



An introduction to...



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WHAT IS CPD?

CPD (Continuing Professional Development) is the term used to describe the commitment to lifelong learning, a skill that is invaluable to all people across every segment of society.

Continuing Professional Development is a largely holistic approach to the concept of 'professionalism'. CPD combines different methodologies to learning, such as training, workshops, conferences and events, e-learning programs, best practice techniques and ideas sharing, all focused for individuals to improve their personal proficiencies.

Engaging in CPD activities ensures that both academic and practical qualifications do not become outdated or obsolete; allowing individuals to continually 'up skill' or 're-skill' themselves, regardless of occupation, age or educational level.

CPD allows an individual to focus on what specific skills and knowledge they require over a short-term period, say 12 months, in order to be confident there is recognisable improvement within their proficiency and skillsets.



BACKGROUND OF CPD AND ITS PURPOSE

The concept of CPD can broadly trace its roots to the decades following World War II, when institutional bodies identified a need for structured further learning post formal qualification.

Up until this point it had largely been assumed that qualified professionals would identify and initiate their knowledge enhancement requirements on a casual or voluntary basis.

However, in an increasingly litigious and technologically advancing business and professional environment, the need became apparent for a more disciplined and structured approach to further learning.

Over the past two decades this commitment to CPD has spread beyond those affiliated to institutional bodies and is now embraced throughout all sectors.



WHO DOES CPD?

Allocating time for CPD is the individual's responsibility. They need to identify the CPD requirements for their organisation/industry to understand how their CPD learning should be recorded and how much time is required. The level of CPD necessary for any individual can vary between sectors.

Regulated industries tend to expect professional bodies & associations to ensure a mandatory CPD policy is implemented across the various roles and job functions working within that sector. This can be seen clearly within traditional sectors such as law, construction, healthcare, medical, financial services and accountancy but is equally pervasive in newer professions such as IT, communications, marketing, human resources and business management.

CPD enables an individual to regularly apply attention to areas of development and take appropriate action to reduce any deficiency in knowledge. Equally, an individual must see Continuing Professional Development as a way to remain competitive with his or her peers, and as an opportunity to differentiate themselves at moments where this may be required, such as in job interviews or in tenders for new work and business acquisition.

As more people become professionally qualified with similar qualifications, CPD can be important as a means of separating yourself from the pack.

TYPES OF CPD

Continuing Professional Development can be achieved by a variety of different methods, for a range of different purposes.

Structured CPD / Active Learning – involves interactive and participation-based study. It is typically proactive and can include attending a training course, conference, workshop, seminar, lecture, e-learning course or CPD certified event. CPD active learning also applies when professionals take career orientated exams and assessments (the study and revision would be considered self-directed learning, see Self-Directed Learning).

Reflective CPD Learning – involves no participant-based interaction, so this form of CPD is much more passive and one directional. Examples of this include reading relevant news articles, podcasts & case studies and industry updates. Some informal meetings can be applicable to CPD reflective learning, but the learning objectives of these meetings must be made clear in an individual's overall CPD plan.

Informal CPD / Self-Directed Learning – involves all unaccompanied CPD activities. It covers the reading of documents, articles and publications; either in print or online. Reading relevant publications, books by leading experts, industry journals and trade magazines are all types of self-directed CPD. You could also include industry-specific news feeds or research into relevant fields.

The availability of more flexible CPD suited for business requirements has increased significantly in recent years, with the introduction of online learning, short courses and half-day workshops, as well as distance learning and educational exhibitions.

These can provide CPD learning seminars alongside new business revenue and networking opportunities.

HOW DO YOU COMPLETE CPD?

An individual should keep a track of their annual Continuing Professional Development activities on a CPD record form and must ensure it is correct, up to date and meets the requirements of their professional body of association.

CPD activity is recorded in terms of learning outcomes and the practical application of the knowledge obtained.

The CPD undertaken is recorded by a CPD Certificate of Attendance, CPD Self-Assessment forms and personal CPD Record Cards. Once a CPD certified activity has been delivered, the attendee can update their CPD record sheet and attach the associated certificate.

Keeping accurate CPD record sheets helps reflect on personal progress over time. It is important that individuals keep CPD record sheets up-to-date as they will often need to submit evidence of CPD activity to their governing professional bodies or employers. CPD training should never be undervalued. CPD enables learning to become conscious and proactive, rather than merely reactive.

CPD creates positive change through a methodical approach to learning. Professionals across all industries are aware of the importance of training & development, and the need to enhance skills to stay proficient in the workplace.



BENEFITS OF CPD

CPD is essential in helping individuals, organisations or entire industries to keep skills and knowledge up to date. Providing CPD enables organisations to become a knowledge bank to key stakeholders of an organisation. CPD accredited training courses, workshops and events allow professionals to use the learning time towards individual CPD requirements.

Benefits of CPD for Individuals – CPD helps individuals to regularly focus on how they can become a more competent and effective professional. Training and learning increases confidence and overall capability, and compliments career aspirations.

Benefits of CPD for Organisations – Providing CPD accredited learning benefits your organisation through recognition and increased brand perception. Internal use of CPD encourages and promotes a healthy learning culture for your organisation, leading to a more fulfilled workforce and retaining valuable staff.



CPD Hours & Points

The vast majority of institutions and professional bodies provide individuals with CPD targets generally expressed on a temporal or numerical basis. These targets are defined by the accrual of CPD activities through training, seminars, workshops, events and conferences, as well as other structured forms of learning. CPD is sometimes expressed in the form of hours, points, units or credits.

Accredited CPD Providers are able to provide guidance to individuals as to how many CPD hours or points are achievable from the completion of any certified CPD activity, such as a conference, training course or seminar. This will help any individual delegate record the correct, or most appropriate level of CPD hours for their professional body. It is not necessary for the accredited CPD Provider to keep an ongoing learning record for each of their delegates. However it is advisable to provide at least a certificate of participation to individuals once an activity has been completed.



WHO REQUIRES CPD? PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

CPD is typically regulated by professional bodies, trade and industry associations within each professional sector. There are over 1000 institutes and professional bodies across the UK, a number that is forecast to increase.

Most institutes provide their members with Continuing Professional Development requirements generally as a required annual number of hours. These CPD hours are sometimes converted to points, units or credits. The majority of institutions allow members to choose subjects of relevance to them as individuals, a minority also require their members to seek CPD on a range of core subjects.

More and more employers are taking a proactive and supporting role with the CPD required by their employees. Aside from industry associations, CPD's importance within general enterprise is growing, as more employers see the benefits of more highly skilled, motivated and committed workforce.

Accompanied by such growth is the acceptance that academic qualifications must offer more vocational and skills-based or 'practical' learning. A structured, practical and methodical approach to learning helps employers across industries to keep key staff, and develop the skills and knowledge in their organisations to maintain a sustainable and competitive advantage.





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