

# Continuing Professional Development

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For the past several years the New Zealand Institute of Forestry has informally embraced a policy of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and various articles have been published in the Institute's journal. The requirement to undertake a minimum level of CPD is now enshrined in the Registration scheme and all members are encouraged to make a commitment to ongoing learning.

This article has been prepared by Kathrine Fraser of Kinetics for the Registration Board and draws on previously published material to:

- summarise the Institute's CPD policy
- provide guidelines for achieving the Institute's CPD requirement.

## Introduction

Foresters work in many different roles and contexts within the industry. It is for this reason that the NZIF CPD system is being designed with maximum flexibility for members to determine appropriate learning opportunities.

Recent trends stress the significance of multi-skilling, the transferability of skills and the critical importance of being able to learn and adapt to new demands from organisations, clients and the global marketplace. As people progress through their careers, new development needs typically emerge as they accept new responsibilities, such as supervisory and management roles, marketing functions, mentoring and instructing, and also as they adjust to other life/career changes. Professionals have to plan their CPD so that they are equipped to deal with the challenge of change which has become a reality of modern life.

On October 1, 1996 the New Zealand Institute of Forestry Registration scheme came into effect. Its purpose is to enable the professional knowledge and skills, high standards of professional conduct and commitment to ongoing learning demonstrated by suitable practitioners, to be recognised within the industry.

The focus of the scheme is professionalism in forestry practice. One component, identified by Council as a cornerstone of professionalism, is a demonstrated commitment to ongoing learning or, what the Institute has termed, Continuing Professional Development (CPD). All members are encouraged to undertake a minimum of 20 hours CPD per year, and those on the Register are required to do so. Applicants for Registration are requested to provide an outline

of the CPD they have undertaken over the previous three years. This requirement is consistent with developments within other professional institutes both within New Zealand and overseas.

NZIF has defined Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as:

*"the systematic and structured learning that professionals undertake throughout their careers to ensure that they continually maintain and enhance their knowledge and skills and improve the quality of service they offer."*

This is a very broad definition allowing members to focus on learning that is relevant to their particular work situation and career stage. The implications of the definition are:

- CPD is systematic in that it is planned with regard to the individual's overall job, employer's business strategy, client needs and career stage.
- CPD includes both the maintenance of existing knowledge, skills and attitudes and the development of new ones.
- CPD is one of the responsibilities of being a professional.
- The focus is on 'learning' and attaining 'competence' rather than 'teaching'.
- CPD is governed by the sound principles of adult learning and quality management including the setting of learning objectives, evaluation of their achievement, reflection on their application, implementation in practice (i.e. this implies that CPD is structured).
- Providing it is structured, CPD can include learning that occurs on-the-job, through research projects etc. (i.e. not only formal classroom teaching counts).
- CPD covers not only technical, forestry skills, but also interpersonal, business management, marketing and other areas that contribute to professional effectiveness.

## CPD policy

One of the objects of the Institute of Forestry is "to serve its members by providing for the recognition of professional standards".

There are three aspects to this:

- identifying the standards
- facilitating their achievement
- recognising them.

CPD falls within this object because ongoing learning has long been recognised as a responsibility of being a professional. Consistent with trends nationally and internationally, NZIF has moved towards formalising the requirement for members to undertake a defined minimum level of CPD. Whilst desiring all members to accept the responsibility of continually developing their knowledge and skills, the mechanism adopted for implementing CPD is the Registration scheme which is heralded as the pinnacle of professionalism within forestry.

The policy of the Institute in relation to CPD is:

*that all members on the Register undertake a minimum level of 20 hours per year of structured learning selected on the basis of its relevance and application to the member's professional role and responsibilities.*

Structured learning is defined as learning which is planned, has identified outcomes and which can be independently authenticated (e.g. through an attendance record at a seminar, written report of study findings, outline of coaching session, etc). The latter criterion is included to enable a judgment of compliance to be made.

In assigning the minimum level of 20 hours it is acknowledged that most members are likely to well exceed this level. Twenty hours is not a recommended level, but merely a minimum.

## Methods of learning for achieving the CPD requirement

Learning can occur in many different contexts, and members are encouraged to use a variety of mechanisms to gain their CPD. The focus of the Institute's programme is professional development, with the key criterion for selection of both topic and medium being **relevance** to one's professional situation. With this as the base assumption, here are some options:

- Formal Seminars/Conferences  
The most visible medium for CPD within the Institute is attendance at a formal event such as the annual conference or Local Section seminar/field day. Other formal courses include seminars run by training providers or other professional institutes, with topics ranging from technical forestry issues through business and personal management, marketing, computer skills, etc.

- Tertiary papers offered through universities and polytechnics, including extramural study.
- Short courses offered by universities and other providers.
- In-house training programmes run by employing organisations to assist staff to meet business objectives, e.g. technical skills, quality management. Included within in-house training is one-to-one coaching on specific work-related tasks providing that the coaching session occurs at defined time/s and follows a pre-prepared outline which includes learning objectives. (In order to encourage interchange within the forestry profession, a limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed from in-house training.)
- Authorship of technical articles for publication, providing this involves new learning or assimilation of ideas by the author - (a limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed for authorship of articles).
- Structured private study and research. This involves a topic/problem being specified, objectives for the study being identified, various information sources being explored and documented, and results, conclusions and recommendations being reached and written up<sup>1</sup> (a limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed from private study).
- Original presentations of a job-related nature can be claimed for CPD credits along with the preparation time involved, up to a maximum of 3x the length of the actual presentation (a limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed). If making a joint presentation, claim only for your personal preparation/involvement. Similarly, teaching a new course for the first time can be claimed on the same basis.
- Preparation of forestry standards, technical guidelines and professional submissions. (A limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed.)
- Serving in NZIF Boards, Committees, Tribunals and in other similar professional roles includes an element of professional learning which can be claimed. (A limit of up to 50% of CPD credits can be claimed.)

CPD credits are assessed as the number of hours of active learning time, irrespective of the type of activity involved. This is the most easily understood and user-friendly measurement, which is readily calculated and transferred from one learning situation to another.

The establishment of a CPD system may be viewed by some as demanding more of members, but it is in fact only

formalising and refining the ongoing development activities which forestry professionals have always undertaken.

## ADMINISTRATION

### CPD Record Card

All members of the Institute are encouraged to keep a record of their learning activities, and to this end, a CPD Record Card has been printed. On this members can record the name and organiser of the event, the learning time involved, and other basic details. The card does include another critically important component. This is a column in which members record what they gained from the event in terms of knowledge and skills and how they might apply this in their work. This aims to make explicit the bridge from learning to application on the job and is a critical ingredient in gaining real benefits from CPD. *CPD is not about learning for learning's sake, just to clock up hours, it is about improving individual and organisational performance.* Learning without subsequent change is a waste of resources, both financial and human. Spending some time reflecting on new learning and its application enables professionals to identify changes they can make in their own work to better meet the demands of their clients and work situation.

To gain the greatest benefit from CPD, it is important that learning is relevant to professional practice and the individual's personal and organisational goals. Answering the following questions can assist with identifying key development priorities:

- What would make this year successful for you professionally (both personally and organisationally)?
- What job do you envisage yourself doing in five years' time (consider both technical and management aspects)?
- What new clients/markets are emerging for your services?
- How will technology, legislation and other external factors influence the job you currently do?

Answers to these questions assist in identifying the gap between current practice and desired future practice. Having identified the knowledge, skills or attitudes needing development, the next step is to seek out opportunities for this learning.

## The Link Between Registration and CPD

The CPD Record Card has been designed to facilitate the easy administration and processing of registration requirements as well as to incorporate the principles of effective adult learning in members' CPD.

All members, not only those on the Register, are encouraged to maintain a record of their ongoing learning on the CPD Card. However, only those on the Register are required to make an annual return to the Institute.

Each year, at the time members on the Register receive their subscription notices, they are requested to complete the registration panel on the card and forward it to NZIF with their fees (and PI evidence in the case of Registered Forestry Consultants). Completing the required level of CPD and returning the card annually is a requirement of Registration. When the Institute receives the required information from the members on the Register, the Registered Forestry Consultants will be forwarded their Annual Practising Certificate and the Registered Members will receive their annual Certificate of Compliance.

A random audit procedure can be used to monitor CPD compliance. In effect, however, through signing their annual declaration and forwarding their CPD card, members on the Register are monitored. Some form of monitoring procedure is consistent with practices in other professional groups.

<sup>1</sup> *General reading, e.g. of New Zealand Forestry, does not qualify as CPD nor structured private study because this type of reading generally has a low level of retention. If reading is focused on a particular topic, and recorded as outlined above, then it can be claimed for CPD.*

## Applicants for registration

The following have applied to become Registered Forestry Consultants.

Kevin Mardie Jamieson  
Ian Gordon Jolly  
Andrew Joseph Dakin  
Mark Bloomberg

Wellington  
Rotorua  
Papakura  
Christchurch

Under the NZIF constitution, any members of the Institute may send objections in writing within 20 days of Journal publication to the Registrar, NZIF Registration Board, PO Box 1340, Rotorua.