

**Distance Learning Guidelines**

**Continuing Professional  
Development**

**Distance Learning Approval**

## Contents

1.	Background	3
2.	CPD Credits	3
3.	Distance-Learning Communications Media	3
4.	Approval Criteria	4
5.	CPD Distance-Learning Evaluation Panel	6
6.	Appeals	7
7.	Terms and Conditions for Indicating CPD Approval	7
8.	Submitting an online Distance-Learning product- completing the application	8
9.	Distance-learning review time frame	12
10.	Administration and Evaluation Fee	13
11.	Contact Details	15

**Note: This document applies only to the approval of distance learning materials specifically produced for this purpose. This does not include journal articles (print- or electronic-based) or modules/programmes incorporating material published in or as journal articles, nor the broadcasting of live or recorded conferences, lectures or teleconferences.**

## 1. Background

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the educative means of updating, developing and enhancing how physicians apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in their working lives. Since 1995 the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (comprising the Royal Colleges of Physicians of London, Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow) has developed policies and criteria for CPD activity.

The purposes of the CPD scheme are:

- To approve CPD activities organised and developed by individuals and organisations (non-commercial and commercial)
- To allow physicians to record their participation, in the form of credits, in these approved CPD activities

## 2. CPD Credits

Physicians are required to register a minimum average of 50 CPD Credits annually, of which 25 must be external (category 1) credits.

The Federation has an Approved Distance-Learning Credit category in order to acknowledge the increasingly available high quality online educational opportunities. Physicians can register up to 10 Approved Distance-Learning Credits towards their minimum annual requirement of 25 external (category 1) credits. **Physicians can only register Distance-Learning Credits from Distance-Learning materials/products that have been approved for this purpose by the Federation.**

## 3. Distance-Learning Communications Media

Distance-learning can be defined as providing education to physicians engaged in learning at a time and place of their own choosing and at a distance from a presenter, facilitator or tutor.

The Federation will consider approving high quality distance-learning products delivered in the following ways, or a combination of these:

- Computer based via the Internet, CD-ROM and DVD
- Via mobile devices
- Through audiovisual media including video and DVD

This list is not exclusive. Communications media are constantly evolving and the Federation wishes to encourage innovative approaches to the provision of CPD distance-learning.

## 4. Approval Criteria

Distance-learning products submitted via our online application process for consideration and approval **must** meet the criteria listed in A to N below. Up to two members of the CPD Distance-Learning Evaluation Panel (see section 5) will be asked to make a recommendation based on these criteria.

All products eligible for approval should:

**1) Provide a supporting statement that explains why you have developed this particular product and topic(s).**

**2) Identify and state the target audience.**

The target audience must fall within the remit of the Federation and must be clearly identified in terms of professional role and specialty. The Federation CPD scheme is intended for trained doctors, Consultants and Staff and Associate Specialist Grades.

Please see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialty> for Federation supported specialties.

**3) Define specific learning objectives which are appropriate for the target audience.**

The learning objectives must be stated at the beginning of the module or programme. They should be explained in terms of the knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviours that will be learnt.

**4) Provide good quality content covering the subject matter.**

Content must represent up-to-date evidence-based best practice as advised by experts or opinion leaders in the field, and must be able to deliver the stated learning objectives.

**5) Focus on a specific clinical or non-clinical (professional) subject.**

Distance-Learning materials focussing on clinical issues could, for example, cover a particular disease, condition, treatment or patient management problem. For non-clinical issues the subject could focus, for example, on a particular educational, managerial or academic skill (e.g. teaching, appraisal or assessment).

**6) Include interactivity between the user and material to enhance and reinforce the learning process.**

Ideally this should involve the user in decision making or a test of knowledge during the course of the materials and not just through a series of questions at the end of the programme.

**7) Incorporate the key principles of adult learning to enhance knowledge, attitudes and skills and to develop understanding of content and context.**

As best practice, the product should contain features that encourage reflective practice, peer learning/interaction with peers and problem-based or task driven approaches to learning.

**8) Provide an effective method of assessment to demonstrate whether the user has achieved the stated learning objectives.**

i) For example, undertaking a set of self-assessment questions (we recommend a 'best-of five' format) or submission of a portfolio of work. If self assessment questions are used there should be at least 10 questions for each CPD credit applied for and there should be a threshold score\* that ensures a level of learning appropriate to a trained specialist.

ii) The product should be designed in a way that does not allow users to skip sections of the activity and go straight to the assessment.

iii) If users do not achieve the threshold score, then they should be directed back to the activity where it is expected that they will review the educational content and *then* reattempt the assessment.

**9) There should be evidence that all legal, medico-legal and ethical considerations are met.**

These include: copyright, patient consent for clinical materials used, patient confidentiality and data protection.

**10) Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by a commercial organisation must be declared in the materials. Any competing or vested interest on the part of the producer or contributors must also be declared.**

If there is no potential competing interest there must be a declaration to this effect.

**11) Any support, sponsorship, funding or involvement by commercial organisations must not influence the structure or materials.**

The materials will not be approved if there is bias towards use of any commercial product that does not represent current evidence-based professional practice.

Generic names of pharmaceutical products must be used throughout and not proprietary or "trade" names.

\* A threshold score of 70% would normally be sufficient to demonstrate learning, but this may vary according to the difficulty of the questions and the material.

**12) Be flexible and free from unreasonable geographical and resource (hardware and software) implications and time constraints that will restrict access to use**

Users should be able to work at their own pace and at any time with the ability to stop and continue with the module or programme when desired.

**13) Provide facilities to enable users to evaluate the product.**

To determine user-satisfaction, to provide feedback from the user to the provider and to the CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel and to assist the evaluation of the product's potential influence on the user's performance, behaviour and clinical practice.

**14) The provider's evaluation record for previous or on-going products must be satisfactory or, where not, reasons for unsatisfactory ratings must have been addressed.**

**15) Upon successful completion of the product, the user must be provided with a certificate stating the user's name and details, results from the assessment section, CPD Distance-Learning Credits awarded and CPD approval code.**

The user is advised to keep a copy of the certificate for audit purposes. It is recommended that the downloadable certificate is issued automatically at the end of a satisfactory assessment of learning.

### **Expiry date and suggested credits**

When submitting a distance-learning product for evaluation and approval, providers should suggest to the CPD Office the number of CPD Distance-Learning Credits to be awarded and an expiry date for CPD approval. Current and expected advances within the subject area should be taken into account when considering the expiry date. The expiry date must be no longer than two years after the date the product is approved for CPD. When CPD approval has expired, providers will have an opportunity to revise their work and submit a new application for CPD approval.

### **5. CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel**

An evaluation of the product will be conducted by up to two members of the Panel. The Panel will include the Federation's Regional CPD advisers and specialty representatives, other consultant physicians drawn from the medical specialties, and professionals noted for their expertise in non-clinical issues. Names of the Panel members will not be disclosed to providers at any time during or after the evaluation and approval process.

The Panel members will assess the value of the product as a CPD resource using the criteria outlined in section 4. The Panel members will be asked to complete a CPD

Distance-Learning Evaluation Form which can be accessed from the RCP website:  
<http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/cpd/manage-your-cpd/cpd-approval-distance-learning>

The Panel members will recommend to one of the Federation's Directors of Continuing Professional Development that the product be:

- Approved - including the suggested expiry date and number of CPD credits
- Approved - subject to minor amendments
- Not approved and referred back to the provider with reason(s)

If the product is approved subject to minor amendments the product may be resubmitted once for further consideration. (See section 9 for further information)

## **6. Appeals**

In case of disagreement between the provider and the assessors an appeal must be made in writing. The matter will be referred to two Directors of CPD of the Federation's three Colleges. The final decision will rest with the Directors. An extension of the review period should be expected in these circumstances.

## **7. Terms and Conditions for Providers Indicating CPD Approval by the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians**

Upon written confirmation of approval the provider will be asked to agree to the terms and conditions for indicating CPD approval on the packaging, communications media and any promotional material.

- The following statement (or words similar) must be indicated on the packaging, front-end screen and certificate (see below) – “This product has been approved for ‘x’ Distance-Learning CPD Credits by the Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. The expiry date for CPD approval is *month / year.*”
- Where applicable (e.g. with CD-ROMs and printed materials) providers must deposit a functioning copy of the final version of their work with the CPD Office.
- The product will automatically be removed from the electronic events database at the end of the approval period.
- Providers must be able to demonstrate that the following systems have been set up and included within or alongside the product:

- Issuing of certificates to and keeping of records of those physicians awarded CPD Distance-Learning Credits. Certificates should contain the following: physician’s name, CPD credits awarded, a CPD activity code **and the issue date of the certificate**.
- A CPD activity code or codes will be issued to the provider upon approval. The activity code will be valid until the end of the agreed expiry date.
- Individuals utilising a product must not be able to access the electronic or print copies of certificates, records and self-assessment scores of other users that are held by the provider.
- Collection of feedback – relevance, quality and effectiveness – from physicians regarding the use of the product. A report summarising the results of any feedback must be provided to the CPD Distance Learning Evaluation Panel on an annual basis or upon request.
- The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians reserves the right to withdraw CPD approval at any time, should it feel that any of the above terms and conditions has been contravened, in which case the provider must no longer communicate that their distance-learning product has been approved for CPD by the Federation.

## 8. Submitting an online Distance-learning product - completing the application

Please use the official online application form to submit a package for approval.

### Step 1. ADD ACTIVITY TITLES AND CREDITS

#### Title of Module or Programme/proposed start date

Please decide on a title for your module/programme and when you would like it to start.

**Step 1. Add Activity Title and Credits**

**Important:** You must click Edit to enter your DL start date.

Please note the maximum length of approval for a distance learning product is 2 years from approval. Retrospective approval can be applied for if the start date is within the current CPD year. (1st April- 31st March).

code	Start Date	Product/Module Title	Credits		
74625		Type your title here	0	<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete"/>
<input type="button" value="Add Module Title/credits"/>					

### Suggested CPD Credits

1 CPD credit = 1 full hour or learning/educational content

Please round up for every additional 30 minutes and round down for everything less than 30 minutes. For example 1hour 30 minutes = 2 CPD Credits 1hour 15 minutes = 1 CPD Credit

## Step 2. BASIC DETAILS

Details of an individual(s) with whom we can primarily discuss administrative and educational issues to do with the application

Step 2. Basic Details

User Fee (£)	
Type	Clinical
Category	External
Contact Name	
Contact Job Title	
Contact Email	
Contact Tel	
Registered Organisation Name	Royal College of Physicians of London
Organisation type	Non commercial
	Do you form part of the Registered Organisation? Select 'No' if you work for another organisation such as a conference or event organising company <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Organisation Website	
Kind of Activity	Distance Learning Activity
<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	

## Fees to be charged to Users

Details of any charges to Users for using the programme or accessing the module

## Contact Details of Provider/Applicant

Details of an individual(s) to whom we can primarily discuss administrative and educational issues to do with the application

## Step 3. PRODUCT FORMAT AND LOG IN DETAILS

Step 3. Product format and log in details

Important: For products of any other format, e.g. CD-ROM, please contact the CPD office on [cpdapproval@rcplondon.ac.uk](mailto:cpdapproval@rcplondon.ac.uk)

User process: Please provide details of how we can replicate the process an actual User would experience when utilising your product. Alternatively you can upload this information via the file upload section in Step 7.

Website/Url	
Username	
Password	
Any special hardware or software requirements	
User Process	
Details of non-online product	
How long would you like your DL product to be approved for?	
<input type="button" value="Edit"/>	

- For online programmes which require a log in: provide us with access details. (Website address, username and password etc.) If the website is still under construction or not yet live; a log in for a test/development area or temporary site is acceptable as long as it is nearing completion.
- NB: If you do provide us with a log in for a temporary area please provide details of minor changes which may be made or additional information which will be included when the site is completed and launched.
- Provide all materials which a User would require to complete the distance learning programme- for example: workbook and CD Rom.
- Provide evidence that interactivity between the User and the programme exists and demonstrate how/where this is present.
- The expiry date should be no longer than two years after the date the work is approved for CPD.

NB: The clinician who reviews the application for accreditation needs to be able to replicate the *full process* a user would experience when accessing the distance learning programme/module, therefore the information provided needs to be accurate and sufficient for this purpose. It should also be possible to ‘fast-forward’ or ‘replay’ the review material in order to assist the reviewer.

#### Step 4. ADDITIONAL DETAILS

**Step 4. Additional Details**

The learning objectives should reflect measurable outcomes, and use action verbs such as "evaluate", "identify", "review", etc. For example, "To evaluate current guidance regarding the application of the Mental Capacity Act, in order to increase delegates' awareness of this topic".

Learning Objective 1	
Learning Objective 2	
Learning Objective 3	
How will this activity be evaluated?	
Competing interest	In compliance with Federation guidelines, the provider/applicant confirms that all participants (speakers, chairpersons or other faculty) in this programme have disclosed any potential or actual competing interest. This includes any financial or other support that might cause bias. The provider/applicant accepts responsibility for ensuring that all potential competing interests relevant to the presentation/event are declared to the audience/participants prior to the CPD activity. <b>Do you have any competing interests or potential sources of bias to declare?</b> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Competing interest declaration	<input type="checkbox"/> I/we agree that I/we have provided all of the requested information regarding competing interests of the organisation and faculty and have been accurate and truthful about the status of our organisation (Not-for-profit or For-profit).
Audience Local	Please Select (Please note that events confined to individuals from one hospital or trust do not qualify for External CPD approval).

**Please provide 2 or 3 learning objectives associated with the programme.** The objectives should reflect measurable outcomes, and use action verbs such as “evaluate,” “identify,” “review” etc.

Include details about what the distance learning material hopes to achieve, and how this will be put in practice.

For example, ‘To be able to evaluate the current treatment options for elderly patients with type 2 diabetes’

#### Step 5. TARGET AUDIENCE

Include professional role and specialty for example: Consultants, Rheumatology  
Please note the educational content of the programme must be primarily aimed at consultants and post training physicians.

Please see <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/specialty> for medical specialties that fall within the remit of the Federation.

#### Step 6. SPONSOR DETAILS

Please provide the names of any sponsors involved in the programme as well as what sort of sponsorship they are providing.

Sponsorship must be provided in the form of an unrestricted educational grant.

#### Step 7. FILE UPLOADS (SUPPORTING INFORMATION)

It is mandatory to upload the following information:

- Assessment of learning
- Self-assessment threshold (refer to Criterion 8)
- Example of certificate

You can use this section to upload any further information in a single document which you feel is relevant in support of your application. This may include:

- Further details regarding intended users, subject and specialities
- Details and results of any market research and evaluative procedures
- Methods used to select information for inclusion in the programme (e.g. based on expert opinion, literature, research, etc)
- Additional contact details where applicable

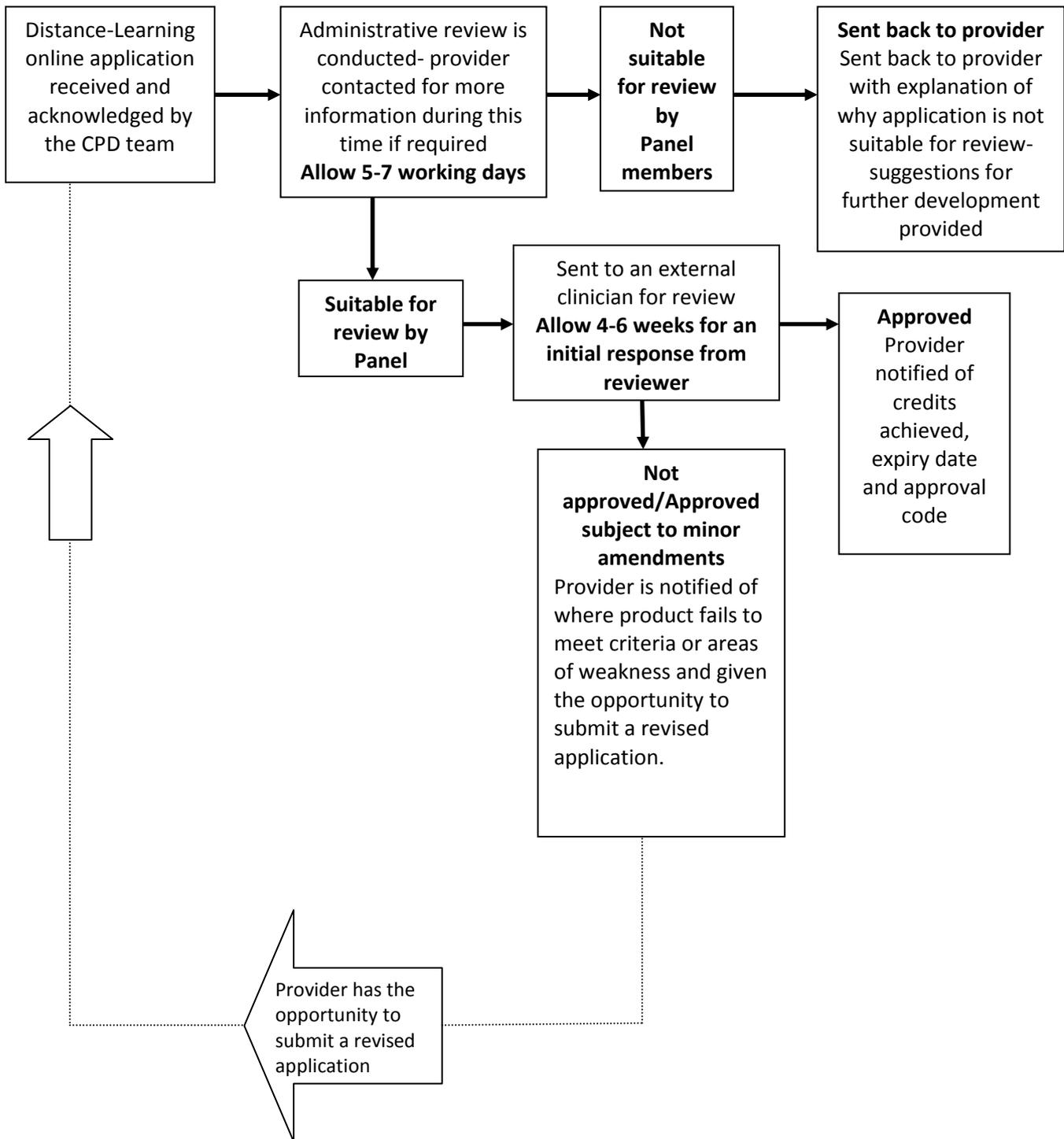
#### **Step 8. CLINICAL/NON-CLINICAL LINKS**

Please link to a specific clinical speciality or non-clinical topic e.g. cardiology or education, respectively.

#### **Blended learning**

To apply for CPD approval of a blended learning product, providers are required to complete both the online distance learning application form and online live event approval application form and submit them to the CPD office at the same time.

## 9. Distance-learning review time frame



## 10. Administration and Evaluation Fee

An administration and evaluation fee applies to any distance-learning application made to the Federation. This fee must be paid in advance of an external review commencing and should be arranged and included when making a formal application.

Our fee structure is on a per credit basis and charges are as follows:

NUMBER OF CREDITS	COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS	NON-COMMERCIAL PROVIDERS
1	£500 + VAT = £600	£250 + VAT = £300
2	£1000 + VAT = £1200	£300 + VAT = £360
3	£1500 + VAT = £1800	£350 + VAT = £420
4	£2000 + VAT = £2400	£400 + VAT = £480
5	£2500 + VAT = £3000	£450 + VAT = £540
6	£3000 + VAT = £3600	£500 + VAT = £600
7	£3500 + VAT = £4200	£550 + VAT = £660
8	£4000 + VAT = £4800	£600 + VAT = £720
9	£4500 + VAT = £5400	£650 + VAT = £780

- If an application is *not approved* for CPD credits, or an application is withdrawn by the provider, then the non-refundable 1 credit administration fee will be retained (£500 + VAT for commercial providers and £250 + VAT for non-commercial providers) – NB: This will apply even if the product attracts only one credit.

The commercial fees apply to:

- 1) Commercial providers producing a distance learning product (including joint productions with medical societies)
- 2) Commercial providers making an application or producing the product on behalf of a non-commercial organisation. This includes situations where the commercial provider is the host or provides a platform for a non-commercial product to exist
- 3) Non-commercial providers receiving financial support and/or contributions towards the cost of developing, launching or maintenance of a distance learning product from a commercial organisation
- 4) Products sponsored by or jointly produced with a pharmaceutical, industrial or other commercial company

Please note:

- If, when an application is evaluated and it is approved for more CPD Credits than estimated at the application stage, the provider will be requested to pay the additional fee per credit above the original payment amount to receive the full CPD approval.
- If an application is approved subject to amendments the provider will have one opportunity to amend the product accordingly and re-submit a revised application.  
If the amendments are not made as required and therefore the application is rejected, a new application may be submitted later, but a new fee will be charged.

**Arranging payment**

**Making payment online or selecting a payment method**

- **Invoices** can be generated instantly within the system, with a PDF copy being emailed to you immediately, and the option to include your own purchase order number is available.
- **Payment** by credit/debit card can also be made online by logging into your provider account, locating your event, and clicking on the 'pay' button.
- **A cheque** can be sent – please make sure the event code number is quoted on the back of the cheque and that it is made payable to Royal College of Physicians and sent to the CPD office (see contact details, page 15).

Click through the tabs to view your application status

Activities in production	Activities submitted	Activities that are with reviewer	Rejected activities	Activities waiting payment	Approved & Live activities
Date	Code	Name	Status		Payment Amount
22/04/2010	64808	Type your title here	Assigned to a reviewer		£30.00 (Inc 20% VAT)



**NEW!** To make a payment, please select one of the following options: (then scroll down the page, read our instructions, and select Confirm Payment Method)

- I wish to send a cheque
- I wish to pay online by credit card using PayPal
- I would like to request an invoice

**Payment by invoice**

Please provide the following details in order for us to email you with your invoice. Also note that you can print your invoice anytime via the home page.

**Billing Address**

Contact name:   
Address:   
City:   
Post code:   
Purchase Order Number:

**Contact details**

Contact number:   
Contact email:

Please note: Any applications received on or after 4th January 2011 will be subject to the 20% VAT increase.

[Confirm Payment Method](#)

Note that it is only when we receive payment of the administrative fee that an approved event will go live on the system. We therefore **strongly recommend** that payment is made on submission of your application form.

It is possible to select a payment option, change your payment option, or make a payment at a later date, by logging back into your provider account, locating your application, and clicking on the Pay button.

If clarification or advice is required as to which fee applies please contact the London CPD Office to discuss the applicable fees (See Section 10). In these cases we will need to see a sample of the product or a completed application form in order to offer fee guidance.

### **Review of Fee Structure**

The fee structure and policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that charges are realistic and equitable.

#### **CHECK LIST:**

***Before submitting your application, please ensure that you have read and understood our distance learning guidelines and check that you have included the following in your online application:***

- Active online log in details/URL to access the programme where applicable
- An answer key to any method of assessment which is part of the programme
- Arranged payment (using one of the above methods)
- Enclosed any additional information which may be useful during the review process

### **11. Contact Details**

- **The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom  
CPD Office - Distance-Learning**  
Royal College of Physicians of London  
11 St Andrews Place  
Regent's Park  
London  
NW1 4LE

**Contact:** Francesca Pateman

**Tel:** 0203 075 1489

**Fax:** 020 7487 4156

**Email:** cpd@rcplondon.ac.uk or francesca.pateman@rcplondon.ac.uk

**Websites:** [www.rcplondon.ac.uk](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk)  
[www.rcpsg.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk)  
[www.rcpe.ac.uk](http://www.rcpe.ac.uk)

- **The Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom is a working partnership of three Colleges:**
  - Royal College of Physicians of London
  - Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
  - Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow