcomes:
You will be able to produce your own PDP to assist your continuing professional development (CPD) and to enable you to demonstrate to the General Dental Council (GDC) your commitment to lifelong learning.

Introduction

A PDP can be defined as “a process by which we identify our educational needs, set ourselves some objectives in relation to these, undertake our educational activities and produce evidence that you have learned something useful.” From August 2008 Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) are required to undertake 50 hours of verifiable CPD and 100 hours of non-verifiable CPD in every five-year cycle to maintain registration. The purpose of this CPD is to ensure that your patients receive high quality care. The GDC stipulate that a PDP should be used to identify and plan your CPD needs to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the verifiable and non-verifiable CPD activities that you participate in. By identifying your learning needs, participating in a related CPD activity and improving your professional standards, you will feel in control of your own learning and future career.

It is possible that your PDP may form a major part of the GDC professional revalidation programme for the future. Your PDP will not only be essential for the GDC, but will also form part of your professional portfolio, which can be used for future job interviews. It really is simple to construct if you follow the step-by-step approach described in this article. We recommend that you spend some time now constructing your PDP so that you can derive maximum benefit from the CPD you complete on CPD4dentaltechnicians.co.uk.

If you have any queries, feedback or questions then please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to assist you.
**Step 1 of your PDP
Undertake a SWOT analysis**

Open up a word document and title it ‘SWOT analysis’. You can add some clip art if you choose. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and allows you to analyse your current situation, which may help you in setting your goals. You may choose to do this alone or with other colleagues.

**Strengths** may be that you are a motivated learner and regularly undertake CPD activities, that you have good communication skills or that you are excellent in ceramic work. Use this to sell yourself!

**Weaknesses** may be that although you have been undertaking CPD you have not been recording how you apply it to practice, you find it difficult to manage your time or that you feel you lack knowledge in certain areas such as aesthetics. Use this to acknowledge your weaknesses as a tool for further development.

**Opportunities** may be that you now have the potential to extend your permitted duties, that you have supportive employers and colleagues or that you have the opportunity to be in control of your own learning through developing your PDP.

**Threats** may be that you have just changed jobs and are trying to learn many new skills or that you have limited time available due to other commitments.
Step 2 of your PDP
Decide your goals and make them SMARTER

Open up a word document and title it ‘SMARTER GOAL 1’. You may have 3 or 4 goals initially in your PDP so you will have 3 or 4 pages like this. Your goals may be identified in many ways. They may be highlighted through self-awareness, appraisal, audit, or reflection on an event that happened to you at work, which highlighted to you an area that you could improve. For example you may be continually having a problem with porosity in denture processing. You may decide to explore the causes of porosity as you have identified this as a learning need that you need to address to improve the quality of your work. This can be entered into your PDP as a goal. Other goals for the year may be to produce your initial PDP and to complete CPD courses in equipment and materials and medical emergencies. We suggest that you build up your PDP gradually and do not enter in too many goals initially, which may be difficult to achieve. Once you become familiar with it you can enter more.

Once you have an idea of your goals you need to make them SMARTER:

- **SPECIFIC**- is the goal specific enough?
- **MEASURABLE**- can success be measured?
- **ACHIEVABLE**- is the goal achievable?
- **RELEVANT**- is the goal relevant to your working practice?
- **TIMED**- is the goal on-going or timed?
- **EXCITING**- is the goal interesting enough to be motivating?
- **RECORDED**- will this be logged as verifiable or non-verifiable CPD?

The best way of making a goal SMARTER is to break the goal into smaller sub goals. Your SMARTER goal document should have the following titles: -

- **Goal 1** For example this may be to produce your PDP
- **How will I achieve this?** At this point you can break your goal into smaller sub goals for example in the case of the goal to produce your PDP this may be to read an article, complete the questionnaire, undertake a SWOT analysis, decide on initial goals, make them smarter and then write the PDP.
- **What will mark your success?** In this case this would be completion of your PDP
- **What resources will I need?** In this case you will need computer access and time.
Step 3 of your PDP
Write your PDP

So far your PDP consists of your SWOT analysis and some pages containing your SMARTER GOALS. Now all you need to do is fill in your PDP table. There is a link to an example PDP table from the members page that you can use or alternatively you can produce your own version. Our table is produced in landscape. If you wish to enter more sub goals then right click in the box and select split cells. When you wish to add more rows to the PDP select insert on the tool bar and then choose rows below. Now follow these steps;

- Write in your goal
- Write your justification for choosing this as a goal
- Break the goal into sub goals (copy this over from your SMARTER goal document)
- Enter dates for completion
- Enter evidence as you complete each goal
Step 4 of your PDP
Enter your verifiable and non-verifiable

Your verifiable CPD log is updated automatically when you complete your online questionnaire. You will need to enter in your non-verifiable and any other verifiable CPD you complete. Use the observation box to reflect on what you have learnt from the CPD and how you will apply it to your working practice. It may be that you observe that completing the CPD has highlighted another learning need, which you can add to your PDP.
Step 5
Print off your PDP and place it in a suitable indexed folder

You can choose how to present your PDP. It may be part of your Personal Professional Portfolio, which may also contain your curriculum vitae, appraisals and references. You may wish to place it in an indexed folder so that it can be viewed easily.

When you have completed the above steps you will have completed your initial PDP. You will need to ensure you put time aside to enter new goals, enter your verifiable and non-verifiable CPD and realign your goals as necessary.

To re-cap

Step 1- Undertake a SWOT analysis
Step 2- Decide on goals and make them SMARTER
Step 3- Fill in your PDP
Step 4- Fill in your verifiable and non-verifiable CPD chart
Step 5- Place your PDP in an indexed folder

Now take the exam to test your knowledge and then enjoy compiling your own PDP. Don’t forget to contact us if you have any queries and make sure you share and exchange ideas with other colleagues.

Portfolio Tip

Further information about Personal Development Planning can be accessed from the non-verifiable section of the website. Don’t forget to update your non-verifiable CPD record whenever you complete some.

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References

2 The General Dental Council. Continuing Professional Development for Dental Care Professionals. London. p.3