

# Reflections on the MMA CPD system

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The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is the body that represents registered medical practitioners in Malaysia. In 1994, it introduced a national Continuing Medical Education (CME) system on a voluntary basis for all doctors in the country. As a longstanding member of the MMA Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Committee, I wish to record some reflections on the MMA CPD System and document the history and the pioneering work of MMA in the area of CPD.

## History of the MMA CPD System

During the 33rd AGM of the MMA in Pulau Langkawi 1993, the following resolution was unanimously adopted by the House:

*“That this House resolves to direct the Incoming Council to ensure that the MMA will help implement, monitor and coordinate CME programmes for the MMA members, both specialists and non-specialists. Representatives from each group will be co-opted to form a committee and that the MMA will be the secretariat for the National CME Programme. Minimum attendance requirement for CME programmes will be monitored by the MMA through its branches and even at district levels. These returns will be conveyed to the MMC for their information towards eventual issuance of the Annual Practising Certificate.”*

Following this, the MMA Council formed the MMA CME committee to implement CME in a coordinated manner, the modus operandi for the MMA CME Programme was formulated and adopted by the MMA Council. The MMA CME Programme was launched in February, 1994.

## Collaboration between Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) and MMA

On 30th March 1994, the MMA was requested by the MMC “to undertake to conduct and co-ordinate CME credit activities for all medical practitioners (MMA members and Non-Members of the MMA). The MMA CME Committee and the MMC Standing Committee on CME met on 30th September 1994 and decided to adopt the MMC CME Grading system and the MMC, on 13th December 1994, officially appointed the MMA as the Secretariat for the MMC CME Grading System.

## MMC CME Grading System

This was launched on 11th January 1995 by the then President of the MMC, Tan Sri Dato’ Dr Abu Bakar bin Suleiman, with MMA as the Secretariat responsible for:

1. Registration of Providers
2. Accreditation of CME activities
3. Allocation of CME Points according to the MMC-CME Scoring Schedule

4. Collation of points accrued by registered participants, forwarding to MMC and preparation and issuance of certificates.

The name of the grading system was changed to MMC CPD Grading System in July 2006.

## MMC-CPD Grading System Scoring Schedule

The schedule for the MMC-CME Grading System initially had eight categories, 1A, 1B, 1C, 2, 3A, 3B, 4 and 5 (Appendix 1).

In 2014, the MMA worked with the MMC on a major revision of the MMC-CPD Grading System. The updated Scoring Schedule which had nine Categories, A1 to A9, was completed on 24th December 2014 and finalised on 31st January 2015 by the MMC CPD Committee. It was presented to the MMC on 17th March 2015 and confirmed during the MMC meeting on 21st April 2015. It was slightly edited on 5th May 2016 and further revised on 4th April 2018 (Appendix 2). The MMC CPD Grading System was later expanded and amended again in 2020 and the latest schedule with eight categories, A1 to A8, came into effect from 1st July 2020 (Appendix 3).

In the latest grading system, CPD points can be awarded not only for attendance at meetings and conferences but also for work-based learning and quality improvement activities. The scope of scholarly activities has been expanded for training and presentation during meetings as well as for involvement in research and publications as investigators, grant recipients, supervisors, authors, reviewers and journal editors. An additional category was added for professional development activities including leadership role in medical societies, self-development courses and community activities.

## MMA CPD Session

The first ten sessions (from 1994 until 2004) ran from 1st September until 31st August of the following year. Since it was anticipated that CPD points would eventually become a requirement for renewal of Annual Practising Certificate, the CPD Session was changed from the 11th session onwards (ending in 2005) to commence on 1st July of each year and to run until 30th June of the following year. This far-sightedness obviated the need to change the dates for the CPD session when it came to pass in 2017 that CPD points become a mandatory requirement for renewal of Annual Practising Certificate.

## Certificates for the CPD Programme

From the beginning, the process of verification of CPD points was stringent and required either validated certificates of attendance for overseas meetings or the submission by

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registered the CPD providers of attested attendance records with signatures against the names and identity card numbers of the participants. The MMA CPD Secretariat collated the CPD points according to the categories in the MMC-CME Grading System and sent verification statements to the MMC at the end of each CPD Session. Based on the verification statements, MMC issued a certificate of the credit points accrued by the Registered Medical Practitioners annually, beginning in 1996. The certificates with the number of CPD points accrued in all the categories were sent to all members shortly after the closure of each CPD Session.

### The MMA CPD Committee

From 1994, the MMA CME committee has overseen the accreditation of CPD points for all doctors, both primary care doctors and specialists, in the private and government sectors. This committee changed its name to MMA CPD Committee in 2005. MMA invested heavily in hardware, software and trained staff to administer this system which has been running smoothly for over two decades. The MMA CPD Committee has experienced members who have championed and nurtured the system for many years as well as more junior members who are no less enthusiastic. The committee members include both primary care doctors and specialists. In the early days, all the functions had to be carried out manually and resulted in much paperwork for registration of providers, accreditation of CPD activities, recording attendance for CPD activities and issuance of certificates.

After the MMA CPD System moved online in 2017, most of the work for accreditation of CPD activities was done on the MMA CPD Portal. Discussion on registration of new providers has been done via email circulation.

### CPD Providers

As of October 2020, 508 active CPD providers had re-registered with the MMA CPD System via the MMA CPD Portal. These providers are from the following categories:

- i. Government hospitals
- ii. Private hospitals and medical centres
- iii. Departments in the Ministry of Health
- iv. Specialist bodies and societies
- v. Universities, colleges and institutes

The largest number of Providers is from the category specialist bodies and societies, followed by Government and private hospitals, departments in the Ministry of Health and universities, colleges and institutes in Malaysia. The MMC has set out criteria for the providers in their Quality Standards and these criteria have to be fulfilled to assure that CPD activities have strong educational content and are relevant to the practitioners.

### Activities to encourage participation in CPD

Participation in CPD activities was voluntary from the commencement of the MMA CPD System in 1994 until 2017. Much work was done to encourage doctors to participate in CPD activities. Apart from the certificate provided by the MMC, MMA awarded an additional Certificate of Merit to those who attained 50 points and above on a yearly basis. In 2008–2009, Assoc. Prof. Dr. John George and I co-authored four articles for the MMA newsletter *Berita MMA* regarding the MMC-CPD Grading System. On 29th March 2009, a

MMA National CPD Symposium was organised by the MMA CPD Committee. Speakers from Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia shared their experiences regarding the CPD programme in their countries and there were also speakers from local stakeholder organisations including MMC, MMA, Ministry of Health, Academy of Medicine of Malaysia and Academy of Family Physicians of Malaysia.

### Compulsory CPD for renewal of Annual Practising Certificate

Internationally, formal CPD Systems have evolved apace in developed countries with stringent regulatory CPD requirements linked to recertification.<sup>1</sup> However, CPD has yet to evolve in many of the Southeast Asian countries.<sup>2</sup> Singapore had imposed compulsory Continuing Medical Education requirements on doctors for renewal of their practicing certificates from 2005.<sup>1</sup> There are also regulations on CPD in Indonesia<sup>2</sup> and the Philippines<sup>3</sup>, for doctors to renew their licenses, In Thailand and Myanmar, CPD is not a mandatory requirement for doctors to renew their license<sup>2</sup> and Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR are currently in the process of instituting a licensing system.<sup>4,5</sup> An overview shows that CPD Systems have evolved at different rates with significant variations in organisational structure and regulatory mechanisms.

To facilitate the development of CPD and accord it legitimacy, Malaysia amended its Medical Act, 1971 to make CPD a mandatory requirement for fully registered medical practitioners and linked it to the renewal of annual practicing certificate (APC). Malaysia joined the ranks of nations that practise mandatory CPD for doctors when the Medical (Amendment) Act 2012, Medical Regulations 2017 came into force on 1st July 2017.

With regards to this, MMA was mandated as a CPD Administrator by the MMC. The other CPD administrators are the MyCPD System of the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Medicine of Malaysia Medical Specialist CPD System.

All Registered Medical Practitioners are encouraged to participate in the MMA CPD System. Members of MMA are automatically registered in the system. Non-members must register to participate in the MMA CPD System; they have to provide their MMC full registration number so that their status as a registered medical practitioner can be ascertained before registration is confirmed. As part of its Social and Corporate Responsibility, MMA has agreed to collate and tabulate the CPD points for non-MMA members without any applicable fees, so it can benefit all medical practitioners who are registered with the MMC.

### MyCPD System of the Ministry of Health Malaysia

The MyCPD system of the Ministry of Health had adopted the MMC-CPD Grading System in 2007 with additional categories included. From 2015, a project was undertaken by Ministry of Health to upgrade the MyCPD System to Version 2.0 and I attended many MyCPD Version 2.0 Project Management Meetings in 2016 and 2017 as representative of the MMA. This system is a web-based system and records CPD points for all Ministry of Health staff.

### MMA Mobile Application for CPD

A mobile application for CPD providers and doctors was launched in May 2017 during the 57th MMA Annual General Meeting in Penang. Via this application, points can be viewed in real time unlike the past where one had to wait for a whole year to receive the certificate. The aim was to automate the system so that registered participants can check accrued CPD points easily and in real time. Capabilities included the following:

1. Registration of non-members
2. Registration of CPD providers
3. Processing applications for accreditation of educational events by providers
4. Recording attendance instantaneously during educational activities (by swiping profile QR Code during physical events or swiping event QR code during online CPD events)
5. Issuance of certificates at the end of each CPD Session

This innovative solution based on information technology is part of MMA's effort to upgrade in order to cope in this era of expanding regulatory requirement for accurate recording of CPD activities. MMA also has equipped the mobile application with a Manual Submission section which will capture points for CPD activities other than accredited events organised by local CPD providers. Registered medical practitioners can apply for CPD points for these activities, including for international conferences and online events, attachments, audit and quality assurance activities, training, research, publications and professional development activities in the manual submission section of the MMA CPD mobile application. After clicking on the Manual Submission icon, the user has to upload details of the activity, programme and certificate; these details are then displayed in the MMA CPD Portal for approval by the MMA CPD Committee. Once approved, the CPD points will be shown in the user's MMA CPD mobile application.

The data recorded in the mobile application has been linked to the MyCPD System of the Ministry of Health and Malaysian Medical Council APC (MeRITS) website. This was made possible from the hard work of the Executive Committee and Information Technology (IT) Committee of the MMA.

### MMA CPD Online Modules

With the advent of the MMA mobile application, it has been possible to work with CPD providers of online CPD modules. The websites of these providers are linked to the MMA CPD Portal via application programming interface (API) and CPD points are accredited into the user's MMA CPD mobile application upon successful completion of each module. At present, the education websites with CPD online modules linked to the MMA CPD Portal include those of MIMS Education, Docquity, Medcomet, Prezcapture and the Malaysian Thoracic Society.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the online CPD modules have become increasingly popular and there has been an increasing number of MMA CPD mobile app users claiming CPD points for completing CPD online modules apart from those listed above. These have to be submitted on the

Manual Submission section of the MMA CPD mobile application. Many conferences and meetings have had to be converted to virtual meetings and webinars, since face-to-face meetings have had to be curtailed from March 2020.

### Role of MMA State Branches

One of the strengths of MMA in CPD is the network of CPD Chairpersons and Coordinators at each State Branch; they were active in organising and accrediting CPD activities held under the auspices of their Branch and verified attendance records before sending to the MMA CPD Secretariat. Before the advent of the MMA mobile application, they also forwarded claims for CPD points by members for overseas meetings and publications to the MMA CPD Secretariat.

As an example, MMA Penang Branch organised many smaller meetings as well as a well-received conference for General Practitioners annually from 1998. The last conference held in September 2019 was the 23rd in the series. The Branch also organised theme conferences including Conferences on Pain Management (2004), Metabolic Syndrome (2006), Infectious Diseases (2007), Clinical Emergencies (2008, 2010 & 2014) and Childhood Diseases & Women's Health (2011), and the Penang Respiratory Conference (2019).

### CONCLUSION

The history and progress of the MMA CPD System has been documented from its inception in 1994 until the present day when it still plays an important role as CPD administrator for over 34,000 doctors in Malaysia. It is envisaged that the MMC will guide future developments as the regulatory authority overseeing the CPD mandatory requirement for renewal of Annual Practising Certificate for registered medical practitioners.

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**Appendix 1**  
**MMC-CPD Grading System Scoring Schedule**  
**EFFECTIVE FROM: 01/01/1996**

Category	CPD Activity Description	Credit Points Attainable	Additional Criteria Required
1A	Medical Congress (Local/International)	20 points per congress	A congress should: a) Be conducted not less than 3 full days, a full day being 5-8 hours b) Involve speakers of international standing c) contain plenary lectures/symposia d) allow presentation of free communications/posters, etc.
1B	<b>Scientific meetings of Chapters of Academy/ Universities/Colleges/ Association/Public &amp; Private Medical Institutions</b> a) less than 2 hours b) 2-4 hours (1/2 day) c) 5-8 hours (full day) d) 4 or more full days	1 point 2 points 3 points 10 points	Between 1,2, or 3 days, points are awarded according to hours
1C	<b>Workshop/Courses</b> a) Full Day b) More than full day but less than two full days c) 3 or more full days	3 points 5 points 10 points	A full day is 5-8 hours
<b>For all activities in these categories, attendance lists or certificates of attendance for overseas meetings are to be submitted.</b>			
2A	<b>Ward rounds/Lectures/ Clinic Attendance</b>	1 point per hour	For ward rounds, credit points are awarded to participants from outside the hospital establishment, e.g. Private practitioners, verified by the CPD Chairman of that institution
3A	<b>Publication of Original Articles in Medical Journal/Chapters in Book</b> a) Indexed Journal (i) Principal author (ii) Others b) Non-indexed Journal (i) Principal author (ii) Others c) Chapter in book -each chapter (up to a maximum of 10 points)	10 points 7 points 5 points 3 points 5 points	An Indexed journal is one which has international standing and is listed in the Index Medicus or similar indexing system
3B	<b>Presentation at accredited meeting</b> a) Free paper/short paper/poster b) Plenary lecture/long paper c) Visiting Lecture	3 points 5 points 3 points	a) These credit points are in addition to full delegate attendance at Medical Congresses (1A), Scientific Meetings (1B), or Workshop (1C). Otherwise, only credit points for presentation are attainable. b) Attendees/audience should be medical practitioners.
4	<b>Self-Study/Group Study/ Distance Learning</b> a) Reading scientific Papers from indexed journals b) Audio-visual c) Organised group discussion under accredited co-ordinator	1 point 1 point 1 point	Documented evidence (with verification) needs to be produced.
5	<b>CPD Online (By Registered Accredited Provider)</b>	1 point	a) Participants will be allowed 2 weeks to read CPD Article and answer associated questions b) Each participants will only have one attempt at Answering allotted questions per article c) Participants must obtain a minimum of 65%, to be awarded 1 credit point

**Appendix 2**  
**MMC-CPD Grading System Scoring Schedule**  
**Updated 24.12.15, finalised on 30.1.15 (Edited on 5.5.16) (Reedited on 4.4.18)**

Category	CPD Activity Description	Credit Points	Additional Criteria Required
<b>A1</b>	<b>Medical Congress</b>		
	(Local/International)	Maximum points per Congress is 20 points	A congress should: a. Be conducted over full days, a full day being 5 – 8 hours. b. Involve speakers of international standing. c. Contain plenary lecturers/symposia. d. Allow presentation of free communication/poster, etc.
	a. 5-8 hours (full day)	8	
	b. 2 full days	16	
	c. 3 or more full days	20	
<b>A2</b>	<b>Scientific Meetings</b>		
	Academy / Universities / Colleges / Association / Institutions	Maximum points per Meeting is 20 points	
	a. 1- 2 hours	2	
	b. 2-4 hours (1/2day)	4	
	c. 5-8 hours (full day)	8	
	d. 2 Full days	16	
	e. 3 or more full days	20	
<b>A3</b>	<b>Workshops/Course/ study tour</b>		
	Includes hands-on & skills courses		For professional attachment, credit points are awarded to participants from outside the place of work, e.g. Tertiary Hospitals, University Hospitals.
	a. Half day (2-4 hours)	4	
	b. Full day (5-8 hours)	6	
	c. 2 Full days	10	
	d. 3 or more full days	15	
	e. Skills accredited courses by specific disciplines (e.g. ALS, PALS, NRP, MTLs)	20	
	f. Study tour	5	
<b>A4</b>	<b>CME session/ other professional activities</b>		
	Topic seminar, Forum, Lectures, Formal Ward rounds (teaching rounds), Clinic attendance, Hospital clinical meeting, Video presentation, Medical video conferencing, Morbidity and mortality reviews, Epidemiological reviews		For ward rounds and clinic attendance credit points are awarded to participants from outside own hospital/ establishment, .e.g. Private practitioners, verified by the CPD Chairman.
	a. Organising Chairman for a Scientific meeting	5 pts/ meeting	
	b. Topic seminar	1 point/hr	
	c. Forum	1 point/hr	
	d. Lectures (postgraduate lectures are not eligible for CPD points)	1 point/hr	
	e. Ward rounds	1 point/hr	
	f. Clinic attendance	1 point/hr	
	g. Hospital clinical meeting	1 point/hr	
	h. Video presentation	1 point/hr	
	i. Medical video conferencing	1 point/hr	
	j. Morbidity and mortality reviews	1 point/hr	
	k. Epidemiological reviews	1 point/hr	
<b>A5</b>	<b>Presentation at meetings</b>		
	Plenary Lecture/long paper/ free paper/short paper/ poster/ Other lectures, Hospital Clinical meeting, CME sessions, Public Medical talks		These credit points are in addition to full delegate attendance at congresses, scientific meetings or workshops. Otherwise only credit points for presentation are attainable.
	a. Free paper/short paper/poster	10	
	b. Plenary lecture/long paper	10	
	c. Lecture presentation	5	
	d. Hospital clinical meeting	5	
	e. CME session	5	
	f. Public medical talk	5	



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<b>A6 Publications of original articles in journal/ chapters in book / reports &amp; Important role in journal</b>			
(i)	Publication of original articles in journal /chapters in books/ reports		An indexed journal is one which has international standing and is listed in the Index Medicus or similar indexing system. *Note: All whose name is in the paper will be given the points.
	a. Indexed/peer reviewed journal (authors)	20	
	b. Non-indexed journal (authors)	10	
	c. Chapters in book (authors)	10 per chapter	
	d. Reports e.g. Technical reports, working papers etc.	10	
(ii)	Editor, Member of Editorial Board, Referee/Reviewer		Pertaining to production of journals, special reports, bulletins, newsletters etc.
	a. Editor	10	
	b. Member of Editorial Board	5	
	c. Referee/reviewer (per article)	5	
<b>A7 Self-study/group study/distance learning</b>			
Reading scientific papers from indexed journals, organised group discussion under accredited co-coordinator	1 point per paper or session		Documented evidence (with verification) needs to be produced e.g. a. Self study - Self administered MCQ. b. Documented evidence in the form of synopsis / evidence table.
<b>A8 CME Online</b>			
	1 point per article or session		The CPD Board is ultimately responsible for accreditation of the providers.
<b>A9 Special interest training courses (Short training courses/Fellowship /Attachment)</b>			
			These should be a. Conducted by relevant recognised authorities - local or international. b. Verified by the CPD committee. c. Points are given only once, on completion of studies.
	a. >3 - 6 months	20	
	b. >6 months - 1 year	30	

For all activities, certificates of attendance, certified attendance lists or other evidence of verification are required.

**Appendix 3**  
**MMC-CPD Grading System**  
**Effective from 1st July 2020**

Category	CPD Activity Description	Credit Points
<b>A1</b>	<b>Scientific Meetings/Congress</b>	
	a. Half day (2-4 hours)	4 points
	b. Full day (5-8 hours)	8 points
	c. 2 full days	16 points
	d. 3 or more full days	20 points (max)
<b>A2</b>	<b>Workshops/Courses/Skill Courses including ATLS/CCrISP/CPR/ACLS/ALS/PALS/NRP/MTLS</b>	
	a. Half day (2-4 hours)	4 points
	b. Full day (5-8 hours)	8 points
	c. 2 full days	16 points
	d. 3 or more full days	20 points (max)
<b>A3</b>	<b>Work-based Learning</b>	
	a. Hospital/department CME	1 point/hr
	b. Small group discussion/case conference	1 point/hr
	c. Participation in inter-department clinical meeting / epidemiological review	1 point/hr
	d. Journal club meeting	1 point/hr
	e. Formal grand ward round	1 point/hr
	f. External CME lecture/ topic seminar	1 point/hr
	g. Short courses/attachment >1 – 3 months	10 points
	h. Short courses/attachment >3 - 6 months	20 points
	i. Short courses/attachment >6 months - 1 year	30 points
<b>A4</b>	<b>Quality Improvement Activities</b>	
	a. Morbidity and mortality reviews	1 point/hr
	b. Audit meetings	1 point/hr
	c. Participation in accreditation exercise	1 point/hr
	d. Participation in quality assurance (QA) activities	1 point/hr
<b>A5</b>	<b>Scholarly Activities/Training/Presentation</b>	
	a. Organising chairperson for a recognised Scientific meeting or workshop	5 points
	b. Examiner at final undergraduate/postgraduate examination	5 points
	c. Trainer/facilitator at a workshop	5 points
	d. Plenary /keynote lecture	5 points
	e. Presentation of lectures/oral/papers/posters at scientific meetings	5 points
	f. Presentation at hospital/departmental meetings and external lecture/topic seminar	5 points
<b>A6</b>	<b>Scholarly Activities/Research/Publication</b>	
	a. Principal/Co-Investigator in a clinical trial/research	5 points
	b. Obtained a research grant	5 points
	c. Author of an indexed/peer reviewed journal article	5 points
	d. Author of a non-indexed/non-peer reviewed journal article	5 points
	e. Author of a textbook/book chapter	5 points
	f. Chief Editor of a Journal Editorial Board	5 points
	g. Member of a Journal Editorial Board	5 points
	h. Reviewer of a peer reviewed journal article	5 points
	i. Reviewer of a textbook	5 points
	j. Supervisor for postgraduate research project	5 points
	k. Reviewer/examiner of research thesis	5 points
	l. Preparation of reports/member of reports committee e.g. technical reports, working papers, guidelines	5 points
m. Member of clinical guidelines/consensus guidelines (national/international)	5 points	
<b>A7</b>	<b>Self-directed Learning</b>	
	a. Online CME modules	1 point/module
	b. Self-study (Relevant books, publications, Journal articles, podcasts etc.)	1 point/module
	c. External lecture/ topic seminar	1 point/hr
<b>A8</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>	
	a. Leadership role in medical societies /NGOs	5 points
	b. Self-development courses e.g. IT courses, business management, administrative skills, leadership skills	5 points
	c. Risk management courses e.g. communications, ethics, medico-legal, patient safety	5 points
	d. Participation in community activities	5 points
	e. Participation in innovation projects	5 points
	f. Public lectures/talks, lectures/talks to NGO/radio/TV	5 points