

Continuing professional development—a duty on us all

The Institution of Civil Engineers is taking steps to ensure more members are aware of their duty to society to maintain their competence. Director of membership **David Lloyd-Roach** and consultant **Richard Larcombe** conclude that more effort is still needed.

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a comparatively young phenomenon. The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) made CPD a professional obligation as recently as 25 years ago.

However, as is often the case with innovation, there was a big gap between what the Institution encouraged and what members actually did. For example, few members bothered to use their CPD record booklets (then known as ICE 108), and even fewer noticed that they should be setting themselves targets as well as recording the CPD they carry out. As the advice in the booklets concluded, 'CPD will work only if you make the effort.'

Current ICE requirements

ICE's *Code of Professional Conduct*¹ was updated in 2004 and rule 5 states, 'All members shall develop their professional knowledge, skills and competence on a continuing basis, and shall give all reasonable assistance to further the education, training and continuing professional development of others.'

The document also says, 'Where appropriate, there are Guidance Notes to help members interpret and apply the rules'. ICE 3006,² which provides CPD guidance for members, was updated in 2006. Along with most of the UK professional bodies in engineering and construction, the guidance focuses on the 'CPD cycle' (see figure).

ICE thus has a reasonable expectation that, to comply with its rules of professional conduct, members will identify, plan, carry out, record and evaluate their CPD in accordance with ICE 3006 and membership guidance note 39.³

Limited awareness of members

However, responses to recent email surveys confirm that while some ICE members consciously 'do CPD', few of them identify their development needs and draft their CPD plans, and even fewer evaluate the CPD that they have done.

Digging deeper, it appears members who admit to not undertaking CPD are often actually doing it without realising. Also, the annual appraisal systems of many employers actually assist in the planning, undertaking, recording and evaluation of CPD without describing it as such.

Obligation to society

So, does ICE have a problem? In part, yes. The variability of members' understanding of the true nature and value of CPD makes it impossible for the Institution to reassure the society it exists to protect that its professionally qualified members continue to maintain their competence.

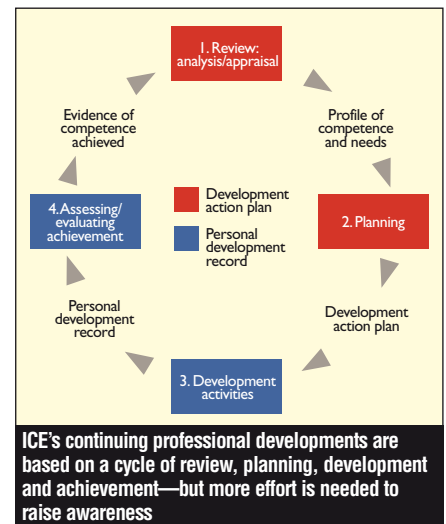
The good news is that the CPD practice of many members is likely to fulfil rule 5 of the code of professional conduct. The bad news is that, for many other members, this may not be the case. In reality ICE has no idea of the number of members who are unaware of rule 5 or ICE 3006.

The position of EC^{UK}

Anecdotal evidence suggests that ICE is not alone in experiencing a gap between best CPD practice and average practice. However, the engineering profession appears reluctant to act.

An Engineering Council (UK) (EC^{UK}) working group, comprising members from a number of professional bodies, was set up in 2007 to examine ways in which CPD monitoring should be done. Recommendations backed away from intervention, focusing instead on sharing good practice. The EC^{UK} board endorsed this, agreeing not to seek formal monitoring of individuals' CPD but to provide better guidance.

Why is the profession being so circumspect? Possibly it is because the cost of carrying out any meaningful form of CPD audit would be prohibitive. It is also possibly because the



results of any such audit might reveal areas of unacceptably poor level of practice.

ICE takes the lead

To move things forward, ICE council endorsed a proposal towards the end of 2007 that, 'CPD awareness amongst the membership should be increased, and as a first step, those members fulfilling roles on Boards, Committees and Council should make a CPD submission.'

It is a good start. But if ICE's members really believe in their own code of professional conduct, then more needs to be done. The Institution must maintain public confidence in the profession. The challenge is for the collective practice of the membership to demonstrate an increasingly mature CPD culture.

The authors of ICE 108 were right—we need to make more of an effort.

References

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2. INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS. *Continuing Professional Development, ICE 3006*. ICE, London, 2006. See http://www.ice.org.uk/downloads/ICE3006_ContinuingProfessionalDevelopment.pdf (last accessed March 2008).
3. INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS. *Membership Guidance Note—Development Action Plan (DAP) & Personal Development Record (PDR)*, MGN 39. ICE, London, 2006. See [http://www.ice.org.uk/downloads/MGN39_DAP&PDR\(1\).doc](http://www.ice.org.uk/downloads/MGN39_DAP&PDR(1).doc) (last accessed March 2008).

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