ICAPHE
International Council for Accreditation &
Advancement of Public Health Education

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Accreditation Handbook

2025

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ICAPHE's CPD Accreditation

ICAPHE's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Accreditation is an independent certification that formally recognises the quality of a range of public health training activities. These include, but not limited to, short training courses, standalone modules, symposia, summer schools, MOOCs, and micro-credential courses. However, this accreditation does not extend to conferences.

In many countries, these activities are categorised as CPD training events, which are specifically designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and competencies required by public health professionals.

Application Process

The ICAPHE CPD accreditation self-evaluation / application form is structured to guide training providers through a logical sequence of questions, enabling them to reflect upon and self-assess their training provision. For courses under 40 hours in length there is no mandatory review required although external reviewers may request virtual meetings and / or additional documentation where necessary.

Each individual course seeking accreditation must undergo a separate application process. Once approved, CPD accreditation is valid for three years from the date stated in the formal acceptance letter. If the training course undergoes significant changes during this period, the provider must notify ICAPHE in writing and submit the

relevant updates. Any substantial modifications may require reapplication for accreditation. As part of the overall quality improvement of the ICAPHE accreditation processes, applicants will be provided with areas for improvement consideration on which they will be expected to report back to ICAPHE.

CPD Training and Micro-Credentials

Public health professionals benefit greatly from CPD training, which ensures they remain up to date with the latest developments in their field, continuously refining their expertise and skills. These training courses are available across various health sectors and can be delivered in-person, online, or through a blended learning approach serving either as standalone certifications or as components of broader qualifications. They also help professionals build a structured portfolio of

CPD evidence, demonstrating their knowledge and competencies in specific areas of public health while underscoring the public health workforce's commitment to ongoing professional development.

Course Specification

A CPD course completes a Course Specification which begins by defining the aims and intended learning outcomes, outlining what the training course aims to achieve and detailing the knowledge, skills, and attributes that trainees will develop in line with the mission of the organising institution. It also provides an overview of the training and learning (andragogical) methodologies used to deliver the course effectively. The Specification includes a breakdown of assessment methods, if applicable, clarifying how trainee performance will be evaluated. Additionally, professional adaptation and the content covered within the course is outlined, giving trainees a clear understanding of the topics with which they will engage.

The structure and delivery format of the training sessions are also specified, including the duration and mode of delivery and the resources available to support trainees, ensuring they have access to the necessary tools and assistance throughout their training.

At the end of the Course Specification, an optional section is included for monitoring Essential Public Health Functions, in alignment with the World Health Organization (WHO) framework. While this section is not mandatory, it allows training providers to assess how their public health courses align with global standards. Feedback from this monitoring process may be submitted to WHO for consideration in future policy reviews and updates.

Clarity and Accessibility

The CPD application should be concise, clear and understandable to a broad audience including employers. The final document should present an accessible summary that supports informed decision-making for prospective trainees.

PROCEDURAL OVERVIEW

Initial Discussion

The applicant begins by discussing the processes and what is required with ICAPHE to gain a clear understanding of the CPD accreditation process and its associated requirements.

Application Submission

To begin the CPD Accreditation process, the applicant submits a draft self-evaluation to ICAPHE for an initial review to assess whether any modifications are necessary or might improve the application. If revisions are proposed, the application is discussed with the applicant along with detailed feedback outlining the amendments advised. If no changes are necessary, the application proceeds next stage and is forwarded to an external reviewer for evaluation.

External Reviewer Evaluation

The external reviewer will determine whether the application and course meets the established criteria. If they are satisfied that the submission is complete and requires no further revisions, the review continues to its conclusion. For courses under 40 hours there will be one reviewer assigned experienced in the subject matter. For courses over 40 hours two reviewers are assigned. If there are differences in findings between the two reviewers, a third external reviewer will be

contracted to provide the final review recommendation.

Online Review

Courses over 40 hours in length are required to undertake a small tele- review where reviewers will have chance to meet and discuss the course with key internal and external stakeholders. The schedules for these reviews are entirely bespoke and will be based around the lines of enquiry generated by the reviewers. The timeframes for these reviews will be between one and three hours maximum. For courses less than 40 hours, reviewers may have areas for clarification or modification. In this circumstance the applicant is informed and provided with specific feedback detailing the necessary changes and / or the need for a small tele-conference to discuss any areas where the reviewer seeks clarity. If the reviewer considers the amendments sufficient, the process moves forward to the next stage.

Accreditation Review Board Decision

The Accreditation Review Board appraises the findings from the external assessment and makes a final decision on the application. If the Board approves the application, an official CPD Accreditation decision is issued. However, if further revisions or clarifications are required, the applicant is notified and may need to provide additional information or participate in a virtual meeting to address the Board's concerns.
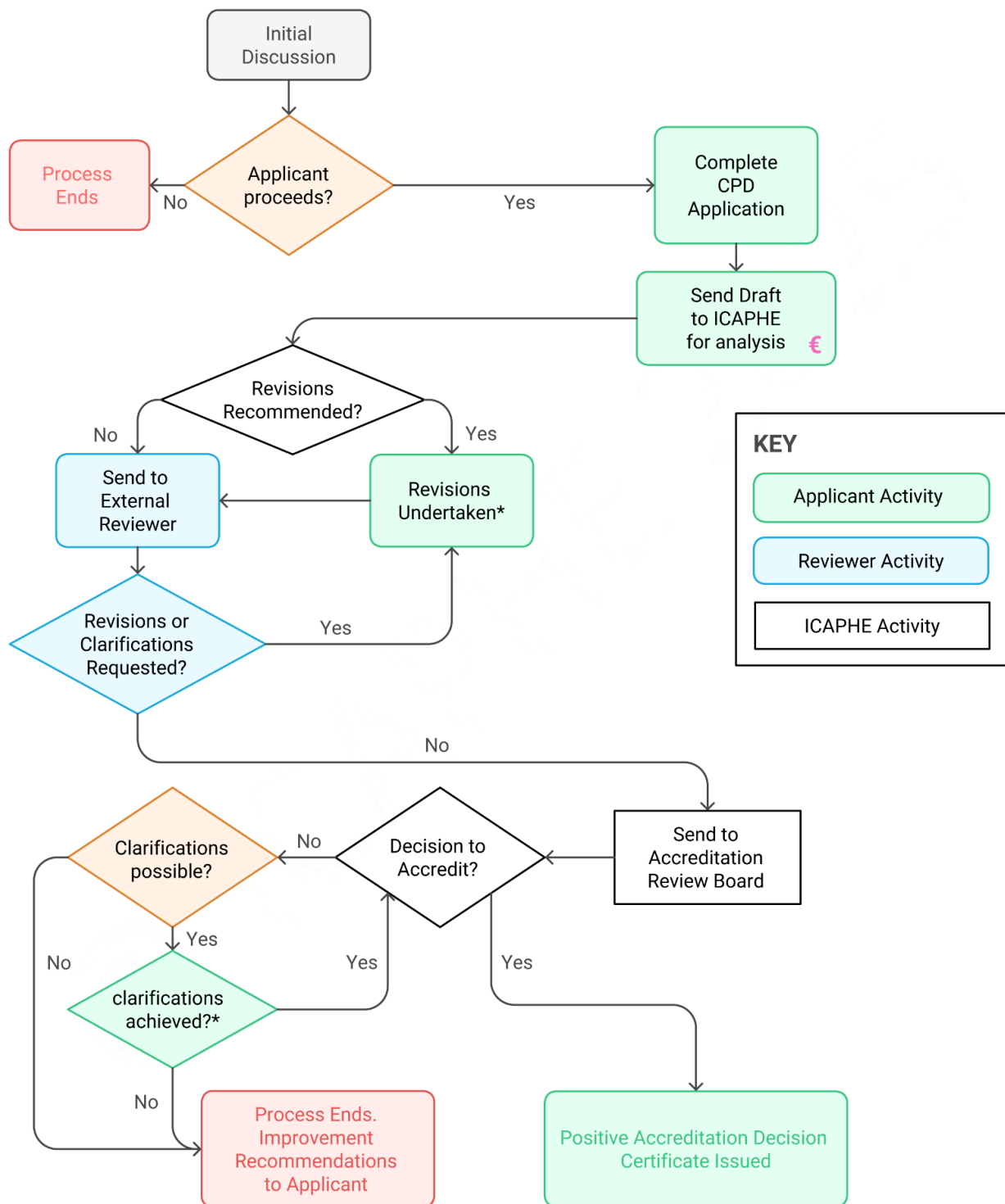
Final Review and Decision

If the revised submission fully meets all necessary requirements, the Board finalises its decision and grants accreditation and a Certificate. If the application remains unsatisfactory, the applicant receives a Quality Enhancement Review Report detailing the required modifications, along with recommendations and a timeframe for resubmission. In this case, the application is declined until the necessary improvements are made.

Areas for review will be forwarded to the applicant as part of the continuous improvement life cycle.

The above stages are summarised in the workflow diagram on the following page:

Process Workflow

Initial Discussion

Applicant proceeds?
- No → Process Ends
- Yes → Complete CPD Application

Send Draft to ICAPHE for analysis €

Revisions Recommended?
- No → Send to External Reviewer
- Yes → Revisions Undertaken*

Revisions or Clarifications Requested?
- Yes → Revisions Undertaken*

KEY
- Applicant Activity
- Reviewer Activity
- ICAPHE Activity

Send to External Reviewer

Revisions or Clarifications Requested?
- No → Decision to Accredit?

Send to Accreditation Review Board

Decision to Accredit?
- No → Clarifications possible?
- Yes → Positive Accreditation Decision Certificate Issued

Clarifications possible?
- No → Process Ends. Improvement Recommendations to Applicant
- Yes → clarifications achieved?*

clarifications achieved?*
- Yes → Decision to Accredit?
- No → Process Ends. Improvement Recommendations to Applicant

Positive Accreditation Decision Certificate Issued

Decisions

The Review Board has access to three broad categories of decisions for accreditation which are explained in brief here. The conditions for each category are outlined in the subsequent pages.

1. Full Accreditation

Full Accreditation is granted for a maximum term of six years when a course meets the minimum compliance with all applicable accreditation criteria. There may be recommendations for follow-up measures- for example, Quality Review and Progress reports may be required. Once accredited, the results are published on the ICAPHE website.

2. Conditional Accreditation

Conditional Accreditation is granted when a course meets core accreditation requirements but has specific deficiencies that must be addressed within 2 years. This status allows continued operation while improvements are made. The applicant must submit a corrective action plan as part of the Quality Review and Progress processes (see below) and demonstrate progress in resolving issues. Failure to meet conditions by the deadline may result in denial / revocation of accreditation. However, if the conditions are met accreditation may be fully granted for the remaining period of six year accreditation.

3. Denial / Revocation of Accreditation

Denial or revocation of accreditation is issued when a course fails to comply with the accreditation criteria. The applicant receives detailed feedback on deficiencies, along with clear guidance on necessary improvements for future consideration as part of the Quality Review and Progress processes (see below). If accreditation is revoked, the course is required to cease operation under accredited status. The applicant may reapply once all identified issues have been adequately addressed and compliance with accreditation criteria is demonstrated.

CATEGORY OF ACCREDITATION	IS ACCREDITED?	TIMEFRAME
Full Accreditation	Yes	3 years
Conditional Accreditation	Yes	6 months to 1 year
Denial / Revocation	No	As of the date of the letter informing of the Denial / Revocation of Accreditation status, the course is no longer or will not be accredited. Applicants have opportunity to appeal this decision. The course is not accredited during the appeal process. Accreditation for the course is restored by a Review Board decision based on appeals process.

Quality Review and Progress Reporting

ICAPHE Accreditation is far more than a stamp of approval. It is a process in overall Quality Assurance and Improvement and the ongoing journey of continuous development in our Schools, courses and Courses.

1. Application (Self-Evaluation)
The process begins with a holistic and inclusive introspective application of activities, processes and systems. The Application is based around a series of criteria which provide the applicant with a tool to institutionalise reflection through providing a framework to reflect on existing thinking and practices as part of a Total Quality Management System.

2. External Review
The second stage consists of independent reviewers assessing the course through analysis of the application which may require meetings with key stakeholders. Their evaluation provides an objective perspective on the course's quality but also where improvements might be sought.

3. Formative Feedback from Reviewers
As part of the external review, reviewers provide constructive feedback on the course's strengths and areas for development. This feedback helps support courses in areas they are doing well and receive formative and objective advice for potential action in areas that may require review. These come in the form of recommendations.

4. Conditions, Recommendations and Action Plans
Specific conditions or recommendations are provided with the objective of enhancing the course. These

Quality Review and Progress Process — Self-Evaluation 1, External Review 2, Formative Feedback 3, Recommendations & Action Plans 4, Implementation 5, Follow-Up Reporting 6

recommendations form the basis of action plans which can be used as part of the progress reports[1].

5. Implementation Phase
The course puts the agreed action plans into practice, addressing the recommendations or conditions. (see below)

6. Follow-Up Reporting
As part of the ongoing improvement activities, the course submits a follow-up report to demonstrate progress on the action plans. This report allows reviewers to assess whether the recommended improvements have been successfully integrated into the course or what challenges are being faced.

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[1] In the case of conditional accreditation the reviewers defines "conditions" that must be implemented for obtaining full accreditation. This is different from recommendations which do not have a mandatory nature

Additional Assistance

In addition to the above processes there is also an optional meeting available with the reviewers at the end of the review to informally discuss potential areas for further development. The reviews offer an in-depth objective view of the course which can be fed back into developmental aspirations.

Quality Review and Progress Processes in action

ICAPHE accreditation is a formative model designed to help courses improve over the longer term, so it is in the interest of the course that accreditation is used as a tool to support them moving forward. It is important to distiguish between recommendations and conditions. In the case of conditional accreditation the review team defines "conditions" that must be implemented for obtaining full accreditation. This is different from recommendations which do not have a mandatory nature.

It is strongly advised that the course undertakes a small feasibility study and needs assessments to ensure that the practicability of the recommendations suits its needs before reporting back if it accepts the recommendation and how it will be implemented.

In all cases, each review recommendation or condition made should be addressed and reported back on. The system used is found in the table below and consists of identifying actions to take along with indicators for success as well as persons responsible and timeframes. The follow-up reporting will vary depending on the accreditation decision

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Condition/Recommendation	Action to take	Completion date	Actioned by	Indicator
Condition or recommendation made by the review team	Action taken as result of condition or recommendation	Date for action to be completed	Persons or group responsible to undertake action	Indicator for success (KPI)

Table 1: Action plan outline for reporting

Self-Evaluation Report & Accreditation Criteria

Guidelines for the Self-Evaluation Process

The self-evaluation begins with a brief introductory section to contextualise your Course. While some of this content may be repeated in the main body of the report, this introduction serves to familiarise reviewers with your Course's context.

The Self Evaluation Report should address each applicable criterion demonstrating how your Course complies with it (maximum of 2 pages each). Each criterion should be supported by relevant evidence which may be presented in different ways. Documents can be submitted with the report, the School may provide adequate links and some documentation (e.g. examples of examination papers, Master or PhD thesis, etc.) may be made available during the visit. This may be discussed with the Accreditation Review Panel. If there are criteria which are not applicable to your particular circumstances or context you are obliged to issue a statement informing the reviewers why this is the case.

Completed self-evaluations should be submitted approximately two months before the intended review date, along with a draft meeting schedule highlighting the individuals to be interviewed.

Guidance for Applicants on writing the Introductory Section for Reviewers

Please provide a short (maximum 2 pages) introductory piece to help orientate the reviewers to your Course. The following sections can act as guidance, and you may include references or links to relevant sources.

A. History of the Course

Brief overview of your Course's history, including when and why it was established and by whom. Significant milestones or developments over time, particularly any key changes that have taken place in recent years.

B. The Public Health Context

Please provide insight into the broader Public Health context and Public Health priorities and how they shaped your Course, influencing its overall objectives.

C. Distinctiveness and Impact

Highlight any areas which you believe your Course to be distinctive and where you feel it makes the most impact.

D. Why Are You Undergoing Accreditation?

Explain your reasons for seeking accreditation. What benefits do you anticipate and how does accreditation align with your Course's objectives and plans? Finally, how did you hear about ICAPHE and why did you choose them?

Accreditation Criteria

INTRODUCTION

History of the course, public health context, distinctiveness and impact etc

1. Course Aims and Decision-Making

1.1. Course Aims, Outcomes, Distinctiveness & Social Accountability

Criterion

The course clearly articulates its aims, learning outcomes and distinctiveness, indicating alignment with the host institution's mission and demonstrating that it serves an identified need with intended impact on learners and professional practice.

Guidance

Applicants should describe the main aims of the course and what it is intended to achieve for learners in terms of knowledge, skills or professional growth. Explain how these aims support or complement the strategic goals or values of the host institution. Clearly outline the intended learning outcomes and explain how these are relevant, measurable and aligned with the course's purpose and the needs of the intended audience. Additionally, reflect on what distinguishes the course, for example, whether through innovative content, teaching methods, delivery formats or a specific target audience. Emphasise the most significant outcomes or impacts the course aims to deliver, such as workforce development, community engagement or policy influence.

1.2. Organisation & Decision Making

Criterion

The course is supported by a clear organisational structure, with designated leadership and active stakeholder involvement to ensure effective design, approval delivery, accountability and continuous development.

Guidance

Applicants should explain how the course fits into the institution's organisational framework, including any relevant departments, units or centres. Clarify who is responsible for organising, approving and overseeing the course and summarise their key roles in ensuring quality and relevance. Identify the stakeholders involved, such as trainers, professional bodies, external partners, participants and explain how they contribute to course design, delivery or review. Emphasise how this collaboration ensures the course meets professional development needs, aligns with institutional goals and reflects current public health priorities.

2. Participants and Engagement

2.1. Audience & Admissions

Criterion

The targeted audience and admission / registration processes are clearly defined, transparent, inclusive and appropriate to the course aims and outcomes. Appropriate outreach and criteria ensure participants are suitably prepared to benefit from the learning experience.

Guidance

Applicants should clearly define the intended audience, outlining the professional backgrounds, roles or sectors the course is designed to support. Describe the entrance requirements and how prospective learners can apply. Explain the steps in place to assess applications fairly, consistently and in line with the course's objectives. If there is a limit on participant intake, outline how this is determined, such as resource availability, optimal group sizes or delivery format.

2.2. Learning & Assessment

Criterion

The course is designed and delivered using appropriate, inclusive and evidence-based learning methods, with clear outcomes, structured content and assessment (where applicable) that supports the application of learning in practice.

Guidance

Describe the teaching methods and delivery formats used, whether in-person, online or hybrid and explain how these approaches enhance accessibility and engagement. Provide an overview of the course structure and sequence, including a brief timetable if applicable. If assessments are used, explain how they support and measure the achievement of learning outcomes. Finally, highlight how learning is designed to be applied in practice, for example, reflection or practical exercises and how innovation, whether through content, delivery or technology, is integrated.

* Much of this criterion may already be included in Course / Programme Handbook. If so please refer.

2.3. Participation & Awards

Criterion

The course clearly defines learner participation, recognises engagement through appropriate certification or CPD credit and ensures transparency in how these awards are calculated, issued and recognisable.

Guidance

Applicants should describe the types of learning engagement offered, such as, trainer-led sessions, group work or self-directed study and explain how participation is distributed across these formats. Clarify whether a certificate is awarded upon completion, who issues it and what

conditions must be met. Where relevant, outline if the CPD issues a certificate and by whom. Reflect on how these certificates or points are recognised professionally, nationally or by other institutions.

3. Resources

3.1. Human & Physical Resources

Criterion

The course is supported by suitably qualified trainers and appropriate physical, digital and learning resources that are adequate and relevant to meet its stated aims, outcomes and participant needs.

Guidance

Applicants should describe who the core trainers are, highlighting how their qualifications and experience align with the course's objectives and content. Outline the support roles in place, such as administrative, technical or facilitation staff and explain how these roles contribute to effective course delivery. Provide an overview of the core learning materials or texts used and how they support the intended outcomes. Additionally, describe any supplementary resources available to enhance the learning experience, such as access to online platforms, simulations, specialised equipment, academic literature or databases.

3.2. Public Information

Criterion

Courses ensure clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and easily accessible information is available for prospective participants, stakeholders and the public at large.

Guidance

Applicants should provide clear and detailed information about their CPD programmes in public health. This should include the courses offered, the intended audience, learning outcomes, the structure and duration of the courses and the type of certification awarded upon completion.

4. Quality Assurance, Financing and Integrity

4.1. Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Criterion

The course operates within a clear system of quality assurance and enhancement that ensures regular review, integrates stakeholder feedback and supports continuous improvement in line with evolving workforce needs and public health priorities.

Applicants should describe their approach to quality assurance and enhancement, including who is responsible for oversight and how the processes are implemented. Explain how the course is regularly reviewed (internally or externally) to ensure it remains relevant, effective and responsive to evolving public health and workforce needs. Describe how feedback from learners, staff and external stakeholders is systematically gathered and used to inform course improvements. Additionally, reflect on how benchmarking, external review processes or formal accreditations have shaped the design, delivery or refinement of the course.

4.2. Financing & Conflicts Of Interest

Criterion

The course is transparently financed and implements safeguards to ensure it is free from undue commercial influence or conflicts of interest, protecting the integrity and independence of its educational content.

Guidance

Applicants should describe how the course is financed, including key sources of income such as participant fees, grants or sponsorships. Clearly explain the steps taken to identify, declare and manage any potential conflicts of interest, particularly where external funding or partnerships are involved. Detail how the integrity of the course is safeguarded, ensuring that commercial or financial interests do not influence the course content, learning outcomes or delivery. This may include internal policies, review processes or declaration requirements for trainers and contributors.

5. SWOT Analysis; Improvement Plan

Provide a short (1 page maximum) SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the CPD Course / event. This analytical document should include:

- Review/reflect on the strategic goals of your Course.
- Analyse its strengths and weaknesses (factors intrinsic to the Course which enable or hinder the achievement of strategic goals).
- Identify opportunities and threats (external factors which can positively or negatively affect main goals)

Propose an improvement plan for your Course which answers the following questions:

- What changes are planned to achieve the main objectives?
- Do the improvement proposals address the weaknesses?
- Are those proposals supported by the strengths?
- Priority and time for implementation
- Indicators of implementation

Examples of supporting evidence

1. Course / Programme Handbook (or other material which indicates the following): Course timetable; topics; learning outcomes; training methods; modes of delivery and assessments (where applicable)
2. Trainer CVs or short bios outlining relevant experience.
3. (if not in Handbook) List of learning materials or access to a reading/resource guide.
4. Summary of Internal review reports or quality improvement plans
5. Provide a copy of your conflict of interest policy, if available.
6. Other relevant documents