

You and your Learning Partner

Working with a Learning Partner is one of the requirements for completing your group 3 goals. You must choose someone with whom to discuss the review of your practice at the start of each three year learning period, and at each step of your Group 3 professional development goals.

This is a supportive friendly relationship demonstrated by constructive discussion between colleagues on an equal footing, and there is no concept of a performance appraisal or peer evaluation. You and your partner will discuss your self-appraisal (the structured exercise where you formally think about what you do and how you do it relative to standards), your strengths and those areas you feel you want to improve.

Feedback from your partner is a way to get additional insight about your practice and validate your point of view, e.g. you might discover that you were too critical in your self-assessment. Another point of view can help you to be more objective. A partner can also assist you to identify strengths or gaps in your practice that you are not able to identify yourself.



Ideally, you should have a discussion together about your proposed learning, including assessment of your learning needs, developing and implementing a professional development plan, your preferred learning style and possible learning resources available.

Who should be your learning partner?

Your learning partner should be an appropriate NZ registered health professional, holding a current APC with no conditions, who has a good understanding of your work, and your ENHANCE requirements for recertification. They do not have to be a pharmacist, but it is probable that they will be. (There may be exceptional circumstances when your partner may not be a health professional - if you think that someone else would be more suitable for your role, please contact [ENHANCE](#) to discuss this).

Because you are responsible for selecting your partner, you have the opportunity to choose someone whose opinion you respect and whose judgment you trust. Ideally, your partner should be a colleague and equal in a similar practice situation to you, but this may not always be possible or appropriate. They should understand your area(s) of practice well, and be familiar with what you do, especially if you are in a specialised role.

If you work in a specialised role, you should identify a partner who you feel is able to comment on your professional practice. If you cannot identify a pharmacist in a similar role, you might, for example, choose another professional associate with whom you interact regularly, such as a Specialist Diabetes Nurse, GP or Physiotherapist, if they are more appropriate for your particular learning goal.

Who don't we recommend to choose as your learning partner?

Your partner should be your professional peer in all senses of the word. It is important that your partner not be under any real or perceived pressure (financial, job security etc) to work with you or 'sign you off'. We strongly recommend that that spouses/life partners do not act as Learning Partners for each other, or that 'the boss' choose to work with the junior/newly registered pharmacist. In some exceptional circumstances, a junior colleague could act as a Learning Partner for a more senior staff member if they have specialist knowledge or expertise.

The Learning Partnership



- ✚ You can work with a different learning partner for each Group 3 goal, but you should work with the same Learning Partner throughout each goal.
- ✚ You do not have to be their learning partner in return – they can also choose to work with anyone they wish to
- ✚ You do not have to actually work alongside your Learning Partner, and if you have a specialised role, it is possible that your Learning Partner will be in a completely different city or area.
- ✚ You need to discuss your structured review of your practice (however you have done it), your learning goals, how you intend to approach them, and then your actual learning and outcomes of that learning, at each step of the CPD cycle.
- ✚ Much of this could occur within one meeting – there does not have to be separate meeting for each part of the discussion but you do need to cover everything required.

Getting Together with your Learning Partner

You and your Learning Partner will need to decide on how this process will work best for both of you and agree on how you will communicate to meet the specific obligations of the partnership.

You can decide how you will meet - face-to-face in person is ideal, but if this is not always possible then email, Skype or telephone may be used. It is strongly recommended that, if possible, at least some discussion occurs face-to-face, because it may be difficult to attain an appropriate level of trust if all communication is conducted remotely.

An important reason to meet face-to-face with your Learning Partner, at least initially, is to build rapport. Good rapport promotes trust and understanding which will make it easier for both parties to share information.



At the start of your relationship with your Learning Partner we suggest you also discuss the following:

- Expectations and understanding of the learning partnership
- Confidentiality
- A structured approach to discussions
- What happens if the relationship is not working

Ideally, together you should have a discussion about:

- the pharmacist's planned professional development, including helping them assess their learning needs
- developing and implementing their professional development plan
- how they best like learning and what type of learning suits this preference
- suitable available learning resources

Your Responsibilities as the pharmacist half of a learning partnership

You are wholly responsible for meeting your Pharmacy Council recertification requirements, (your own learning, all documentation and for achieving the planned outcomes), including ensuring the input of your Learning Partner, as required. Your Learning Partner is not responsible for what you do (or don't do!)

Your specific responsibilities are to:

- select a suitable Learning Partner(s)
- organise meetings (as many as are reasonably necessary) during each three year learning period to discuss your practice review (at least once every three years), the application of Competence Standards or other standards to your pharmacy practice and each of the four steps of the CPD cycle (Reflection, Planning, Action, Outcomes) for each of your Group 3 (significant) learning goals.
- keep brief notes of these meetings and document a summary of discussions held with your Learning Partner (space available to record this online at the end of each step of the Group 3 goals)

You may choose to include plans and goals for future practice roles and have an annual discussion with them about your Professional Development Plan and how you are tracking with this.

Benefits of being a CPD Partner

The role of CPD partner is not just about the pharmacist's learning; there are potential gains on both sides. If you are approached to be a CPD partner and you are wondering whether you are up to the task – think again. It could be an opportunity to develop increased self-awareness and some valuable interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

Your Responsibilities in being a Learning Partner

Your role is to affirm, encourage and where appropriate and required, advise or challenge your partner, providing support, feedback and encouragement about their planned and completed learning. You must clearly understand the role they have as a pharmacist and what they do on a day to day basis. You must hold a current APC with no conditions over the entire time you are acting as a learning partner.

Your specific responsibilities are to:

- be available for meetings with your partner (as many as are reasonably required)
- affirm, encourage and where appropriate, advise or challenge your partner
- discuss the process and outcomes of the review of their day to day work (however they have done it), the application of Competence Standards or other standards to their professional role and provide feedback about whether this has been appropriate and how they have selected accepted standards and used them to review their work
- discuss the results for each step of their Group 3 goals – this doesn't have to be (and is not intended to be) onerous. Think of yourself as a sounding board.
- Review the final outcomes of their group 3 goal – where are they going from here?

You may have some additional tasks such as:

- advise on the choice of learning resources
- discuss the relevance of their chosen learning goals to their current or future practice
- discuss their Professional Development Plan on an annual basis, and how they're tracking with that

You do not have to:

- be accountable for their activity (or inactivity!) There is no concept in this relationship of peer appraisal, evaluation or peer review
- have them as your learning partner – you are free to choose anyone you like to work with for your learning
- be their learning partner for all of their group 3 goals –being their learning partner for just this one is OK
- work with them or even live in the same town

Giving and Receiving Feedback

**Kind (but
honest)**

**Helpful
(so that...)**

**Specific
(be precise)**

Giving feedback

Giving positive feedback is relatively easy but if the feedback process is diluted, it may simply become a mutually supportive praise session for friends. Positive feedback alone is non-productive; it needs to be objective, constructive, and requires preparation. The process should be mutually supportive and focus on sharing and developing practice to the advantage of both parties and, ultimately, to the service user.

You may feel reluctant to provide critical evaluation to your partner, therefore, learning partner meetings should be structured, voluntary and done with an atmosphere of cooperation, mutual learning and with a view to sharing evidence-based practice.



Using the '**STAR**' Tool can give you a framework to work with, especially if you are uncomfortable with giving negative feedback.

- ★ **S**pecify the exact nature of the situation - Focus on facts, not the person. Choose positively phrased statements, such as "Forgetting to do that caused a delay," rather than saying "You're completely disorganized."
- ★ **T**alk it through to establish each of your views and discuss possible causes. Share your thoughts on alternative approaches while remembering to seek the other person's ideas.
- ★ **A**gree an action plan, including a review date. Provide your partner with support to act on your feedback.
- ★ **R**eview the situation at the agreed time.

Although the thought of having a Learning Partner may feel daunting, it can in fact be an excellent mechanism for giving and receiving feedback between peers, and can help increase confidence and willingness to share good practice. This can be particularly valuable for pharmacists working in more isolated environments.

Receiving Feedback

- Take time to listen carefully, understand and consider what is being said, then reflect on whether or not you think it is a fair comment. It is important to be honest with yourself.
- Allow the other person to finish giving their opinion before you say anything.
- If the feedback is negative, try not to become defensive or take it personally. Your selfworth is not diminished by suggestions for improvement.
- Ask questions to clarify information and for more specific examples if you think what is being said is vague.
- Summarise your understanding of the main points of the feedback. This can achieve a number of things: this demonstrates that you are listening and helps you to avoid sounding defensive and provides an opportunity for your partner to clarify their feedback if you have misinterpreted it.
- Discuss a possible way forward with your partner, create some action points and take responsibility to move forward.



The template below can provide some structure for these meetings, allow you to create action points from your discussions and then review those actions at the next meeting.

Meeting Record with Learning Partner Date:
Type of meeting (e.g. face to face, telephone).....
Purpose of Meeting (tick as appropriate):

Practice Review Discussion
 Professional Development Plan
 Significant Learning Goal Step 1. Step 2. Step 3. Step 4.
 Significant Learning Goal Step 1. Step 2. Step 3. Step 4.
 Significant Learning Goal Step 1. Step 2. Step 3. Step 4.

Discussion Points	Action Points

Next meeting:

Professional Development Plan (PDP)



Once you have identified your learning objectives, it's a good idea to create a learning plan to be completed over a specified time period (usually within the current three year learning period).

This plan is intended to help you identify and concentrate on the learning opportunities that will be of most benefit to you and your practice and will best assist you to achieve your professional goals.

Ideally the creation of a PDP should be an important focus of your first meeting with your Learning Partner.

It is recommended that you develop your PDP within the first few months of each new three year learning period, but a PDP is not written in stone – goals shift, people change, circumstances present new challenges and opportunities. It is a living document, responsive to the particular needs of your ever changing practice environment. It can - and should - be reviewed on a regular basis. February or March (just before applying for your APC) is a good time to do this.