Policy

Title: Continuing Professional Development for Genetic Counsellors

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Introduction

The Human Genetics Society of Australasia (HGSA) and the Australasian Society of Genetic Counsellors (ASGC) are committed to ensuring that people seeking genetic counselling services in Australasia receive these services from an appropriately trained genetic counsellor meeting the HGSA Competency Standards for Genetic Counsellors. Therefore, like most professional organisations, the HGSA has adopted a continuing professional development (CPD) program as a mechanism for assessing and maintaining the required knowledge and skills of its practitioners, to ensure client safety.

Within the CPD program, MHGSA and FHGSA genetic counsellors undertake self-directed learning activities. The program aims to assist MHGSA and FHGSA genetic counsellors with adapting to the changing needs of their clients and responding to developments in the field. The process of CPD demonstrates a commitment on the part of the HGSA and its membership to the continuing education and maintenance of the standards of practice in the profession of genetic counselling.

The HGSA Code of Ethics for Genetic Counsellors states that genetic counsellors must keep up to date with current standards of practice and continue education and training; demonstrating these through engaging in the CPD program. Annual CPD submissions ensure that genetic counsellors maintain standards of practice.

For the purposes of regulation, the National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP) definition of practice has been adopted, as follows:

“[Practice]...indicates that an individual is drawing on their relevant professional skills and knowledge in the course of their work to contribute to safe and effective delivery of services within the profession... It is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care and may also include working in a direct nonclinical relationship with clients; working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, for example. This work can be of a paid or formal volunteer nature on a full or
part-time basis.”

**Administration of CPD**

- CPD will be administered by the CPD Committee
- CPD activity is mandatory for all practising MHGSA and FHGSA genetic counsellors
- CPD submissions are due every year by March 31. In exceptional circumstances, applicants who may be unable to complete annual CPD requirements must contact the CPD Committee before the March 31 deadline.

A CPD submission must consist of:

- Continuing education report: Applicants will be required to submit their CPD events electronically through the CPD portal on the HGSA website.
- **It is strongly recommended that CPD activities are submitted through the portal as and when they are accumulated over the course of the year, rather than batched.**
- Applicants who experience technical difficulties with the portal should contact the HGSA Secretariat as soon as possible for assistance.

**Requirements for CPD Submissions**

Applicants must fulfill the following criteria to be eligible for the CPD program:

- Applicants must complete a minimum of 25 hours per year of learning activities relevant to their area of practice, for both full-time and part-time genetic counsellors. The rationale for this is based on the need to maintain knowledge and skills, irrespective of the number of hours worked.
- **It is strongly recommended that all CPD activity be submitted as a complete record of continuing education and development even if it exceeds the required 25-hour minimum so that it accurately reflects the variety and range of the learning activities undertaken. This will be useful in the event of an audit, or assessment for a Resumption of Practice Program through the Recency and Resumption of Practice Committee.**
- Applicants must participate in a minimum of one hour per month of genetic counselling supervision if working in a clinical role, for both full-time and part-time genetic counsellors. Genetic counsellors working in other roles are strongly encouraged to participate in one hour per month of supervision appropriate to the role.
  - FHGSA genetic counsellors can meet the supervision requirement through one to one and/or group supervision.
  - Supervision requirements for MHGSA genetic counsellors are documented in the Practitioner Certification for Genetic Counsellors Policy.

**CPD Learning Activities**

Applicants are required to demonstrate a range of learning activities in the areas of skills and knowledge. Applicants must complete at least 25 hours of learning activities which should include:

- a minimum of three hours of practical skill-based activity (e.g., attending counselling skills workshops, supervisor training, variant curation workshops), AND
- a minimum of 10 hours of knowledge-based activity (e.g., attending lectures, journal clubs, webinars, completing online courses).

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1 NASRHP; Self Regulating Health Profession Peak Bodies Membership Standards; 2/12/2016, p. 31
Applicants are required to obtain at least 12.5 hours externally to their department. Applicants are encouraged to seek relevant learning experiences for themselves to meet their own training requirements.

External learning activities include courses, conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures and membership of relevant committees that are arranged externally to the applicant’s genetics service. Activities organised by the applicant’s place of employment (e.g., hospital, rather than the genetics service) are considered external. Applicants are strongly encouraged to regularly attend the HGSA Annual Scientific Meeting and/or ASGC SIG day to maintain current knowledge and skills in the Australasian context, and connection with the HGSA professional community.

Internal learning activities include study days, journal clubs and lectures arranged within the applicant’s genetics service. Time spent writing publications can be included. Time spent preparing for and delivering a presentation can also be included. Where the same presentation is given multiple times, only the initial preparation time may be included. Attendance at clinical management meetings, supervision sessions, case conferences or multidisciplinary meetings cannot be counted as a learning activity unless there is a significant learning component deliberately intended and delivered.

Applicants must accumulate a variety of learning activities in combination. For example, the applicant should not accumulate all their hours by only attending one type of meeting, or attending a single conference. In the event of an audit, applicants with a limited range of activities may, at the discretion of the CPD Committee, be required to undertake particular types of learning activities to address this. Please note that the learning activities described above are not exhaustive and are shown here as examples only.

Each learning activity should include reflection on how the activity has or will impact on the applicant’s practice. Evidence of completion of the activity should be attached to the submission where possible. This could include:

- an attendance certificate
- a copy of an email regarding a poster/oral presentation at a conference
- the first page of an article on which the applicant is an author.

The CPD Committee will audit a minimum of five per cent of CPD submissions each year, so applicants may be contacted to provide further evidence of CPD activity.