Guide to the RCGP

Revalidation ePortfolio

January 2012
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Introduction

Welcome to the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio full user guide. After thorough piloting and testing, the College is extremely confident that this tool will add significant value to GPs’ clinical practice and professional growth. It is a holistic learning system that incorporates all known and anticipated requirements for both appraisal and revalidation in the UK. You can read more about the pilot in Appendix 1.

This ePortfolio has been designed by working GPs. It is intended to be applicable to, and usable by, every GP in the UK. The heart of the tool is a log of continuing professional development (CPD), with events recorded in a simple format to aid reflection. As they are entered by the Appraisee, CPD items are organised into a format ready to be used as supporting information for revalidation. As the requirements of revalidation continue to be defined and refined, the College will update the Revalidation ePortfolio accordingly. We are always keen to hear new ideas and consider this Revalidation ePortfolio to be a living document that is constantly evolving.

The College’s current criteria for revalidation can be found in the RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners, and is always available on the revalidation section of the RCGP website.¹ This document describes the requirements for revalidation for GPs and is the basis for the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio; it is frequently referred to throughout this guide. The answers to most queries about the process of revalidation can be found in this document. In addition, the College website includes a video demonstration of this Revalidation ePortfolio and a set of instructional “microvideos”.

¹
Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and other resources will be continually updated in response to identified user needs.

**Key features of the Revalidation ePortfolio**

- **A ‘traffic light’ indicator** of a GP’s progress to each appraisal and (separately) each revalidation.
- Template-based records to maximise the ability to **search and integrate** information.
- **A learning log** where each item can be optionally linked to appropriate areas of Good Medical Practice (GMP) and also to the RCGP’s GP curriculum.
- **Interoperability with the RCGP eLearning system** that allows CPD items to be logged automatically from completed eLearning courses or sessions.
- An easy-to-use **cataloguing system** for learning done, allowing doctors to see at a glance the range and quantity of their activities in any appraisal or revalidation period.
- **A fully integrated appraisal system.** This will allow GPs solely to use the RCGP system for both appraisal and revalidation. The system provides a summary overview of the information discussed during each year’s appraisal. A summary for each revalidation is accumulated over 5 years.
- Functionality for Appraisers to be able to manage appraisals and to view **shared log entries** at any time, but also for Appraisees to keep items confidential until they decide to share them.
- **A contextual help** function provides users with guidance when completing all areas of activity in the ePortfolio.
- **A messaging function** whereby the system generates an automatic email to Appraisers and Appraisees, notifying them of specific ‘events’. One such example would be a message to an Appraiser informing him or her that an Appraisee has submitted appraisal information. Such messages are anonymous, and users are asked to log in to the system to check details.

- **Form 3** and **Form 4** have been integrated into the tool for Primary Care Organisation (PCOs) who wish to use them.

- For the future – functions for PCOs will be developed in Phase 2, allowing PCOs to **manage Appraisers** and provide reports aligned to guidance from the NHS Revalidation Support Team and regulators.

- Phase 2 will also include **interoperability** with other College e-learning products.

- It is proposed that interaction with external bodies such as the General Medical Council (GMC) should be achieved in Phase 3.

**Phase 1 – full functionality for appraisal**

Phase 1 of the Revalidation ePortfolio includes all the functionality required for appraisal. Some Revalidation ePortfolio sections relating to revalidation will be marked as ‘optional’ (explained further in Appendix 2) in Phase 1. As appraisal moves towards the ‘strengthened’ appraisal required for revalidation, it is anticipated that users will choose to utilise more of these optional areas (such as CPD credit scoring, recording of multi-source feedback (MSF) and linkage of CPD to the GMP attributes). It is important to be familiar with the appraisal requirements of your particular PCO because different organisations are moving towards strengthened appraisal at different rates.
Accessing the Revalidation ePortfolio

College members can access the tool using their standard RCGP log-in details. Every UK PCO was invited to start using this ePortfolio for appraisal from 2010. The system is being provided free of charge for all GPs on a trial basis until 1st April 2012, after which non-members will be required to either pay a standalone subscription to the ePortfolio or become associate RCGP members. Even if you are a College member whose PCO has not yet adopted this tool, you can still, if you wish, use it to log all your CPD. There is a function to save your entries into a PDF file to send to your Appraiser or upload on to whichever other electronic toolkit your PCO has currently chosen to use. Thus you will be able to benefit from the functionality of the ePortfolio to categorise your CPD in line with the College revalidation guidance during this current period of uncertainty, where PCOs are still deciding which electronic format to use for revalidation.

How the Revalidation ePortfolio works

The Revalidation ePortfolio organises supporting information into 12 areas, as set out in the document, RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners. These are displayed on the dashboard, shown below, which is the heart of the tool.
Each area has a **status bar** next to it. These are divided into the requirements for appraisal and revalidation. When the Appraisee has entered sufficient supporting information for his or her appraisal requirements, the status box will be green; if there are insufficient entries in this area, the box will be red. Progress towards achieving the requirements achieves an amber rating. These appraisal ratings are all based on the **Appraisee’s self-assessment**, but only translate into revalidation ratings after Appraiser review – this is explained further below.

Each area of the dashboard contains a hyperlink so the user can **interrogate** that area, i.e. search for all evidence within the Revalidation ePortfolio linked to that area. Users also click on the area hyperlink to **add** more information.

Below the table are hyperlinks to reach the optional tables summarising **RCGP curriculum coverage** (see p. 26 of this guide) and **GMP attributes** (see pp. 25–6 of this guide).
The right-hand section of the dashboard shows how supporting information is accumulating for Revalidation. The process for this is currently set up as follows:

- information marked for appraisal by the Appraisee will be reviewed by the Appraiser during the appraisal process
- if it has also been marked for revalidation by the Appraisee, once agreed by the Appraiser it moves into the revalidation column at appraisal sign-off

Throughout the Revalidation ePortfolio the user enters as much or as little as he or she wishes on each template. The only exception to this rule occurs when the Appraisee chooses to ‘submit’ his or her portfolio prior to the appraisal discussion – the Revalidation ePortfolio will then prompt Appraisees regarding essential fields left incomplete. Even at this stage users can still proceed to appraisal with incomplete fields if they are confident they can justify this to their Appraiser and PCO. For example, an Appraisee may not have uploaded anything electronically into area 3 but has agreed with his or her Appraiser to bring this information in paper format. This is explained further in section 2, ‘Summary of the Appraisal process using the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio’ (p. 9).

**The Academy CPD 9-point grid**

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges has developed a categorisation of CPD to allow GPs to assess the ‘spread’ of their learning. This categorisation uses the following ‘dimensions’:

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1 The revalidation column will begin to accumulate credits in 2012 to coincide with the introduction of revalidation.
• ‘personal’ – involving only the GP
• ‘local’ – based around the GP’s usual team
• ‘external’ – at a regional or national level.

Examples of each field (row) are as follows:

- **clinical** – anything directly relating to the clinical care of patients
- **managerial** – anything related to managing a GP’s clinical practice or the clinical service. An example would be setting up a new system for repeat prescription monitoring or developing a new service through practice-based commissioning
- **professional and academic** – anything that advances the profession directly. This will include all teaching, research, mentoring and Appraisal. It will also include political activities.

The 9-point grid allows users to see at a glance if their spread of learning is appropriate to their work. For example, anyone working clinically should have some credits in the clinical area. For many GPs, all credits will be clinical (if they only work clinically and not in an academic or managerial role).
The CPD credit scheme

The RCGP has introduced a credit-based system to assist GPs in quantifying their learning for Revalidation. At its simplest, each recorded hour spent on a CPD activity (which can include planning and reflection) counts as a credit.

Additional credits can be earned by demonstrating the impact of the learning:

- impact on patients (e.g. implementing a new clinical guideline)
- impact on service (e.g. developing and implementing a new service)
- impact on others (e.g. teaching).

Demonstration of impact enables any claimed time-based credits to be doubled.

A full guide to the RCGP credits system is available at http://www.rcgp.org.uk/professional_development/continuing_professional_dev/cpd_credits_scheme.aspx

Reflection on the outcomes and impact of developmental activity is an important part of CPD. While time spent accumulating knowledge is an important part of all doctors’ lifelong development, the real measurement of progress is the effect on their practice and care of patients. Impact-scoring is designed to support this approach. The Revalidation ePortfolio contains reflective templates (based on guidance from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges) to support documentation of reflection – these are described more fully under area 6 on pp. 24–9.
Summary of the Appraisal process using the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio

Please see the ‘quick start’ guides for flow diagrams showing the steps required. The key features are as follows:

1. The date of appraisal shown on the Revalidation ePortfolio is initially entered by the GP’s PCO and can be edited by the Appraiser. The date will default to 31 March 20xx until entered by the Appraiser or PCO.

If an appraisal has not been completed by the time it is due (for a 2011/12 appraisal this will be 31 March 2012) the user will enter the ‘Grace Period’. This is a period of time within which an appraisal can still be completed for the appraisal year which has ended. Once the grace period expires any open appraisals will be automatically closed and the information will be accessible via Area 4 (Previous Appraisal Documents). Users will be made aware of the grace period by a message at the top of the Dashboard.

During Appraisal preparation the GP should review dashboard areas 1–12 and check he or she has made entries in all fields appropriate for the current year’s Appraisal. As discussed elsewhere in this guide, requirements may change from year to year or between PCOs.
2. The **short cuts** on the page after log-in are intended to assist the Appraisee in quickly moving to the key entry areas (see screen shot below). These include **CPD** (shortcut 2) and **Personal Development Plan** (PDP, shortcut 3).

![Short Cuts Table]

3. Via shortcut 3, or Area 5 of the Dashboard, PDP items can be uploaded to the ‘Current PDP’ (active items agreed at your previous appraisal) or to ‘Next Year’s PDP’. There is also an option to upload a previous PDP in a PDF or Word document file format in Area 4 of the dashboard (Previous Appraisal Documents).

![Personal Development Plan]

4. CPD entries must be ‘**marked for Appraisal**’ within the template (see pp. 28–9) if they are to be included in the appraisal discussion. Please note that, once marked, they can be seen by the Appraiser even if the appraisal documentation is not yet submitted.
5. **Short cut 4** takes the user to the **dashboard** (see pp. 4–6) and **short cut 5** to his or her **CPD 9-point grid** (see pp. 6-7), to assist the Appraisee in reviewing overall progress.

6. Once the appraisal documentation is complete, the **Appraisee must ‘submit’** (this is explained in more details in section 4, p. 35).

7. The **Appraiser should review the Revalidation ePortfolio prior to the appraisal meeting** to ensure sufficient documentation is present for the appraisal process. The Appraiser may, if he or she wishes, add comments to items at any point (including before, during or after the appraisal meeting).

8. If during the appraisal discussion it is mutually agreed to **edit** an item (e.g. a credit score), the Appraisee can log in, **un-submit** and edit accordingly.

9. At the end of the appraisal process the Appraiser should review the 12 dashboard areas and ensure he or she has commented across the whole range of the Appraisee’s professional practice. **The Appraiser comment log forms part of an equivalent document to ‘form 4’ of the existing appraisal process.** There is a further summary (available to the Appraiser after clicking ‘Mark Appraisal as Satisfactory’, but before completing the Appraisal process) which provides an overview of the Appraiser’s comments.

Though it was anticipated that the comment log, combined with the appraisal summary, would form a ‘Form 4 equivalent’ a traditional Form 4 template has also been included for organisations who required this.
10. After Appraiser sign-off, the Appraisee is notified automatically by email and has an opportunity to add his or her own comments and complete a feedback questionnaire (see p. 37).

11. Once the Appraisee accepts the outcome of the appraisal, this locks the whole process and creates an appraisal summary document in PDF file format that moves automatically into area 4 of the dashboard.

12. Finally, both Appraiser and PCO receive an email stating the Appraisee has accepted the appraisal outcome, and the PCO receives a copy of the appraisal summary document which includes PDP, Appraiser comment log and Form 4.
How to use individual sections of the Revalidation ePortfolio

At the top of every page is the following summary of the user’s key dates of Appraisal:

The appraisal date is set by the PCO administrator. However, the Appraiser can log in to the system, select an Appraisee and re-schedule an appraisal. The Appraisee will receive an automated message stating that his or her appraisal date has been changed. If the date is not convenient, the Appraisee can contact his or her PCO.

Dashboard area 1 – Statement of Professional Roles

Area 1 is the place the Appraisee enters his or her qualifications and current posts / roles.
Click on each turquoise tab to turn it navy and add data. The ‘Additional Information’ tab is optional (use it if you have a particularly complex work situation or role to explain to your Appraiser).

Within the ‘Your Professional Roles’ template there is a place to specifically record out-of-hours work and to record extended and other roles.
Because the Revalidation ePortfolio is intended to be used throughout a GP’s career, the fields are very flexible. The dropdowns should be used to complete as many fields as are necessary for the Appraiser to understand each role, starting with the GP’s main role (the one taking up most of his or her professional time). Extended roles, which build upon the main role, can also be entered (e.g. GP with a Special Interest). These roles are paid positions that could not be undertaken without being employed in a substantive post.

‘Approved clinical environment’ refers to whether the post has a system of active clinical governance or not. Most NHS practice posts (with a PCO or salaried contract) will be in approved environments. Some posts have active performance review in conjunction with or in addition to a GP’s normal appraisal; if this is the case, select yes.

There is a facility, using this button \( \text{Add an attachment} \), to upload any document associated with performance review or any other aspect of the GP’s role.
Recording in- and out-of-hours work

Normal hours are 8.00 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. in most parts of the country. Some jobs may involve working both in and out of hours, or flexibly. Enter an ‘average’ week, bearing in mind this field is merely to assist the Appraiser in getting a picture of the Appraisee’s working week.

Dashboard area 2 – Exceptional circumstances

This is the place to record any exceptional circumstances that have prevented the GP documenting a full portfolio of supporting information. For example, maternity leave or sickness may have precluded working for a substantial part of the five-year cycle. Please see the RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners for more information about area 2.¹

**Area 2: Statement of Exceptional Circumstances (optional)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date From</th>
<th>Date To</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 September 2010</td>
<td>01 November 2010</td>
<td>maternity leave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dashboard area 3 – Form 3

In this area the Appraisee can complete a traditional Form 3 for their Appraiser and upload any previously completed Form 3s.
Dashboard area 4 – Form 4 and Previous Appraisal documentation

This is where the Appraiser can complete a traditional Form 4. It is also the storage area for previous Appraisal output documentation. The Appraisee’s latest form 4 (or equivalent) is the minimum upload required to turn the dashboard green, but more documentation can be added if wished.

To attach a document from an existing electronic toolkit such as form 3 or 4, first the user needs to download it to the computer on which he or she is working.

Users of the NHS Appraisal toolkit can select the ‘Reviewing Information’ tab on the left-hand menu, then ‘Appraisal Statement’. Click on ‘Preview’ (the document symbol with two yellow ticks) and a Word document will open – it can take a few seconds. This can then be saved to a folder or the desktop of the computer.

To attach the document to the Revalidation ePortfolio click on area 4, then ‘Add a past Appraisal’. Within the template, select ‘Browse’. Search for the document in the files of the computer being worked on, open it and click for the document to upload.

Form 4/Previous Appraisal Documents
For the ‘outcome’ dropdown, it is anticipated in nearly every case the ‘satisfactory’ option can be chosen. Only select ‘pending’ if you have not yet received notification from your PCO that your previous year’s appraisal is completed, or if you are going through a complaint or review process regarding its outcome.

**Dashboard area 5 – Your PDP**

If you click on area 5 you will see a screen with two tabs like this:
PDP items can be uploaded to the ‘Current PDP’ (active items agreed at your previous appraisal) or to ‘Next Year’s PDP’. There is also an option to upload a previous PDP in a PDF or Word document file format in Area 4 of the dashboard (Previous Appraisal Documents).

The template used for either type of entry look virtually the same, as follows:

The above template is for a ‘Current PDP’ item

**Anticipated and actual outcome**
The RCGP has developed the ‘normal’ PDP outcome field to allow the user to document both his and her anticipated (planned) and actual outcome. Actual outcome is what actually happened by the end of the ‘date to achieve goal’ stated. Every GP knows it is not always possible to finish every PDP item within the time anticipated. Reasons can be documented here, and if appropriate the item can be moved forward into next year’s PDP by the Appraiser using the ‘Appraiser actions’ shown below.

### PDP table

As PDP items are added via the template described above, a table is created with each item occupying one row. This will be a familiar format to previous users of the NHS Appraisal paperwork or toolkit.
It is important for the Appraisee to remember, before signing his or her pre-appraisal documentation, to comment on all agreed PDP items in the comments box. This allows the Appraiser to review progress and add his or her own comments at or after the appraisal meeting.

**Dashboard area 6 – Log of CPD (including credits)**

The heart of the Revalidation ePortfolio is the **CPD log**. It is best used in real time to record learning events. The log drives all the other applications.
Column 1, ‘Type’, refers to what type of CPD this is – the user is provided with a dropdown pick list to choose from when making an entry.

The ‘Credits’ column refers to the credits the Appraisee has self-scored. In essence 1 hour of education is 1 learning credit. However, if that education leads to changes for patients, the doctor or the practice, the GP can claim 2 learning credits for each hour of such education. To double their credits, the Appraisee must select the number 2 in the impact box and provide comment.
‘Included for appraisal?’ ticked indicates the entry has been marked for the Appraiser to view.

The ‘Actions’ column allows items to be edited and deleted by the Appraisee at any point up until the ePortfolio is submitted. The ePortfolio can be unsubmitted during the Appraisal discussion if items require editing.

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**Patient-identifiable information – important note**

The RCGP strongly advises users NOT to enter information that contains or leads to the identification of specific patients. This is a potential breach of GMP guidance.

*For example, if attaching documents such as complaints:*

- remove identifiers such as name, address and date of birth
- consider removing other identifiers such as rare diagnoses/drugs or distinctive family/social history data.

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**Adding a new entry to the CPD log**

By clicking ‘add new CPD item’ the following template appears:
Clicking on the ‘Type’ produces a dropdown list of different types of CPD activities to help speed up data entry.

‘Description’ is a field to enter a brief description and reflection on your learning. Further comments can be added in ‘Impact comment’ area but this field is to comment on the credit score selected. CPD credit scoring is explained above (p. 7).

In blue you will see three optional links: GMP attributes demonstrated (optional); RCGP curriculum coverage demonstrated (optional); record reflections.
**Linking CPD to PDP items**

When editing, or adding, CPD items they can be linked to PDP items from the ‘Linkage to PDP’ tab. These links will be shown from the PDP item, but can only be created or broken from the CPD item.
Recording reflections

It is important to record as many reflections as you can. By clicking on the tab a new template opens to allow the user to structure his or her thoughts in a format suggested by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

Completing the template will provide the Appraiser with an insight into the relevance of the learning done.
Supporting Information

Within the supporting information tab Appraisees can upload attachments, record GMP attribute and RCGP curriculum coverage and also complete CPD 9 point grid information.

Clicking on the GMP attributes tab allows the user to demonstrate that learning covers at least one area of GMP.

GMP attributes are currently being piloted and their use in revalidation is subject to the outcome of these pilots. At present one substantive item of supporting information is required per attribute per revalidation period. The benchmark for ‘substantive’ is not yet defined. Therefore the attributes are shown here in the Revalidation ePortfolio to
allow users to get a feel for them, as opposed to Appraiser scoring. Further guidance will be added to the ePortfolio as it is known.

CPD entries can also be optionally linked to the RCGP curriculum areas. This will allow users to see the spread of their learning across the curriculum. This is optional, but takes little time; we suspect many GPs will find this facility useful to enable the identification of gaps in learning later on.
Each CPD entry can be selected to be included for appraisal or kept private. If they choose, Appraisees can ‘hold’ an item on their CPD log not included for appraisal and change their mind later. For example, if an Appraisee has done an audit that he or she is hoping to develop further, it can be brought into his or her appraisal discussion at a later date. This decision can be taken at any point until the appraisal sign-off. Appraisees should bear in mind that their Appraisers can view their portfolio at any stage and will only be able to view those items marked for appraisal.

Integration with RCGP Online Learning Environment

Any courses or sessions completed using the RCGP Online Learning Environment can be added to your CPD log. The ‘Retrieve RCGP eLearning’ button will take you to a new page called 'OLE upload page' which will contain a list of completed courses or sessions.
Selecting the courses or sessions and importing them will add them as RCGP e-Learning CPD items in your CPD log, which can be marked for appraisal.

**Appraiser CPD review tools**
At the bottom of the CPD entry template is a field where the Appraiser should comment on the quality of the entry and the number of credits claimed.

**CPD analysis – interrogating the CPD log**

On the learning credit table (shown above) any column can be sorted by clicking on the relevant column title. This then sorts alphabetically (for non-numerical entries) or numerically, e.g. by date order. Furthermore, a term can be entered in the search box
such as ‘teaching’ and all entries of this type will move to the top of the list. This also works for keywords, e.g. if ‘diabetes’ is put in the search box, only entries with diabetes in the title fields will be shown. The software has been designed to provide maximum functionality to enhance the appraisal discussion by focusing on any particular part of the CPD log that users wish to scrutinise. The College is confident that GPs will find this unique feature very helpful in ensuring that their appraisal discussion remains formative and not merely a ‘tick box’ exercise.

The Revalidation ePortfolio also provides an analysis of the type of supporting information mapped to each area of GMP. The GMP table can be accessed via a link at the bottom of the dashboard. Users can click on each row (such as ‘maintain your professional performance’) to see a breakdown of the evidence provided.

Similarly, if the Appraisee has linked his or her CPD to the curriculum, the Appraiser can click on the area title in the curriculum table (also via a link under the dashboard) to bring up a list of the entries linked to this.
**Dashboard area 7 – Colleague feedback (MSF)**

This area of the dashboard displays any MSF data uploaded. The Appraisee will be asked to complete the usual CPD template, to allow him or her to add CPD credits and reflections, and link to GMP and curriculum coverage if wished. There are also fields for the Appraisee to enter information specifically about this area. **Appraisees who have not yet participated in MSF (like most GPs) are still encouraged by the RCGP to document any other supporting information and reflections they can provide on relationships with colleagues, to fulfil the requirements of appraisal.**

If the Appraisee has received feedback on his or her MSF from another person or organisation (such as a commercial MSF analysis provider) this can be uploaded in the ‘supporting information’ section.

**Dashboard area 8 – Patient feedback (PSQ)**

This area of the dashboard displays any patient feedback data uploaded. As for MSF, the Appraisee will be asked to complete the usual CPD template and provide information relating specifically to this area. **Appraisees who cannot yet provide patient survey data are still encouraged by the RCGP to document any other supporting information and reflections they can provide on relationships with patients, to fulfil the requirements of Appraisal.**
Dashboard area 9 – Complaints / Cause for Concern / Positive Feedback

It is important that any formal complaints are discussed at Appraisal, as part of the formative learning process. To neglect to include them would be a serious probity issue. Relevant documentation should therefore appear within the Appraisee’s Revalidation ePortfolio. It is important that any documentation (including attachments) is anonymised, both to protect patient confidentiality and for data protection (see box on p. 21).

The Appraisee should attach sufficient information about any complaint for the Appraiser to understand it fully. Use the template to record the following:

1. Is the complaint resolved or ongoing?
2. If ongoing, are other bodies (such as the PCO or the GMC) involved?
3. What steps have been taken to deal with the complaint?
4. What response has the Appraisee had from the complainant?
5. What other information can be provided to reassure the Appraiser that the issue will not be recurrent?

It is advisable for all Appraisees to use the ‘comments’ box to declare the fact they have submitted all formal complaints from the year (or if none, to state this). Please refer to the RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners for guidance on complaints and Revalidation.¹

It is also possible to record any positive feedback from patients (or colleagues) in this area. There are specific templates for Complaints, Cause for Concern and Positive Feedback. The Appraisee should therefore ensure that they select the correct tab before they enter information.
**Dashboard area 10 – Significant Event Analysis**

The template for significant event analysis facilitates addition of reflections in the GMP domains. Please refer to the *RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners* for further guidance on this area.¹

**Dashboard area 11 – Clinical Audits**

The template is designed to promote a structured account of the audit to reflect good practice.
Please refer to the RCGP Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners for further guidance on this area.¹
Dashboard area 12 – Declarations of probity, health and insurance

For the purposes of revalidation, Appraisees will be required to sign the declarations listed that confirm basic information about their professional status. Failure to comply with this may jeopardise their revalidation and continuing licence to practise. These declarations are required by the GMC. Users will need to accept these annually, for each appraisal.

As with certain other aspects of the RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio, prior to the formal commencement of revalidation these declarations are technically optional. Also, their actual content is still subject to pilots and refinement. However, it is already part of the existing appraisal process for Appraisees to discuss these topics with their Appraiser. Users of the ePortfolio are encouraged to document reflections and / or attachments regarding probity and health via their CPD log, perhaps using the ‘professional conversation’ heading. This will allow the Appraiser to add comments, which will enter the comment log to form a record of the discussion. It is also possible to upload
the Leicester statement template to focus the conversation. These can be accessed using the following link:


For further information regarding the GMC’s guidance on your Declaration of Fitness to Practise please click here.
You may also wish to view the GMC’s Good Medical Practice guidance sections for Probity and Health.
Completing the Appraisal Process

Appraisee submits Appraisal

When the Appraisee has completed recording his or her supporting information in areas 1–12 for the year, he or she should click the Submit Appraisal button at the bottom of the dashboard. Following this, it will not be possible to update the appraisal record, apart from area 5 – PDP. However, the Appraisee can ‘un-submit’ the appraisal if his or her Appraiser is not satisfied with the appraisal information. This action is possible as long as the Appraiser has not marked the appraisal as satisfactory. The Appraisee can resubmit his or her appraisal information for review at a later date.

It is the responsibility of the Appraisee to add PDP items for Appraiser review. By the end of the appraisal process the Appraisee and Appraiser need to have finalised the Appraisee’s new PDP. The Appraiser reviews each item and confirms them via the ‘Appraiser actions’ if he or she agrees for it to be included for the year indicated by the Appraisee. This process can take place before or during the appraisal meeting if the Appraisee has already prepared his or her entries. If not, it will need to take place after the appraisal meeting.

Appraiser completion of the appraisal process

At the very bottom of the Appraiser’s dashboard is a button, ‘Mark Appraisal as Satisfactory’, which takes him or her to a checklist (as shown here).
Once the Appraiser is happy that everything necessary is in place, he or she adds any final comments and then clicks ‘Complete Appraisal’.

**Appraisee accepts Appraisal outcome**

After the appraiser clicks ‘Complete Appraisal’, an automatic email is generated to the Appraisee telling him or her that the appraisal is finished. The Appraisee is asked to log in to the ePortfolio. After logging in, the system will allow him or her to review the appraisal summary report and accept the appraisal outcome. To accept the appraisal outcome, the Appraisee must complete the post-appraisal questionnaire, after which they click ‘Submit form’ and receive an acknowledgement message. The system will automatically generate and send a message to the Appraiser to notify him or her that
the Appraisee has accepted the appraisal outcome. The outcome summary report moves automatically to area 4 of the dashboard – previous appraisal documents.

Finally, both Appraiser and PCO get an email stating that the Appraisee has accepted the appraisal outcome, and the PCO receives a copy of the PDF summary document.
The future of the RCGP ePortfolio

Phase 2

Phase 2 will include advance functionality to manage Appraisers in line with the guidance of the Revalidation Support Team. There will be functions to upload Appraiser training and CPD. Appraisee questionnaire feedback scores will automatically enter the Appraiser management area, where mean scores compared with PCO mean will be available. There will be functions to provide outputs for reporting such as AQMAR or equivalent. Phase 2 will also include options for PCOs to upload clinical governance data into ePortfolios, for example the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QoF) or prescribing reports. The College anticipates it will remain at the discretion of the Appraisee as to whether such items are marked for Appraiser view.

Additionally, Phase 2 will introduce intra-operability between the Revalidation ePortfolio and the RCGP Online Learning Environment (OLE), meaning ePortfolio users will have the option of automatically updating their CPD log when they complete an OLE module.

Phase 3

Phase 3 in 2012/13 will include full functionality for the Responsible Officer to view whichever areas of the ePortfolio are deemed appropriate by the GMC and Revalidation Support Team (the RCGP currently anticipates the Responsible Officer will need access to the same fields as the Appraiser, in order to quality-assure the Appraisal process). In addition,
Phase 3 is also planned to include interaction with external bodies such as the GMC. At present the GMC has not announced what output it requires for revalidation, but the College is planning to integrate any template produced into this ePortfolio, so that GPs and PCOs using this tool will not have to do any further work to prepare reports for the GMC.

As stated elsewhere in this document, the RCGP will continue to monitor the outcome of ongoing revalidation pilots and new national guidance, and incorporate it into future ePortfolio releases in a timely way. User feedback is also a key part of our quality assurance process.
References, further reading and links

References


Further reading


Links

The Revalidation Support Team home page shows a number of key links and articles. The ‘resources’ tab goes to further links to all the main sites of interest. See www.revalidationsupport.nhs.uk/.
Appendix 1 – Background to the phase 1 release, including the pilot

The RCGP Revalidation ePortfolio was piloted on a range of GPs in five UK PCOs in 2009–10 and subsequently further refined in response to an external usability review.

The pilot Revalidation ePortfolio contained the principal functionality of the Phase 1 release product, and also some additional Appraiser Revalidation assessment functionality that has been excluded from the Phase 1 release (see Appendix 2).

Pilot response of Appraisees

The majority of Appraisees found the ePortfolio ‘fair’ or easy to get started with, which given the unfamiliar Revalidation language and format was considered a positive result. Uploading of CPD was also rated ‘fair’.

Positive comments were received which demonstrated that the ePortfolio was more productive than previous tools and that its use became faster as familiarity increased. The fact it was a dynamic document that could be used throughout the year was viewed positively, along with the traffic light system and curriculum section.

Various issues to be addressed were identified:

- to fix the system ‘bugs’ (including Appraiser not being able view Appraisee uploads and an issue with unexpected PDP deletions)
- to improve helpdesk and on-screen support
- to improve recording of CPD score decisions and domain scoring (link to evidence)
- to improve PDP functionality including editing.

One hundred per cent of Appraisees agreed that the ePortfolio would aid preparation for Revalidation and 91 per cent would use the ePortfolio again.

**Pilot response of Appraisers**

The largest Appraiser group rated both getting started with the ePortfolio and validating CPD as ‘fair’, as opposed to easy or hard. Given the newness of the structure of Revalidation this was an encouraging result for the RCGP, with the additional support being developed for post-pilot users expected to improve this further.

Various positive comments were received from Appraisers, including the fact that the ePortfolio helped the Appraiser make decisions.

Additional issues to address beyond those identified above were:

- training issues – the need for the Appraiser to see/learn the tool from the Appraisee perspective and to understand the new sign-off structure and how to maximise the formative aspects
- more scope for free text/comments
- allowing the Appraiser to alter credits
- allowing the Appraiser to ‘go back’ to view evidence during sign-off.

The large majority of Appraisers agreed the ePortfolio would assist in preparation for Revalidation and two-thirds would use the ePortfolio again. A third were not
convinced, but the Appraisers’ suggested changes were incorporated into the post-pilot review process.

**Post-pilot review**

In response to the pilot feedback and the usability review, extensive revisions were made to the ePortfolio, particularly the ‘flow’ of the tool, in order to improve the user experience. The College has also invested significant resources in submitting the revised tool to an extensive programme of testing for security and stability, and developing a comprehensive helpdesk resource.
Appendix 2 – Refocusing the Revalidation ePortfolio for standalone Appraisal, 2010–12

The Appraisal ‘arm’ of the Revalidation ePortfolio is structured for ‘Strengthened’ Appraisal. GPs and PCOs using the tool prior to the formal commencement of Revalidation do not necessarily intend to change their Appraisal approach or policy to adopt a summative approach immediately. Furthermore, aspects of the ePortfolio such as scoring of domains are still being piloted by the NHS Revalidation Support Team. Therefore, for Phase 1, the College has refocused the tool as follows:

- PDP as the key summative outcome (i.e. the same as for current Appraisal process)
- CPD credit scoring encouraged but not compulsory
- domains/attributes scoring optional
- Appraisers review supporting information in a structured way, but do not have to make formal decisions as to summative achievements
- health, probity and insurance declarations kept as optional (at Appraiser discretion)
- Appraiser sign-off declarations and attribute scoring dropped. Sign-off to simply consist of Appraiser confirming that he or she is satisfied with PDP outcome and CPD progress, and has agreed next year’s PDP. The Appraisal can be completed with areas of dashboard still red, if Appraiser is comfortable that progress is within the parameters appropriate for his or her PCO at that point in time.