

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for registered veterinary surgeons in Malta

The **Veterinary Surgeons' Council (VSC) Code of Professional Conduct** makes it clear that veterinary surgeons have the responsibility to ensure that they maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence. The **Code of Professional Conduct** also requires veterinary surgeons to provide the VSC with their CPD records. CPD is a personal obligation of all responsible veterinary surgeons and should be seen as the continuous progression of capability and competence.

Continuous Professional Development is "the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the Registered Veterinary Surgeons' working life."

The recommended **minimum** CPD is **105 hours over a rolling three year period** with an average of 35 hours per year. It is appreciated that most veterinary surgeons will do considerably more than this. It is also recommended that at least 50% of these hours would be carried out in his/her relevant occupational sector. The remaining 50% can be carried in any other area within the veterinary profession.

The VSC requires all Registered Veterinary Surgeons to maintain their competence and should be seeking to make continuous improvements to the standard of service they provide to their patients and clients.

The VSC requires all Registered Veterinary Surgeons to engage in CPD to ensure the maintenance of the highest professional standards both in the private and public sector.

In line with Annex I, Section III, Chapter 5 of Regulation 854/2004, all Veterinary Surgeons working as official veterinarians are to maintain up-to-date knowledge and to keep abreast of new developments through regular continuing education activities and professional literature. The official veterinarian is, wherever possible, to undertake annual continuing education activities.

What counts as CPD

Any activities undertaken in order to further the professional competence as part of a planned development programme can be counted towards CPD.

- Ad hoc, undocumented private study (up to 5 hours per year)
- Clinical audit activity (up to 5 hours per year)
- Discussion group - informal documented learning set (up to 10 hours per year)

- Distance learning – on-line/ formal (assessed and/or moderated by a third party) (uncapped)
- Distance learning – on-line/informal (not assessed) (up to 10 hours per year)
- Distance learning – webinars (up to 20 hours per year)
- Lecture by external provider (up to 35 hours per year)
- Mentoring (up to 10 hours per year)
- Practical training – clinical skills/lab (up to 10 hours per year)
- Practical training – wet lab (up to 10 hours per year)
- Preparing a new lecture/presentation for veterinarians and or related professionals (up to 10 hours per year)
- Preparing a new lecture/presentation for the general public(up to 5 hours per year)
- Project – working on a new project/in a new area of work (up to 5 hours per year)
- Reading – planned and documented private study/reading (up to 10 hours per year)
- Research – clinical (up to 10 hours per year)
- Research – scientific (up to 10 hours per year)
- Research – veterinary management (up to 10 hours per year)
- Secondment to another work place documented(up to 15 hours per year)
- ‘Seeing practice’ – work-based observation (up to 5 hours per year) (uncapped if documented and certified by an institution or higher qualified professional)
- Seminar/workshop – external delivered by a non veterinarian (up to 5 hours per year)
- Studying for a post graduate qualification (uncapped)
- Training – documented received in house (up to 10 hours per year)
- Training as examiner/assessor/inspector (up to 15 hours per year)

Workplace activities such as case conferences could also count as CPD activity if outcomes are systematically recorded by the candidate to reflect on what has been learnt.

Private, **documented**, self-directed learning such as keeping up to date with relevant veterinary journals can be incorporated into CPD plans and it is good practice to keep a personal record of such activities, perhaps in the form of a learning diary. Undocumented private studies can only account for up to five hours per year towards CPD.

There are increasing opportunities to take part in online assessment, and other distance learning involving online tutors and learning groups. There is a maximum restriction on the number of hours of online assessment or mediated distance learning that can count towards CPD. Notes should be kept of all such activities so as to account for what has been learnt.

One may choose to work towards a qualification. Achieving a qualification will provide ample evidence of engagement in CPD activities. On the CPD Record a summarised note of any courses attended should be included, secondment experience, and time spent putting together case logs/reports should also be included. A separate file should be kept

for more detailed notes of learning where more information about the studies undertaken including personal observations and reflections on what has been learnt.

It is the responsibility of each Registered Veterinary Surgeon to keep a record of learning plans and activities, and to keep documented evidence of participation in courses and other activities.

Undertaking CPD is not just about attending courses – it is about continuing the professional learning in whatever way best helps to maintain the competence and to improve the professional service provided.

Submitting the CPD Records

A personal file with any certificates of attendance, learning diaries, CPD plans, assessment results, or other documents that serve as evidence of involvement in CPD should be kept.

Registered Veterinary Surgeons are to send in their CPD Record to the VSC every year including nil reports by not later than the end of each calendar year. A VSC subcommittee on CPD will evaluate the data received. The Registrar has the duty to record data received and shall pass them to the subcommittee. Although some CPD courses and activities may accrue 'points' values, Registered Veterinary Surgeons are asked to record details of their CPD in terms of hours completed.

The VSC may inspect CPD records for all Registered Veterinary Surgeons when it undertakes its statutory visits to any veterinary establishment. The VSC may at times undertake random sampling of the detailed CPD Records in order to monitor CPD participation so Registered Veterinary Surgeons can therefore be invited to submit their Records at any time. CPD records must be requested from Registered Veterinary Surgeons who are subject to investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

CPD is mandatory to all Registered Veterinary Surgeons listed on the VSC Register

The *Code of Professional Conduct* states that veterinary surgeons must maintain and develop their knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence

Non-practicing Veterinarians

Veterinarians that are on the Register as practicing veterinary surgeons must fulfil their CPD obligations, regardless of how many hours they work. Registered Veterinary Surgeons that notify the Council in writing that they will be taking a non-practicing period will not be required to submit proof that they acquired CPD hours. However they must acquire 105 CPD hours within the year before returning to work.

Registered Maltese and foreign veterinarians regardless of whether they are practicing overseas or in Malta are expected to comply with the minimum CPD requirement of 105 hours over three years if they are listed on the VSC Register as a Registered Veterinary Surgeon.