



Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education

ACPE Principles of Continuing Professional Development for Pharmacy Professionals

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## **Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Overview**

The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) is the national agency for the accreditation of professional degree programs in pharmacy and providers of continuing pharmacy education (CPE). ACPE (until 2003 known as the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education) was established in 1932 for the accreditation of professional degree programs in pharmacy, and in 1975 its scope was broadened to include accreditation of providers of continuing pharmacy education ([www.acpe-accredit.org](http://www.acpe-accredit.org)). ACPE expanded its activities to include evaluation and certification of professional degree programs internationally in 2011. Additionally, ACPE has collaborated with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) to accredit pharmacy technician education and training programs since 2014. The mission of ACPE is to assure and advance quality in pharmacy education. ACPE is an autonomous and independent agency whose Board of Directors is appointed by the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) (three appointments each), and the American Council on Education (ACE) (one appointment). State boards of pharmacy require that licensure applicants from the United States be graduates of an accredited pharmacy degree program to be eligible to sit for the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination™ (NAPLEX®). State boards of pharmacy also require pharmacists to participate in accredited or otherwise approved continuing education activities for relicensure, with a growing number of state boards of pharmacy require pharmacy technicians to participate in continuing education for re-registration or relicensure. In addition, some state boards allow for continuing professional development (CPD) portfolios to be submitted in lieu of continuing pharmacy education (CPE) hour requirements. Most recently, the Board of Pharmacotherapy Specialties (BPS) has announced a pilot program which requires pharmacists applying for recertification to complete 20 units of CPD. These principles for CPD programs were created and described to help pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy personnel to engage in CPD and to meet education requirements. For definitions and descriptions of unfamiliar terminology, please refer to the glossary, which can be found at the end of this document.

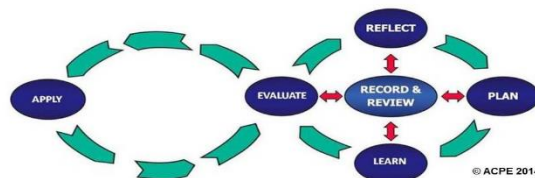
## Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programs

Consistent with ACPE's mission to assure and advance excellence in education for the profession of pharmacy, the purpose of the accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program is to build upon the existing foundation and principles of needs-based, outcomes-focused accredited continuing pharmacy education (CPE) to provide a process for pharmacy professionals to meet, maintain, and enhance competencies needed in areas relevant to their respective professional responsibilities/practice in an intentional, self-directed manner.

**ACPE defines CPD as: “a self-directed, ongoing, systematic and outcomes-focused approach to lifelong learning that is applied into practice.”**

While continuing pharmacy education (CPE) is often a component of CPD and may contain components of CPD within educational activities and programming, CPD emphasizes formal planning, identification, and active participation in a variety of learning activities that assist individuals in developing and maintaining competence, enhancing their professional practice, and supporting achievement of their career goals. CPD facilitates continued proficiency and competency for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians through intentional, tailored individual learning that continues and evolves throughout one's career. The ACPE CPD cycle consists of six components: *Reflect*, *Plan*, *Learn*, *Evaluate*, *Apply*, and *Record/Review*, as depicted in the figure below.

Figure 1. The ACPE CPD Cycle



### ***Benefits of CPD***

CPE providers, state boards of pharmacy, pharmacists, patients, students, and employers all stand to benefit from engaging in CPD. Providers of CPD programs may benefit from developing and implementing CPD programs for internal and external use. Development and implementation of an accredited CPD program sets a high standard across the organization for staff development, improves productivity with the help of motivated and skilled employees, endorses a learning culture within the organization, and allows providers to keep up with the latest trends and changes in the profession. Additionally, some state boards accept CPD for license renewal requirements and the Board of Pharmacy Specialties (BPS) are piloting the inclusion of CPD in recertification. CPD has the potential to provide several benefits to pharmacy students and professionals, including but not limited to: promoting independent learning, improving learning ability, develop practical skills and qualifications, and apply new knowledge, skills, and attitudes

to enhance patient outcomes. Additionally, organizations and employers may benefit from employee engagement in CPD by encouraging a culture of learning and staff development. Finally, patients stand to benefit from learner engagement in CPD, which focuses on helping pharmacy professionals develop holistically, acquiring the skills and training required to promote person-centered care.

## **Principles of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Pharmacy Professionals**

*The purpose of the principles is to ensure that CPD programs offered by providers have clear processes, design, assessment, and evaluation of the CPD process. Groups and organizations offering CPD programs must show how the CPD program will be delivered, that the program design includes elements from each component of the CPD cycle, and clear learner assessments and program evaluation methods are included and used within the CPD program.*

**Principle 1: Systematic Planning**

**Principle 2: CPD Program Design**

**Principle 3: Assessment of Learner CPD**

**Principle 4: Evaluation of CPD Program**

## **Principle 1: Systematic Planning of the CPD Program**

Providers of CPD programs establish and employ a systematic planning process for the development and implementation of a CPD process for learners. The program includes the following core elements:

- plan/resources/activities for learner engagement in the CPD program, e.g. “learning contract” (incorporate educating the learner of CPD as a foundational knowledge to effectively engage with the programming),
- resources required by the provider for development, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation of the CPD program,
- means by which learner CPD will be assessed and minimum level of achievement required,
- means by which the CPD program will be evaluated,
- process for awarding CPD value-based credit upon learner completion of the CPD program.

Guidance: Providers of CPD programs should plan for the development, facilitation, implementation, and evaluation of the CPD program, outlining methods and resources to be used. The plan should also define the expectations and timeline for the learner’s involvement in the program where the learner accepts responsibility to fully engage in and document their CPD through reflecting on their practice, assessing and identifying professional learning needs and opportunities, developing and implementing a personal development plan, and evaluating learning outcomes with the goal of enhancing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required for practice.

## **Principle 2: CPD Program Design**

The CPD Program employs a design or process based around the tenets of a CPD cycle: Reflect, Plan, Learn, Evaluate, Apply, Record/Review.), where learners:

- ***Reflect:*** complete a structured self-assessment and identify competencies for development.
- ***Plan:*** Create a personal development plan to address identified learning needs, which includes SMART learning objectives and identification of activities and resources to meet goals.
- ***Learn:*** Implement the plan using a range of learning activities and methods, and document all learning (CE and non-CE) that occurred to meet goals and objectives.
- ***Evaluate:*** evaluate learning outcomes from participation in CPD activities to meet stated CPD goals.
- ***Apply:*** Assess application of acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values into practice and associated impact of application
- ***Record/Review:*** Review CPD documentation to measure progress over time.

Guidance: The CPD program design should aim to meet the specific professional development goals and objectives of learners by facilitating practice assessment and self-appraisal, intentional and purposeful action, and application of learning for improvement. The content of CPD should be based on valid, evidence-based practice. Providers of CPD programs should employ mechanisms to allow for learner documentation of all aspects of CPD and systematic review to measure progress over time and demonstrate achievement of goals, e.g. ACPE's CPD Platform, CPD Worksheet, CPD portfolio, human resources talent tracking software, etc.

### **Principle 3: Assessment of Learner CPD**

**The provider of the CPD program employs a process to validate learner engagement and performance, with focus on learning outcomes and impact on professional practice, patient/population health, and/or organizational/system outcomes.**

**Assessment elements include identification of specific learning needs and goals through reflection with consideration of alignment with organizational goals, creation of SMART learning objective(s), congruency between completed CPD activities and identified needs/goals, evidence that learning needs/goals have been addressed through achievement of SMART learning objective(s), evaluation of achievement of professional development outcomes, evaluation and verification of learning application/practice changes.**

**Assessment feedback is to be provided to the learner in a constructive and timely manner through each step of the CPD cycle (formative) and upon completion of the program (summative).**

Guidance: The provider should develop a process for assessing the learner's CPD and associated outcomes to aid in development of self-directed lifelong learning skills and behaviors. Assessment approaches may include peer assessment, mentor assessment, and/or self-assessment with associated feedback. Instruments such as checklists, rating scales, and/or rubrics can aid in performing and documenting assessment.

### **Principle 4: CPD Program Evaluation**

**The provider of the CPD program conducts or facilitates a structured evaluation of the CPD program for determining its effectiveness in supporting and promoting self-directed lifelong learning. Information gathered should be used in a systematic fashion for the purpose of ongoing improvement of the provider's CPD program.**

Guidance: The provider should use a system of evaluation that includes measures and input from learners and other stakeholders to aid the provider in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the CPD program and provide direction for ongoing improvement.

## **Appendix I. Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education Definition of Continuing Professional Development**

### ***How do continuing professional development and continuing pharmacy education differ?***

Continuing pharmacy education (CPE) activities are often components of continuing professional development (CPD) processes or cycles. While CPD is an approach to learning, CPE activities are one example of an activity which may contribute to the completion of a CPD cycle. The CPD concept also allows that the content chosen by the professional does not need to be pre-set by a CPE provider that meets all the CPE standards, but that professionals can explore personally identified content that is useful to practice. Additional activities outside of CPE which relate to and help advance an individual's professional practice may be elements of a CPD cycle.

### ***Have any questions?***

If you have any questions as to what constitutes continuing professional development for the profession of pharmacy, please contact ACPE staff at [cpdinfo@acpe-accredit.org](mailto:cpdinfo@acpe-accredit.org) or phone 312-664-3575.

## Glossary

**Accredited CPE Provider:** An institution, organization or agency that has been recognized by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, in accord with its policy and procedures, as having demonstrated compliance with the standards that are indicative of the provider's capability to develop and deliver quality continuing pharmacy education.

**CPD Program Provider:** An institution, organization or agency that has been recognized by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education, in accord with its policy and procedures, as having demonstrated compliance with the criteria that are indicative of the provider's capability to develop and implement a continuing professional development program.

**Continuing Pharmacy Education (CPE):** Continuing education for the profession of pharmacy is a structured educational activity designed or intended to support the continuing development of pharmacists and/or pharmacy technicians to maintain and enhance their competence. Continuing pharmacy education should promote problem-solving and critical thinking and be applicable to the practice of pharmacy.

**Continuing education (CE) activity:** An educational event or intervention offered by an accredited CE provider that is based upon identified needs, has a purpose or objectives, and is evaluated to assure the needs are met.

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** A self-directed, ongoing, systematic and outcomes-focused approach to lifelong learning that is applied into practice. It involves the process of active participation in formal and informal learning activities that assist in developing and maintaining competence, enhancing professional practice, and supporting achievement of career goals.

**CPD activity:** A formal or informal learning activity undertaken as part of one's personal development plan. Attributes of activities beneficial to CPD involve selecting learning opportunities in response to identified professional needs and goals that relate to daily practice or areas of professional interest and focus on specific learning objectives and associated outcomes.

**CPD cycle:** an ongoing learning and development cycle aimed to meet specific goals and objectives of individual practitioners by encouraging practice assessment, intentional action, and application of learning for improvement. The cycle incorporates the six components of CPD: reflect, plan, learn, evaluate, apply, and record/review.

**CPD program:** the comprehensive set of strategies, services, tools, and resources employed by a CPD provider to support learners in their self-directed lifelong learning.

**Joint Providership:** An organization offering a CPD program works with another organization for the purpose of developing a CPD activity.

**Learning contract:** A formal agreement between the CPD provider and learner, providing the framework for self-directed lifelong learning. The agreement aids in defining learner responsibilities, participation, and progress in the CPD program.

**Lifelong learning:** the ongoing process of active participation in formal and informal learning and professional development activities that assists in maintaining and enhancing competence, advancing professional practice, and supporting achievement of career goals.

**Personal development plan:** a detailed proposal to address learning needs. Planning involves the process of defining SMART learning objectives, learning activities, and other resources in order to meet CPD goals.

**SMART learning objectives:** objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timed.

- Specific: clearly and concisely state what the learner will be able to do
- Measurable: include an observable or quantifiable action or behavior
- Achievable: integrate action that is feasible/attainable
- Relevant: align with practice and/or organizational goals
- Timed: include a target date for completion