

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Policy Statement

CPD is understood across most professions as the systematic acquisition of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities, to maintain and enhance professional competence¹. All members of professional engineering institutions have an obligation to undertake CPD, and to support the learning of others. For Engineering Council registrants, this obligation underpins the value of the professional titles of Engineering Technician, ICT Technician, Incorporated Engineer and Chartered Engineer, as well as serving society and enabling it to have confidence in the engineering profession.

CPD has several purposes, which will vary in relation to registrants' circumstances, their needs and their career progression. Very often registrants will do CPD to assure their continuing competence in their current job. At other times, CPD may be done to enable a different role within or outside their organisation (which may have more management content or which may not be a pure engineering role). Equally, CPD may help them follow a longer term career development plan, or to enhance their professionalism in a wider context than a specific job role. The focus of registrants' learning may therefore be on different areas of competence at different times.

CPD can also take a variety of different forms. At its heart is informal learning through the challenges and opportunities of working life, and interaction with others (eg colleagues, customers, suppliers) including professionals from other disciplines. However this may be supplemented by structured activities such as courses, distance learning programmes, private study, preparation of papers and presentations, mentoring, involvement in professional body activities, or relevant voluntary work. (This list is not intended to be exhaustive). Individual registrants are best placed to determine their needs and how to meet them. Often, employers or experienced colleagues will play a significant part in this, but individuals should be responsible and proactive in seeking professional development opportunities.

While most engineering professionals undertake CPD, this is often on a casual basis, without any deliberate planning, recording of activities, or conscious reflection. Whatever its purpose or nature, learning through CPD should be reflective and should relate to specific objectives even if these are only to maintain their professional engineering competence. Having a regularly reviewed development plan will facilitate learning, although there will always be a place for unplanned activities. Registrants should record both their CPD activities and what they have learned or achieved through them, and relate this to any planned objectives. Doing this will help them to determine their future needs and plan accordingly, as part of a cyclical process. It will also encourage an outcome-based approach which is more appropriate to professional learning than relying solely on quantitative measures such as hours or points.

One of the main functions of a professional body is promoting and supporting the professional development of its members. The professional engineering institutions (PEIs) licensed by the Engineering Council advise and support their members on CPD in a number of ways, such as providing guidance, resources and mentoring programmes. A number

¹ The five areas of technical and non-technical professional competence for Engineering Council registrants are set out in UK-SPEC and the ICT Technician Standard

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provide CPD planning and recording systems, and review their members' CPD from time to time. They should in future strengthen their support by reviewing a random sample of their professionally active registrants' CPD records each year and providing appropriate feedback. The sample need not include registrants who are not professionally active or those on career breaks for any reason (e.g. maternity or paternity leave, parenthood, unemployment etc).