Continuing Professional Development for Speech Pathologists in Australia 2024-2025

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) supports speech pathologists to maintain and further develop their clinical and professional knowledge and skills required to provide optimal care to health consumers.

The Australian Health Professional Regulation Agency (AHPRA) defines CPD as:

…how health practitioners maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives.

Engaging in regular CPD assists speech pathologists to meet their obligations under the National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers (the National Code) as legislated in their state or territory.

Speech pathologists seeking to meet Speech Pathology Australia's (SPA) certification program requirements must complete specified CPD activities.

This guide is designed to support speech pathologists in Australia to:

- understand their CPD obligations,
- identify activities that contribute to CPD,
- plan CPD activities,
- record CPD activities, and
- maintain evidence of completion of CPD activities for investigations and/or audits.

Overview of CPD Obligations

The National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers

Speech pathologists currently fall outside the scope of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) and do not require registration in order to practise in Australia. The National Code aims to strengthen regulation of health professionals not regulated by the NRAS. CPD supports speech pathologists to meet the following obligations under the National Code:

- maintain the necessary competence in their field of practice,
- not provide health care of a type that is outside their experience or training, or provide services that they are not qualified to provide, and
- provide health services in a manner that is culturally sensitive to the needs of their clients.

While there are no specified CPD activities under the National Code, it is important that speech pathologists complete sufficient amounts of CPD to meet their obligations, and maintain evidence to demonstrate they have met their obligations in the event they're investigated by the appropriate state or territory statutory authority.

Speech Pathology Australia Certification Program

Speech pathologists have the option of meeting the requirements of SPA's certification program. This program was introduced prior to the legislation of the National Code as part of a self-regulatory mechanism. There are specific CPD activities that need to be completed to meet the requirements of the certification program.

For new graduate speech pathologists this includes:

1) Developing a CPD plan and goals.
2) Engaging in a minimum of 20 hours of learning per year that includes the following:
   a. a minimum of 12 hours receipt of professional support by a speech pathologist (minimum of 6 hours 1:1, maximum of 6 hours in a group setting).
   b. a minimum of 2 hours of learning that supports cultural responsiveness and culturally safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.
   c. completion of the ethics education requirements specified by SPA.
   d. completion of the evidence-based practice education requirements specified by SPA.
3) Maintaining an accurate CPD record or log.

Fig. 1. Speech Pathology Australia minimum hours of learning by learning activity category for new graduate speech pathologists.

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1) Developing a CPD plan and goals.
2) Engaging in a minimum of 20 hours of learning per year that includes the following:
    a. a minimum of 2 hours receipt of professional support.
    b. a minimum of 2 hours of learning that supports cultural responsiveness and culturally safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.
3) Maintaining an accurate CPD record or log.
4) Seek to ensure CPD activities contribute to quality of practice.
5) Seek to ensure CPD activities benefit service users and/or communities.
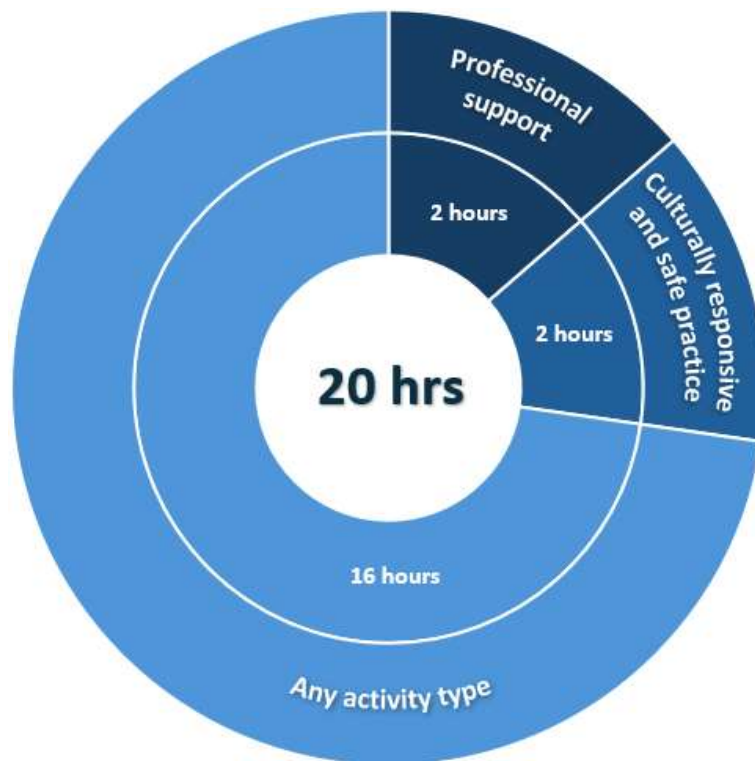6) Engage in CPD that draws on the best available evidence.

Fig. 2. Speech Pathology Australia minimum hours of learning by learning activity category for speech pathologists.

Speech pathologists that meet the requirements of SPA's certification program are 'eligible' for 'Certified Practising Speech Pathologist' status. Speech pathologists that meet the requirements of SPA's certification program and pay a yearly fee will receive 'Certified Practising Speech Pathologist' status. It should be noted that in accordance with SPA Policy 10.08:

"The granting of certified speech pathologist status is an indicator that a speech pathologist has represented to Speech Pathology Australia that they have completed certain education and experience and satisfied other requirements. However, certification is not a guarantee or assurance of the competence or ability of any particular speech pathologist. Further, given that Speech Pathology Australia does not examine or assess any applicant for certification, Speech Pathology Australia does not represent or warrant in any manner that a certified speech pathologist is competent in their field(s) of speech pathology practice. Anyone using the services of a person who has been certified under this policy should rely on his or her own independent judgment about these matters."

Identifying CPD Activities

CPD Activities

Most speech pathologists complete CPD activities on a regular basis without realising it. Below are examples of activities that can be considered as CPD:

- creating or reviewing a CPD plan,
- case discussions,
- clinical observation,
- clinical supervision,
- clinical incident reports,
- clinical feedback,
- clinical audits,
- quality improvement projects,
- research,
- performance appraisals,
- performance management,
- workshops,
- webinars,
- posters,
- journal articles,
- books,
- lectures,
- presentations,
- modules,
- courses.

CPD activities should involve a two-step process:

1. **Engage in the activity**
   This involves learning new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives.
2. **Reflect on the activity**
   This involves thinking about how the new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives would be applied in a clinical context.

Learning Activity Categories

Speech Pathology Australia has specified learning activity categories with minimum hours of learning. CPD activities must fall within the specified learning activity categories. Required CPD activities are different for new graduate speech pathologists and speech pathologists.

Professional support	Professional support activities must be provided by an experienced speech pathologist with knowledge and experience in the practice or professional area in which support is sought.
Ethics	Activity that involves the completion of the 'Code of Ethics: Support for Everyday Practice' education package
Evidence-based practice	Activity that involves the completion of Module 2 of the 'EBP: Independent Study Resource (module 1 and 2)' education package
Culturally responsive and safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities	Activities that improve the capabilities of the speech pathologist in providing culturally responsive and safe services.

Table 1. Speech Pathology Australia learning activity categories for provision new graduate speech pathologists

Professional support	Professional support activities can be provided by an experienced speech pathologist or another health professional with knowledge and experience in the practice or professional area in which support is sought.
Culturally responsive and safe practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities	Activities that improve the capabilities of the speech pathologist in providing culturally responsive and safe services.
Other learning activities	Activities that maintain, update and broaden the speech pathologists clinical and professional knowledge, skills, and perspectives.

Table 2. Speech Pathology Australia learning activity categories for speech pathologists

Planning CPD Activities

CPD Plan

CPD plans, also known as Professional Development Plans (PDP), are an important tool to identify and meet our learning needs. CPD plans do not need to be completed in one sitting and can evolve over time. Time taken on your CPD plan also contributes to your CPD.

A CPD plan uses a four-step process:

1. **Self-assessment**
   This involves identifying our learning needs through self-reflection. Some questions that can be helpful include:
   - What populations do you see?
   - What practice areas are you practising in?
   - What clinical settings are you practising in?
   - What knowledge and/or skills gaps do I have in the areas I currently practise in?
   - What knowledge and/or skills gaps do I need in the areas I would like to practise in?

2. **CPD Goals**
   This involves creating learning goals that address our learning needs.

3. **CPD activities**
   This involves identifying learning activities that support us in meeting our CPD goals.

4. **Reflection**
   This involves reflecting on the progress and/or barriers to achieving our learning goals, and if our circumstances have changed reflecting on whether our learning needs have changed. Reflection should occur as often as required to ensure our CPD plan is current and reflects our learning needs.

Recording and Maintaining Evidence of CPD Activities

CPD record or log

A CPD record or log is a way of recording the details of our CPD activities such as:

- The date of the activity.
- The time taken to engage and reflect on the activity.
- The details of the activity such as the activity name, activity type, activity category, author or presenter names, and summary of new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives presented.
- A summary of our reflection on how the new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives would be applied in a clinical context

Recording the details of our CPD activities serves three purposes:

1. To assist in our CPD plan reflection to ensure we're achieving our learning needs.
2. To keep track of previous CPD so that we can review knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives.
3. Provide evidence of meeting CPD obligations.

Maintaining evidence of CPD activities

Maintaining a copy of our CPD plan and CPD record or log is important in the event of an investigation by a statutory authority. This will allow us to show evidence of meeting obligations under the National Code. There is no designated timeframe to maintain evidence under the National Code.

Speech pathologists that are 'eligible' for 'Certified Practising Speech Pathologist' status as part of the employment requirements should maintaining a copy of CPD plans and CPD records or logs to show their employer when asked.

Speech pathologists that have purchased 'Certified Practising Speech Pathologist' status are required to keep a copy of CPD plans and CPD records or logs for 2 years in the event of an audit by SPA.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Learning Needs Self-Assessment

This template is designed to assist you in identifying your learning needs. You may find this helpful to complete prior to starting your CPD Plan.

	Current (what I currently provide services in)	**Desired** (what I would like to provide services in)
Population/s (age ranges, conditions, identities, etc)		
Area/s of practice (receptive language, expressive language, voice, swallowing, etc)		
Clinical setting/s (acute, rehab, private practice, community, aged care, justice, mental health, etc)		

What knowledge and/or skills gaps do I have for current areas of service?

What knowledge and/or skills gaps do I need for desired areas of service?

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Plan

This template is designed to assist you in planning your learning activities that address your learning needs. Additional copies of this template should be made for every additional learning goal you create.

CPD year: ____/____ to ____/____

Clinician: _____

Learning goal Identify a goal that addresses your learning needs	
Proposed activities Identify activities that support you to achieve your learning goals	
Proposed timeframe Plan your activities throughout the CPD year to make CPD manageable	
Reflection Identify if: • you achieved your learning goal, • you need further activities to achieve your learning goal, • your circumstances have changed and the learning goal is no longer relevant	

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Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Plan

This template is designed to assist you in planning your learning activities that address your learning needs. Additional copies of this template should be made to record further learning goals.

Clinician: _____   **CPD year:**   ____/____ to ____/____

Learning goal Identify a goal that addresses your learning needs	Proposed activities Identify activities that support you to achieve your learning goals	Proposed timeframe Plan your activities throughout the CPD year to make CPD manageable	Reflection Identify if: • you achieved your learning goal, • you need further activities to achieve your learning goal, • your circumstances have changed and the learning goal is no longer relevant

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activity Record

This template is designed to assist you in recording your learning activities. Additional copies of this template should be made for additional learning activities.

Date (day activity occurred)	
Duration (hours being claimed)	
Details of activity (activity name, activity type, activity category, author or presenter names, and summary of new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives presented)	
Reflection (reflection on how the new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives would be applied in a clinical context)	

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activity Log

This template is designed to assist you in recording your learning activities. Additional copies of this template should be made to record further learning activities.

Date (day activity occurred)	Duration (hours being claimed)	Details of activity (activity name, activity type, activity category, author or presenter names, and summary of new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives presented)	Reflection (reflection on how the new knowledge, skills, and/or perspectives would be applied in a clinical context)