



## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - A Guide for Members**

### **What is CPD?**

CPD stands for Continuing Professional Development and is the term that describes how professionals maintain their own competence in the workplace. All members of the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST) should maintain and develop their competence in the workplace as a matter of course but CPD is the recommended way of achieving this. CPD comprises updating particular areas of competence, developing personal and management skills and broadening experience leading to new opportunities. The challenges and opportunities of the work experience provide the central mechanism for maintaining CPD. The Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology encourages and supports its members to maintain their CPD.

Members will have initially developed their professional competencies in the workplace after gaining the necessary academic qualifications. This period in their professional career is called Initial Professional Development (IPD) and will consist of both training, either formal or informal, and work involving increasing levels of responsibility (consolidating the training). The philosophy of maintaining one's professional development will have begun during the IPD phase. CPD is a continuation of this process.

### **What does CPD have to do with me?**

Today technology is changing at such a rapid rate that individuals must 'keep up to date' in order to remain competitive and employable. Most employers recognise the importance of the need to have a workforce that is continually developing its skills, knowledge and competencies. CPD ensures that members develop their skills, knowledge and competence by 'keeping up to date'. The crucial role played by the people in a company is now widely recognised and an employee that recognises this by maintaining his/her competence through CPD will be a highly valued member of the workforce.

### **How does CPD help me?**

Constantly evolving technology, faster rates of product development and the need for employees to work across several disciplines require everyone to be aware of the need to regularly update their skills. CPD offers a well-recognised mechanism for professional engineers, scientists and technologists to update their technical competence, communication and management skills and appreciation of the commercial aspects of their industry. CPD will allow you to spot opportunities and exploit new ideas effectively. Only through CPD will you be able to realise your full potential for excellence.

People change their employer every 4.5 years on average, this can be a voluntary change or compulsory e.g. as a result of redundancy. Either way a major element to ensure continuity of career is maintained is by CPD. A well maintained portfolio of evidence of CPD and how it has had a positive impact on one's career to date together with a viable CPD plan is a very powerful document when searching for a new employer. Similarly a good employer will not want to lose an employee that takes advantage of CPD opportunities to the benefit of his company. Correctly maintained CPD will have the added benefit of allowing you to review and explore your career and discover your strengths and weaknesses.

Professionals are exposed to ever greater scrutiny from their clients. An increasingly vocal group of shareholders and consumers is armed ready with litigation, lobbying powers and letters whenever they feel professional standards have slipped. CPD is proof that you have continued to review and develop your professional standards. Your vulnerability to your professionalism being brought into question will be greatly reduced if you maintain your CPD.

### What do I have to do?

Like many things in life, CPD can be organised so that it is carried out [almost] automatically. The Institute can help in advising you how to maintain your CPD effectively. The important thing to bear in mind is that it is a continual process of planning, completing activities, assessment of those activities and review/feedback back to the plan.

You will need to set up a system that encompasses these four core stages. Many employers have a bespoke system in place that performs this function satisfactorily; members can adopt such a system or use the system provided by the Institute. Members are encouraged to include their employers in the CPD process, ideally it should be a partnership that will benefit employee, employer and the company. The annual appraisal interview is the ideal time to plan development targets and assess progress. Notwithstanding it should always be remembered that the detail of CPD is very much the individual's property and one should not rely on the Company (Personnel) system, it may not be maintained properly and is of no support if you no longer work for them.

### **Planning**

This stage is probably the most important of the four core aspects of CPD. Your CPD stems from your CPD plan. Initially you should analyse your current job concentrating on your knowledge and skills. Next you should do the same thing for the job/position to which you aspire. Consultation with a mentor at this stage could be helpful. A skills and knowledge gap analysis will identify the most appropriate learning and development activities to meet your own skills profile. You will need to take into account the opportunities available as well as any personal preferences and constraints. Your targets should be high, practical, achievable and challenging. You will need to bear in mind that your plan will change regularly.

Initially gather together relevant information on such things as technical subjects, likely foreseeable career opportunities and in-house or external development courses. Develop an outline plan stating objectives, priorities, target dates and appropriate development activities. If appropriate, agree your plan with interested parties such as your employer, mentor, development specialist, colleague or the Institute. Develop the outline plan into a structured, detailed plan to include such information as targets, agreed resources, agreed support, agreed controls and responsibilities.

## **Development Activities**

To meet your development needs and achieve your targets, as defined in your CPD Plan (see above) you will choose from a wide range of available activities and seek (or secure) the support of your company. Activities can be formal and structured e.g. courses, distance learning, conferences, presentations or research. The advantage of formal activities is that they will often offer tangible evidence that can be incorporated into a record of CPD. Activities may, however, be informal and less structured such as work experience or assignments, on-the-job training or mentoring. Remember that most CPD will be a combination of both formal and informal activities together with activities outside of the work environment and professional activities such as IMarEST branch meetings, social gatherings and personal study.

Although most activities will be planned the Institute encourages members to recognise and take advantage of opportunities that arise from day-to-day work experiences, unexpected challenges and professional contacts. Successful development usually requires that learning activities are matched with practical applications. You should allow adequate time to include personal reflection of what you get out of each of the development activities and on how you could become a better learner.

## **Recording and Assessment**

An important outcome of the development activities is the completion of a detailed record of activities undertaken. The record should show intended objectives, what activities have actually occurred and with what consequences. A suitable professional development log/record book can include certificates of attendance at events, training course syllabuses and completion certificates, performance appraisals, psychometric test results, etc. as well as your own professional development record. The Institute can provide a professional development record folder to members on request at a reasonable cost. You should record what happened, where, when and the outcomes. It is advisable to record verification of attendance and achievement, when available, on this record.

To gain full benefit from Development Activities individuals need to ensure that the results are assessed in some way. Without this assessment of the activities the lessons learnt will be lost. In addition to personal reflection on the activities undertaken individuals may wish to discuss the experience with a colleague, friend or mentor. The Institute can assist, if required by nominating a suitable local member as a mentor, confidante or assessor on request. It might be helpful to ask the following questions:

- What was particularly interesting/pitched at the right level for me?
- What was new or unexpected?
- Was the quality good?
- What happened and in what circumstances?
- What could have been done differently?
- Did it proceed at an appropriate pace/did I learn anything?
- Was it relevant to my learning objectives?

Proper assessment of activities will assist in the review of newly acquired skills and how they impact upon the objectives in the original CPD plan.

## **Review/Feedback**

This is done against the CPD plan and measured in terms of new and/or improved levels of competence. It is a similar process to the initial analysis of your current job, concentrating on your knowledge and skills, which led to the production of your CPD plan. A review of this nature should be placed in context and assistance from your

mentor at this stage could prove helpful. You will need to continually question whether your initial precepts that formed your CPD plan are still valid, have been met and need to be adjusted and planned accordingly. Above all are your new-found skills and competencies taking you in the right direction? It might be helpful to ask the following questions:

- What added value did I gain from this activity?
- What can I do now/do better that I could not do before?
- How do I now plan to use my new abilities?
- Am I making progress towards achieving my learning objectives?
- What lessons have I learned and what should I do next?

As stated at the beginning of this section, CPD is a continuous process of planning, completing activities, assessment of those activities and review/feedback. Having completed the review and feedback phase you will need to amend your plan and start the process again. The CPD plan and regular update together with your portfolio of achievements will not only act as a useful historical record for you but will be a powerful document when in discussion with your current employer, a potential new employer and the Institute.

#### What activities count for CPD purposes?

Most activities in the workplace will have relevance to professional development in one form or another, however, some will be more effective than others in satisfying the needs of a CPD plan. Possibly the most effective learning opportunity is organised support at work. The support provided by colleagues or mentors is significantly more effective than that provided by an individual's line manager. The style of support is also crucial, solving problems and meeting challenges as part of a cohesive team is the most effective. Work experience, whether within a structured and regulated situation or requiring significant innovation, is also an extremely effective way of achieving CPD goals. Informal discussions are also very useful, especially when conducted with subject specialists or work colleagues.

Interestingly those activities that people most often associate with CPD i.e. attendance on short academic and training courses and postgraduate programmes are not considered to be as effective as the activities mentioned above.

These are still, however, valid means of maintaining one's CPD. It is also interesting to learn that formal reviews, informal debriefings and individual reflection on experience are not particularly effective as learning opportunities. Publications, although often cited as useful vehicles for CPD based learning are really only effective when the individual wishes to find out how to perform a specific task. Despite this many professionals spend considerable time reading publications and this will add to the knowledge base of individuals, and, therefore, will assist in maintaining an individual's CPD. {data taken from survey carried out at reference 5}.

#### How can a mentor help?

A mentor is a more experienced and knowledgeable person who gives dispassionate and objective support and guidance to a learner [or mentee]. To be effective the mentor should not be in a position of authority over the learner. The most important functions of a mentor are to provide positive feedback, offer encouragement and adjust expectations.

Contact with a mentor can be useful in that he or she is someone you can turn to who has knowledge and experience of your situation and no interests to consider other than your own. Being a mentor can be very rewarding and a valuable CPD activity in that it

provides a valued outlet for all the wealth of knowledge and experience that has built up over a career and provides an occasion to help others take advantage of some of the opportunities and avoid some of the pitfalls that you as a mentor may have encountered 'along the way'.

In terms of Continuing Professional Development, a mentor can be particularly helpful with the following;

- Conducting a Skills Audit/Gap Analysis
- Determining the knowledge and skills required for a particular job or role
- Setting development objectives
- Assessing learning experiences
- Deciding what should be the next steps
- Offering encouragement and providing motivation to persist with a CPD activity
- Suggesting alternative CPD activities
- Identifying CPD providers

Individuals should initially seek access to a mentor within their own workplace. Alternatively, the Institute may be able to provide a useful contact who can advise you on how to go about planning and achieving your professional development objectives. Both of these sources of support have advantages and disadvantages and you should consider carefully what you require from a mentor. It is expected that mentoring will be particularly useful to those taking responsibility for their own CPD for the first time, those in the early stages of their careers and those contemplating a career change

#### What can my employer do to help?

Individuals have a responsibility to themselves and their employers to consider what might be required in the future and take steps to prepare themselves to be ready when opportunities occur and when changes are necessary. Employers have a responsibility to ensure that this is provided and managed.

All professionals are being encouraged to address lifetime learning issues to make sure that they maintain their professional competence and continue to develop in all aspects of their work. Employees should be encouraged to keep records of their objectives and of the learning opportunities that they have used. The annual appraisal interview is the ideal time to plan development targets and assess progress but CPD is the individual's responsibility.

Employers can start investing in the Continuing Professional Development of their employees by the following:

- Clarify how your business objectives may best be met by investment in your people.
- Take opportunities such as an annual appraisal to discuss development with individual members of staff.
- Ask them about their commitment to their own development and encourage understanding between you of shared objectives.
- Listen to their ideas and encourage them to consider their own personal goals.
- Aim to create a partnership between you where you both contribute to their development.
- Set realistic expectations - you both will have limited resources of

time and money.

- Persevere in this process, continue to encourage your people and review progress regularly. The pay off will be a tangible improvement in productivity and in the competitiveness of your business.
- Establish a mentoring scheme to assist employees in setting medium and long-term career goals.

Further information about Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for employers is contained in the IMarEST document 'CPD - A Guide for Employers' available from the Institute.

### Why is the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology interested in CPD?

As a Professional Body with its own registers and a licence from both the Engineering Council UK and the Science Council, The Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST) is interested in the Continuing Professional Development of its members. The IMarEST provides both general and specific advice about CPD, professional activities which contribute to an individual's CPD and approval of activities for the purpose of CPD. Members of the IMarEST are required to maintain their own CPD or risk being removed from the membership role. CPD is thus a vital element of the activities of the Institute.

Members are entitled to free advice and support about CPD. The Institute will also send members official CPD recording and planning documentation on request. Employers are requested to support the IMarEST initiative and promote employees CPD.

### The Science Council and Revalidation of CSci

Once CSci has registration has been conferred to an applicant, Chartered Scientists have an obligation to maintain professional competence and are required to revalidate their registration on a regular basis. Originally, the Science Council required the revalidation process to be conducted every five years. This is no longer the case.

With effect from October 2008, the Science Council has changed its ruling. By 2011, all Chartered Scientists will be required to revalidate on a yearly basis. This yearly revalidation process will be rolled out over the next few years in three stages.

#### **Stage 1**

All Chartered Scientists, who were registered in 2004, will be required to undergo the revalidation process in 2009. As part of this process, they will need to individually submit a one page report outlining the CPD activities undertaken. These activities must be seen to uphold the standard for CSci. The IMarEST is obligated to review and audit these one page reports. The Membership Committee has been tasked with carrying out the audit and will interview any person, who fails to meet the required standard.

After this revalidation review in 2009, all CScis registered in 2004 will then be required to undergo the revalidation on yearly basis.

## **Stage 2**

All Chartered Scientists, who were registered in 2005, will be required to undergo the revalidation process in 2010. As part of this process, they will need to individually submit a one page report outlining the CPD activities undertaken. These activities must be seen to uphold the standard for CSci. The IMarEST is obligated to review and audit these one page reports. The Membership Committee has been tasked with carrying out the audit and will interview any person, who fails to meet the required standard.

After this revalidation review in 2010, all CScis registered in 2005 will then be required to undergo the revalidation on yearly basis.

## **Stage 3**

All remaining Chartered Scientists registered after 2005 will need to partake in the yearly revalidation from 2011.

It is important to note that the Membership Services Department at the IMarEST will be co-ordinating the revalidation process for all Chartered Scientists and will be writing to all Chartered Scientists shortly to explain the situation and to provide you with the one page report. This report will need to be returned to the Membership Services Department, so they can conduct the review in time and ensure that there is no lapse in your registration. If you have any questions about the revalidation process, then please feel free to contact them.

## **Further Information**

Additional information about CPD can be obtained directly from the IMarEST headquarters or alternatively from the IMarEST website at [www.imarest.org](http://www.imarest.org).

Amended by Ben Saunders – Education and Training Manager  
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