

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

1 Foreword

1.1 *Individuals' & professional organisations' CPD : A subjective outline of CPD information reviewed*

- 1.1.1 Information about CPD (from nine professional organisations checked in mid-2005) ranges from outline to comprehensive. Some information is freely available to all, but some is restricted to members (who register) only. Information on CPD is quite scattered amongst & within the web sites of the organisations checked. Types & descriptions of CPD show much overlap across & between professional organisations.
- 1.1.2 Stated purposes of CPD *seem* to range from altruistic (i.e. benefit to others) to professionally self-serving (i.e. career- & self-fulfilment) & selfish (i.e. enhanced personal prospects & pay).
- 1.1.3 CPD can affect professional individuals fundamentally, throughout their working lives. *Benefits* potentially accrue to society, to employers, to clients, to the professions, & to those professional individuals who participate. CPD can provide a motive to *manage & progress* individuals' careers. It can keep industry *proficient & competitive*, it can make work more *interesting*, & it can make individuals more *employable* as professionals.
- 1.1.4 CPD is important not only to grow & refresh capabilities in professional individuals, but it is necessary also to make such individuals better & more professional participants in the teams with which they work.
- 1.1.5 In some instances, CPD for professional staff is offered by employers, who allocate time & funding to each individual. Some employers do not do this, perhaps where they see little need for CPD, particularly at the lower professional levels.
- 1.1.6 Where CPD is not provided in employment, it can be facilitated by professional organisations who offer CPD guidance to members, to help where employers do not do so. In all cases, CPD should be seen as the *personal responsibility* of each professional individual.
- 1.1.7 CPD appears to be strongly encouraged, & increasingly close to compulsory. Internationally, & within Europe, CPD seems to be encouraged & practised, & no significant differences were found.
- 1.1.8 Recommended quantity or time *commitment* to CPD seems to be generally quite vague, & left to professional or other needs, & judgement. A *minimum commitment* of 20 CPD "units" per year was suggested in one case, & five days (i.e. 40 hours) per year in another. At the other extreme, a CPD *commitment* of 15 days (i.e. 120 hours) per year was heard of in one case, at a high professional level (mandated, supported & funded by a large, public-sector employer).
- 1.1.9 Quality of CPD is of rising importance: it should be *self-assessed* by *relevance & outcome* compared with an individual's *professional needs* (i.e. a measure of *quality*), & *logged* accordingly. CPD may be subject to *audit* by professional organisations; & this might be extended to audit by employers & others in future.
- 1.1.10 The Society of Professional Engineers might choose to adopt & adapt for its members the best CPD features to be found, with due acknowledgements.

2 The Nature of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

2.1 *Relevant study at professional level ongoing throughout a working career*

- 2.1.1 This is almost a short definition of CPD.
- 2.1.2 *Relevant* excludes hobby pursuits or amateur study in areas not connected to the individual's profession.
- 2.1.3 *Study* excludes work experience & learning on the job: time must be dedicated to study.
- 2.1.4 *Professional level* excludes the frivolous or trivial & indicates an appropriately advanced, technical & conscientious approach to the matter.
- 2.1.5 *Ongoing* excludes occasional, sporadic or random study events, unless these are part of a planned continuum.
- 2.1.6 *Throughout a working career* excludes periods of full-time education at school or college. CPD is desirable during any spells of unemployment, but not in retirement.

3 The Purpose of CPD

3.1 Maintenance of professional excellence or competence, including updating skills & knowledge

- 3.1.1 It is necessary to possess *excellence or competence* (regarding *skills & knowledge*) to practise or work as a professional, *competence* being the very *minimum acceptable*.
- 3.1.2 However, firstly, *skills & knowledge* gained by education at school or college tend to decay & diminish with passing time.
- 3.1.3 Also, secondly, professional techniques tend continually to advance through developments in technology, law, & across wider society.
- 3.1.4 Any relative decline in *professional excellence or competence* caused by these two factors requires to be countered by CPD.

4 The Need for CPD, & its Justification

4.1 Obligation & Compulsion

- 4.1.1 Motivation to undertake CPD springs from a desire or *need* to maintain professional *excellence or competence*. Without CPD, these personal professional qualities will suffer. Life span should recognise CPD to be just as necessary to the ongoing professional career as appropriate education & training were at earlier stages. Hence, the professional will sense (almost as a matter of conscience) an *obligation & compulsion* to undertake CPD, or suffer the consequences. Briefly, CPD can *demonstrate & maintain professional competence & standing*.

4.2 Employability & Career Advancement

- 4.2.1 One of the basic needs of most professionals is continuing appropriate *employment*. Early in a career it becomes clearly apparent that key to value as a professional are current *skills & knowledge*, springing from education, training & experience. CPD is the professional way to updating *skills & knowledge*. It should be seen to help maximise a professional's potential for lifetime employability. Without CPD, one may not remain *employable* as a professional person.
- 4.2.2 Without CPD credentials (including professional qualifications), career advancement may be impaired, & new employment opportunities may be reduced. CPD should open the way to improving employability, & finding new career opportunities. It can provide the *professional polish* to succeed as an individual, & contribute to business success. All this may lead to opportunities for *promotion & mobility* of the professional person.

4.3 Professional registration

- 4.3.1 The hallmark of professional education & training is professional qualification, leading to *registration* with a recognised professional organisation. As with other credentials, *professional registration* can be crucial to career success & fulfilment in life. Increasingly, in line with an ethos of establishing & maintaining professional *excellence or competence*, professional organisations are stipulating CPD as a *duty of membership*.
- 4.3.2 Professional standards are set for entry to professional organisations &, increasingly, such standards may include a requirement for CPD, or professional membership may not be allowed. In some cases, written evidence of CPD is required at *professional review* before the *Chartered Engineer Qualification* can be granted. Evidence of CPD is also required for *Engineering Council Registration*.
- 4.3.3 Professional standards must also be maintained current by means of CPD, otherwise professional membership may not be allowed to continue, or allowed to be renewed. *Professional registration*, if achieved, may *lapse* or be *forfeit*, with potentially serious consequences.

4.4 The Importance of CPD

- 4.4.1 It follows from the above that CPD is important. Professional organisations *Codes of Conduct* (see below) increasingly cite CPD as *mandatory* or *obligatory*, maintaining professional standards & demonstrating *Professional Competence & Integrity* in the *Public Interest*, as a duty to the *Relevant Authority* (clients, or employers), & as a *Duty to the Profession*.
- 4.4.2 There is agreement amongst professional organisations as to the *growing importance* of CPD. However, perhaps because of such a *changing scene*, there is variety in how the importance of CPD is perceived & stated. Briefly, CPD is not *compulsory*, but it is *expected* of & is to be viewed as *obligatory* on *qualified, professional members*. Opinion is divided as to whether CPD is *mandatory*, some saying CPD is *mandatory within a model code of conduct* (the code itself being *voluntary*).

4.5 Code of Conduct Requirements

- 4.5.1 Code of conduct requirements for CPD activity generally include the following:

- 4.5.1.1 Undertake appropriate self-management, systematic planning, achievement, evaluation, recording of CPD.
- 4.5.1.2 The preparation, for production, of evidence of all this.
- 4.5.1.3 Support of the learning & CPD of others.
- 4.5.1.4 Demonstrate commitment to CPD, as above.
- 4.5.2 According to the code, CPD may be monitored (for example by audit, a feedback questionnaire, or otherwise) as a key requirement of professional registration.

5 Guidance & Help with CPD

5.1 Employers

- 5.1.1 Employers attitudes to CPD for professional staff range widely from mean & minimal to enthusiastic & generous. Overall, however, employer CPD provisions are improving. Probably, this has much to do with rising expectations generally, an increasingly litigious & safety oriented culture, & improved education of the workforce.
- 5.1.2 Training & in-service courses have been provided by some employers, for some staff, for very many years. At the higher levels, this was CPD in all but name & structure.
- 5.1.3 Recently, in more efficiency-seeking times, the *personal review*, to which staff may be subjected by their employers on a periodic (yearly) basis, may have grown up as a means of improving staff performance & of eliminating those who are consistently unsatisfactory.
- 5.1.4 The resulting structure of *appraisal*, indicated *action*, & subsequent further *review* leads on well to *employer-provided* CPD. Here, professional staff negotiate (with managers or the personnel department) *development goals & activities* to be provided.
- 5.1.5 Sadly, there may be some employers (often small) who seek to provide CPD „on the cheap“. They perform lip-service only to the provision of training, experience, & development opportunities. They make little investment in staff, & may have a *hire & fire* approach to the workforce. They plunder & poach talent where they can.
- 5.1.6 This may be short-sighted, as the better staff probably leave, despite their handicap, & find greater *fulfilment & recognition* of their professionalism elsewhere.
- 5.1.7 Generally larger employers, particularly those in the public sector, tend to offer the better CPD schemes. They have a *service ethos*, as well as an efficiency & profit motivation. They employ significant numbers of professional staff, & recognise a *role as investors* in people.
- 5.1.8 Some employers have long-standing arrangements with professional organisations to provide a *planned & structured developmental progression* to assist & motivate staff in their careers.
- 5.1.9 Whilst not *featherbedding*, such concern by employers for their professional staff is most welcome, & surely provides the *easiest route* to good CPD.

5.2 Professional organisations

- 5.2.1 Many professional organisations offer *help & guidance* to their members & others who consult their web-sites & publications.
- 5.2.2 Since CPD is not compulsory (yet), there are no *fixed rules* for it. Professional organisations offer *non-prescriptive guidance*, meaning that adherence to such guidance is *voluntary* & subject to individual *professional judgement*.
- 5.2.3 Gross errors here might render the CPD insufficient to pass muster if subjected to audit, inspection, or checking by professional organisations or others. However, there does seem to be a wide recognition (even tolerance) of *equivalence & mutual acceptability* of various CPD schemes, whether derived from professional organisations or employers. It has been said that, “If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well”.
- 5.2.4 It seems to be widely accepted that, if available, it is *best* (& *easiest*) to follow an *employer’s CPD scheme*, which is likely to provide funding, time, & other resources. Failing this, *CPD schemes* available from the professional organisations may be used.
- 5.2.5 Some of these *CPD schemes*, or products, are *software* or *web-site based*, & may provide *discipline, storage & accessibility* in relation to the *CPD record*.
- 5.2.6 It is, perhaps, a matter for conjecture & judgement whether such *schemes* or *products* are *future-proof*, & will withstand the *test of time*.

- 5.2.7 A CPD scheme may be required to last for forty years, & much will be liable to change over such a long period. *Paper* records may be a sound basis for *CPD records* that are to be archived for so long, & which may be liable to have to be *produced for inspection* from time to time.

5.3 **Organisation of Systematic CPD**

- 5.3.1 Professional organisations' guidance generally suggests that CPD may be best achieved through an evolving structured *development action plan*. There should be a clear demonstration of a commitment to CPD, typically including a commitment to a multi-stepped process intended to be used several times during a professional career.
- 5.3.2 Periods covered by each *development action plan* may range from two months to two years (or much more), but *reviews* should be held at least *every six months*. It may be helpful for reviews to be done with a *professional colleague or mentor*. Each *development action plan* should contain:
- 5.3.2.1 *Achievements since the last development action plan review, &*
- 5.3.2.2 *Actions agreed for the next development action plan review*
- 5.3.3 The following outline *plan structure* is suggested.
- 5.3.3.1 Analyse personal *strengths, weaknesses, & what is important*
- 5.3.3.2 Analyse career *opportunities & threats*
- 5.3.3.3 Identify *clear & realistic goals*: short, medium, & long term
- 5.3.3.4 Determine *skills & competencies* needed, including developing & acquiring *new competencies* (to keep employers interested)
- 5.3.3.5 Aim to *extend & broaden* personal knowledge, understanding, & technical capabilities
- 5.3.3.6 Draw up a *flexible*, personal & career development *plan*, & consider the *resources required*
- 5.3.3.7 *Focus* learning & development efforts *on the plan*
- 5.3.3.8 *Record all* learning & other activities & achievements, & *maintain evidence of* professional competence development
- 5.3.3.9 *Review progress regularly*, both of one's own personal & career development needs, & of *the plan itself*

6 **Quality of CPD**

6.1 **What to do, & How to do it**

- 6.1.1 These precepts must be well considered & appropriate if quality CPD is to result. *How to do it* is a matter of *organisation*, as touched on above.
- 6.1.2 What to do, or *types of CPD activity*, may be selected from a list of suggestions, as below.
- 6.1.3 This list is *not exhaustive*, & other *types of CPD activity* may very well be appropriate, *depending on circumstances*.
- 6.1.4 *No attempt* should be made to undertake *everything* listed.
- 6.1.5 Everything *planned* for action, or actually *done*, should be *logged in a Record* of CPD activities

6.2 **List of Types of CPD activity.**

- 6.2.1 In-house & external courses
- 6.2.2 Work-based learning, training, & seminars
- 6.2.3 Learning, training & seminars outside work
- 6.2.4 Distance learning, correspondence courses
- 6.2.5 Open learning, broadcast & video courses
- 6.2.6 Self-directed private study
- 6.2.7 E-learning & web research
- 6.2.8 Educational courses
- 6.2.9 Additional academic qualifications
- 6.2.10 Pursuing doctoral studies or a complementary degree

- 6.2.11 Reading books & journals
- 6.2.12 Writing for periodicals & the web
- 6.2.13 Preparation of papers
- 6.2.14 Preparation & delivery of talks, seminars, & lectures
- 6.2.15 Attendance at lectures, etc. on career & professional matters, & technology
- 6.2.16 Professional meetings & conferences
- 6.2.17 Learning through networking, discussion, & special interest groups
- 6.2.18 Sharing knowledge & skills by giving training, coaching, tutoring, mentoring, etc.
- 6.2.19 Experience, secondment, & participating in projects, new work, etc.
- 6.2.20 Building a databank on interesting firms, professional contacts, etc.
- 6.2.21 Keeping in touch with persons who can help (or, for the future, may be able to do so)
- 6.2.22 Studying typical career paths, & those of others: what are success factors?
- 6.2.23 Study of career cross-roads situations; seeking professional career advice
- 6.2.24 Keeping an open & realistic view of competencies in demand
- 6.2.25 Structured analysis of ambitions, successes, failures, experiences, motivations, people, & organisations who bring out one's best
- 6.2.26 Consulting others to help identify & recognise understand oneself, & one's own possibilities, opportunities, & capabilities
- 6.2.27 Use of web tools for career counselling & information
- 6.2.28 Relevant voluntary work
- 6.2.29 Maintain a schedule of certificated educational, training, & professional qualifications achieved, & keep the certificates with copies on file
- 6.2.30 Reviewing & revising a CV periodically to explain clearly competencies, responsibilities, accomplishments, etc.

7 Quantity of CPD

7.1 Time commitment

- 7.1.1 CPD is a *long-term* commitment, & it may be prudent to be *realistic* (indeed cautious) regarding the *nature & amount* that can be *achieved & maintained* throughout a professional career.
- 7.1.2 The essence of CPD is recording activity & the *preparation of evidence* for inspection & audit. Thus, any significant *changes* to the style & quantity of CPD will be *evident*. It may be desirable for the record to include *explanations* for these changes, as necessary.
- 7.1.3 The CPD plan should, itself, consider the *resources & time* to be committed to CPD.
- 7.1.4 It may be wise to *begin* with a *modest CPD commitment*, at or below the *lower end* of the *range* of examples mentioned above (i.e. 20 to 120 hours per year, a six-to-one ratio).
- 7.1.5 A realistic approach is necessary. For example, in an employer provided scheme, 120 hours (*three weeks*) CPD represents 6.8% of a 44-week working year (excluding public holidays & leave). This is clearly a *major overhead* for the employer, which has an impact on the *other work that can be done*.
- 7.1.6 Such *generous employers* may be rare. A more common allowance for training & CPD would be *two weeks*, & many *conscientious* professionals may (in the knowledge of management) wrestle with *competing interests* to be able to consider allocating as much time to CPD as this.
- 7.1.7 Where employers *passively expect* CPD to be done without affecting *performance*, it may be useful to note that CPD is likely to *improve the quality* of professional work done. As a minimum, time resources should be allotted to (or negotiated by) the professional to allow CPD to be undertaken.
- 7.1.8 *Units* of CPD arise from some *kinds* of CPD activity being deemed of *higher quality & more valuable* than others. This is a *minefield* in its own right. A key factor is the level of personal *investment or engagement* with the activity. The higher this is, the higher the value of CPD time.

- 7.1.9 In the suggested tabular CPD *record* (see below), allowance should be made for the *quality* of CPD undertaken. Here, *quality* is a function of *relevance* (to professional needs) & *outcome* (did it succeed in its own terms). Further, the *value* of CPD is a function of its *quality* & *duration*.

8 Assessment of CPD

8.1 *Self-Evaluation of CPD activities, including self-assessment & feedback to refine the development action plan*

- 8.1.1 Statement of objectives
 8.1.2 How far these were met
 8.1.3 Appropriateness of learning method
 8.1.4 Further CPD needs identified
 8.1.5 How the learning will be used

8.2 *Audit by professional organisations & others*

- 8.2.1 To date, some professional organisations set *appropriate CPD* as a *requirement* for professional *membership*, professional *registration*, & the *continuance of these*. Checks on individuals CPD are made during applications for professional *membership* & for professional *registration*. It seems that some have progressed to regular audit (on a small sample basis initially) of professional members CPD, or are likely soon to do so. In *safety-related* or *safety-critical* work, employers or other industrial regulators already audit appropriate competencies. At a professional level, this can amount to audit of CPD.

9 A Typical CPD Scheme

9.1 *Annual, self-assessed, tabular records*

- 9.1.1 A professional individual's CPD activities, both as pre-planned & as subsequently *self-assessed for quality*, may be documented in *tabular form* (both in brief descriptive text & in quantitative terms) using a *spreadsheet*. See an example attached. A fresh table may be used for each year, to allow for separate handling & to cater for evolution & development of the *CPD scheme* & its *record* in documentary form. Whenever printed, the table should be signed by the individual & kept on a CPD file. Documentation obtained during CPD activities should also be kept on file.

9.2 *Evaluated relevance & outcome, & overall quality*

- 9.2.1 Some CPD activities may fall short of a professional individual's expectations, & may be evaluated as less than fully satisfactory. Accordingly, using the method suggested, some time spent on CPD activities may not be fully credited. An allowance should be made in the CPD plan for anticipated *low scores* (perhaps 50% initially) in relevance & outcome, & (hence) in their function: overall *quality*. Over time, such CPD *low scores* (at first seen as losses, but later recognised as augmenting a learning process) should reduce through experience &, consequently, improved CPD planning.

9.3 *Annual target net value of CPD time*

- 9.3.1 The CPD plan for each year should include a *target net value of CPD time*. *CPD time* is adjusted to take account of *scores* in *relevance* & *outcome*, & hence *quality* overall, which is, itself, a *function* of these *scores*. The *net value of CPD time* is a function of *gross* CPD time & its *quality*.
- 9.3.2 Thus, for example, a *net* 20 hours CPD might be achieved by 30 hours *gross CPD time* having an average *quality* of only 66.6%. Occasionally, in exceptional cases, CPD activities may surpass reasonable expectations, & may justify *relevance*, *outcome* or *quality* exceeding unity.

Hugh Wynne FSPE, Glasgow, Thursday 10 August 2006