



Road to Chartered series: paper 4

# The growing significance of CPD

Ensuring professionalism in a dynamic  
and changing workplace

THE **CHARTERED BODY** FOR  
THE **PROJECT PROFESSION**

This paper is produced in co-operation with PARN (the Professional Associations Research Network), and the substantial contribution from Professor Andy Friedman in drafting this paper is acknowledged.



**M E M B E R**

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## 1. Foreword

There is no disputing that continuing professional development (CPD) is essential to the modern professional. Long gone are the days when a professional could achieve initial or entry-level qualifications and conduct their professional development based on their original skill sets supplemented by vocational experience. In addition, the pace of change in the working environment, and the increasing requirement to keep up to date and learn new skills across a career, means CPD is vital. This is particularly relevant in the project management profession, as it is a discipline many professionals come to as a second, or even third, career – or as an added skill set within their existing career.

Professional bodies have a crucial role to play in enabling and supporting CPD. This relates to the vital role that professional bodies play in underpinning and justifying public confidence, and ensuring that, when the public deals with a professional, they can trust and have confidence in the skills of that professional, and that their organisation/firm is at the cutting edge of their profession in terms of the latest knowledge. Commitment to CPD is the best way not only to maintain professional standards, but also to signal a commitment to them.

In ensuring professional standards, the role of a professional body is vital for a number of reasons – and first and foremost is supporting the individual professional's self-development. CPD is also important as a component for organisations and firms, ensuring their people are aware of developments relevant to both their specific work and wider training needs, and ensuring that they are investing in the skills of their people.

It is clear that CPD continues to be important in a fast-changing world, and professional bodies must meet the challenge to provide excellent and relevant content directly or indirectly, and have an easy-to-use recording system that meets the individual's requirement, blended with their employer's needs.

The Association for Project Management (APM), like other professional bodies, is keen to benchmark the journey we need to take to ensure our CPD content and systems are fit for purpose for our future plans as the Chartered body for the project profession. This paper on best practice and developments in other professional bodies is therefore of great help to us, as I am sure it is to others.

**Dr Paul Chapman**  
APM board member

## 2. About this paper

This paper is the fourth in a series of Chartered thought-leadership papers – ‘The Road to Chartered’ – being prepared by APM to help build its capacity as a Chartered body. The series will be published over the next 12 months to spring 2018. This paper focuses on the importance of CPD in a world where lifelong learning and keeping up to date with changes in the workplace are becoming increasingly essential to both the individual and the professional.

**Note:** We are grateful to the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN) – and to its CEO Professor Andrew Friedman in particular – for the bulk of the content in this paper. APM is a long-standing member of PARN, and we welcome its support in developing this paper.

As this series progresses, it will provide members with insight into how APM will develop and what this will mean for them, and crucially how members can be involved in this evolution. It will also signal to the wider public the intent of the project management profession to play its part in the development of the social and economic well-being of the UK – a contribution that, we believe, has for too long been underappreciated.

This series of papers will also act as a springboard for debate – surely an essential role for a professional body – and will help explain the transformation APM is experiencing as it evolves as a Chartered body.

It will also provide a backdrop to the essential and detailed work being undertaken throughout 2017 and into 2018 as APM develops the new standard for the profession and establishes the register of Chartered project professionals. This essential benchmarking work needs to be as thorough as possible to ensure that APM establishes the appropriate standard for a fully constituted Chartered body that will inspire public confidence.

We hope you will find the series informative and, whether you are a member, prospective member or interested external stakeholder, that it provides a proper context to this important phase in the development of our profession.

### 3. Why CPD is core to the modern professional and to professional bodies

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**"CPD signals a commitment by professionals and their professional bodies that qualification is not regarded as a one-off activity – that competence to practise can be, and in most cases will be, regularly developed and reviewed"**

In this world of rapidly improving technology, shifting legal constraints and expanding competition often associated with globalisation, the presumption that a professional who qualified 10 or 20 years ago is still competent to practise without further learning is just not credible. Even those who come to a profession later in their working life cannot allow their learning and development to stop once they attain a new qualification. CPD signals a commitment by professionals and their professional bodies that qualification is not regarded as a one-off activity – that competence to practise can be, and in most cases will be, regularly developed and reviewed.

Of course, long before the arrival of CPD, good professionals always kept up to date, reflected on their practice, looked to improve their knowledge and planned development activities. However, before CPD, there was no organised, widely held system for evidencing such activities beyond those that led to specific higher-level qualifications. Increasingly, one must not only keep up to date, but also be seen to be keeping up to date. As a systematic method of organising such activities, CPD facilitates the visibility of these efforts, and therefore their legitimacy in this world of transparency and accountability.

Professional bodies have been critical in delivering this change in expectation of professionals. It is professional bodies that have largely promulgated the concept of CPD. They monitor and evaluate CPD, and can accredit individual compliance with a formal CPD policy. This has had a profound effect on the operation of professional bodies, the activities of professions and the very nature of professionalism.

Professional bodies have, in the past, regulated professionals using three primary methods or 'pillars' of professionalism (Friedman and Hanson, 2010).

The first method is entry qualifications, whether by examination after formal training, recommendation after apprenticeship, approved prior learning or presentation of a portfolio of work judged to be of sufficient quality and relevance. These continue to be the primary means of distinguishing professionals.

Entry qualifications have been supplemented for many years by complaints and disciplinary procedures to sanction those found to be incompetent, incapable or untrustworthy. This second pillar of professionalism is guided by codes of ethics, and operates through investigative procedures, hearings and appeals processes.

There has always been a third method of regulating professionals, but it has, until CPD, been far less visible outside the professions. This is the positive support for good professional practice offered by professional bodies. It includes organising seminars and conferences, publishing information that can guide practice, providing helplines and advice, and running member networks, including branches, special interest groups and specialist groups. These all contribute to communities of practice and the culture of professionalism that allows new knowledge and good practice techniques to be generated and disseminated. CPD has become the mainstay of this third pillar of professionalism, systemising development activities and helping to make them potentially visible to other professionals, clients/patients, employers and the general public.

This is a significant change. CPD has formalised this third pillar of professional regulation and makes it not only more visible, but also potentially more closely connected to improvements in practice and in impacts on those receiving professional services.

Professional bodies have always recorded attendance at events and meetings. However, the motivation for this was recording the popularity of events; attendance would be added up to show the events' success in terms of attracting members and covering costs. What did not occur was reviewing which individual members attended. It is the tracking of individual member activities, and/or their plans and reflections on the contributions of activities to their learning and practice, that is new with CPD. This has made professional bodies more closely linked to the ongoing practice of professionals, and professionals have, consequently, become more engaged with their professional bodies.

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## 4. History and development of CPD across the professions

### Emergence of CPD

After a period of high repute after the Second World War, the professions' legitimacy began to be challenged in the 1960s; this intensified in the 1970s and 1980s. Nobel laureate Milton Friedman famously criticised the practice of doctors in the US in 1962, saying, 'A man's ability to pass an examination 20 or 30 years earlier is hardly assurance of quality now' (Friedman, 1962: 158).

From the 1960s and 1970s, professions came under increasing pressure from those accusing them of designing their complaints and disciplinary procedures to protect the profession and individual professionals, rather than clients and the general public. Up to then, complaints were mainly lodged by fellow professionals about what was regarded as unfair competition. Since then, obligations towards clients/patients and other stakeholders, including the general public, have been strengthened. Radicalism within this period led to questioning of authority in all places, and for the professions, accusations of the monopoly of power fed a decline in trust in professionals. This has been fuelled by a wave of neoliberal thinking that presumes that the market will solve all problems of protecting consumers. In addition, cases of high-profile misdeeds on the part of professionals have contributed to the concerns.

The professions were not deaf to the rise of concerns. Ethical codes have been revised and clarified. The results of disciplinary procedures have been made more public, with disciplinary committees including more lay members. However, the really significant change has been the introduction of CPD policies and programmes.

Beyond being part of efforts to raise professionalism, the coming of CPD may be seen in part as being stimulated by a general rise in concern for lifelong learning that emerged in the 1970s (Faure et al, 1972; Cropley, 1979). This concern was primarily designed to overcome deficits in early learning among disadvantaged groups, largely to raise literacy and numeracy among the world's adult population. However, the majority of lifelong learning is undertaken in countries with developed economies, and mainly by professionals. CPD has stimulated this and made it more visible. In addition, the arrival of CPD was stimulated by a popular education philosophy that proposed not only that learning should be a lifetime activity, but also that learners should take control of their learning, planning and reflecting on their own learning activities. There was also a view that important learning could be achieved from life itself (Illich, 1971).

Before CPD, there were programmes in certain professions concerning continuing professional education, but the introduction of the 'CPD' label was intended to indicate that professional development involved more than taking courses, reflecting the lifelong learning philosophy.

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**"The arrival of CPD was stimulated by a popular education philosophy that proposed not only that learning should be a lifetime activity, but also that learners should take control of their learning, planning and reflecting on their own learning activities"**

## Proliferation of CPD across the professions

CPD began to be adopted as a policy by UK professional bodies in the 1980s, when it spread very rapidly. During the 1990s, this slowed down, but it continued growing in the first half of the 2000s (Figure 1). Since then, the level has remained roughly stable. Not all professional bodies have a programme, because some professional associations leave CPD to the relevant regulatory bodies, and some regulatory bodies leave it to the related professional associations. In addition, there are always new professional bodies being formed that have not yet adopted a policy.

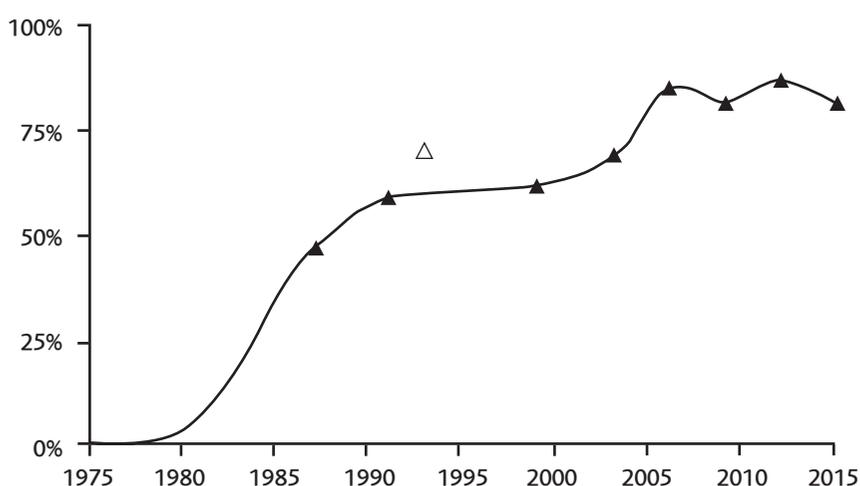


Figure 1  
Proportion of UK professional bodies with a CPD policy  
Source: Friedman and Tinner, 2016: 27

Ten years ago, it was estimated that CPD was carried out by 3.4 million individuals, representing 26 per cent of professionals and 12 per cent of the labour force in the UK (Friedman, 2012: 34).<sup>1</sup> There can be no assurance (yet) that all professionals undertake CPD, because, for many, it is not compulsory to follow their professional body's policy.

## CPD compliance policies

There are four models of CPD compliance: voluntary, obligatory, compulsory or mandatory,<sup>2</sup> and mixed. In the early years of CPD, regulatory bodies adopted a mandatory policy. Professional associations mostly adopted either a voluntary policy or (particularly in the case of Chartered bodies) an obligatory compliance policy. The following definitions are followed by most UK-based professional bodies:

- **Mandatory/compulsory** – Policies involve sanctions for non-participation based on some form of specific audit or assessment.
- **Obligatory** – CPD participation is an obligation contained in the code of conduct or ethical code, with no sanctions other than those for any obligation in the code. Ethical behaviour is not monitored, but the obligations are highlighted if there is a complaint or misconduct is brought to the attention of the professional body in any other way.
- **Voluntary** – Participation is encouraged, with no sanctions for non-participation, although participation is recorded and the record is available for the individual to use.
- **Mixed** – Compulsory for some grades of membership (Chartered, those with licence to practise, Fellows), and only obligatory or voluntary for others.

“There are four models of CPD compliance: voluntary, obligatory, compulsory or mandatory, and mixed”

<sup>1</sup> Based on an estimate of a labour force of 28 million in 2007 (Office for National Statistics).

<sup>2</sup> Both 'mandatory' and 'compulsory' are used, but they mean the same thing.

	2003	2006	2009	2012
Compulsory	13%	20%	27%	29%
Obligatory	27%	20%	25%	24%
Voluntary	42%	43%	28%	19%
Mixed	17%	14%	20%	24%
Base	112	93	60	92

**Figure 2**  
21st-century compliance policies  
of UK-based professional bodies

**“A voluntary policy only weakly contributes to the core significance of CPD. It cannot reassure stakeholders that all professionals are keeping up their competence, only that they have opportunities to do so”**

The proportion of professional bodies with a voluntary policy declined dramatically between 2006 and 2012 (Figure 2). Correspondingly, the proportion with a compulsory policy grew throughout the period from 2003 to 2012. Assuming virtually all with a mixed policy have at least some members under a compulsory policy, by 2012, the majority of professional bodies had a compulsory policy for some or all members.

This pattern seems set to continue in future. In a 2015 PARN survey, out of a sample of 43 professional bodies, 22 per cent of those with a voluntary policy claimed to have plans to move to a compulsory policy, while only nine per cent of those with a compulsory policy planned to make CPD voluntary (Friedman and Tinner, 2016: 36–37).

The advantage of a voluntary policy from a professional body’s perspective is that it does not require the resource for monitoring individual professionals and organising the consequences of non-compliance. Further, some may be discouraged from professional body membership if they are opposed to the bureaucracy of recording their CPD. However, a voluntary policy only weakly contributes to the core significance of CPD. It cannot reassure stakeholders that all professionals are keeping up their competence, only that they have opportunities to do so.

Expectations of members enshrined in an ethical code as obligations are considered by many to be the fundamental way professionals should be managed. However, to others, this is old-fashioned and confusing. Either you have to do CPD, or it is voluntary. In this world of heightened expectations of accountability, reliance on a sense of duty, although important, can often be regarded as inadequate on its own.

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**“Increasingly, professional bodies are regarding practice itself as a source of CPD, though only if reflected on and/or evaluated”**

## **5. Ways of undertaking CPD**

Methods of carrying out CPD include private reading; socialising with friends; work assessments and projects; seminars and conferences; and formal further qualifications and degrees. CPD can also include the design of plans to undertake activities that will contribute to learning, as well as evaluating and reflecting on those activities. It can go beyond individual learning and involve tutoring or mentoring others; lecturing and organising meetings; and organising and participating in branch and special interest group meetings. CPD may also involve volunteering work and other forms of public service.

Increasingly, professional bodies are regarding practice itself as a source of CPD, though only if reflected on and/or evaluated. Those using this pure, output-based approach to CPD measurement emphasise that what matters is not what CPD activities were undertaken, but rather their consequences. What did you learn? How did it affect your practice? How did it affect your future plans? How did it impact on others?

Useful learning can also occur in situations that are not usually recognised as formally educational, such as at dinner parties or during other leisure pursuits, and particularly during the execution of professional practice. This way of thinking is emphasised by the term 'continuing professional development', in contrast to 'continuing professional education'.

Some professional bodies classify CPD activities in relation to the nature of members' work and provide long lists of suggested activities. For example, the Health and Care Professions Council lists 45 items as examples of CPD activities under five headings (see [bit.ly/2unnkvm](https://bit.ly/2unnkvm)), and the Institution of Civil Engineers suggests 79 activities under 12 headings (ICE 2016). These items include formal courses as well as work-based learning, involvement in activities within the professional body, self-directed learning, and voluntary or public-service activities.

## 6. Trends in measurement

### Defining CPD and professional development value

CPD can be measured using the concept of professional development value:

**Professional development value** is the impact CPD has on individual professionals and other stakeholders according to the way the aims of CPD are formulated. This can usually be discerned by the definition of CPD published by the professional body.

The aims of CPD are generally specified in the way CPD is defined. The most common definition is:

The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individual's working life.

Although this definition was formulated more than 30 years ago, it has been used by more professional bodies than any other (Friedman et al, 2000). It has three elements:

- maintenance of knowledge, skills and competencies;
- improvement and broadening of knowledge, skills and competencies; and
- development of personal (and professional) qualities, such as the ability to plan, and other aspects covering trustworthiness, as may be evidenced in the professional ethical code.

Other elements contained in some definitions of CPD include:

- protection of clients/patients and the general public; and
- furthering the career of the professional.

These are aspects of the professional development value that we suggest should inform CPD measurement and may be used to assess the CPD measurement scheme adopted.

### Measurement of inputs

#### Pure hours system

Early CPD compliance-measurement systems were mainly based on the number of hours of activities undertaken. This was easy to monitor and assess, and was the system adopted particularly by regulatory bodies, where the emphasis has been on clarity and assurance of compliance.

Still today, input-based systems are more commonly used by regulatory bodies and by professional associations with regulatory functions. The requirement is usually expressed as a certain number of hours per year, or perhaps hours per year on average over a two- to three-year period. A PARN survey of UK-based professional bodies in 2015 found that 30 hours per year was the average for those that had adopted an hours system (Friedman and Tinner, 2016: 50). Most reported that this minimum was, in many cases, far lower than the number of hours many of their members actually undertook.

#### Structured hours and points systems

Many input-based systems place restrictions on what counts as CPD. The philosophy behind the approach is based on the notion that more CPD time equates to more professional development value – more learning and more up to date practice.

With such a philosophy, it becomes logical, first, that some indication will be given as to what kinds of activities are particularly appropriate for professional development value, and second, that members will be provided with information that will allow them to choose among the different specific opportunities available. This will enable them to decide what is best in terms of their personal professional development.

Professional bodies therefore provide guidance on what kinds of activities comprise acceptable CPD. Most classify their own activities as yielding a certain number of CPD hours. In addition, members

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are guided to particular activities or suppliers that are regarded as of sufficient quality to be counted towards the requirement. This can take many forms, including:

- a simple list;
- accreditation of activities by getting suppliers to comply with specific learning objectives, and to offer resources devoted to particular development activities; and
- substantial accreditation inspections and assessment of evaluations by previous participants.

Accreditation can be resource intensive, although it is increasingly accepted that professional bodies will charge suppliers for this service.

A distinction is made in some input systems between structured and unstructured CPD activities, or between those that are verifiable and non-verifiable. Reading would be unstructured and non-verifiable. Attending a course where attendance is recorded formally would be verifiable. It would also be structured if there were clear learning objectives attached to it, though some may count this as structured, even if it did not have such objectives. Some may require there to be a test at the end for an activity to count as structured. The CPD compliance policy will then require a certain minimum number of structured hours of CPD to be included in the total annual requirement.

Distinguishing different levels of credit for different types of CPD activities is taken much further by some professional bodies, which award points rather than hours. For example, someone attending a training event may be awarded a number of points reflecting the number of hours spent, but someone leading or presenting at the event would be awarded a higher number of points. Such systems can become very complicated.

**"Distinguishing different levels of credit for different types of CPD activities is taken much further by some professional bodies, which award points rather than hours"**

### Measurement of outputs, outcomes and impacts

As Figure 3 shows, the focus of CPD measurement and assessment has been switching from inputs to outputs, and particularly towards a combination of input and output approaches.

	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015
Inputs	63%	43%	34%	26%	33%
Outputs	22%	31%	38%	31%	22%
Mixed/combination of inputs and outputs	15%	26%	28%	40%	45%
Base	93	60	60	88	69

**Figure 3**  
Changing measurement schemes in the 21st century of those with a formal measurement scheme

**“In some sense, it is not what you do, but rather what you do with what you do, that counts as CPD”**

Input measures of CPD have been criticised as tick-box exercises. Attendance at CPD events, for example, does not indicate that learning has occurred, even if attendance is independently verified. More importantly, attendance provides no evidence that practice has been affected by any new knowledge that may have been acquired.

One way of thinking about CPD outputs is to consider the standard CPD cycle. Almost all professional bodies use the CPD cycle to emphasise the continuing nature of CPD. Although some have variations and added stages, the fundamental model of the CPD cycle is shown in Figure 4.

#### Example of a CPD cycle

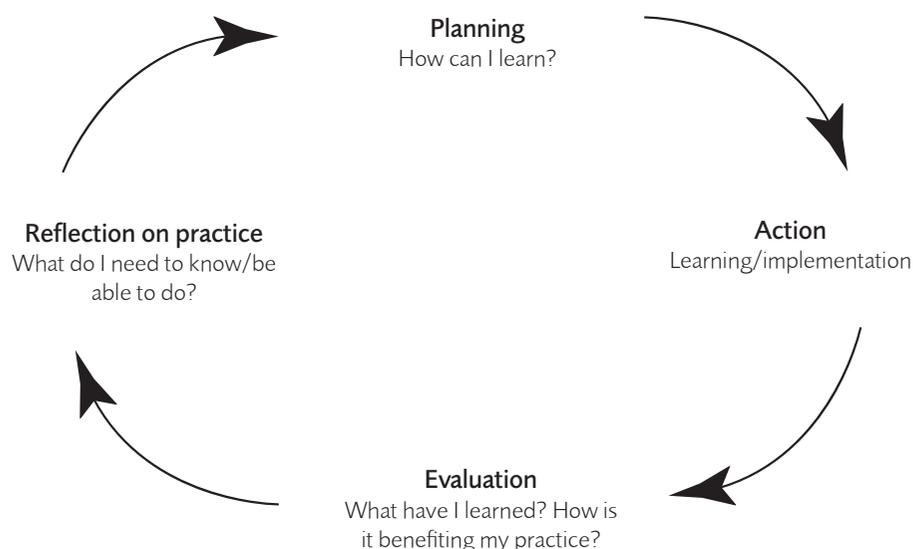


Figure 4  
Typical CPD cycle model

Outputs may be gathered at three of the stages: planning, evaluation and reflection. How much effort is put into identifying and measuring each of these stages of the cycle will depend on how CPD is defined – that is, it will depend on the way professional development value is formulated. If the definition of CPD emphasises that professionals should take control of their learning, emphasising personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties, then one would expect evidence of planning to be required in detail. If the definition explicitly states that the aim is to protect clients/patients and the general public, then stronger evidence of evaluation would be expected (Friedman and Woodhead, 2008).

Those with pure output measures emphasise that any activity can be regarded as CPD as long as the individual considers that activity in terms of evaluating and/or reflecting on it, and/or incorporating it into planning for future activities. In some sense, it is not what you do, but rather what you do with what you do, that counts as CPD.

The quality of these outputs will be evaluated by professional bodies with compulsory CPD schemes. Most will expect serious evaluation of how CPD activities contributed to the professional's learning. Many will also expect evidence of the evaluation of contribution to practice, sometimes called outcomes. Some go even further and expect identification of impacts on the quality of practice in terms of impact on employers, clients/patients and the process of individual professional development itself (Figure 5).

In addition to the types of outputs measured, there are differences in expectations of the nature of evidence considered to be acceptable. The most common evidence comes through auditing the quality of self-assessment. Self-assessments are supported in varying degrees by guidance and templates from the professional body. For planning, these supports may involve merely requesting

	2012
Evidence of planning and reflection	89%
Evidence of learning	75%
Evidence of changes in working practice	39%
Evidence of client outcomes	26%
Base	62

**Figure 5**  
Types of output requested/required by professional bodies

**“Reflection may be requested at minimum in terms of an open-ended question requesting reflection. This can be further supported by a set of questions requiring reflection specifically on the implications for current and future roles, the evaluation of practice outcomes, and any impacts on service users”**

a statement of goals and an assessment of needs, perhaps with examples provided. A step up from this would be the provision of a template planner to be followed – and, beyond this, some will provide a competency framework to elicit a standardised self-assessment of detailed career and practice outcomes.

For evaluation, a list of questions may be provided to aid self-assessment. This may include learning objectives provided by suppliers, and could follow a planning template. Criteria may also be provided to aid judgements of different levels of self-assessment concerning how much was learned, practice outcomes and impacts on clients. Beyond this, evaluation can involve objective assessment methods: that is, methods that involve others, whether they be examiners from the activity, suppliers, peers or clients.

Reflection may be requested at minimum in terms of an open-ended question requesting reflection. This can be further supported by a set of questions requiring reflection specifically on the implications for current and future roles, the evaluation of practice outcomes, and any impacts on service users.

## 7. Modern trends in CPD

### Current trends in measurement

**"It seems clear that emphasis on evaluation outputs will increase in future. According to a 2015 survey, 52 per cent of professional bodies expect evidence of evaluation"**

CPD measurement is constantly changing. Reflection has recently become of particular concern to professional bodies. A 2006 survey found that 47 per cent of those with output or combination measures collected evidence of planning, compared with 39 per cent for reflection (Friedman, 2012: 136). A similar survey in 2015 found that 54 per cent collected evidence of planning, but, by then, 76 per cent gathered evidence of reflection (Friedman and Tinner, 2016: 54).

Some would say it is difficult, almost impossible, to audit reflection accurately because of the subjectivity involved in assessment. It can also be very resource intensive, even where professional bodies rely on volunteers to carry out some of this work. Where several people carry out audits, it is important to train them to judge quality to the same standard to ensure consistency of assessment. Volunteers may be more difficult to supervise closely in an attempt to ensure that consistency. In the future, it is likely that clearer guidelines will be developed throughout the sector, identifying standards for acceptable and high-quality reflection.

It seems clear that emphasis on evaluation outputs will increase in future. According to a 2015 survey, 52 per cent of professional bodies expect evidence of evaluation. This is also likely to involve more than evaluation of consequences for learning. In addition to measurement of the outcomes of CPD on practice, we expect the proportion collecting evidence of client impact from CPD to rise substantially from the 26 per cent found in 2012 (Figure 5).

Underlying this trend, we anticipate that CPD will come to be defined more in terms of supporting client and employer impacts and the general public. This will be especially important for professions where the professional body is constituted as a charity or Chartered body.

**"In relation to the nature of evidence required for measuring CPD, PARN expects that, over time, there will be more emphasis on objective evaluation measures involving peers, clients/patients and/or employers"**

In relation to the nature of evidence required for measuring CPD, PARN expects that, over time, there will be more emphasis on objective evaluation measures involving peers, clients/patients and/or employers. Some CPD will be organised collectively, with assessment becoming a collaborative process. This may involve groups organised through local professional body networks or an approach using the idea of 'learning sets' (sometimes called 'action learning sets').<sup>3</sup> The latter is a system used by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. CPD submissions are made by peer groups that meet at least four times a year. The peer group authorises what activities are undertaken and how much CPD credit this should count for ([bit.ly/2stU6JP](http://bit.ly/2stU6JP)).

This idea could be taken further by involving inter-professional groups, whereby those in certain occupations work closely with other professions to provide services. This approach would require close collaboration among professional bodies, and so may take some time. Ultimately, such learning sets could include service-user representatives. These developments would reflect new, emerging collaborative professional communities found in select American hospitals (Adler et al, 2008).

### Other trends

As measurement of CPD becomes more refined and linked to professional development value, it is likely that evidence of completion of CPD requirements will become more easily conveyed to observers outside the profession. New ways of demonstrating that individual professionals are keeping up their CPD, and that it is effective, will be explored and developed.

For example, new forms of displaying CPD compliance, involving better recognition on certificates of what has been achieved, and new forms of certification are likely to be developed. Some form of electronic CPD badging may even become more prevalent.

On the other hand, a very different kind of measurement may emerge, whereby large numbers of professionals are assessed collectively to show that CPD leads to widespread improved practice and positive stakeholder impacts. This will require substantial research efforts. It will be needed to dispel doubts around the value of CPD and help raise its status. It will also serve to raise the status of professionalism in general, particularly with governments and academics.

<sup>3</sup> According to the National Library of Health, a learning set consists of five to eight people who meet regularly to discuss work-related issues or develop skills in an area of common interest. Through these meetings, all in the group can also develop listening skills and reflect back on what they have heard, as well as discussing sensitive issues in a supportive environment.

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Another trend is the dramatic rise in online CPD activities. It may be the case that, not only will more training be undertaken in this way, but also that more social media activity that is not immediately recognisable as CPD will become incorporated clearly into CPD schemes. This will help support collaborative communities.

According to Lindsay (2015), adaptability is likely to emerge as a new aim of CPD. Adaptability involves encouraging professionals to experiment, explore and engage with others, and supports the self-belief and positive attitude needed to make the most of opportunities that present themselves. This is particularly suited to the development of portfolio careers, as well as the continued development of the gig economy.

## **8. Why CPD is important**

### **a. For the individual professional**

CPD is of growing importance for individual professionals. It is a way of systematically keeping in touch with developments in their field and demonstrating this in an accredited manner. It is an increasingly common way of raising the quality of professional practice and articulating this in a cohesive way.

CPD is important for your own development; it enables you to plan your career and demonstrate to both current/future employers and clients that you are up to date. It creates a shared landscape with peers, raises self-confidence, integrates your professional community, and increases the visibility of individual and collective professional development. CPD can improve confidence in a member's competence, as well as encouraging certain crucial characteristics that are of great value to professional practice, such as planning, reflection, critical evaluation and adaptability. As a result, it can support career development at a time when working for a single employer for life is no longer the norm.

Beyond a positive impact on individual professionals, the trend towards compulsory CPD will mean that not following a recognised CPD programme, and not being able to produce evidence of it, will harm career prospects. CPD as an integral aspect of being a professional is becoming the increasingly important third pillar of professional regulation.

Following from these arguments, compulsory CPD in particular has the potential to raise the status of the profession as a whole. A consequence of this would be to encourage bright young people to choose paths that will lead to membership, and to encourage existing members to stay. This, in turn, can contribute to raising the quality of the community of practitioners, and thereby help raise the quality and status of the profession.

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**"It is important for the general public to have signposts they can believe in that will encourage and restore trust in the services they receive from professionals. CPD, as it becomes more systematised and required of all professionals in more occupations, can provide the support for this trust"**

#### **b. For the workplace/company**

CPD is important for employers in terms of maintaining competence and improving practice. It can provide a learning and development programme for small-scale employers, and act as support for programmes already in place for larger employers. It can help guide the development of such programmes and, as such, save resource on organising training and administration. This will require some communication between line managers and HR staff running the CPD programmes within the professional body. Such coordination can be achieved in different ways. It can be initiated by individual professionals, as well as by HR and line managers at employers.

Some professional bodies, Engineers Ireland being an iconic example, accredit employer learning and development programmes (see its CPD Accredited Employer standard at [bit.ly/2s90ZAF](https://bit.ly/2s90ZAF)). The audit process they provide allows employers continually to align business objectives strategically with professional development activities.

Another interesting advantage to employers is that strengthening their learning and development programmes with the CPD of major professional bodies can make them more attractive to potential employees. This is of increasing importance to top-level employers, which compete fiercely for the most talented staff.

#### **c. For the public**

Ultimately, a more competent set of professionals means better and safer professional services. It is important for the public to know that those carrying out professional services are up to date with legal and technical requirements. It is also essential for the public to know that professionals have been regularly reflecting on their ethical behaviour, and that ethical codes are not merely window dressing or simply aspirational.

Professionalism has taken serious knocks in recent years; with the rise of populism, experts, facts, and truth itself have come under attack. Ultimately, social and economic transactions rely on trust. It is important for the general public to have signposts they can believe in that will encourage and restore trust in the services they receive from professionals. CPD, as it becomes more systematised and required of all professionals in more occupations, can provide the support for this trust.

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**"Employers can benefit from the guidance of professional bodies as they contribute to the ongoing competence of their members through CPD"**

## **9. Getting employers more engaged and getting relevant CPD**

The development of collaborative working between professional bodies and employers can lead to greater appreciation of the value of reflection and planning in achieving what employers want from their professional staff. Employers can benefit from the guidance of professional bodies as they contribute to the ongoing competence of their members through CPD. The wealth of support and learning opportunities professional bodies can provide helps build the competence of employees who are members of those professional bodies.

Professional bodies are receptive to employer engagement and aligning company learning and development programmes with CPD. This can save company resource by providing standardised information that can be included in employee appraisals. Professional bodies can benefit from engagement with employers to help frame what new competencies are arising from practice to feed into professional body qualifications and CPD offerings.

The role of professional bodies can be particularly valuable in accrediting different CPD suppliers to help direct employees towards more useful and relevant CPD activities. This can save considerable resource for both professionals and employers.

## **10. Conclusion**

CPD provides a significant opportunity for professionals to organise their learning activities in a systematic and standardised manner. It is likely that, in future, it will become essential for employment, as well as reassuring and impressing clients and customers. CPD will provide assurance that professionals have up-to-date evidence of continuous adherence to a relevant programme. It will serve the same purpose as the framed evidence of a university degree or a professional qualification.

Public expectations of transparency and accountability from service providers have grown, and evidence of keeping up competence throughout a professional's working life via CPD is also coming to be expected. For both professionals and their employers, demonstrating to clients that the professional is up to date with CPD will become as important as demonstrating that they are sufficiently qualified. CPD represents a kind of 'new professionalism' and, as such, it is predicted to continue to enhance the reputation of professionals and professionalism.

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"APM is committed to delivering relevant content to allow our members to undertake appropriate CPD, resulting in meaningful change"

## 12. APM – the road ahead for CPD

When done well, CPD is a way of wrapping up everything that a Chartered body does and presenting it as a coherent package, allowing individuals to identify where they fit in terms of career development. This should highlight what they can be doing that is relevant to where they are now, and what they can do to progress in the future. Due to this, any CPD scheme, APM's included, reaches far across the organisation, tapping into most of what we do.

Traditionally, APM has catered for individual CPD with a blended CPD scheme: inputs in the form of minimum hours required, and outputs requiring reflective statements on how the learning has been applied. The requirements for the APM CPD scheme are that CPD activities must:

- comprise a minimum of 35 hours;
- be project related (evidenced through reflective statements);
- consist of more than one activity (ie reading *Project* journal alone cannot count for the annual requirement); and
- have taken place within the past 12 months.

General principles for CPD are that it should:

- have a clear definition;
- be market relevant;
- provide a range of offerings to suit different budgets and locations;
- be easy for our members to engage with, access and record;
- provide a clear framework; and
- be clear and credible.

With the advent of APM becoming a Chartered body comes an increased focus on CPD. Compulsory CPD is already a component of the Registered Project Professional standard, and will be a requirement both for applying for the Chartered standard, and for the ongoing maintenance of the designation.

APM is committed to delivering relevant content to allow our members to undertake appropriate CPD, resulting in meaningful change. To do this, both the content and the ways in which members are able to record and monitor their CPD are core aspects of how APM's CPD offering will be enhanced in the future. Enhancements to this offering are being planned into work for the next few years using phases, and are currently being scoped. We look forward to developing the existing relationships with other professional and Chartered bodies, our members, and corporate organisations, and creating new partnerships in order to deliver this. APM has a strong history of collaborating, and is ahead of the trend illustrated in PARN's reflection on the world of CPD.

PARN's research highlights that APM's scheme exceeds the norm in terms of hours required, as well as showing the trend of moving towards outputs-only CPD, whereby hours are not defined and should be considered as part of any updates to the APM CPD scheme. The trend in moving towards compulsory CPD for all members is also an interesting one, and one that should be considered in the future, in consultation with the membership and other parties. Systems to support this would be a key requirement before considering any roll-out.

**Continuing to build our collaborative partnerships with both other professional bodies and employers will help to identify key areas for developing CPD offerings that meet the needs of industry and are relevant to our members. We will also be welcoming feedback from individuals on CPD. To begin with, we welcome any feedback that you have on this paper and the reflective questions contained on the next page. Email [cpd@apm.org.uk](mailto:cpd@apm.org.uk)**

## Appendix 1 – CPD reflective questions

- Reflecting on this publication, what do you think the key advantages of CPD are for you, your organisation and the wider public interest?
- How will you likely use or consume CPD in the future? Think particularly of new technology as a vehicle for using or delivering CPD.
- In what ways might the CPD needs of an individual and their employer diverge, and is this important? What support could APM give you to help with this?
- Is it helpful to have an hours requirement to set an expectation of what is required as a minimum, or do the remaining requirements of the APM CPD scheme allow for sufficient guidance and flexibility on what can be undertaken?
- Do you think a professional should be able to prove to their body how much CPD they have undertaken on request?
- Do you have any other general principles that you feel apply to CPD?

Any feedback on this paper and the reflective questions will be welcomed at [cpd@apm.org.uk](mailto:cpd@apm.org.uk)

### APM – continuing professional development

CPD is part of the *APM FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism* ([bit.ly/2spubHV](https://bit.ly/2spubHV)) and fundamental to today's business environment. It ensures that you have the breadth of knowledge to illustrate your commitment to lifelong learning in a rapidly changing environment.

APM expects professionals to undertake 35 hours of formal and informal professional development every year. This is a professional obligation to clients and employers.

As a committed project management professional, you are responsible for your own CPD activities and are expected to complete the required hours every year.

This publication counts towards up to an hour of CPD using the reflective questions.

Information on what APM classifies as CPD can be found at [bit.ly/2sufj6g](https://bit.ly/2sufj6g)

## Appendix 2 – about PARN and the author

APM is grateful for the cooperation we have received from Professional Associations Research Network (PARN) in the production of this paper.

PARN is a not-for-profit membership organisation for professional bodies, offering expertise, experience and perspective on key issues in the sector through research, bespoke services, networking, events and training. PARN was set up in 1998 by Professor Andy Friedman. As the organisation for the professional body sector, PARN aims to:

- conduct research that determines and promotes best practice;
- equip professional bodies to deal with common challenges;
- raise the profile of issues related to the professional body sector;
- promote professional bodies' contributions to society; and
- support professional bodies with bespoke consultancy in areas such as strategy, governance and CPD.

**Professor Andrew Friedman** is managing director at the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN), a research and development network that includes most of the larger professional bodies in the UK, based at the University of Bristol. Andrew has published widely on issues concerning management, information systems, professions, stakeholding and the environment, much of the latter in connection with various projects carried out for WWF-UK. From 2002, he has published articles in the *Journal of Management Studies*, *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *International Journal of Lifelong Education* and *Sociology*. He is widely cited in the journals, with more than 400 separate citations of his work listed in the various citation indices.

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