

Information sessions assemble people to share information on a particular topic and/or consult stakeholders on new policy, procedures or guidelines to improve professional standards and practice with a minimum duration of one hour and a maximum of three hours.

The CPD points in Table 2 reflect the range of points that the CPD Approval Panel may allocate based on the abovementioned criteria.

TABLE 2
CPD POINTS FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES

CPD Group Activity	Range of points
Workshop Maximum 5 days	2-5 per day
Small group discussion Minimum: 1 hour Maximum: 2 hours	2 per hour 1 Hour: 2 points 2 Hours: 4 points
Conferences	2-4 per day
Information sessions Minimum: 1 hour Maximum: 2 hours	1.5 per hour 1 Hour: 1.5 points 2 Hours: 3 points

Individual activities

Individual activities refer to activities where a person is involved on an individual basis in an activity and the onus lies entirely on the individual to convince the Approval Panel of the relevance of the activity for CPD points. No external CPD accredited provider is involved. Individual activities include self-study, formal learning programmes, external examination, short learning programmes, paper presentations, research, authorships, peer reviews, policy analysis, membership and personal wellness. CPD activities of other professions may be recognised for points. The onus is on the registered person to prove the relevance of the activity for CPD points. The CPD Approval Panel reserves the right not to allocate points.

Individual activities are defined as follows:

Self-study of scientific articles and books which require reflection on scientific articles/books either according to a questionnaire in the particular journal (if available) or a guideline of the SACSSP.

Formal learning programme includes a whole qualification on any relevant topic related to the working environment with proof of registration, progress and successful completion of a whole qualification. For studies towards a master’s qualification, points will be allocated for a maximum of three years, and towards a doctoral programme for five years. For a postgraduate diploma points will be allocated for a maximum of two years. Additional points will be allocated on successful completion of a qualification.

External examination refers to practitioners assessing postgraduate studies.

Short learning programmes refers to all short programmes, whether credits are awarded or not, and are inclusive of credit-bearing skills programmes and non-credit-bearing short courses.

Two short learning programmes are distinguished:

- A *short course* is a type of short learning programme through which a learner does not receive credits towards a formal qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);

- A *skills programme* is occupationally based and when completed will accumulate credits towards a qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Paper presentations include a written paper presented in a plenary or breakaway session, guest lecturer at a higher education institution, introductory presentation in a panel session, poster presentation, web-based presentation or video production. Paper presentations include the preparation, presentation and facilitation of a discussion.

Research refers to an investigation by one or more persons into a particular field or area of practice to obtain facts that will inform practice and improve service delivery, and which culminated in best practice models and/or publications (individual activity).

Authorship entails publications in books, in scientific or practice journals, authored as a sole author, a co-author, editor or contributor. It also includes training manuals and protocols.

Peer reviews involve commenting on the professional activities and work of colleagues upon formal request, including monographs, manuscripts and book reviews, amongst others.

Position paper/legislative and policy analyses entail responding in writing to policies and legislative issues reflecting a critical analysis in order to influence or shape policies and legislation.

Membership includes evidence of being a registered and active member of any international, national, regional or local organisation which protect and promote the professional interests of the profession and professionals. A maximum of two points per person will be allocated for membership.

Personal wellness refers to a structured programme that is considered by the CPD Approval Panel as contributing to the individual's ability to cope more effectively with the demands of the profession.

The requirements and points for individual CPD activities are indicated in Table 3.

**TABLE 3
 INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES**

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
Self-study - Scientific articles - SACSSP Newsletter - Books	Submission of completed questionnaire	1 1 5
Formal Learning Programme	Proof of registration and progress	10 per annum
	Proof of relevant whole qualification	10 on completion
External examination (Applies to practitioners)	Proof from HEI	MSW dissertation: 4 Doctoral thesis: 6
Paper presentations - Conference presenter - Plenary - Breakaway group	Written submission	8
		6

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
- Guest lecturer at higher tertiary institution	Written submission	6
- Panel session	With introductory presentation	4
	Without introductory presentation	2
- Poster	Visual presentation	4
- Web-based	Visual presentation	4
- Video production	Visual presentation	6
Research		
- Best practice model	Written submission	10
- Publication (see “authorship” points below)		
Short learning programme (Based on level, duration and relevance)	Proof of successful completion	
- Short course		5-20
- Skills programme		5-20
Authorship		
- Book [<i>On publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 30 Co-author: 15 Editor: 20 Contributor: 10
- Scientific Article [<i>on publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 10 Co-author(s): 5
- Professional/practice article [<i>on publication</i>]	Proof of publication	Sole author: 5 Co-author: 2.5
- Training manuals/ protocols	Independent peer review <i>or</i> employer’s report	Author: 10 Co-author: 5
Peer reviews		
- Manuscripts	Invitation and acknowledgment of task completed	2
- Research proposals		2
- Monographs		4
- Book reviews		5
Position paper/legislative and policy analyses	Proof of written submissions	1-4
Membership (Maximum of 2 points)	Proof of current membership	
- Professional Association		1
- National/ provincial/ regional social service structure		1
		1

INDIVIDUAL CPD ACTIVITIES		
CPD activity	Requirements	Points
- National/ international professional bodies - Union		1
Personal wellness	Proof of provider, programme and duration	1-2

There may be instances of a specific individual activity not included in the list of activities of the SACSSP's CPD policy, but the activity may warrant consideration for the allocation of CPD points. In such cases the registered person should compile a substantial motivation and keep it in her/his portfolio of evidence.

ACTIVITIES ACCREDITED BY OTHER PROFESSIONAL COUNCILS

Activities approved for CPD purposes by other professional statutory councils or professional boards may also be approved as relevant activities with a certain number of CPD points. The CPD Approval Panel will consider such activities in terms of their appropriateness for the professions registered with the SACSSP and the criteria.

In this category a registered person has two options with regard to the submission of the activity for CPD:

- Submission of the activity as an individual activity to be approved for the allocation of CPD points. Proof of attendance and the programme must be included in the portfolio of evidence, indicating the CPD approval number of the other professional council, as well as the number of CPD points that were allocated to the CPD activity. The Approval Panel of the SACSSP will then consider the relevance of the activity for the social service professional and allocate the number of CPD points that the person may obtain.
- The activity may also be submitted by the provider to the Approval Panel of the SACSSP for consideration, particularly if a number of social service professionals are likely to attend. The normal procedures will then be followed to approve the activity as a CPD group activity and to allocate the number of CPD points. It is important to note, however, that the points allocated will be in alignment with the SACSSP's CPD point system and not with the applying professional council's point allocation for the particular activity.

Application and registration requirements

Application and registration requirements apply to persons registered with the SACSSP, non-practising registered persons, first-time registrations, registered persons practising outside the RSA and restorations.

Persons registered with SACSSP

- Each registered person must maintain a portfolio of evidence of CPD activities to the value of 20 points for each financial year.
- This portfolio of evidence must be submitted only at the SACSSP's request, which will be based on a random selection. It is obligatory to begin accumulating CPD points from 1 April 2010. The first random selections for portfolio of evidence will commence after 1 April 2011.

- Submissions of portfolio of evidence will be in a cycle of three years.² Portfolios must provide evidence of accumulated points to the value of 20 points for each of the financial years from 1 April 2010.

Non-practising registered persons

When non-practising registered persons re-enter practice, they will be obliged to commence with the accumulation of CPD points in the year of re-entry.

First-time registrations

Anyone who registers for the first time in a particular year, with specific reference to the year after graduation, will be obliged to commence with his/her CPD programme in the year of registration. However, the person will only be required to submit CPD points for registration purposes in the following year.

Registered persons practising outside the RSA

Registered persons who are practising abroad are required to comply with CPD requirements.

Restorations

Any person whose name has been removed from the register will be obliged to commence with accumulation of CPD points in the year of restoration.

NON-COMPLIANCE³

The Approval Panel will investigate the reasons for non-compliance after which the names of non-compliant practitioners will be sent to the relevant Professional Board to follow up.

The Professional Board may take the following actions:

- A letter will be sent to the practitioner requesting a reason for non-compliance. The practitioner will be required to furnish the Professional Board with a letter of explanation within two weeks of receipt of the letter of enquiry;
- Should the explanation be acceptable, the practitioner will be given six months to comply with the CPD requirements. Evidence of such compliance must be received by the Professional Board within two weeks of the end of the six months period;
- Should the practitioner not comply with the requirement his/her name will be forwarded without delay to the Committee for Preliminary Inquiry to deal with the matter according to the Rules relating to the acts or omissions of a social worker, a social auxiliary worker or a student social worker, which shall constitute unprofessional or improper conduct and the Regulations regarding the conducting of inquiries into alleged unprofessional conduct (Social Service Professions Act, No. 110 of 1978 as amended).

Functions of stakeholders

Stakeholders in CPD include the SACSSP and Professional Board(s), the approval panel for CPD activities and providers of CPD activities.

² This means that each registered person will be required to submit a portfolio of evidence at least once in three years. However, due to the random sampling technique, a call for submission by registered persons may be more than once in the cycle of three years. Submission will therefore range from a minimum of one to a maximum of three in a cycle of three years.

³ With acknowledgement to the *Continuing Professional Development Guidelines for the Health Professions*, 21 June 2005.

SACSSP/Professional Board

The SACSSP will accept responsibility for the following:

- Establishing a basic infrastructure to ensure an efficient CPD system;
- All administrative processes related to the CPD system;
- Determining the criteria for the approval of CPD points;
- Appointing and supporting the CPD Approval Panel in collaboration with the Professional Board;
- Promoting CPD;
- Monitoring and evaluating the CPD system;
- Quality assuring of CPD activities;
- Creating and maintaining an internal database of approved CPD activities and service providers. The delegated official allocated by the SACSSP will maintain a register with the particulars of each approved activity, the number of CPD points allocated to the activity and the approval number allocated to the activity by the SACSSP.

Approval Panel for CPD activities

- All activities and points must first be approved by the CPD Approval Panel based on the criteria and requirements for CPD points as articulated in the CPD policy.
- All approved CPD group activities will be allocated an approval number by the Approval Panel.
- The CPD Approval Panel may decline to approve applications if such applications fail to meet the criteria.
- When any disagreements arise between providers and the Approval Panel, the application for the approval of the CPD activity will be referred to the Professional Board for consideration during a full meeting of the Professional Board.
- The Approval Panel shall have guidelines for the approval of CPD activities and the allocation of CPD points.

Providers of CPD activities

- Prospective providers must submit applications in the format prescribed by the Professional Board.
- An activity is accredited for a period of one year.
- Applicants will be required to pay a set fee for the processing of each CPD activity. The prescribed fees are:
 - R100 for a CPD activity offered to practitioners at no cost to the practitioner;
 - R500 for a CPD activity offered to practitioners at a specified/registration fee.
- On completion of the activity, the provider must provide a certificate to the registered person, reflecting the approval number of the CPD activity, as well as the number of CPD points and the particulars of the person who completed the activity. This certificate must be kept in the registered person's portfolio of evidence.

For application forms and procedures to apply for the accreditation of CPD activities and submission of portfolio of activities by participants, see the *Policy on continuing professional development (CPD) of persons registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions* (SACSSP, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The CPD policy of the SACSSP is the result of a transparent, well consulted and research-based process. Social service practitioners had a window period of six years to voluntarily come on board with CPD before the commencement of compulsory CPD in 2010. They have been oriented and prepared to commit themselves to CPD in the belief that both they and the service beneficiaries will reap the benefits of ongoing learning and professional development.

During the development of the CPD policy, social service professionals became aware of the ethical obligations that underpin the preservation of their professional status (Butler, 2003:2). Although professionals have an ethical obligation to self-directed learning, it can never be their sole responsibility, which is contrary to Butler's (2003:2) argument that CPD is the professional's responsibility and "lies not with a regulatory authority" (Butler, 2003:2). CPD remains an ethical as well as statutory obligation (HPCSA, n.d.)

As indicated in the CPD policy of the SACSSP, various stakeholders have a role to play in the success of, and compliance with, continuing professional development. Without an effective CPD system it is not possible to have successful implementation of CPD. The SACSSP is thus challenged to provide a user-friendly and cost-effective CPD system that can support the compulsory implementation of CPD for all registered persons. Service providers are challenged to provide CPD activities that meet the goal of continuing education, i.e. the acquisition and maintenance of new, current knowledge, relevant professional skills and ethical professional attitudes with a benefit for the beneficiaries (HSPS, 2005). Finally, employers are challenged to facilitate access to CPD for employees.

The foundation for CPD, i.e. professional commitment, has been established throughout the development process of the CPD policy. The implementation phase of compulsory CPD from 2010 will yield evidence whether the enabling environment has been sufficiently prepared by the SACSSP, service providers and employers to facilitate the fulfilment of social service professionals' ethical obligation and professional commitment to CPD.

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