



Professional Competence SCHEME

**Supporting
lifelong learning**



Irish College of
Ophthalmologists
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

PCS Key Points

Please consult the following guide if you require more information on these points

The Principles of Professional Competence mandate each individual doctor to:

- Record and document educational activities
- Balance areas of activity
- Ensure that professional competence activities relate to current practice

Each individual doctor shapes the learning process to suit their professional needs and are responsible for developing and implementing a **CPD plan**, based on their roles and responsibilities

Professional Competence has **two key components**:

(1) Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and (2) Clinical / Practice Audit

1 CPD credit = 1 full hour of educational activity

PCS requires **year-on-year compliance**. There is no mechanism to 'carry forward' credits or competence from year to year

Evidence of attendance at educational activities is required and should be uploaded to your **PCS Account** <https://pcs.rcsi.ie/>

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – **PCS Categories & Requirements**

A minimum of 50 CPD credits per annum, to be allocated as follows:

- External: 20 CPD credits per year
- Internal: 20 CPD credits per year
- Personal Learning: 5 CPD credits per year
- Research/Teaching: 2 CPD credits per year desirable

Remaining credits can be allocated across any of the PCS categories

Clinical Practice Audit: 1 per PCS year (minimum of 12 hours per annum)

The **Statement of Participation** summarises what you have recorded on your PCS Account and will indicate if you have had your Account validated and the outcome of the process

CPD activity is **monitored** in the form of two validation audits carried out by:

- The Medical Council
- Training Body (ICO)

Please visit the **ICO website** for the following:

- Guides and links to our members' portal for templates and resources
- ICO annual educational programme for doctors in training and doctors in practice
- Details of how to apply for CPD recognition for an event/activity
- Extenuating Circumstances: Mat/sick leave; Practicing overseas; Locum / part-time doctors; Retired doctors

<https://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/Professional-Competence-Scheme.asp>

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A MESSAGE FROM The Irish College of Ophthalmologists

Since May 1st 2011, all doctors who hold Specialist, General or Supervised registration with the Irish Medical Council, are legally obliged to maintain professional competence by enrolling in a Professional Competence Scheme (PCS) and meeting the requirements set by the Medical Council.

The schemes formalise the process of career-long learning and are operated by the postgraduate training bodies to facilitate professional practice which is centred on patient safety and quality patient care. The learning and career development activities which doctors must engage in reflect the eight domains of professional competence; Patient Safety and Quality of Patient Care; Relating to Patients; Communication and Interpersonal Skills; Collaboration and Teamwork; Management (including Self-Management); Scholarship; Professionalism; Clinical Skills.

The ICO is approved by the Medical Council to administer a PCS in line with the requirements of the Medical Practitioners Act. Participation in a PCS helps registered doctors to demonstrate that they are fulfilling their statutory duty and the ICO's scheme facilitates this process for medical and surgical eye specialists.

The principles of Professional Competence mandate each individual doctor to record and document educational activities; balance areas of activity and ensure that professional competence activities relate to current practice.

While CPD is the responsibility of the individual doctor, there is a need for the organised collection of evidence of appropriate activity and to facilitate these requirements ICO provides an online PCS Account. The system's primary aim is to support doctors in meeting the requirements and to reduce the burden of record keeping to a minimum.

The ICO aims to support our members in meeting their annual PCS requirements, and advocating on their behalf as the PCS evolves.

What is the Professional Competence Scheme?

The PCS is an evidence-informed education initiative that encourages and supports the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities of participants.

If you are on the Irish Medical Council Register and practice for more than 30 days in Ireland you are required to enrol on a Professional Competence Scheme, engage in CPD activity to meet the minimum requirements set by the Medical Council, record and retain documentation relating to CPD activities attended and maintain enrolment on a PCS by paying your annual enrolment fee.

As a PCS participant, you shape the learning process to suit your professional requirements. You are responsible for developing and implementing your personal CPD plan, relevant to your roles and responsibilities.

How the Professional Competence Scheme works

Professional Competence has been defined by the Medical Council as having two key components:

- Continuing Professional Development (CPD); and,
- Clinical / Practice Audit

CPD is measured in hours with each full hour of educational activity equalling one CPD credit.

Practitioners must accumulate 50 CPD credits on an annual basis and one clinical / practice audit per year. The 50 CPD credits are divided across four learning categories (see Framework on page 4).

Professional Competence Scheme require year-on-year compliance. There is no professional competence 'cycle' and no mechanism to 'carry forward' credits or competence from year to year.

You are responsible for choosing your own professional development goals and identifying and participating in appropriate activities which should be relevant to your practice, and support current skills and knowledge or career development. It is also your responsibility to record activity, document the learning achieved and upload or retain evidence that you have completed the activity.

Evidence of attendance at educational activities is required and should be uploaded into your PCS Account or a hard copy kept on file. If you are selected by ICO for a validation audit, you will be required to produce this documentation. Records and evidence should be kept for six years.

The Professional Competence Scheme Year

The scheme year runs from May 1 to April 30. Statements of Participation are issued on a yearly basis and are available in May each year. The Statement will reflect what you have recorded on your PCS Account. The Medical Council may ask you for evidence of participation in a Professional Competence Scheme and your Annual Statement of Participation is appropriate evidence for this purpose.



Framework for Professional Competence

The framework for professional competence aims to incorporate various types of learning.

CPD is measured in hours. 1 hour of educational activity = 1 CPD credit
 50 CPD credits minimum per annum must be accumulated in four categories
 1 Clinical (Practice) Audit must be completed with a minimum of 12 hrs per annum

The table below summarises the learning sections under the PCS framework:

Category	Minimum Requirement
EXTERNAL	20 CPD credits per year
INTERNAL	20 CPD credits per year
PERSONAL LEARNING	5 CPD credits per year
RESEARCH OR TEACHING	2 CPD credits per year desirable

The remaining minimum credits can be allocated across the remaining PCS categories

CLINICAL PRACTICE AUDIT

If your Clinical Practice Audit spans over two PCS years, record it in the year you completed majority of work

**1 audit
(minimum of 12 hours
per annum)**

Examples of CPD Activities & Evidence by Category

This list is a guide and is not intended to be exhaustive.

EXTERNAL – Maintenance of Knowledge & Skills (20 CPD credits pa)

Events/activities accredited by Training Bodies that meet educational standards

ACTIVITY	EVIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International/National Meetings • Courses accredited by Training Body • College/Society meeting • Conference • Medically related advanced degree • Examination • Lecture • Seminar • Webinar • Workshop • Certain Online Courses (should contain some type of learner interaction or self-assessment; learning objectives are communicated; access to appropriate bibliographic sources that allow for further study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Attendance at course / meeting / events • Activities attended should be recognised by a PGTB or other reputable organisation and will have CPD credits awarded • For activities outside Ireland, credits can be calculated by the no. of educational hours you attended – 1 hour equals 1 credit. A cert of attendance is required also • Medically related advanced degrees - copy of diploma or final transcript

INTERNAL – Practice Evaluation & Development (20 CPD credits per annum)

Activities that develop and improve the quality of clinical practice

ACTIVITY	EVIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morbidity and Mortality Meetings • Clinical Risk Meetings • Case Presentations • Clinical Case Discussion • Chart Reviews • Grand Rounds • Multi-disciplinary Meetings • Peer Review Groups • Annual Plan and Annual Plan Reflection • Quality improvement process • Clinical club: club with colleagues for regular clinical case discussions • Committee participation • Locum handover: discussing patient cases, files & updates on the practice • Patient survey • An implemented change to practice as a result of learning taken from a meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICO Template for Single Internal Meeting • ICO Log for Cumulative Internal Meetings • Memo or Certificate from hospital management confirming attendance at Internal activities outlining the number of hours attended • Letter from hospital, hospital department/unit or medical organisation listing the activities participated in and the number of hours attended • Copy of Annual Plan and Annual Plan Reflection • Copy of Patient Survey template • ICO Template for Clinical Club • Change/Improvement Process Summary

PERSONAL LEARNING (5 CPD credits pa)*Self-directed education, e.g. Journal reading*

ACTIVITY	EVIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed education, training or assessment activities (e.g. Journal reading) • Participation in professional development workshops/courses • Volunteer or outreach activities • Learning diary • E-learning • Online search • Personal reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICO Log for Personal Learning Activities • ICO Template for Online Journal Club • Journal Reading document which details the Journals you have read and ideally list the dates and titles of articles • For online learning, details of the website and relevant links as well as any key points in the activity description box

RESEARCH OR TEACHING (desirable 2 CPD credits pa)*Postgraduate and Undergraduate Teaching, Courses, Research projects, either laboratory or clinical*

ACTIVITY	EVIDENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited Postgraduate Trainer • Lecturer • Examiner for Undergraduate/ Postgraduate students. • Publishing articles • Poster Presentation • Question setting • Research • Programme Director • Educational Supervisor • Accreditation visit • Article publication • National standards development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate Trainer / Examiner / question setting - confirmed by the Postgraduate Training body. • Date of lecture / name of lecture • Poster presentation - copy of page from conference proceedings that lists the poster abstract and identifies the presenter • Summary of the research work and/or copy of published article's title page

Clinical/Practice Audit (1 per annum)

Clinical Practice Audit is a mandatory element of the Professional Competence Scheme for all Surgeons/Medical Practitioners following the introduction of Part 11 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 on May 1, 2011. The purpose of clinical/practice audit is to establish if best practice is being adhered to for quality assurance and improvement purposes.

Guidelines for Clinical/Practice Audit:

- Stage 1: Identify the topic for the clinical audit**
- Stage 2: Select the relevant audit standards**
- Stage 3: Draft a written protocol**
- Stage 4: Carry out the data collection**
- Stage 5: Compare your data against the selected audit standard**
- Stage 6: Identify the changes that you need to make to achieve the standard**
- Stage 7: Re-audit to complete cycle**
- Stage 8: Audit must be signed / verified by a consultant supervisor, clinical director or other clinician other than the registrant.**

The audit should be relevant to scope of practice and the methodology must be adapted to those who are not in routine clinical practice. Audits should include qualitative and quantitative measurements of activity. Where there are no known or available standards, data can be compared to historical records over time. This data should be subject to peer review.

The Medical Council provide useful video resources for Clinical/Practice Audit guidance: <https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/News-and-Publications/Videos/Clinical-Audit-Guides/Clinical-Audit-Guides.html>

Clinical/Practice Audit & GDPR

The National Office of Clinical Audit (NOCA) has published guidance on GDPR legislation and its impact on clinical audit. The guidance clearly states “there is nothing in the legislation that prevents clinical audit being carried out locally or nationally.” The NOCA guidance provides clear practical steps to ensure compliance with GDPR when carrying out clinical audit.

Health data is defined under the GDPR as special category data, and can be processed in situations where it is necessary in the area of public health e.g. ensuring high standards of quality and safety of healthcare.

Medical practitioners (and their employers) are not required to seek consent before processing special category data for the purposes of clinical/practice audit. However, they should ensure that comprehensive privacy notices are provided to their patients e.g. via a patient information leaflet or a privacy statement.

If the data in your audit can no longer be linked back to any identifiable individual; it is considered anonymised data, not personal data and is not subject to the GDPR.

The NOCA guidance document is available at the following link: <https://bit.ly/320tZgk>

The Medical Council also guidance relating to the Clinical/Practice Audit and GDPR: <https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Existing-Registrants-/Professional-Competence/Guidelines-on-the-implications-of-GDPR-on-Clinical-Practice-Audit.html>

Using the PCS Account

ICO is using the PCS Account developed by the RCSI. This is a web-based application to allow users to easily record their professional competence activity: <https://pcs.rcsi.ie/>.

Once enrolled on the ICO Professional Competence Scheme, practitioners will get access to the PCS Account, and you can view the dashboard at any time by logging into PCS on a PC, tablet or mobile device.

Evidence of attendance at educational activities is required and should be uploaded into your PCS Account or a hard copy kept on file should they be required for validation audit purposes. You are encouraged to keep you CPD activity records up-to-date.

Key Features of the PCS Account

An overview of activity uploaded with a 'traffic-light' colour coding system that shows progress

- with the mandatory requirements per year;
- the facility to add records
- the facility to view records
- the facility to upload supporting documentation
- the facility to clone/copy record

Comprehensive help with the PCS Account is available through the PCS Account Guide on the ICO website: <https://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/Professional-Competence-Scheme.asp>

There are also video tutorials available at www.rcsi.ie/pcs.

Summary View Records Add Record

From 01/05/2019 To 30/04/2020

Term	External (20.0 min)	Internal (20.0 min)	Personal Learning (5.0 min)	Research or Training	Total (50 min)	Clinical Audit	Credits on Target	Verification Status		
2019-2020	0	0	0	0	0	No	No	Unverified	View Activities	View Documents

Legend

On target with credits
 Require more credits to reach minimum requirement
 Below target

PCS Account Mobile App

ICO-RCSI now provides direct access to the PCS Account using a smartphone. You can log in to your PCS Account on your smartphone and the mobile adapted version will open, enabling you to view your details and upload activities.



Statement of Participation

The Statement of Participation is a key document which summarises what you have recorded on your PCS Account and will indicate if you have had your Account verified and the outcome of the process. It will also indicate if you have reported an absence from practice of three or more months during the professional competence scheme year. You can access your statement when logged into your PCS Account and it is available to download at any time, printed or saved to your desktop/PC. The Medical Council may ask you for evidence of participation in a Professional Competence Scheme and your Annual Statement of Participation is appropriate evidence for this purpose.

ICO Supports & Templates

The ICO has developed Guides and Templates both to aid understanding of the PCS requirements and to reduce the administrative burden of having to create documents to evidence activity. Please refer to these at the start of the PCS year as they may answer any questions you have or help you plan for the year ahead.

These resources are available via the ICO Members Online Portal:

<https://ico.wildapricot.org/>

For more information please visit the PCS page on the ICO website:

<https://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/Professional-Competence-Scheme.asp>

It is also important to note the PCS Account Guide on the ICO website as you will be using the PCS Account throughout the year.

Continuing Professional Development - Support Scheme (CPD-SS)

The HSE provides the Continuing Professional Development - Support Scheme (CPD-SS) for Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs), working in the public health service, who are not on a formal training programme or who are not on the specialist register, to help them pay for attending activities that accrue External CPD points. The scheme only provides for educational/training activities undertaken in any of the Irish Training Bodies.

This is the entry criteria for the scheme:

- You are not enrolled in an intern training programme or on a postgraduate specialist training programme such as BST or HST
- You are enrolled on a Professional Competence Scheme applicable to your specialty
- You have paid your Professional Competence Scheme subscription
- You hold a current NCHD contract
- You are working in the public health service
- You are on the General or Supervised Division of the Register of Medical Practitioners maintained by the Medical Council

Once enrolled on the CPD-SS, NCHDs will be able to access training and educational activities in the External CPD category and the fees for attendance are covered by the HSE via the training body.

The CPD-SS applies only to activities attended/participated in the External CPD category which has a minimum requirement of 20 CPD credits per year. Please consult the PCS

Requirements section of this website for information about your requirements for Clinical/Practice Audit and the other CPD categories: Internal, Personal Learning, Research and Training.

The CPD-SS Application Form is available for download on the ICO website. More information is available on the HSE website [Guidance Document on Continuous Professional Development - Support Scheme \(CPD-SS\) for NCHDs](#)

Calendar of Approved Events

The ICO runs an annual educational programme for doctors in training and doctors in practice. These events are accredited for CPD points as appropriate. Details of forthcoming meetings are available on the ICO website www.eyedoctors.ie and members of ICO are informed via the Members Online Portal: <https://ico.wildapricot.org/>

Meetings and events organised independently of the ICO may also be recognised for CPD points by the College. Further details on this process is available on the PCS page of the ICO website: <https://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/Professional-Competence-Scheme.asp>

Please note the PCS meetings and events accredited by the other Postgraduate Training Bodies will also be recognised by the ICO.

What processes are in place to Monitor CPD Activity?

Medical Council Audit

The Medical Council will undertake an annual audit of a random sample of participants. You will receive advice from the Medical Council if you have been selected for an audit. In the first instance, the Medical Council will request a copy of your annual statement of participation.

Postgraduate Training Body Annual Validation Process

The ICO is required by the Medical Council to carry out an annual validation of activities recorded by doctors participating in a Professional Competence Scheme. Every year a random group of enrolled doctors is selected for validation. The PCS Account record of selected doctors is reviewed to check if they are meeting the minimum requirements of the Scheme. The evidence uploaded to support the activities recorded is also reviewed.

If selected you will receive notification from ICO that you have been selected for validation of your CPD activities, and advice and support to guide you through the process.

This is a supportive exercise intended to promote confidence in what practitioners are recording, identify best practices in maintaining competence, identify shortfalls in meeting the Professional Competence Scheme requirements and provide support to assist practitioners in addressing these shortfalls.

Following an Audit, the compliant doctor will not be re-audited for the next three years, and then only validated if randomly selected. A doctor who receives the result "Non-Compliant" will be automatically included in the following year's validation process and will be provided with ongoing support. Repeated /recurring "non-compliant" results will be reported to the Medical Council.

Extenuating Circumstances

Maternity leave/sick leave

You should inform the ICO if you are (or have been) absent from practice for 3 months or more during the professional competence year (which runs from 1st May – 30th April). The absence will be recorded on your PCS Account and an annotation will appear against the relevant year on your Statement of Participation. Where possible, you should try and maintain some engagement in maintenance of your professional competence during your absence from practice.

Doctors practicing overseas

If you chose to maintain your registration with the Medical Council while practicing in another country for more than one year, and there is a similar scheme in the country where you are practicing, the Medical Council may accept this as meeting your requirements and you may not need to register for PCS in Ireland. Please confirm the details directly with the Medical Council. Further information is available on the Medical Council's website: <https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/Existing-Registrants-/Professional-Competence/Overseas-Doctors/New-Professional-Competence-Requirements-for-Overseas-Doctors.html>

Engaging in CPD activities while in another country can be recognised by the ICO, while you avail of our scheme's facility for recording and managing activities. Ensure you keep records of your activities while away and upload the supporting evidence to your PCS Account.

You can choose to withdraw from the Medical Council's register and seek to restore it on your return to Ireland.

Locum / part-time doctors

There are no special exemptions or derogations for doctors working less than full-time. Once registered, you are required to maintain your professional competence and enrol in the relevant scheme to record 50 CPD credits as well as a clinical audit on an annual basis.

Retired doctors

Retired doctors who wish to maintain their registration with the Medical Council must maintain and enrol in the professional competence scheme. There are no derogations from the requirement to record 50 CPD credits as well as a clinical audit on an annual basis for doctors who are retired.

Doctors Completing or Temporarily Withdrawing from a Training Scheme

Trainees who have Trainee Specialist Registration with the Medical Council are exempted from enrolling in a PCS as you will already be keeping your knowledge and skills up to date via your training. If your registration changes from the Trainee Specialist Division to the Specialist or General Register then you will be required to enrol in a PCS.

CPD Recognition:

Applying for External CPD Approval of Events Recognition of Educational Events for External Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Details of how to apply for CPD recognition are available on the PCS page of the ICO website: <https://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/Professional-Competence-Scheme.asp>

Governance of Professional Competence Scheme

The Council of the ICO is responsible for the maintenance and development of the ICO's Professional Competence Scheme. It also provides resources and administrative means to support the day to day operation and improvement of the PCS. The ICO participates in the Forum for Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies which aims to enhance the effectiveness of the postgraduate training bodies in maintaining the highest standards in Medical Education and Training. The ICO is represented on the Forum's PCS Subcommittee which specifically reviews and discusses all relevant matters relating to professional competence.

Fee to Enrol on a Professional Competence Scheme

There is an annual fee approved by the Medical Council. The professional competence scheme is being run on a not-for-profit basis.

Members of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists pay a reduced fee for access to the ICO PCS.

Confidentiality

ICO is required to provide the Medical Council with data and analysis relating to the operation of the Professional Competence Scheme. All data held by the ICO will be in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2003.

Complaints & Appeals

If you have a complaint relating to Professional Competence, you should submit this complaint in writing to the ICO. The complaint will be considered and brought to the attention of the President and the Honorary Secretary.

If you wish to appeal a decision relating to Professional Competence, you should submit this in writing to the Chair of the ICO Scientific & Professional Development Committee, who will if necessary, bring your appeal to the Committee. The matter may, if deemed necessary be referred further to the Council. We will endeavour to resolve your complaint / appeal within a short timeframe as possible.