

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SURGEONS

ABSTRACT:

A professional development plan (PDP) is an integral part of the appraisal and revalidation process. It can be quite a daunting process for the uninitiated surgeon. A good PDP leads to the surgeon providing better patient care, as per the GMC survey. This article explains the theory and a simple framework when creating a PDP.

ARTICLE:

A professional development plan (PDP) is a documented action plan of your aspirations, to ensure successful personal development. PDPs help surgeons become more self-aware of their weaknesses and strengths and help them to improve their performance and learn new skills. PDPs are now an integral part of appraisal and revalidation.

PDP Model:

A good PDP includes all five components as illustrated in Figure 1.

1. **Reflection.** Think about your performance, successes and failures.
2. **Planning.** Think about your personal, professional and academic aims.
3. **Analysis.** Prioritise your development needs and set goals based on your reflection.
4. **Executing.** Put into motion how to achieve your goals.
5. **Evaluation.** Record and monitor your progress.

Creating a PDP:

Creating a successful PDP can be broken down into four main components:

Step 1: Personal analysis -your strengths and weaknesses.

The first step of creating a good PDP is a period of self-analysis. Think about your strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) and write them down in a grid.

Step 2: Setting your goals - where I would like to be and how to get there.

Ask yourself:

- What do I like doing? Operating, teaching, hobbies, making money.
- What is my motive for learning? Improve knowledge, learn a new technique, recognition.
- What qualifications and experience do I have?
- What method of study suits me? Part-time, e-learning, courses.
- How much time do I have? Consider your commitments.
- How much time can I spend away from my family? Consider partners, children, and parents.
- What will happen to me in the next few years? CCT, new job plan, new house.
- How will I get financial support? Deanery, grants, specialist society, Royal College.
- What is my ultimate goal?
- How will I measure it? Qualifications, feedback, personal goals.
- Where will I get advice? Specialist societies, peers, friends, Royal College.

Once you have considered all factors, you can decide your future goals and will have defined the upper edge of your learning gap.

How can I get there?

Ask yourself:

How can I get there by splitting tasks into small chunks. Set your goals using the SMART criteria:

- **Specific** – target a specific area for improvement.
- **Measurable** – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- **Assignable** – specify who will do it.

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- **Realistic** – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- **Time-related** – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Tabulate your goal settings, e.g.:

What do I want to learn?	What do I need to do?	What support is needed?	How will I measure?	Target date for review?
Endoscopic cubital tunnel release	Cadaveric course. Business case.	Course fees. Time off. Support for business case.	Course assessment. Leave from hospital. Successful business case.	12 months
Widen my understanding of my leadership	Learn from more experienced leaders. Leadership Course (web-based).	Arrange time off. Arrange to spend time with experienced leaders. Join the NHS Leadership Academy.	Mentoring and performance appraisal by clinical lead. Completion of module.	12 months
Improve my state of health	Attend training sessions twice a week.	Join a gym.	Improve personal fitness levels.	2 years
Improve teaching skills	Teaching experience. Teaching course. PG Cert.	Time off. Course fees. Enrol at university.	Feedback. Course assessment. Teaching degree.	3 years
Examination skills	Contact university. Course on examining.	Time off. Examining experience.	Feedback.	2 years

Step 3: Personal objectives - write your short, medium and long term goals

For example:

Short term

- Start an endoscopic cubital tunnel service.
- Become a medical student examiner.
- Improve general fitness.
- Develop leadership skills.

Medium term

- Develop teaching experience.
- Apply for clinical lead role.
- Become an examiner for MRCS.

Long term

- Leader in my field.
- Gain promotion and recognition as a leader.
- Consultant surgeon with additional NHS duties
- Become an examiner for FRCS.

Step 4: Evaluation - am I on track?

Your personal development plan should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that you are achieving your goals. Your goals and circumstances may change and hence your PDP should reflect this. There will be areas where you have possibly overshot your aspirations and, therefore, you will need to set higher goals and, equally, there may situations where you have not achieved what you set out, which will require reflection and adjustment. This process can be included as a regular part of your appraisal and revalidation.

Figure 1.
Chart showing the PDP cycle

