



New Graduate Veterinarians:

How to plan and record your continuing professional development

The goal of CPD in the first year of practice is to build confidence and competence as the new graduate becomes part of the veterinary profession and transitions from university curriculum to clinical practice (making the link between theory and practice). A key objective is to develop a strong foundation of knowledge and capability in both technical veterinary and non-technical skills.

This document sets out how we expect the CPD programme to work for new graduates and their mentors.

Expectations for new graduates

In your first year of professional practice you must:

1. Hold a planning session with a mentor (or mentors) when you start work (or within the 1st few weeks). The planning session should identify your immediate learning needs to become confident and competent in your new role and prepare a plan to address those needs.
2. Meet regularly with a mentor (or mentors) to review progress against your plan and check on your wellbeing. This should be at least monthly for the first three months and every other month after that until the end of the first year. Meeting more regularly than that is acceptable and may be needed for some.

Expectations for mentors

For the purposes of the CPD framework, mentors are the people who meet with new graduate veterinarians to help them plan their CPD and review their progress. Therefore, mentors must meet with the new graduates as set out above.

Mentoring is a skill and we strongly recommend that mentors take part in training (e.g. VCNZ and NZVA provide Mentorloop and a mentor training scheme for both mentors and mentees) and other CPD to develop your mentoring and coaching skills.

Some practical suggestions:

- Provide ample opportunity to discuss progression. It is important to provide time to step back from day-to-day clinical issues to allow for reflection, goal setting and evaluation, and assessment of learning needs. In essence the mentor 'knows where the new graduate is at and knows where to help them develop more'.
- Include a process for constructive feedback. Consider here how to tie the objectives for the new graduate with useful feedback and assessment.



- Have a process for identifying any unmet needs for clinical, social, and emotional support. Start by providing a safe environment for conversations and consider developing checklists to work through.

What a successful new graduate CPD programme looks like

Safety and capability

- The mentor has strong supervisory and mentoring skills, such as the ability to constructively critique, empathy, supportiveness, being non-judgemental, the ability to encourage to improve and the ability to reflect.
- There is an agreed sense of safety, confidence and competence. Each clinical environment should provide opportunities to develop knowledge and practice without unnecessary risk to patients or people. Activities like professionally conducted Morbidity and Mortality (M&M) Rounds, informal case reviews and feedback, and clinical record reviews provide effective forums for addressing patient safety and quality improvement competencies.

Orientation and support as a foundation for success

- Continuing support from the clinical team is crucial during this period as it fosters acceptance and learning.
- There must be a realistic understanding the clinical capabilities of the new graduate. It is vital that the expectations of the clinical capabilities of the new graduates are realistic (both for the graduate and the clinical team) and they are given enough time to familiarise themselves with their role.
- The new graduate should be included as one of the team. Being treated an integral member of the team is important.

Developing clinical competence

- Ensure realistic expectations and workload so the new graduate is not overwhelmed.
- In order to deliver quality care a graduate must have an effective skill mix. This is developed through instruction and controlled exposure to a variety of clinical scenarios and relating these to what is important at the veterinarian's level of development and experience.
- Providing suitable adjunct support around new graduates will enhance their confidence in handling emergent situations. New graduate supervision and mentoring provide the foundation for this support and may be successfully supplemented by, for example, recent graduate peer group discussions, facilitated by employers or graduates themselves.



- Reflecting on the development of the graduate should be wider than just technical competencies and should ideally include regular reference to the five areas of competence:
 - Critical reasoning
 - Professional Identity
 - Technical Skills
 - Personal Wellbeing
 - Clinical Knowledge

Striking the balance between development and accountability:

- Everyone involved has a clear understanding of the new graduate's current level of development, including their achievements, objectives, and accountability. Providing a scoring mechanism can help with this. For example, using a feedback mechanism that provides the new graduate a performance snapshot might look like this:
 - Needs Instruction
This means you are not yet experienced in this competency and need support from an experienced staff member to learn.
 - Understands basic concepts and can perform task competently
This means that you understand how to perform this competency and are confident to progress without supervision (although support is always available if you have any questions or need assistance).
 - Exceeds expectations and can teach concepts
This means that you have a good understanding of this competency and have sufficient experience and confidence that you are able to support other employees in their learning.
- A culture of improvement and development can complement this with regular and less formal conversations and coaching. These sessions often lead with questions such as:
 - 'What am I doing that I should keep doing?', And
 - 'What am I doing that I should change?'

Frequency of meetings

The New Graduate Development Plan should plan the learning objectives based on small, achievable goals to fit the planning cycle. A suggested timetable might be:



1st meeting - During the new graduate's 1st week

2nd meeting - End of the new graduate's 2nd week

3rd meeting - End of the new graduate's 4th week

4th meeting - End of the new graduate's 6th week

5th meeting - End of the new graduate's 8th week

6th meeting - End of the new graduate's 3rd month

7th meeting - End of the new graduate's 4th month

8th meeting - End of the new graduate's 6th month

9th meeting - End of the new graduate's 8th month

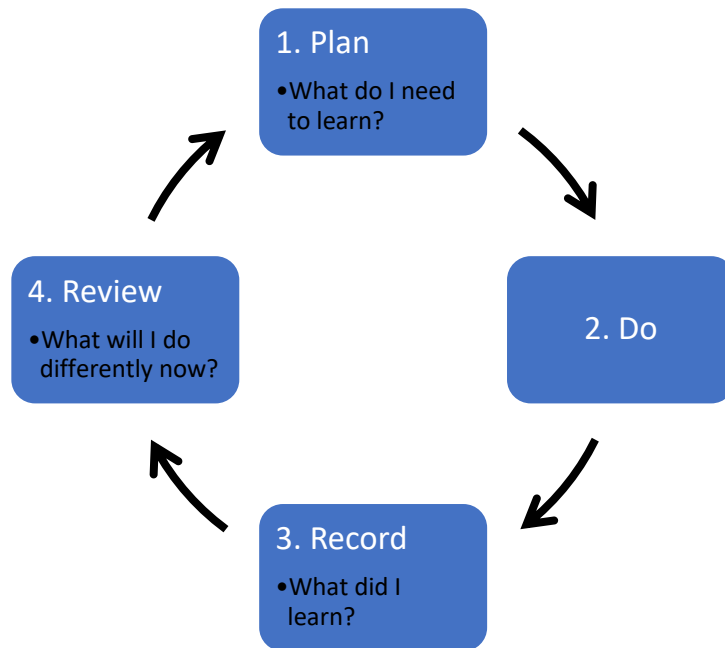
10th meeting - End of the new graduate's 10th month

11th meeting - End of the new graduate's 12th month

Clearly defined learning objectives/expectations will provide a strong framework for the new graduate and supervisor to work to. These will be different for each discipline and role being undertaken. Refer to the [VCNZ New Graduate Development Template on our website](#), which provides an example of a development plan.

The planning and learning cycle

The principles of planning remain consistent through the VCNZ CPD program which includes Plan, Do, Record and Review.



Planning

1. Work with your supervisor, a colleague or mentor through this planning process
2. Think about your role and try to identify what you do well and what needs improvement in terms of your knowledge, skills, and professionalism.
3. With your supervisor, identify your learning needs – the knowledge, skills, and aspects of professionalism in need of development or updating.
4. Assess your personal level of interest in the learning needs identified above.
5. Prioritise your needs – choose approximately 1–3 important needs to focus on.
6. Determine if and how these learning needs will align with your workplace's plans and needs and adjust your plan if necessary.
7. Based on the learning needs you prioritised, set some goals. We suggest setting a small number of goals for each period and making sure that they are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and, ideally, can be completed by your next meeting with your mentor.



8. Identify a series of actions that that will help you achieve your goals.
9. Summarise the above and write it in your CPD Plan.

Doing

1. Undertake CPD to meet the goals you set. In some cases this will be formal CPD like lectures and conferences but often in the first year of practice it will be learning new skills on the job.

Recording

Record in your plan:

1. One (or more) learning outcome (What will I do differently in my practice as a result of this CPD).
2. name and nature of the activity,
3. date and [optionally] duration
4. [optionally] summary of the key areas of learning/discussion

When engaging in reflection after completing a CPD activity, consider these questions:

1. Did this activity help me develop the knowledge and/ or the skills needed to improve the area of practice that I identified?
2. How can I implement what I learned in the CPD session to improve my practice?
3. Has this program helped me meet my learning outcomes? How?

Reviewing

At each meeting, review progress against the goals and set new goals. It may help to consider the following questions:

1. Have the goals set last time been achieved?
2. Are the learning needs prioritised last time still top priority?
3. What new goals should be set based on the top learning needs?