

# Making Personal Learning Projects part of your CME Portfolio

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The Maintenance of Certification Program has established 6 sections that delineate the various alternatives for your personal continuing medical education. Section 4 includes self directed learning and personal learning projects. Self directed learning is felt to be “better” learning in that it is more likely to lead to a change in clinical practice. This type of learning is considered “active” when compared to the typical didactic lecture which is often associated with Section 1 accreditation.

Personal learning projects are a method of organizing and documenting self directed learning. Most dermatologists participate in some form of self directed learning on a regular basis, for example – looking up the therapeutic alternatives for a patient with recalcitrant lichen planus – that’s a personal learning project! And you are entitled to gain CPD credits for this exercise – it just needs to be recorded in an organized manner, and meet some specific criteria.

In order to organize your self directed learning into a personal learning project, there are 4 components that need to be present and recorded:

1. stimulus / learning issue
2. resource
3. outcome
4. references

Each will now be discussed in more detail:

The **stimulus** leads to the learning issue that is the impetus for the self directed learning. It can be any of the following:

Patient management\*  
Accredited Group Learning Activity  
Audio/video tapes  
Discussion with colleagues  
Self-assessment Program  
Teaching interaction\*

Practice/problem based audit  
Reading journals  
Internet search  
Non-accredited meeting/rounds  
Research  
Other stimuli not listed here

\* Elements that are part of your professional work do not count as credit hours

Time spent in one of these activities (except \*) may be added to the total time spent.

- 1 hour = 1 credit
- There is not limit to the number of Section 4 credits

The time spent in association with the stimulus or learning issue is entered by "A" in the upper portion of the enclosed form. (See Personal Learning Project Template)

The stimulus gives rise to a learning issue which is usually in the form of a question:

- Is there any good evidence that PUVA works for recalcitrant Lichen Planus?

This question may have been generated by any of the following examples:

- Patient encounter – no credit in Section A of PLP template
- Journal reading – 1 hour = 1 credit in Section A of template
- Audio tapes – 45 minutes = 1 credit in Section A of template

**Resources** are the next component of a personal learning project and include:

- All the sources of information that were used to obtain information related to your learning issue.
- One or more types of resources may be used.
- The list of resources is almost identical to the list of stimuli.
  - For example, non-accredited rounds may be your stimulus, but in other cases, you may attend non-accredited rounds to try and find the answer to your learning issue.
  - In either situation, if non-accredited rounds involved 4 hours = 4 credits, this is entered in either Section A or B of the template.

The **outcome** is determined once you feel that you have adequately researched your learning issue. There are 3 possible outcomes:

- I will change my clinical practice
- I will not change my clinical practice
- I need more information

**References** are those resources that you feel are the most helpful in determining your outcome.

Most templates provide space for 3 references, but more can be added if you feel the reference added to your learning. As well, personal notes can be added on the back of the template, or on-line to assist you in keeping your PLP organized.

A further extension of a personal learning project is a practice audit, or chart review.

For example:

- The newer guidelines for managing Accutane patients have now been in place for more than a year
- You decide to review your charts to see if you have been adhering to those guidelines.
- The outcome of the audit is recorded in terms of relevance to clinical practice.
- Time spent in a practice audit can be added to Section 4, if it is a result or an extension of a personal learning project
- Or, time spent in a practice audit can be added to Section 5
- **1 hour = 2 credits for Practice Audits**

Personal learning projects can be documented:

- on the enclosed template
- on a printed template obtained from the Mainport web site
- on line, at the Mainport web site
- on a template that may be provided for you at non-accredited rounds or accredited rounds

Documentation is important to give credibility to the hours that you are claiming. But also, it is a reference for you to support your clinical practice decisions, and can be used in the future to reinforce your learning.

Keep in mind that personal learning projects are meant to be forms of self directed learning, and consequently will be highly varied in topic, format and length, as well as the resources used. Two different dermatologists could easily document similar personal learning projects in two entirely different ways!

In summary, Personal Learning Projects should be organized and documented so that they include all the following criteria:

Stimulus/Learning Issue  
Resources  
Outcome  
References

If you have any questions about Personal Learning Projects, please feel free to contact the education committee, or you can log onto Mainport for further information or contact the Royal College by email.

### **Additional Reading**

1. Bennett NL, Davis DA, Easterling WE Jr, Friedmann P, Green JS, Koeppen BM, Mazmanian PE, Waxman HS. Continuing medical education: a new vision of the professional development of physicians. *Acad Med.* 2000 Dec; 75(12):1167-72
2. Campbell C, Parboosingh J, Gondocz T, Babitskaya G, Pham B, A study of the factors that influence physicians' commitments to change their practices using learning diaries. *Acad Med* 1999 Oct; 74(10 Suppl):S34-6.
3. Cauffman JG, Forsyth RA, Clark VA, Foster JP, Martin KJ, Lapsys FX, Davis DA, Randomized controlled trials of continuing medical education: what makes them most effective? *J Contin Educ Health Prof.* 2002 Fall; 22(4):214-21
4. Dornan T, Carroll C, Parboosingh J. An electronic learning portfolio for reflective continuing professional development. *Med Educ.* 2002 Aug; 36(8):767-9
5. Kelly DR, MacKay L CELT: a computerized evaluative learning tool for continuing professional development *Med Educ.* 2003 Apr; 37(4): 358-67
6. Mazmanian PE, Davis DA Continuing medical education and the physician as a learner: guide to the evidence *JAMA* 2002 Sep 4; 288(9):1057-60.
7. Mazmanian PE, Daffron SR, Johnson RE, Davis DA, Kantrowitz MP. Information about barriers to planned change: a randomized controlled trial involving continuing medical education lectures and commitment to change *Acad Med.* 1998 Aug; 73(8): 882-6
8. Patterson C, Crooks D, Lynyk-Child O, A new perspective on competencies for self-directed learning. *J Nurs Educ.* 2002 Jan; 41(1):25-31
9. Parboosingh JT, Physician communities of practice: where learning and practice are inseparable. *J Contin Educ Health Prof.* 2002 Fall; 22(4):230-6
10. Thompson O'Brien MA, Freemantle N, Osman AD, Wolf F, Davis DA, Herrin J, Continuing education meetings and workshops; effects on professional practice and health care outcomes. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2001; (2) CD003030.
11. Wilkinson TJ, Challis M, Hobma SO, Newble DI, Parboosingh JT, Sibbald RG, Wakeford R. The use of portfolios for assessment of the competence and performance of doctors in practice *Med Educ.* 2002 Oct; 36(10):918-24

## Appendix I – Examples of Personal Learning Projects

### Personal Learning Project

#### Example #1:

Stimulus: Teaching Interaction

You are asked to teach the 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students. You are given a prepared talk on Hand Eczema, and realize that it includes a presentation on the four patterns of hand dermatitis, with diagrams, and you want to review this, because it has been a while since you looked at hand eczema this way.

So you search all the dermatology text books in your office, then go to PubMed and finally find an article entitled Hand eczema by R.G. Sibbald from 1998. You get a copy of this article, and there the patterns of hand eczema well described. Then you happen to run into the author at a small group session, and you get a chance to discuss this article with him.

- Time spent on Stimulus = 0 hours  
(Teaching interaction stimulus doesn't take any time)
- Time spent on resources: 4 hours  
(Text book search, Internet search, reading journal, discussion with colleague)
- Total time spent on this Personal Learning Project: 4 hours = 4 credits  
(See template – next page)

Date: When you started the project

## Personal Learning Project – Example #1

Learning Issue/Question to be answered:

**WHAT ARE THE 4 PATTERNS OF HAND ECZEMA?**

**Stimulus:** (circle one or more of the following)

Patient Management  
Practice/problem based audit  
Audio/video tapes  
Colleagues (discussion)  
Self-Assessment Program  
Teaching Interaction

Accredited Group Learning Activity  
Reading/reviewing journals or text  
Computer/Internet search  
Non-accredited meeting/rounds  
Research  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Time (hours) = 0 credits A

**Resources:** (circle one or more of the following)

Accredited Group Learning Activity  
Computer/Internet use  
Audio/video tapes  
Research  
Discussion with colleagues

Non-accredited meeting/rounds  
Journal articles or texts  
Self-assessment program  
Practice Audit  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

Time (hours) = 4 credits B

**Outcome:** (circle one of the following)

I will change my practice

I will not change my practice

I need to seek more information

**References:** ( include 3 of the more useful resources, if you have 3)

1. Fitzpatrick, Andrews – Derm Text Books – Chapters on Hand Eczema
2. Discussion with colleague – Dr. R.G. Sibbald
3. Hand Eczema Ostomy Wound Management 1998, Aug; 44(8) 68-78

A + B = 4 Total credits

# Personal Learning Project

## Example # 2

Stimulus: Non-accredited Rounds

Your hospital clinic has recently put dermatoscopes in all the exam rooms, and all the attending dermatologists are encouraged to use them. You feel that dermoscopy is of no benefit – however, despite this you decide to attend a program that is sponsored by a pharmaceutical company on the use of dermatoscopes. Dr. Joel Claveau has been invited as the guest speaker, but because the program is industry-sponsored, it does not fit the criteria for Section 1 CPD credits. You would like to get credits for this program because you will spend 3 hours one evening in attendance.

The program turns out to be extremely useful, with a pre and post test that indicates your knowledge of dermatoscopic changes, clinical patients are presented with projection of the dermatoscopic findings, as well as extensive interaction and discussion with Dr. Joel Claveau.

Following the program, you are determined to learn more about dermoscopy, and you go home and over the next 10 days or so, you spend about 8 hours reviewing the CD-ROM on dermoscopy that was provided at the non-accredited rounds. Then you spend an additional 2 hours on an internet search which leads you to a self –assessment test on dermatoscopic features.

- Time spent on the Stimulus = 3 hours  
(Non-accredited Rounds on Dermoscopy)
- Time spent on Resources 2 + 8 = 10 hours  
(CD- ROM and Internet search)
- Total time = 3 + 10 = 12 hours = 13 credits  
(See template – next page)

Date: The date of the dermoscopy event

## Personal Learning Project – Example #2

Learning Issue/Question to be answered: HOW USEFUL IS DERMOSCOPY?

**Stimulus:** (circle one or more of the following)

Patient Management	Accredited Group Learning Activity
Practice/problem based audit	Reading/reviewing journals or text
Audio/video tapes	Computer/Internet search
Colleagues (discussion)	Non-accredited meeting/rounds
Self-Assessment Program	Research
Teaching Interaction	Other _____

Time (hours) = 3 credits A

**Resources:** (circle one or more of the following)

Accredited Group Learning Activity	Non-accredited meeting/rounds
Computer/Internet use	Journal articles or texts
Audio/video tapes	Self-assessment program
Research	Practice Audit
Discussion with colleagues	Other: CD - ROM

Time (hours) = 2+8 = 10 credits B

**Outcome:** (circle one of the following)

I will change my practice	I will not change my practice
I need to seek more information	

**References:** (include 3 of the more useful resources, if you have 3)

1. Non- accredited rounds – guest speaker: Dr. Joel Claveau
2. CD – ROM on dermoscopy
3. [www.dermoscopy.org](http://www.dermoscopy.org) and [www.dermoncology.com](http://www.dermoncology.com)

A + B = 13 Total credits

Personal Notes can be added on the back of your template form, for future references.

# Personal Learning Project

## Example #3

Stimulus: Novartis Presentation on Elidel

Learning Issue: How will the use of Elidel fit into my practice?

You are invited to a day long presentation sponsored by Novartis introducing Elidel. You have heard of this product, and are aware of some of the results of the clinical trials, but have not yet used it in your clinical practice.

You understand that the day will involve small group sessions, and the introduction of case studies that can be used in future CME programs, that you might be involved in designing.

Before you go to the presentation, you feel that you would like to learn more. You decide to do a literature search on Elidel – and you find a number of recently published papers about this product. Many of the authors are also going to be the presenters at the Novartis event. You choose several articles that are peer-reviewed, and obtain full text copies, and read these. The time spent on searching and reading was 3 hours.

You then attend the information session and find it very useful. Much of the information was provided by dermatologists whose opinion you respect. As well, much of the day involved interaction, and questions and answers, and you feel that you “learned” a lot about this product. You spent about 6 hours actually attending and participating in the educational portion of the program.

- Time spent prior to attending rounds = 3 hours  
(Searching and reading articles)
- Time spent at the non-accredited rounds = 6 hours
- Total time spent  $3 + 6 = 9$  hours  
(See template – next page)

Date: The initial literature search

### Personal Learning Project – Example #3

Learning Issue/Question to be answered:

HOW WILL ELIDEL FIT INTO MY PATIENT CARE MANAGEMENT?

**Stimulus:** (circle one or more of the following)

Patient Management	Accredited Group Learning Activity
Practice/problem based audit	Reading/reviewing journals or text
Audio/video tapes	Computer/Internet search
Colleagues (discussion)	Non-accredited meeting/rounds
Self-Assessment Program	Research
Teaching Interaction	Other _____

Time (hours) = 3 credits A

**Resources:** (circle one or more of the following)

Accredited Group Learning Activity	Non-accredited meeting/rounds
Computer/Internet use	Journal articles or texts
Audio/video tapes	Self-assessment program
Research	Practice Audit*
Discussion with colleagues	Other _____

Time (hours) = 6 credits B

**Outcome:** (circle one of the following)

I will change my practice      I will not change my practice  
I need to seek more information

**References:** ( include 3 of the more useful resources, if you have 3)

1. J.Am Acad Dermatol 2002 Apr; 46(4):495-504 Safety and efficacy of pimecrolimus cream 1% in the treatment of mild and maderate atopic dermatitis in children and adolescents. Eichenfield, LF, et al.
2. J Pediatr 2003 Feb;142(2):155-62 Safety and efficacy of nonsteroid pimecrolimus cream in the treatment of atopic dermatitis in infants. Ho VC, et al.
3. Novartis presents: Eczema: Make it Steroid-Free!

A + B = 9 Total credits