

# Continuing Professional Development



## Managing your own Development

*“Learning is ongoing, you can learn from every interaction it is one of the true joys in life - and it’s free.”*

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the action we take to maintain, update and grow the knowledge and skills required for our professional role. As the name suggests, it is an ongoing commitment, lasting for as long as we remain within our profession. As L&D professionals, our capability is our product. If we are not knowledgeable in our subject areas or we do not know how to support and facilitate learning, then how can we help others in our organizations?

CPD is an essential investment in our career and doubly important to us if we are to role model the commitment to learning and development we expect from others. Taking CPD and keeping an appropriate record of it is a strong recommendation to the membership of ITOL however it is often a requirement of most other professional bodies.

In ITOL we treat our members as mature fellow professionals whom we trust. We believe that Recognizing the need for CPD would be common to us all, however the content and amount of development will be unique to each individual. We are not here to police the profession nor to act as a stern head teacher, therefore we do not ‘require’ but ‘recommend’



The fact that we are in this profession suggests that we are already enthusiastic learners. CPD requires us to

focus a part of our learning specifically on areas that are related to our profession – but L&D is a very wide field, and there are few things we can learn that do not contribute in some way to our abilities to help other people with their learning.

The benefits of developing ourselves are boundless not just for us but also for our learners, the organizations we work in or with, and the L&D team or function we are a part of. Just to refresh our mind, some of them are:

**Benefits for you:**

- enhanced reputation and job satisfaction;
- increased confidence and self-esteem;
- improved career prospects and employability;
- improved professional status;
- development is a transferable skill.

**Benefits for your learners:**

- better quality training; up-to-date advice and information;
- training that employs new approaches and methods;
- training that better meets needs;
- greater confidence in the training provided for your organization.

**Benefits to your L&D function:**

- enhanced reputation;
- more likely to be seen as credible and reliable and to become a trusted partner in the business;
- more influence with key stakeholders;
- a more exciting learning environment and opportunities to learn from each other.

**Benefits to the organization:**

- staff who can do the job;
- more likely to achieve evolving organizational goals;
- managers can be confident that staff skill levels are compliant and up-to-date with requirements;
- improved employee engagement;
- enhanced external reputation.







Undertaking continuing professional development is not just about setting personal development objectives and fulfilling these, it is also about reflecting on our learning and applying it to our working life. We should also record our learning activities and reflections to capture our progression as learners and also to demonstrate our commitment to CPD to other parties.

The concept of CPD reflects both the Training cycle and the Learning cycle. It follows the Training cycle in that we need to identify our learning needs, find learning to meet these needs, access the learning and then evaluate how well our learning needs have been met and then start again!

CPD also follows the Learning Cycle in that it requires us to reflect on our experiences, find new ideas and ways of doing things, and experiment with our new ideas – and then start again reflecting on our new experience.



## Key Features of CPD:

-  CPD includes an element of planning and an element of recording and reflecting. You may already have a 'development plan' at work or you may want to devise your own.
-  Planning your CPD is important to ensure that you take a strategic approach to your professional development and include everything needed to meet your professional requirements. You might link your development plan to a performance review cycle at work, or it might be something you do on an annual, or more frequent, basis.
-  You will need to set some objectives for your development so that you can measure your progress towards, and eventual achievement of, your objectives.
-  You should review your progress towards objectives regularly and ensure you stay 'on track', particularly for learning objectives that are compliance or qualification related.
-  As well as planning your CPD you should also record and reflect on your CPD and consider how you will make use of your learning. If you can get into the habit of recording your reflections as you go along it will be easier and more useful to you.
-  The way you record your CPD reflections is up to you although ITOL provide some suggested

formats and templates to our members.

- 🔑 There are likely to be learning activities and learning experiences that you have not planned but which are relevant to your overall development and that you want to include in your CPD record. That is fine it is your record to use as is most useful to you.
- 🔑 You may need to make your CPD record available to other parties occasionally, but it is usually acceptable to provide a reduced or summary version if you are uncomfortable about revealing the full document.

In our experience different people like different formats of CPD plans and Records and there is no 'one size fits all'. Most seem to opt for a table style of document although other styles are becoming popular for example mind maps etc. ITOL provide a complete range of CPD documentation along with other items to support you in the process.



## Choosing Development Activities

There will be a number of practical factors impacting on your choice of development activity, including: costs; availability; time. However beyond these issues we need to consider a balance of learning across a number of other competing factors.

**maintenance V development needs:-** What you need to keep refreshed and up-to-date against what will be new areas of learning for you.

**specialist subjects V training skills/knowledge:-** If you train in a particular subject area you will need to maintain your technical abilities and knowledge, as well as developing your skills and knowledge as a trainer.

**performance requirements V personal aspirations:-** As well as the learning you have to undertake for your job and professional requirements, you may also have personal aspirations or long term plans you want to prepare for.



## Different Learning Methods

Even if you have a preferred way of learning, it is important to engage with different approaches. Challenge yourself! Opt for a highly participative learning activity, even though you would normally choose to learn through research or reading. If work-related development needs to be very logic and reasoning based, you should consider balancing this by taking some more 'creative and artistic' development activities.

There is a vast amount of established learning content out there but we also need to be aware of some of the latest developments that can enhance our career prospects. New ideas relating to learning are emerging from all kinds of fields including neuroscience (*how the brain works*), psychology (*how people behave*) and Technology. New models of learning communities and ongoing developments in virtual learning environments are all worth exploring.

Sometimes it does us good to do some light-hearted development that may appear to have little professional connection but could just 'light a spark' of a future learning direction, or at least be a good stress reliever. Who knows what attending a 'juggling skills workshop' could lead to – you'll never know 'til you try!



As an L&D practitioner you will be very aware of the many formal types of learning activity available to you. Before undertaking any of these activities, ask



yourself ‘what is my objective for doing this, what do I want to learn?’ Having completed the activity, ask yourself ‘What did I learn and how will I use it?’

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### 1. *What is ITOL’s attitude to CPD?*

ITOL believes that personal and professional development is vitally important! Your ITOL membership and your post nominal letters signify that you are professionally qualified, experienced and that you actively keep your knowledge and skills up-to-date. It is important that you meet these expectations by making the most of development opportunities, continuing your personal and professional growth. We also believe that your growth and development as a person is just as important as your development as an L&D professional and often the two are linked.

We recognize that the majority of members also need to be subject matter experts in their specialist field, so a very broad view is taken toward what constitutes ‘professional development’. We also recognize that many members have parallel memberships with their specialist professional bodies. Many professional bodies take a rigid view of CPD e.g. “you must do 20 hours per calendar year”, this puts ITOL in a difficult position because if we were equally rigid over specific amounts of CPD then our members could find themselves spending more time in CPD than actually working!

ITOL's approach to CPD flows from our corporate values, in particular that we recognize you as a mature fellow professional and our starting point is one of trust

## ***2. What is recognized as CPD?***

Personal and professional development is a normal part of a professional's working life. It may be achieved through training programmes, or through attendance at events, undertaking new work activities, reading books or magazine articles or even by chance.

In order for personal and professional development to be useful, it needs to be identified and consolidated. The easiest way to identify and consolidate this information is to keep a personal professional development activity record. We encourage you to undertake a process of planning, recording and reviewing personal development activities to help you to develop your professional skills and knowledge. You could devise your own system or make use of the materials provided by ITOL.

## ***3. Who is responsible for my development needs?***

You are. Only you can decide what your goals are and how best to achieve them. Try and be honest, set realistic goals and outcomes and adapt your plans as the need arises. Remember the only person who will suffer if you cut corners is you.

#### 4. *How much personal and professional development should I achieve?*

This is for you to decide based upon the goals you want to achieve as set out in your Personal and professional development activity planner and can be as little or as much as you feel necessary to meet your goals or as personal and professional circumstances allow.

#### 5. *What's in it for me?*



Keeping a record of personal professional development activity demonstrates a willingness to take control of your development. It will show employers that you are committed to learning and see this as a long term benefit. It will assist you when preparing your CV and for job interviews, acting as an aide memoir to the learning and development you have undertaken.

#### 6. *How do I start?*

As with most things, the next step forward is to take a look back at what has been achieved. Ask yourself the following:

- What have my main career achievements been over the last three years?
- What have I learnt that has really made a difference?
- What will I need to do differently in the future?
- Why do I want to continue to learn?
- What do I want to achieve in the next three years?
- Why will this be important for me?

## ***7. What is a Development Activity Planner?***

The activity planner is designed to help you think about what might be desirable for you to do and learn in the years ahead. It is not prescriptive and you may find that you do not complete everything on your list. The planner also includes a section for reviewing your progress against your goals, this provides you with the opportunity to consolidate what you have learnt so far and to review and implement new plans. We suggest that you carry out review sessions at regular intervals to ensure that the learning carried out is in tune with your goals.

## ***8. What is a Record of Development Activities?***

The record of activities is for you to record your own personal and professional development, such as any training you undertake, courses or events you attend and any in-house or on the job training you receive.

## ***9. What should be recorded in my Record of Development Activities?***

We would expect to see a range of development opportunities recorded, including some or all of the following: formal qualifications, work experience, one day or short courses, reading and personal research on topics relevant to your work and your career, personal learning and activities undertaken outside of work.



## ***10. Why include personal goals?***

For most people professional and personal goals are linked and changes in professional or personal circumstances can have a major impact on each other. It also shouldn't be overlooked that skills learnt at work can be used socially and visa-versa.

## ***11. What about career breaks, redundancy or periods of unemployment?***

We would encourage you to continue to keep development records during career breaks as you may have more time for activities such as reading books or magazine articles, doing voluntary work, attending re-training programmes etc. all evidence of your willingness to learn from new situations and to continue with your development. When you are able to return to work you can prove to prospective employers that you kept your knowledge up to date.

## ***12. How is CPD normally calculated?***

The two most common measures for CPD are 'units' or 'hours'. Quite often a 'unit' will be based on an hour of development so we find it easier to talk in 'CPD hours' The following three narratives are guides on how to calculate development hours:

1. You attend a two-day conference which is related to your work. You attended some twelve hours of workshops and sessions but

you were already familiar with much of the content, and so decide to award yourself only three development hours.

2. You need to learn a specific skill, and to achieve this attend a basic training course for a day provided by a local training provider. It is a full day, and virtually all new knowledge. You award yourself a full day of seven development hours, the maximum that can be claimed in a day.
3. You need to learn some information to support a report you have been asked to prepare. To do this you spend a day using the internet and making telephone calls. You then spend some time consolidating the learning by writing the draft report. In all you calculate that the learning represents a quarter of the working day, and award yourself 1.5 development hours, the minimum that can be claimed in a day

When awarding development hours be honest with yourself on what you have actually achieved, this will then enable you to guarantee that your learning objectives have been met each year.

FINALLY

Finally, remember that undertaking your CPD is itself a development activity. Writing down your goals and planning how you will address them will give you a much greater chance of achieving them. Recording and reflecting on your development activities will consolidate and enhance the learning you get from them. Your CPD Record is a symbol of your commitment to your own learning and something you can be very proud of.

