

Plan of Action: Manager on-line magazine article published 2nd May 2012



IAM Chief Operating Officer James Turner, and IAM Head of Membership Services Rachel Davey, discuss the value of continuous professional development and a number of new initiatives to ensure every hour of study counts.

One of the many reasons you probably joined the IAM was to have your knowledge and skills in administrative management and professional administration recognised. Undertaking Continuing Professional Development (CPD) not only helps you become more effective in the workplace, but can also go towards upgrading your professional body membership.

For example, did you know that 'Technician' level membership is open to individuals who have completed 10 days (70 hours) of CPD in the past two years? At 'Associate' level this increases to 20 days (140 hours) in the past three years. Then, at full Member level this increases to 30 days (210 hours) in the past three years.

Finally, at Fellow level we expect prospective members to demonstrate significant experience or contribution to the fields of administrative management and/or professional administration.

Defining CPD

CPD is an essential part of knowledge and skills development, which is primarily undertaken through the commitment of the individual. In licensed or regulated professions, such as lawyers, teachers and psychologists, undertaking sufficient CPD hours on an annual basis is a condition of being able to practise.

Although administrative management and professional administration are not licensed professions, CPD is every bit as important to ensure that current knowledge and skills remain at the forefront of everything that you do to maintain the highest levels of professionalism in the fields – both in the UK and internationally. CPD consists of a range of activities, including any activity that helps maintain, develop or increase an individual's knowledge and technical or professional skills, and which impacts upon standards of performance.

How to undertake CPD

CPD can encompass a range of formal and informal activity. In fact, it is not uncommon for many people to be undertaking CPD without even realising it. Here at the IAM we do not use a CPD point scheme to recognise CPD completion. Instead, we believe that all the time you have spent across a range of learning activities should be acknowledged. Just by reading this article and this edition of your IAM magazine you are already clocking up your CPD hours. However, your approach to CPD should also be a little more structured to ensure that your specific needs, and those required by your role, are all taken care of.

You will need to take time to consider the changes taking place within your specific sector or industry and in your workplace. Change can be insidious in that, if you relax too long, things have moved faster than you. You are then forever trying to play catch-up with all the advances in technology, practices and processes.

Learning and development plans

If you are serious about maintaining, increasing and developing your skills, knowledge, understanding and expertise in the workplace, you need to start by thinking about your strengths and weaknesses – both from the perspective of your current role, and also within your field. How do you want your role to develop in both the short and the long term? What will assist you to achieve your professional goals? What will threaten you achieving where you want to be in the next 12 months? This is the basis for your learning and development plan.

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Clearly much of the above can be covered in your annual performance and development review process. If the appraisal is structured well you will end up with a very good learning and development plan. However, this does not mean that in the absence of an organisation-led scheme you do not have to worry about your CPD. What would happen if you were on extended leave, perhaps having experienced redundancy, or on a self-imposed break from work?

CPD is always about the commitment of the individual to the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. So having answered the questions above you are in an ideal position to start considering what activities will assist you in maintaining, increasing and developing yourself in these areas.

Ideally you will have considered a range of formal activities – for example, a period of professional study, short duration work-based learning, workshops and conferences – as well as less formal, and therefore more self-directed routes, such as web research, directed reading, personal study and even informal workplace on-the-job coaching.

Try not to be too rigid about your learning and development plans though. That is not to say that it is OK to excuse yourself when you fail to complete what you set out to do because you did not put in enough effort.

Rather it is about allowing your plans to remain flexible enough to avail yourself of other CPD opportunities that present themselves throughout the year. Pace of change is often fast, so you may not have foreseen the need to develop your skills in a particular area when you were setting out your plans.

Supporting CPD in 2012-2013

By being a member of the IAM you have already demonstrated the first step of committing yourself to undertake CPD. In order to get your CPD activities recognised we are now updating our member records.

Later this summer you will then be able to upload your evidence, have your learning acknowledged by the Institute, and be able to print out a CPD transcript (not to be confused with a qualification transcript). This can then be shown to your employers during your performance review meetings. Please look out for further guidance about this in a future edition of our magazine.

As a member of the IAM you have also signed up to inspire and challenge other members to develop administrative management and/or professional administration skills and progress their careers (as per our professional code of conduct). In order to support your personal and career aspirations the IAM will now be running more than 40 regional events over the next 12-month period. These events will include a mixture of speakers and short training sessions, all of which will contribute to your CPD hours. Further information can be found by visiting <http://www.instam.org/events.html>. We would be delighted to see you at one of these events, as they are a great opportunity to meet with other members and share ideas and experiences. If you have any training requests, or would like to see an IAM event in your town or city, please also get in touch with us at iammembership@instam.org.

One route to recognition

Finally, the IAM-awarding organisation has also just launched an 'Endorsement Scheme', which offers accredited centres, professional bodies, commercial training providers and both small and large employers the opportunity to have their in-house programmes formally recognised and endorsed, allowing your staff learners to achieve certification from a national awarding body. As part of this new offer organisations can award CPD hour certification for all endorsed activities – all of which will count towards the CPD requirements of your membership.