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## Table of Contents

1. Frequently Asked Questions ........................................................................................................... 6
  1.1 General Questions – For Microsite ................................................................................................. 6
      1.1.1 What is the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio? ........................................................................... 6
      1.1.2 How does the RCGP’s Revalidation ePortfolio compare with other tools on the market? ...... 6
      1.1.3 How will the Revalidation ePortfolio save me time? .............................................................. 6
      1.1.4 How do I register on the tool? .................................................................................................. 6
      1.1.5 Will I be able to transfer the content from my current tool to the RCGP one? ..................... 7
      1.1.6 What links will the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio have with the RCGP Trainee ePortfolio? ...... 7
      1.1.7 What is ‘Strengthened appraisal’? ............................................................................................ 7
      1.1.8 What do I do about the new 12 Good Medical Practice (GMP) ‘attribute’ headings? .......... 8
      1.1.9 What if I want to enter information confidentially, not for my Appraiser or PCO to see? ...... 8
      1.1.10 What if I enter information now but I don’t want it to be considered for my revalidation? .... 8
      1.1.11 How do I collect CPD credits? ................................................................................................ 8
      1.1.12 What will happen when the Appraiser disagrees with Appraisee’s assessment of CPD credits? 9
      1.1.13 What will happen if the Appraiser is not happy to sign-off the appraisal? ......................... 9
      1.1.14 What if the Appraisee is not satisfied with the Appraiser’s summary of the appraisal? ........ 9
      1.1.15 Can I carry on adding to my CPD log once I have submitted an appraisal year’s documentation and am waiting to be appraised? ................................................................. 9
      1.1.16 How much will the Revalidation ePortfolio cost? .................................................................. 9
      1.1.17 What support will the RCGP provide to help users of the tool? ............................................. 10
      1.1.18 Will the Department of Health recommend a particular toolkit for appraisal/revalidation? ... 10
      1.1.19 Will GPs in Wales and Scotland use the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio? ............................ 10
      1.1.20 I have already completed parts of my current appraisal on a different tool or in paper format, can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio? ........................................................................... 10
  1.2 USING THE TOOL – for inclusion within the ReP: ......................................................................... 11
      1.2.1 Why do I need to subscribe to the ePortfolio? ........................................................................ 11
      1.2.2 How do I subscribe to the ePortfolio ...................................................................................... 11
      1.2.3 How can I add a previous PDP to the Revalidation ePortfolio? ............................................ 11
      1.2.4 How can I add a previous Form 4 to the Revalidation ePortfolio? ....................................... 11
      1.2.5 I am having problems using the Revalidation ePortfolio with Internet Explorer 6 ............ 11
1.2.6 How do I upload a file? .............................................................................................................. 11

1.2.7 Can I upload files other than Word and PDF? ........................................................................ 12

1.2.8 Why would an Appraisee NOT include an item for appraisal? ............................................... 12

1.2.9 How will Appraisers access the tool? ....................................................................................... 12

1.2.10 At what frequency does the RCGP expect Appraisers to look at their Appraisee’s ePortfolio -
i.e. just towards the end of the appraisal year, or on an ongoing basis? ........................................... 12

1.2.11 How do I add a PDP for next year? .......................................................................................... 12

1.2.12 What will the Responsible Officer get to see? ........................................................................ 13

1.2.13 How can you ensure that our data won’t get lost? .................................................................. 13

1.2.14 What is the CPD 9 point grid? .................................................................................................. 13

1.2.15 What is the Dashboard? ........................................................................................................... 13

1.2.16 Where is Form 3? ..................................................................................................................... 13

1.2.17 Where is Form 4? ..................................................................................................................... 13

1.2.18 What colleague feedback (MSF) and patient feedback questionnaires does the RCGP
recommend? ........................................................................................................................................... 13

1.2.19 I am an RCGP Member and a GP in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that I have an IMC rather
than a GMC number. Can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio? ...................................................... 14

1.2.20 Is any training available for using the Revalidation ePortfolio? ................................................. 14

1.2.21 All I see is a grey page, and have to scroll down to see the Revalidation ePortfolio ................. 14

1.2.22 My appraisal date is shown as 31st March, but this is not correct. ........................................ 14

1.2.23 I cannot edit my CPD items ..................................................................................................... 14

1.2.24 Can CPD items be edited after the appraisal has been submitted? .......................................... 14

1.2.25 I have been logged out of the system? ..................................................................................... 15

Or My CPD item didn’t save .................................................................................................................. 15

1.2.26 I have already completed parts of my current appraisal on a different tool or in paper format,
can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio. ......................................................................................... 15

1.2.27 Who is eligible to use the Revalidation ePortfolio? .................................................................. 15

1.2.28 My CPD credits have disappeared from the Revalidation column on the Dashboard? ............ 16

1.2.29 What is the “Close off appraisal” function ................................................................................. 16

1.2.30 Why am I being told that I need to “Close Off (my) Appraisal” .................................................. 16

1.2.31 What is the “Grace Period” ..................................................................................................... 17
1 Frequently Asked Questions

1.1 General Questions – For Microsite

1.1.1 What is the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio?

It is an electronic portfolio to support the appraisal and revalidation needs of all GPs. The RCGP believes that an electronic method is the best solution for collecting and maintaining the supporting information required for revalidation. The ePortfolio is simple and easy to use, aids reflection and helps organise supporting information into the categories required for revalidation. It has sections for use by Appraisers and Primary Care Organisation (PCO) staff and from late 2012, Responsible Officers (ROs).

The current version of the ePortfolio is aligned for use in appraisal alone with flexibility to adapt to the particular requirements of PCOs (including ‘enhanced appraisal’- see below). Once the requirements of revalidation are finalised, the tool will be refined to support this process.

1.1.2 How does the RCGP’s Revalidation ePortfolio compare with other tools on the market?

The RCGP solution has many distinct features:

The RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio has been developed by GPs for GPs in line with the RCGP Guide to Revalidation. Offering a unique look and feel – including the Dashboard which provides an at-a-glance view of progress towards each appraisal and revalidation - the ePortfolio is regularly enhanced in response to user feedback. The tool has been integrated with the College’s Online Learning Environment, giving users the opportunity to update their learning log at the touch of a button after successful completion of an online module. The system will shortly offer integration with the RCGP Trainee ePortfolio, ensuring a smooth transition for GPs after the completion of their training. As national policy emerges, we are developing the system into an “end to end” revalidation solution – providing PCOs with a means to quality assure their appraisal system and Responsible Officers with a mechanism to quickly assess the progress of their GPs and make revalidation recommendations.

The Revalidation ePortfolio is free for College members and PCOs – and it available at a reasonable subscription for non members.

1.1.3 How will the Revalidation ePortfolio save me time?

You enter your CPD onto the ePortfolio using simple templates which then structure the information according to the requirements for revalidation. The RCGP has taken considerable professional advice to ensure the time required for data entry is minimised and the software does all the hard work.

1.1.4 How do I register on the tool?

- Members
  - Visit https://gpeportfolio.rcgp.org.uk
  - Log in using your RCGP website ID and password
1.1.5 Will I be able to transfer the content from my current tool to the RCGP one?

Whilst automatic transfer is not currently possible, manual transfer should not be an arduous process. We estimate it takes about 10 minutes to place the minimum necessary information onto the ePortfolio, which is your Form 4 and PDP. To do this, download your latest Form 4 and PDP from your existing tool. The Form 4 should be uploaded, unchanged, onto the RCGP tool. If you currently have it in a paper format we advise you to scan and upload it. We recommend you cut and paste your PDP into our RCGP PDP template, which will allow your Appraiser to comment on it and incorporate this feedback into your sign-off from your first appraisal using the tool.

1.1.6 What links will the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio have with the RCGP Trainee ePortfolio?

At present qualified GPs can continue to use the Trainee ePortfolio as long as they remain a member of the RCGP. However, we are working towards linking the Revalidation ePortfolio to the Trainee ePortfolio, though some fields are likely to be quite different (revalidation has different requirements to those of completing training). There is already the facility to download some sections of the Trainee ePortfolio which you can then upload into the Revalidation ePortfolio, if you wish.

We aim to reach a stage where CPD and your PDP will flow seamlessly between RCGP tools. We anticipate most users will switch to entering data via the templates in the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio around the time they prepare for their first appraisal after completing training, since these tools will specifically guide you in your appraisal (and revalidation) preparation. However, please check with your Appraiser that they are happy for you to use the RCGP ePortfolio for your current appraisal. Many PCOs are still deciding which appraisal ePortfolio to recommend to their Appraisers in the transitional period leading up to revalidation (see below).

1.1.7 What is ‘Strengthened appraisal’?

‘Enhanced’ or ‘strengthened’ appraisal incorporates specific types of supporting information such as audit, patient/colleague feedback and significant event review into the appraisal discussion. It is anticipated these...
items will be a compulsory part of any appraisal contributing to revalidation, once this starts. The Revalidation ePortfolio will help you to collect any such information you have access to for your current appraisal and by familiarising yourself with the process you will be well prepared for the start of revalidation. For example, most GPs are currently participating in significant event review (for QoF) so may be able to include this material already. Few GPs would currently be able to include multi-source (colleague) feedback. The RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio has been built with flexibility (for the time being) to include as much or as little of this ‘strengthened’ material as you agree is appropriate with your Appraiser/ PCO. The Dashboard colours will reflect your progress against the strengthened appraisal requirements. However, the RCGP believes that most PCOs would currently take the view that there is no obligation for all 12 areas to be green before you sign-off your appraisal. Please check with your Appraiser how your own PCO wishes to use the tool in any given appraisal year prior to the start of revalidation.

1.1.8 What do I do about the new 12 Good Medical Practice (GMP) ‘attribute’ headings?

At present mapping to the 12 Good Medical Practice (GMP) ‘attribute’ headings is optional and is marked as such in the RCGP ePortfolio. The RCGP recognises GPs will need to learn about attribute mapping, and will build support for this into the tool once the full requirements for revalidation are known. In the meantime, you are most welcome to optionally link your CPD to attribute headings if you wish to try this, and the tool will map your progress.

1.1.9 What if I want to enter information confidentially, not for my Appraiser or PCO to see?

This is possible. You just need to not ‘include for appraisal’ in the CPD entry template.

1.1.10 What if I enter information now but I don’t want it to be considered for my revalidation?

Whenever you enter a CPD item you can chose whether to keep it private or show it to your Appraiser. If you are undecided you can simply enter the item in your CPD log and decide later (at any time before you sign-off your log prior to the appraisal meeting). Furthermore, the tool will include a function to allow you to set a specific revalidation period once the GMC advises you of your revalidation date. So you will not be obligated to submit for revalidation information you enter on the tool in the current pre-revalidation period, if you do not wish to do so.

1.1.11 How do I collect CPD credits?

CPD credits are not a requirement of current appraisal, but will become a requirement for revalidation. The RCGP encourages anyone using the tool to have a go at collecting credits. Every time you enter a CPD item you will be asked to assign a credit score. The RCGP Guide to the Credit Based System for CPD can be found here. A comments box on the CPD template is available for you to explain your score to your Appraiser and RO. You should use this box especially if you double your points for impact.

If you decide not to enter any credit scores this part of your Dashboard will remain red. However, you can still proceed to sign-off for any appraisal which takes place before the start of revalidation (anticipated to be early 2013).
1.1.12 What will happen when the Appraiser disagrees with Appraisee’s assessment of CPD credits?

The RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio includes an Interactive Messaging feature which can be used by Appraisers and Appraisees. The Appraiser can request the Appraisee make a change to any aspect of a CPD or PDP item. To do this, the Appraiser opens the item and clicks ‘Request a Change’.

This opens the request a change selection box where the Appraiser selects what they would like changed from the drop down list, add comments indicating why they would like the change to be made and then press ‘save’.

The Appraisee will then receive an email and a message when they log into their ePortfolio notifying them that their Appraiser has requested a change.

To make changes, the Appraisee clicks on the item from the change request and it will open the item that has been requested to be changed. The Appraisee can either accept or decline the requested change and provide comments for the Appraiser.

The Appraiser can either accept or decline the response from the Appraisee. When the Appraisee has accepted and made the change, and the Appraiser accepts the change that has been made, the change request will be closed.

1.1.13 What will happen if the Appraiser is not happy to sign-off the appraisal?

The Appraiser should NOT click the ‘sign off’ tab at the end of the process. They should contact their appraisal lead or PCO, following whatever their locality process is for an unsatisfactory appraisal.

If, following this process an appraisal still cannot be marked as satisfactory, it can be marked as ‘In Review’, allowing the appraisee to begin entering information for the following year.

1.1.14 What if the Appraisee is not satisfied with the Appraiser's summary of the appraisal?

The Appraisee should contact their PCO and should NOT click to ‘accept the appraisal’ button in the Revalidation ePortfolio.

1.1.15 Can I carry on adding to my CPD log once I have submitted an appraisal year's documentation and am waiting to be appraised?

No, once your appraisal has been submitted, the Dashboard is locked (except for your PDP) until the appraisal has been completed and accepted by all parties. However you can ‘undo submission’ if you wish.

1.1.16 How much will the Revalidation ePortfolio cost?

The RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio is available to RCGP members as part of their overall membership package at no extra cost. It is also free for PCOs. Non members who subscribed prior to the 1 April 2012
1.1.17 What support will the RCGP provide to help users of the tool?

Users should refer to the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio “microsite” (http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation_eportfolio_home.aspx) for written guidance and other resources. Resources will be developed to meet user need and we are very keen to receive feedback from users (email gpeportfolio@rcgp.org.uk). The RCGP has taken expert advice to ensure the tool is user-friendly and it is anticipated that most users will not experience any difficulties. However, a dedicated RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio Helpdesk is available to provide support between 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. The Helpdesk can be contacted on gpeportfolio@rcgp.org.uk or 020 3188 7667.

1.1.18 Will the Department of Health recommend a particular toolkit for appraisal/revalidation?

No, the Department of Health will not prescribe any particular system. PCOs are likely to recommend one or two options to performers. The NHS Revalidation Support Team (England) has, however, produced guidance for Responsible Officers on the features they should look for when procuring an electronic system for appraisal and revalidation.

1.1.19 Will GPs in Wales and Scotland use the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio?

Appraisal in Wales is led by the Deanery and we would recommend you contact them for more guidance. At present we believe the Deanery is continuing with the Welsh ePortfolio and therefore your local Health Board will wish you to use this information portal.

We anticipate that many GPs in Scotland will use the established SOAR system, though one of our aims is to work with the developers of this tool in order to achieve interoperability between the two systems. Please contact your appraisal lead if you are a Scottish GP wishing to use the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio for your appraisal this year- it may be an option.

1.1.20 I have already completed parts of my current appraisal on a different tool or in paper format, can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio.

The Revalidation ePortfolio sets guidelines for the information that should be part of an appraisal in line with what the expected requirements for Revalidation will be. If you have information on multiple formats you will still be able to complete an appraisal in the Revalidation ePortfolio (without entering the information again) as long as your appraiser is happy with this and you make a note that some of your appraisal information is elsewhere. We would suggest that after the original transition period it would be best to enter everything to the ePortfolio periodically as this will make it available for your appraisers comments and allow your data to be easy to find and edit from anywhere with internet access.
1.2 USING THE TOOL – for inclusion within the ReP:

1.2.1 Why do I need to subscribe to the ePortfolio?

All non RCGP members are required to subscribe to the ePortfolio in order to access it as an appraisee. Appraiser access is free, even if you are a non member.

1.2.2 How do I subscribe to the ePortfolio

Visit https://integra.rcgp.org.uk/membersarea
Login at the bottom of the page,
Click Non-Member Services on the left,
Click Subscribe and follow prompts

1.2.3 How can I add a previous PDP to the Revalidation ePortfolio?

- From the Dashboard, click into Area 4 and then click the tab Previous PDP’.
- Click ‘Add a Previous PDP’ and Insert the dates and outcome in the text fields provided.
- You can also upload any supporting documents by clicking the ‘Add Previous PDP document’.
- Click Save

1.2.4 How can I add a previous Form 4 to the Revalidation ePortfolio?

- Go to the Dashboard and click on Area 4.
- Click on ‘Add a past appraisal’
- Enter details of Appraiser, Responsible Organisation, Outcome and Date
- Attachments can be uploaded by clicking the ‘Add an Attachment’ button
- Click Save

1.2.5 I am having problems using the Revalidation ePortfolio with Internet Explorer 6

Internet Explorer 6 is no longer supported by Microsoft and we suggest either upgrading to a newer version of Internet Explorer or installing another supported browser such as Mozilla Firefox. If you use software owned by your PCO, as many GPs do, please ask them if it would be possible to upgrade it.

1.2.6 How do I upload a file?
In many areas of the Revalidation ePortfolio you are able to upload documents as supporting information.

To do this

• Click on the ‘Add an attachment’ button and then the ‘Browse…’ button
• This will open a new window which will allow you to navigate to the file’s location on your computer.
• Select the document you wish to upload and click ‘Open’
• Click Save

Uploads are limited to 15MB per item

1.2.7 Can I upload files other than Word and PDF?

Yes, most common document formats can be uploaded.

1.2.8 Why would an Appraisee NOT include an item for appraisal?

Users may wish to collect supporting information and then decide what they wish to share with their Appraiser. They can decide what to include at any time before they sign-off their log prior to the appraisal meeting.

1.2.9 How will Appraisers access the tool?

If a Primary Care Organisation (PCO) has registered on the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio, the PCO Administrator can import the organisation’s Performer List into the tool, assign Appraisee / Appraiser roles (to College member and non-member), set appraisal dates and allocate Appraisers to their Appraisees. The Appraiser will need to be registered with the RCGP and will be able to log in using their RCGP registered email address and password, and then can connect to the PCO by entering the PCO passcode and their PIN when prompted. (see “How do I register on the tool?”)

1.2.10 At what frequency does the RCGP expect Appraisers to look at their Appraisee’s ePortfolio - i.e. just towards the end of the appraisal year, or on an ongoing basis?

Appraisers can view (and comment on) their Appraisees’ ePortfolios at any time, providing that the Appraiser has been allocated to the Appraisee by the PCO administrator and that individual items are ‘included for appraisal’. The College does not have a particular ‘position’ on this, but has provided it as an option to assist Appraisers who would find such access useful.

1.2.11 How do I add a PDP for next year?

A PDP objective intended for next year should be added with the ‘next year’s PDP’ tab in Area 5
1.2.12 What will the Responsible Officer get to see?

We anticipate that ROs will be able to see any data that has been made available to the Appraiser.

1.2.13 How can you ensure that our data won't get lost?

All data will be backed up every two hours. The RCGP uses a myriad server system to ensure optimum security.

1.2.14 What is the CPD 9 point grid?

The CPD 9 point grid provides a visual overview of the distribution of your CPD. This enables you to see, at a glance, whether your learning has been Clinical, Professional or Managerial in terms of Learning Area, and whether that learning has been Personal, Local (i.e. practice/team based) or External.

1.2.15 What is the Dashboard?

From the Dashboard you are able to access, create and edit any aspect of your appraisal information. Revalidation information is added at the end of each signed off appraisal (this cannot be edited, but can be reset to accommodate the ‘go live’ for revalidation). The Dashboard also gives you a clear indication of any areas requiring further attention by using a traffic light system which changes from red to amber to green depending on how much information you require for your appraisal (and revalidation in due course).

1.2.16 Where is Form 3?

Your CPD entries will form the core of your appraisal documentation and we do not anticipate that Form 3 will be required for revalidation. However, we recognise that several PCOs still choose to use Form 3 and have therefore introduced it to the tool. It can be accessed in Area 3.

1.2.17 Where is Form 4?

Form 4 can be accessed by the Appraiser in Area 4.

1.2.18 What colleague feedback (MSF) and patient feedback questionnaires does the RCGP recommend?

The RCGP has commissioned external reviews into the suitability of colleague and patient tools for use in revalidation. Information about which tools the RCGP considers fit for purpose for revalidation based on the findings of the review can be accessed on the College’s Revalidation Supporting Tools webpage:

http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation/revalidation_supporting_tools.aspx
1.2.19 I am an RCGP Member and a GP in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that I have an IMC rather than a GMC number. Can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio?

Yes, you can access the ePortfolio as an International member of the College.

1.2.20 Is any training available for using the Revalidation ePortfolio?

We have provided training for leads in primary care organisations (PCOs) to enable them to deliver training to GPs within their organisations. The tool has been designed to ensure that it is easy and intuitive to use and written guides are available. We have also produced a series of short training videos, which depict various tasks being completed within the tool, to aid first time users. These can be accessed here: http://www.rcgp.org.uk/revalidation_eportfolio_home.aspx

1.2.21 All I see is a grey page, and have to scroll down to see the Revalidation ePortfolio

This occurs when using IE6. This version of Internet Explorer is not supported by the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio. We recommend that you download a more recent version of Internet Explorer or use another browser – those which can be supported are Internet Explorer 7.0 or later versions, Mozilla Firefox, Safari and Google Chrome. We realise that many GPs use NHS computers, and therefore they may need to request that their primary care organisation update their browser or install an alternative.

1.2.22 My appraisal date is shown as 31st March, but this is not correct.

The 31st March is the default appraisal date until your PCO or Appraiser schedules an appraisal date. Failure to complete an appraisal before this date will not affect your ePortfolio. If you are not linked to a PCO you can set an appraisal date yourself by clicking on the blue box in the top right of the Dashboard.

1.2.23 I cannot edit my CPD items

CPD items become locked when the appraisal has been submitted. The appraisal can be unsubmitted, using the “Unsubmit” button on the Dashboard, if items need to be edited. Any CPD items created in previous year’s ePortfolio are available for viewing in Area 6 but aren’t editable.

1.2.24 Can CPD items be edited after the appraisal has been submitted?

The Appraiser can request the Appraisee make a change to any aspect of a CPD or PDP item. To do this, the Appraiser opens the item and clicks ‘Request a Change.

This opens the request a change selection box where the Appraiser selects what they would like changed from the drop down list, add comments indicating why they would like the change to be made and then press ‘save’.
The Appraisee will then receive an email and a message when they log into their ePortfolio notifying them that their Appraiser has requested a change.

To make changes, the Appraisee clicks on the item from the change request and it will open the item that has been requested to be changed. The Appraisee can either accept or decline the requested change and provide comments for the Appraiser.

The Appraiser can either accept or decline the response from the Appraisee. When the Appraisee has accepted and made the change, and the Appraiser accepts the change that has been made, the change request will be closed.

1.2.25 I have been logged out of the system?
Or My CPD item didn’t save

The Revalidation ePortfolio is set to timeout if inactive for 20 minutes. This is comply with security requirements as identified through the testing of the tool. Please make sure that you save your work on a regular basis. You will receive a warning after 15 minutes of ‘inactivity’.

Please ensure that pop ups are enable in order to receive and inactivity warning

1.2.26 I have already completed parts of my current appraisal on a different tool or in paper format, can I still use the Revalidation ePortfolio.

The Revalidation ePortfolio creates a framework for appraisal information in line with what the expected requirements for Revalidation will be. If you have information on multiple formats you will still be able to complete an appraisal in the Revalidation ePortfolio (without entering the information again) as long as your appraiser is happy with this and you make a note that some of your appraisal information is elsewhere. We would suggest that after the original transition period it would be best to enter everything to the ePortfolio periodically as this will make it available for your appraiser’s comments and allow your data to be easy to find and edit from anywhere with internet access.

1.2.27 Who is eligible to use the Revalidation ePortfolio?

The Revalidation ePortfolio is free to use by RCGP members, non member appraisers and primary care organisations (PCOs). Non RCGP members wishing to use the ePortfolio as an Appraisee are required to pay an annual subscription fee.

To make use of its full appraisal functionality (which allows an Appraiser to access an Appraisee’s portfolio via their own login) a GP must work within a PCO which has registered on the tool. Members of the College who are not within a registered PCO can use the tool to record CPD and export their portfolio at any time as a PDF summary document (which can be emailed to their Appraiser). We would advise, however, that GPs in this situation check with their Appraiser as to whether they would be happy for them to submit their appraisal information in this way. It is not currently possible for the RCGP to set up a member who is outside a registered PCO as an Appraiser. A registered PCO can, however, assign somebody from outside their organisation the role of Appraiser to enable them to appraise a GP who is on their performer list.
1.2.28 **My CPD credits have disappeared from the Revalidation column on the Dashboard?**

CPD credits (and cumulative totals of items such as Clinical Audits) are not currently accumulated in the Revalidation column. This column will begin to accumulate credits in 2012 to align with the commencement of revalidation.

Credits from manually closed appraisals will not count towards the Revalidation column.

1.2.29 **What is the “Close off appraisal” function**

The Revalidation ePortfolio has been designed so that information is collected and managed on an annual (appraisal year) basis.

**International Members / Members not connected to a PCO on the ePortfolio**

Users within this category will not have an Appraiser assigned to their account and, as such, cannot sign-off an appraisal year on the ePortfolio. The “Close off appraisal” function allows these users to close an appraisal in order to be able to collect data for a new appraisal period.

If the user is not affiliated with a PCO, the option to close the ePortfolio will appear after the appraisal date, which can be set by the user, has passed.

**Users connected to a PCO on the ePortfolio**

Users in this category are subject to the PCO appraisal year, which allows the PCO to search by year and locate appraisal information for their performers.

The original PCO appraisal year was defined by the date upon which the performer registered on the system, and the April – March period that this date falls under.

*If a performer registered in March 2012 they will have been added in the 2011/12 appraisal year, if they registered in April 2012 they will have been added to the 2012/13 appraisal year*

The PCO appraisal year can now be selected by the appraisee when first logging into the system.

Once the PCO appraisal year has passed the “grace period” (see What is the “Grace Period?”) will begin and the user will be prompted to either complete their appraisal or manually ‘close’ their appraisal in order to move to the new appraisal year.

**Remember that if you close your appraisal year, any information for that year will be archived in PDF summary format in Area 4 (Previous Appraisal Documents).**

1.2.30 **Why am I being told that I need to “Close Off (my) Appraisal”**

If you receive a message saying that the “Your ePortfolio is currently collecting for the 20XX/XY appraisal year...” it is because the appraisal year that your ePortfolio is collecting towards has ended. As explained in 'What is the “Close off appraisal” function', the appraisal year was defined by the date upon which the performer registers on the system. When a user is connected to a PCO and completes the appraisal process, their appraisal year closes automatically and a PDF summary of the appraisal year is archived in Area 4 (Previous Appraisal Documents).

If you are not in the correct appraisal year, your can move to the next year by clicking “Close off appraisal” at the bottom of the dashboard. This will allow you to carry forward or archive any information you have already entered for that appraisal year.

**Remember that if you close off your appraisal, any information (not carried forward) for that year will be archived in PDF summary format in Area 4 (Previous Appraisal Documents).**
1.2.31 What is the “Grace Period”

The “grace period” is a period of time - following the end of a PCO appraisal year - within which an appraisal can still take place on the system for that year.

For users not connected to a PCT the “grace period” will begin immediately following the appraisal date set by the user.

The “close appraisal” function becomes active during the “grace period”.

1.2.32 What is ‘Mutual Login’

During a Mutual Login, both the appraiser and appraisee are logged in at the same time (via the appraiser view) and items can be added (PDP) or edited by the appraiser without having to logout and log back in during an appraisal meeting.

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