

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) - A Guide for Employers

What is CPD?

CPD stands for Continuing Professional Development and is the term that describes how employees maintain their own competence in the workplace. All employees should maintain and develop their competence in the workplace as a matter of course but CPD is the recommended way of achieving this aim. Professional institutions, such as The Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST), encourage and support their members to maintain their CPD. CPD comprises updating particular areas of competence, developing personal and management skills and broadening one's experience, hence leading to new opportunities. The challenges and opportunities of the work experience provide the central basis for maintaining CPD. This can be supported by any number of structured activities both within the workplace and outside.

What does CPD have to do with me?

Today most employers recognise the importance of developing the skills, knowledge and competencies of their staff. Technology is changing at such a rapid rate that businesses must invest in their workforce in 'keeping up to date' in order to remain competitive and profitable. The crucial role played by the people in a company is now widely recognised and many firms are becoming involved with initiatives such as 'Investors in People'. The truism that: 'Investment in people appreciates, whilst investment in equipment depreciates' is becoming evermore evident.

How does CPD help me?

Even in the short term, payback can significantly exceed the outlay because when people understand the processes they are working with, and appreciate the business objectives that they are working towards, their productivity and creativity improve. Individuals also gain greater job satisfaction which leads to a deeper commitment to the company's performance and, therefore, lower rates of staff turnover.

What do I have to do?

Staff development should not solely be an activity carried out by a company for its employees. Ideally it should be a partnership. Employers should be encouraging employees to think about their own aspirations as part of a healthy partnership that will benefit employee, employer and the company. Employers have a responsibility to their companies and to their employees to provide an environment where people can develop the necessary skills and knowledge to take on new responsibilities as the need arises.

What do my employees have to do?

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.

All professionals are being encouraged to address their lifetime learning 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.

How do I do it?

The wide range of activities that take place, daily, in the workplace provide many of the most important learning opportunities. People should be given the chance to experience different situations and develop a wide range of skills. However, in specific instances, formal, off-the-job training may be required. Employees should also be encouraged to read widely and gain an appreciation of the wider issues related to their jobs.

The professional development of staff should not be confined just to technical competencies but should include the wider issues of environmental protection and health and safety as well as interpersonal skills, management techniques and legal and financial knowledge, where relevant.

Employers should actively encourage their employees to attend events organised by local groups of professional institutions and similar, relevant organisations. These meetings offer both technical updating, by means of formal lectures, and the opportunity for discussion with other professional people working in related fields. Encouraging staff to network in this way is a key means of increasing competitiveness.

It is of great benefit to individuals to have help in reviewing their progress and guidance in choosing which routes to follow. Managers within a company should be aware of the importance of individual development and be able to guide those for whom they have responsibility. They should be aware, not only of development goals but also of the different types of training requirements that different people have. Some people learn best in formal teaching situations but many others need an informal approach and will benefit much more from being given the opportunity to work alongside a colleague to acquire particular skills.

It is also strongly recommended that, where possible, a fellow professional acts as a mentor to facilitate the continuing professional development of employees. The IMarEST encourages employers to provide mentors to employees, if possible.

Many employers ask for guidance in measuring the amount of time that should be spent in staff development, but there can be no hard and fast rules. It must be emphasised that it is the benefit of an activity to a particular employee rather than the activity itself which is important. All learning opportunities, however informal, should be seized when they arise.

How to get started – A check list for employers

- 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 Members' available from the Institute (www.imarest.org).

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, the n 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.

Amended by Ben Saunders - Education and Training Manager
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