IRSE///

Institution of Railway Signal Engineers

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IRSE Guidance for Members

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CONTENTS

GUIDANCE ON CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) FOR IRSE MEMBERS

1. INTRODUCTION – WHY UNDERTAKE CPD?

CPD allows you to maximise your potential for lifetime employability in your professional engineering discipline; and, very importantly, it shows that you are committed to maintaining high levels of professional competence by continually improving your knowledge, skills and understanding.

Professional engineers cannot always their employers to identify and satisfy all their development needs. Nowadays people change jobs and organisation frequently, technology is constantly advancing and members need to take ownership of their career and their continuing development.

This guide explains why CPD is important and how best to approach it. If you have any questions, our CPD team are happy to offer advice and can be contacted on pd@irse.org.

2. DEMONSTRATION OF COMMITMENT

Commitment to CPD is shown through the maintenance of an up-to-date professional competence record and working with a full understanding of the IRSE Code of Professional Conduct. This must be demonstrated through appropriate formal records – written or electronic.

3. BENEFITS OF CPD

There are many benefits to members of taking ownership of their careers and CPD. These include:

- Recognising opportunities for career progression
- Being more aware of trends and directions in engineering and society
- Becoming more effective in the workplace
- Being better able to help, influence and lead others by example
- Increasing confidence in future employability
- Being more aware of your own capabilities and limitations
- Having a fulfilling and rewarding career

By taking a structured approach to CPD you will be able to demonstrate your continuing commitment to your profession and develop the good practice of regularly reviewing your development needs and ensuring you undertake appropriate learning activities to help address them.

4. A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The prime responsibility for CPD lies with each member, however, the Institution recognises that effective CPD relies on a partnership between individuals, employers, the Institution and training providers. It is recommended that CPD is planned and implemented in partnership with an employer, preferably as part of the normal review or appraisal cycle where possible.
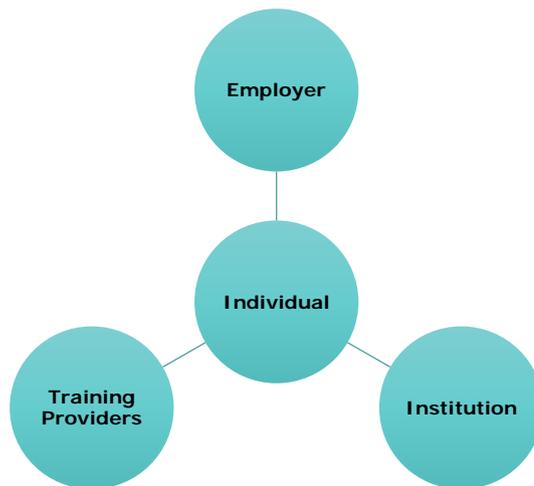
5. THE CPD CYCLE

Everyone's professional development is unique because it must meet your and your employer's needs over a period of time. The process for determining what development is needed is, however, is common and many members will already be familiar with the *Plan – Do – Review* cycle:

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │     REVIEW      │
                    │  Where Am I Now?│
                    └─────────────────┘
        ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
        │    EVALUATE     │     │      PLAN       │
        │ What Have I     │     │ Where Do I Want │
        │   Learned?      │     │   To Be?        │
        │                 │     │ What Do I Want  │
        │                 │     │   To Do?        │
        └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │       DO        │
                    │ Development     │
                    │   Activities    │
                    │ How Do I Get    │
                    │     There?      │
                    └─────────────────┘
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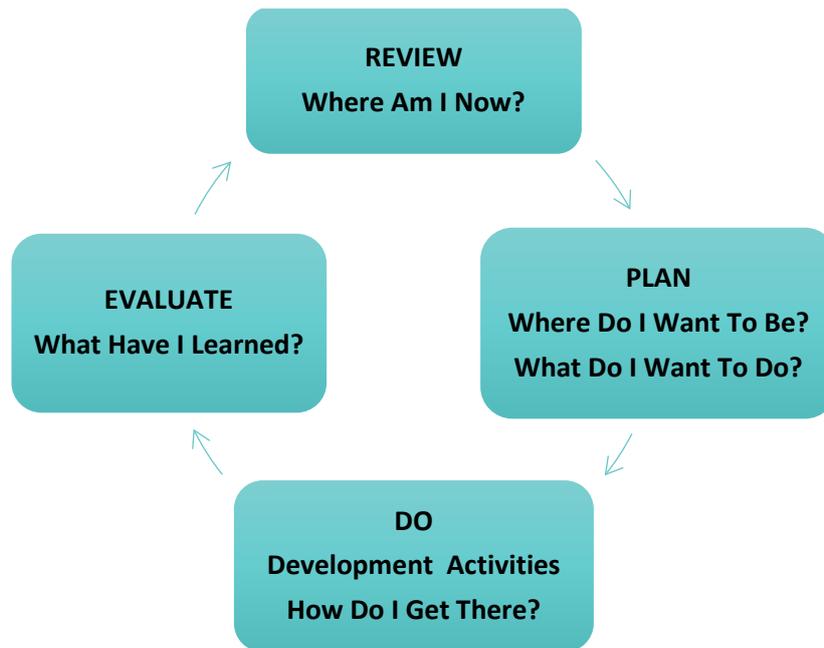
5.1 Reviewing the Current Situation

To get started you will need to think about your future aspirations and career path. Ask yourself:

- Where am I now in my career?
- Where do I want to get to, what do I want to do?
- How might I get there?

Members are expected to keep abreast of new developments in science and engineering relevant to their field of professional activity, and to encourage those working under their supervision to do likewise. Carry out an honest self-appraisal of your current expertise and potential areas for improvement. Think about your strengths, weaknesses and the future challenges and opportunities that might arise.

Consider whether there is someone you can talk to who could help you draw up your plans. If you have a mentor they may be able to help (the IRSE has a Mentoring Scheme). Review your job description and the description for the role you aspire to next, and make use of any notes from recent appraisals. Think about the financial and time implications of your plans.

5.2 Identifying Your Objectives

The first step in any planning is to identify your objectives. You should consider:

- The immediate requirements of your job
- Business and career aspirations (including professional membership)

- Targets for self-improvement
- Family and personal considerations

Although both your medium and long term objectives should be considered, concentrate on those objectives that can be achieved in the relatively short term – probably the next 12 months. These short term objectives are likely to be much more detailed than any longer term ones.

Some people prefer to take opportunities as they arise rather than have fixed planned objectives. However, the people who are best placed to develop their careers are those who know and understand the 'building blocks' needed for their development.

Make your short term objectives SMART:

Specific   state exactly what the aim is

Measurable   be able to clearly identify when the goal is achieved

Achievable   make sure there is a reasonable chance of success

Realistic   select goals that are realistic, yet challenging

Timed   set a completion date

Do be realistic! It is better to set a small number of useful, achievable objectives and exceed them than to set impossible goals. If you have a long term aspiration, set smaller 'stepping stone' objectives along the way otherwise your long term goal may seem like an impossible dream.

5.3 Determine the Skills You Need

Consider your development in the broadest sense – not just your technical skills. What about your interpersonal, leadership and management skills? If you are looking at developing into a new role, consider the competences required. Obtaining relevant job specifications may prove useful in working towards gaining those competences. Similarly, if your aim is to perform better in a particular aspect of your current role this will allow identification of which aspects of knowledge or skills needs to be worked on.

Appendix 1 provides a number of different skills areas you might want to consider as part of your development

5.4 Select Appropriate Competence Standards

The generally accepted definition of competence is:

Competence = knowledge + understanding + experience + attitude + skill

For someone to be fully effective in the workplace all these aspects must be present. The generic Engineering Council competence standards for EngTech, IEng and CEng can be downloaded from the IRSE website www.irse.org. More specific S&T Engineering competence standards are available as part of the IRSE Licensing Scheme and can be downloaded from www.irselicensing.org

5.5 Produce a Development Action Plan

For CPD to be effective it should be part of a structured plan and members are encouraged to produce a Development Action Plan. Your action plan should:

- As a minimum include: Title / Objectives / Initial ideas for methods of achieving the objectives / Start date / Target completion date

- Be regularly reviewed to take account of changing circumstances

- Be written down

You may want to have more than one plan, covering different areas of development.

CPD can take many forms; it is not just about attending training courses. Appendix 2 provides examples of types of CPD activity. Try to ensure your plan includes a range of different activities.

5.6 Record Your CPD Activities – Your 'Evidence' of CPD

Whilst you should keep records of what you have done more important is what you have learned. Producing a record helps to organise thoughts and experiences; records don't have to be complicated but should cover

- Date and duration of activity
- Type of activity (training course, on job learning etc.)
- Evidence title including a brief description of the activity
- Lessons learnt
- Benefits gained
- Follow up – what you will do differently as a result, and how you will apply what you learned.

5.7 Mycareerpath

There are many processes and systems available for recording CPD; IRSE recommends the use of the online tool Mycareerpath, although you may prefer to keep manual records.

Mycareerpath is free of charge to members. It has been developed jointly by the Engineering Council, IRSE and other Institutions for members to plan and record their CPD. It has the facility to upload files including pictures as evidence of CPD activity and allows you to send plans, records and reports to a third party if you wish them to be reviewed. The system also contains the EngTech, IEng and CEng competence frameworks if you wish to collect evidence for these as part of your preparations for applying for either initial Engineering Council registration or for upgrading your registration.

Access to Mycareerpath is via the IRSE website. However for those not wishing to use an electronic online system, simple forms are available which can be downloaded from the IRSE website. Alternatively if members are using other paper or electronic CPD recording systems that include the minimum requirements as stated above, these will be acceptable.

5.8 Reflection

Most important is your reflection on what you have learnt and how you will apply any new skills. The aim is to recognise and record the benefits and change in experience and abilities.

5.9 Review the Development Action Plan

Your plan should be reviewed regularly as it serves to demonstrate how your original objectives have been met. Objectives should then be re-evaluated and modified as necessary, or a new action plan(s) with further objectives should be developed.

6. HOW MUCH CPD IS REQUIRED?

There are no hard and fast rules on the specific numbers of hours of CPD that an individual should do. What is right for you will depend on a range of factors. You should generally plan to undertake more CPD when you are working towards Membership, looking to upgrade your Membership or UK Engineering Council registration. Later in your career when you should complete enough CPD to both maintain and develop the professional knowledge, skills and competence that you need for the role you are undertaking. Your anticipated commitment to your CPD should be reflected in your development plan.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION AND EXAMPLES

Please see the IRSE website for further information and access to examples of CPD records. If you have any questions our CPD team are happy to offer advice and can be contacted on pd@irse.org.

APPENDIX 1 EXAMPLE AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

CPD isn't just about your technical or engineering skills and knowledge. The list below is not exhaustive, but it provides some guidance about the different areas of non-technical development you might wish to consider.

Interpersonal

- Communication skills / Presentation skills
- Report writing
- Interviewing
- Negotiating
- Managing meetings
- Problem solving and decision making
- Stress management
- Foreign languages

Leadership and Management

- Developing business plans
- Leadership skills
- Team management
- Managing performance
- Health, Safety, Quality and Sustainability
- Managing finances
- Contract management

Technical

- Detailed design
- Environmental design/impact
- BIM and other new techniques
- Procurement – estimates, bids, tenders
- New technologies
- Other
- Developing collaborative partnerships
- Client and customer care/management
- Marketing
- Public relations and dealing with the media
- IT: in house systems or external services; specialist software

APPENDIX 2 TYPES OF CPD

CPD can take many forms; the following list is not exhaustive but provides some examples of types of CPD activity:

At work

- Learning on the job, particular in new situations
- Peer discussion and attendance at meetings
- Work shadowing
- Writing reports
- Preparing and delivering presentations to colleagues or other professionals
- Acting as a coach or mentor
- Sharing knowledge and expertise with others

Away from work

- Attending IRSE conferences and events, and relevant events arranged by other organisations
- Attending trade exhibitions
- Structured reading
- Attending IRSE technical meetings
- Research
- Attendance on formal training courses, seminars and workshops
- Undertaking qualifications, distance or e-learning
- Self study
- Preparing for the IRSE Exam or equivalent

Undertaking other activities:

- Promoting engineering in schools or colleges
- Teaching or lecturing at organised events