APPRAISAL, REVALIDATION & PORTFOLIO | MODULE 09

Build a personal development plan that can be delivered

Turn learning needs into realistic objectives, agreed support, evidence of progress and a useful review.

✓ 12 min reading

✓ Full teaching, practical next steps and reflection

✓ Six practice questions with answers and explanations

✓ Complete source list and jurisdiction notes

Prepared for SAS, locally employed and other UK doctors

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Using this module

Independent education

This is general professional information, not individual clinical, legal, employment, immigration, regulatory, tax or pensions advice. Current official instructions and the circumstances of the individual case remain controlling. Practice scores do not establish professional competence or accreditation.

The short answer

A good PDP connects a specific need with an achievable learning action, the support required and a way to review the result. It is a working agreement for development, not a list of course bookings.

Three next actions

- Choose the needs that matter most for your current and emerging work.
- Write actions, support requirements and review points.
- Check each objective with your appraiser and revisit progress during the year.

Learning objectives

- Write objectives that describe a change in practice.
- Separate personal learning from organisational dependencies.
- Review objectives without inflating completion.

Describe the need and the desired change

Begin with the gap you want to address and why it matters. Avoid vague objectives such as “improve leadership” or “keep up to date”. Describe a skill, behaviour or understanding that you can examine in practice. It may be a development need, preparation for a new role or a strength you want to extend.

An original example is: “Develop a more structured approach to giving feedback to supervised colleagues, because my current feedback sometimes leaves the next action unclear.” The desired change is that the colleague leaves with a shared understanding and an agreed plan. This is more useful than “attend a supervision course” because it keeps the learning purpose visible if the method changes.

Choose a method that can address the need

Match the activity to the intended change. Reading may resolve a knowledge question; observation and feedback may be needed for a conversational skill; supervised practice may be needed before extending clinical work. Several methods can be combined. A certificate is evidence of participation, while the objective may require evidence that the learning has been applied.

For the feedback example, a plan could combine reviewing an approved framework, observing a colleague, practising in suitable circumstances and discussing feedback with a supervisor. Specify what each step contributes. The programme’s PDP builder prompts these elements but does not generate an objective on your behalf or decide whether the proposed training is sufficient for independent practice.

Name the support and dependencies

Record what you can do and what requires agreement: protected time, access to a service, supervision, funding, equipment or a learning opportunity. Identify the responsible role and whether support is requested or confirmed. An appraiser’s agreement with the learning need does not automatically authorise expenditure, change a job plan or create clinical privileges.

If the objective depends on a placement that has not been agreed, state that dependency. Plan when to request it and what alternative to discuss if it is unavailable. This makes the plan realistic and helps distinguish a stalled opportunity from a failure to engage. Organisational actions should have their own owner rather than being silently assigned to the doctor as a personal shortcoming.

Decide what progress would look like

Select evidence that fits the objective: an observed discussion, a supervisor’s feedback, a reviewed product, a small evaluation or a reflective account of applying the learning. Use measures carefully. An attendance count may be easy to obtain but poorly matched to a behavioural goal. Avoid setting targets that reward superficial compliance rather than useful change.

For example, “three observed feedback conversations reviewed with a supervisor” describes a learning process, while “all colleagues will rate me excellent” promises an outcome you cannot control. A review should consider what changed, how you know and what remains to develop. The evidence should support the claim being made, including any limit on the setting or level of independence.

Keep the plan manageable

Choose a feasible set of objectives and realistic review dates. There is no benefit in a long list that cannot fit within the year. Identify which needs are urgent for current work, which prepare for a future responsibility and which can wait. A safety-critical competence gap needs appropriate action now; it should not be treated as an optional year-long aspiration.

Use interim review points to notice barriers early. If the plan has become unrealistic, discuss a change and document why. An objective may be revised or discontinued for a sound reason. Honest adjustment is better than marking it complete because the appraisal date has arrived. Keep the relationship between the objective, your role and available support visible.

Review, close or carry forward deliberately

At review, distinguish the activity undertaken, learning gained, application and impact. State whether the objective is achieved, partly achieved, revised, no longer relevant or still awaiting support. Explain the evidence and next step. Do not copy the same objective indefinitely without examining what prevented progress or whether it still matters.

The browser builder supports a draft and a plain-text export, not an official sign-off. Read the export, remove unnecessary detail and transfer appropriate content to the approved appraisal system. A completeness prompt checks that fields are present; it cannot assess the quality, feasibility or regulatory adequacy of your plan. Those judgements require the professional conversation.

Common mistake

Avoid this	Writing an objective as a course title, omitting support needs and later calling attendance proof that the development need is resolved.

Pause and reflect

Which objective in your current plan has the weakest link between activity and a real change in practice?

Takeaways

- Describe the intended change.
- Make support and evidence explicit.
- Review the result and revise honestly.

Knowledge check

Choose one best answer. These practice questions support reflection; they do not assess a real case or confer accreditation. Answer positions match the browser edition.

1. Which PDP objective is best framed?

A. Become excellent at everything in the job description.

B. Attend any leadership course this year.

C. Collect more certificates than last year.

D. Develop clearer feedback conversations, with observed practice and review of agreed next actions.

2. A skill requires supervised practice. What should the learning plan include?

A. Reading alone as proof of independent competence.

B. An appropriate supervised opportunity and feedback, alongside preparatory learning.

C. A certificate from an unrelated event.

D. A statement that the skill has been acquired before practice occurs.

3. The appraiser supports an objective requiring a funded placement. What follows?

A. The objective must be abandoned because support is not yet confirmed.

B. The appraisal discussion automatically authorises the expenditure.

C. The plan should describe the placement as approved to improve its chances.

D. The doctor still needs the appropriate placement, time and funding agreements.

4. What best demonstrates progress in a conversational skill?

A. The cost of the course attended.

B. The number of pages in the reflective account.

C. A promise that every future interaction will be successful.

D. Relevant observation and feedback on applying the skill.

5. A PDP has become unrealistic because the role changed. What is appropriate?

A. Review priorities and document an agreed revision.

B. Delete the previous plan so the change is not visible.

C. Keep the plan unchanged regardless of relevance.

D. Mark every objective complete before the next appraisal.

6. The PDP builder shows all fields completed. What does this mean?

A. The GMC has accepted the development plan.

B. The employer has approved every dependency.

C. The objectives are guaranteed feasible and sufficient.

D. The draft has the requested planning elements, but still needs professional review.

Answers and explanations

1. D — Develop clearer feedback conversations, with observed practice and review of agreed next actions.

A useful objective identifies a change that matters and a way to examine it. An activity or aspiration alone does not describe the development outcome.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

2. B — An appropriate supervised opportunity and feedback, alongside preparatory learning.

The method should fit the capability being developed. Knowledge acquisition and demonstrated safe application are different.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

3. D — The doctor still needs the appropriate placement, time and funding agreements.

A learning need and organisational authorisation are distinct. Make the dependency and next request explicit.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

4. D — Relevant observation and feedback on applying the skill.

Choose evidence that fits the objective. Volume, cost and an untestable promise do not establish practical development.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

5. A — Review priorities and document an agreed revision.

A PDP is a working plan. Transparent revision is more useful than either rigid repetition or inaccurate completion.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

6. D — The draft has the requested planning elements, but still needs professional review.

The builder checks presence of information, not professional quality or regulatory acceptance. Read and discuss the draft in the proper appraisal process.

Review the named teaching section, then explain the next step in your own words.

Official and professional sources

Confirm the current source version and applicable nation, contract, scheme or specialty. A source list is not a statement that every rule applies to every reader.

GMC: continuing professional development
UK · https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/managing-your-registration/revalidation/guidance-on-supporting-information-for-revalidation/continuing-professional-development

GMC: supporting information and declarations
UK · https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/managing-your-registration/revalidation/guidance-on-supporting-information-for-revalidation/guidance-on-supporting-information-for-revalidation

GMC: quality improvement activity
UK · https://www.gmc-uk.org/registration-and-licensing/managing-your-registration/revalidation/guidance-on-supporting-information-for-revalidation/quality-improvement-activity

GMC and partners: reflective practice principles
UK · https://www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/reflective-practice/the-reflective-practitioner---guidance-for-doctors-and-medical-students/ten-key-points-on-being-a-reflective-practitioner

Edition and verification

Editorial edition: 9 September 2026. The page source-review date is 2026-09-09. A publication date, editorial edit and substantive source check have different meanings. See sasdoctors.com/corrections for material corrections and the scope of review.

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