

You and your Learning Partner

Working with a Learning Partner is one of the requirements for recertification each year. It is a discussion between colleagues, and not the same as a performance appraisal or peer evaluation. You and your partner will discuss your self-assessment (your review of your practice), 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 could 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.

Objectives of a Learning Partnership

The specific objectives of the learning partnership are:

- To support pharmacists' continuing professional development
- To promote the concept of life-long learning
- To maintain safe, effective pharmacy practice



The Learning Partnership

You must choose a **Learning Partner** with whom to discuss the review of your practice at the start of the three year learning period, and at each step of your Group 3 professional development goals. 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 in a similar practice situation to you, but this may not always be possible or appropriate. They should understand your area(s) of practice, 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. It may be difficult to find a pharmacist in a similar role, in which case 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. They must be a NZ registered health professional and hold a current APC with no conditions.



In some circumstances, a junior colleague could act as a Learning Partner if they have specialist knowledge or expertise. We suggest that spouses/partners do not act as Learning Partners for each other. 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 may work with more than one Learning Partner if you have more than one role – for example, a pharmacist who works in both academia and community pharmacy may have a different Learning Partner for each area of practice. You may also have a different Learning Partner for each Group 3 goal, but you should work with the same Learning Partner throughout each goal.

You may choose to work in partnership with an Accredited Learning Facilitator (ALF), when they become available. The ALF is a pharmacist specially trained to assist other pharmacists with their professional development.

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. 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 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 discuss the following:

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

Roles and Responsibilities

Your Responsibilities

You are wholly responsible for meeting the 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 accountable for what you do (or don't do!)

Your specific responsibilities are:

- To select a suitable Learning Partner (s)
- To organise meetings (as many as necessary) during each three year learning period to discuss your review of your practice (at least once every three years) and *each of the four steps* of the CPD cycle (Reflection, Planning, Action, Outcomes) for each of your Group 3 (significant) learning goals.
- To 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.)
- To document all learning activities appropriately

You may choose to have an annual discussion with them about your Professional Development Plan.

Your Learning Partner's Responsibilities

Your Learning Partner is not accountable for your activity or inactivity.

Their specific responsibilities are:

- To be available for meetings with you (as many as are required)
- Discuss the process and outcomes of your Practice Review (at least once every three years), your Group 3 (significant) learning goals and each of the four steps of those learning goals
- To affirm, encourage and where appropriate, advise or challenge you.

Their additional responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Discussion of the application of Competence Standards or other standards to your pharmacy practice
- Advice on the choice of learning resources
- Clarification of the relevance of significant learning goals
- Review of the outcomes of the significant learning goals
- To have an annual discussion with you about your Professional Development Plan

Ideally, you should have a discussion together about the pharmacist's CPD, including learning needs assessment, a professional development plan, learning styles, learning resources available, and implementation of the plan.

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.

Giving and Receiving Feedback



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.

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Discussion Points	Action Points

Next meeting: