

ePortfolio Review: Policy on Extenuating Circumstances

Version 2.0

Extenuating Circumstances Policy

The PSI Continuing Professional Development Rules 2015 (S.I. No. 553 of 2015) which came into effect on 1 January 2016, state that registered pharmacists have an obligation to undertake regular continuing professional development (CPD) in order to maintain their competence. The Rules mandate that pharmacists must record and maintain a record of CPD activities, using an ePortfolio system, as specified by the PSI. Each registered pharmacist is obliged to submit a report of his or her CPD activities for review once in every 5 years.

To facilitate the ePortfolio review, the PSI will make a random selection from the register of pharmacists each year, and the pharmacists will be required to submit an extract of his/her ePortfolio to the Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IIOP) for review. The PSI will notify the selected pharmacists by email, advising them of the next steps in the process.

On occasion, circumstances may arise where a selected pharmacist is not in a position to participate in the review. This document clarifies how a pharmacist can make an application for exemption from the review process and how the PSI will consider such applications.

An extenuating circumstance is regarded as a circumstance beyond the control of the individual, which has had and/or will have an impact on the pharmacist's ability to submit a report of his or her CPD activities for review and/or the ability to comply with CPD requirements.

Examples of Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are exceptional situations and it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of scenarios that would fall into this category. Applications will be dealt with on a case by case basis. However, for information purposes, the following is a list of generally accepted circumstances and examples of evidence required to support such applications:

Generally accepted circumstances	Supporting documentation to be submitted with application
Serious illness preventing a pharmacist from being able to work.	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the illness that prevents the pharmacist from working.
Acute personal/emotional circumstances, for example, due to a bereavement, which prevent a pharmacist from working.	An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the circumstances
Serious illness of a family member (e.g. spouse, parent, child)	A medical cert/letter from an appropriate medical professional confirming the nature of the circumstances
Criminal investigation or proceedings, litigation, jury duty, other legal matters, excluding professional disciplinary matters	A solicitor's letter
Maternity leave Parental leave (when taken as 'block' period of time)	Letter from appropriate medical professional and employer with details of when leave commenced.

Examples of generally unacceptable circumstances are set out below.

Generally unacceptable circumstances	Examples
A short-term illness	Short illness that has occurred during the year
Personal disruptions or events	Holidays, staying, travelling or living abroad, weddings, changing address or employment
Excessive demands on time or pressure of one's employment	
Financial problems	
Unemployment	
Career break	
Retirement	Retired pharmacists who wish to remain on the Register are obliged to engage in CPD.

Process

On receipt of notification that a pharmacist has been selected to submit for ePortfolio review, if he/she feels they are unable to submit a report of CPD activities for review due to extenuating circumstances, he/she should complete the Extenuating Circumstances Form and attach all supporting documentation for submission to the PSI by the deadline outlined on the notification email.

- The PSI will acknowledge receipt of the application in writing within 5 working days from the date the application is received at the PSI offices.
- The application will be considered by the Registrar of the PSI (or appropriate person, as nominated by the Registrar) and the outcome will be issued to the applicant formally in writing within 28 days of receipt of the application.

If the pharmacist is unable to complete the application form due to being incapacitated, a next of kin may contact the PSI and request to complete and submit the application on their behalf.

Outcomes

There are two possible outcomes following an application for exemption from the ePortfolio review process, due to extenuating circumstances:

- The application is approved and the pharmacist is exempt from submitting a report of his or her CPD activities for the review year. In these circumstances, the pharmacist will be required to submit the report the following review year.
- The application is not approved and the pharmacist must submit a report of his or her CPD activities for the current review year.

It is important to note that applicants should not assume that an application has been granted until they receive written confirmation from the PSI.

Supporting Documentation

- It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide relevant supporting documentation. Applications made to the PSI without independent supporting documentation will not be considered.
- The PSI reserves the right to independently verify any supporting documentation if deemed necessary. If any supporting documentation cannot be independently verified, the PSI reserves the right to reject an application.
- Supporting documentation provided by a third party must be provided by a relevant, qualified, independent professional, who must not be a relative of the applicant.
- Only original supporting documentation and/or copies of original documents which have been certified as true and accurate copies of the original by a Solicitor and/or Commissioner for Oaths, will be accepted.
- Any supporting documentation submitted that is not in the English/Irish language must also be accompanied by a certified translation. The translation must be carried out by a registered and authorised translator. On the page of the translation, the translator must state name of translator and business address, certify that they are authorised to translate from the language into English [or Irish] language(s) and certify that the translation is true and accurate.
- Documentation submitted in support of an application must be unaltered. Altered or amended documentation will not be accepted.
- If evidence of fraudulent documentation is found during assessment of an application, the matter will be referred to the Registrar of the PSI.
- All applications and supporting documents will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the PSI's Data Protection policies.

Assessment of Extenuating Circumstances Applications

Applications for extenuating circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis by the Registrar of the PSI, or by an appropriate person, as nominated by the Registrar.

When assessing applications for extenuating circumstances, the following considerations shall be included in the assessment process:

- What potential patient safety implications arise, if the pharmacist is exempt from ePortfolio review on this occasion?
- Has the application been submitted by the deadline and in the appropriate form with all relevant supporting documentation?
- Has the pharmacist previously submitted an application for extenuating circumstances?
- Has the pharmacist provided evidence of satisfactory certification for ePortfolio Review in the past?
- Is the pharmacist currently practising?

Document Version Control				
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