

Guidance on the RSS CPD Policy and CPD recording

The following guidance notes have been developed from a review of the CPD submissions made as part of the Chartered Scientist revalidation process carried out during 2011. These CPD submissions include those made by CSci holders who were audited and also by those not selected for audit. There were many examples of good practice, but there were also examples which suggested that further clarifying guidance would be helpful on a number of aspects of the CPD Policy of the Society.

1. Key information to be captured in a CPD summary

Although the Society is not prescriptive about the approach or system to be used to record CPD activities and provide periodic summaries, there is certain information that is required to be included in the summary. For a 12-month summary it should be clear that at least 60 learning hours of CPD have been undertaken and that the activities cover at least 3 of the 5 categories. (The definition of learning hours and activity categories can be found in the CPD Policy which can be downloaded from www.rss.org.uk/cpd . See also the points below) Thus if the summary from the system being used does not include this information it will be necessary to provide an additional mapping of activities to categories and provide a table such as the one below:

| Category of activity | Total number of learning hours for activities in category |
|------------------------|---|
| Work based learning | |
| Professional activity | |
| Formal/educational | |
| Self-directed learning | |
| Other | |
| TOTAL | |

2. Categorisation of activities

In the Society's CPD Policy a very broad view is taken of what constitutes a CPD activity. In order to emphasise this breadth, activities are split into 5 categories; work based learning, professional activities, formal/educational, self-directed learning and other. Definitions of these categories, and examples of activities that fall in them, is provided as an appendix to the CPD Policy (which can be downloaded at www.rss.org.uk/cpd). There are situations when a case can be made for a particular activity falling into more than one category. In these situations, simply select the category that has the best rationale (given the definitions in the Policy document).

3. At least 3 out of 5 categories

The Policy indicates that activities should cover at least 3 of the 5 categories in any 12-month period. This is to ensure that a breadth of development activities are undertaken in order to support the overall professional development of a practicing statistician. For example, a statistician working in academia whose work includes research, teaching, consultancy and administrative duties should pay attention to all these aspects of his/her role when considering development planning and the programme of CPD activities to support it. Such a breadth of consideration would normally lead to at least 3 of the categories being covered over a 12-month period.

4. Exceptionally 2 categories

The Policy also includes the caveat that exceptionally 2 categories will suffice. This is intended to cover the situation where the scope of professional work is somewhat limited or when circumstances preclude certain types of activity being undertaken (e.g. due to lack of mobility or financial constraints). This would include the case when someone is professionally active on only a part-time basis (e.g. when returning from a career break or when semi-retired). However, as the Policy states, the circumstances are exceptional when these situations lead to limitations in the scope of CPD activities being undertaken and need to be justified.

5. Work based learning

Work based learning is the category that is often misunderstood; particularly the distinction between 'work based learning' and 'just doing the job'. Typically in every job role there is an element of work based learning; a natural part of most jobs is coming across new situations where an element of learning needs to take place in order to complete the task. (For the full scope of activities falling in this category, see the appendix to the CPD Policy.) However, every part of 'doing the job' does not necessarily have a learning component and those that do are most often not 100% learning activities. Hence the concept of 'learning hours' in the Policy is useful in appropriately recording the extent to which the activity is a learning activity and so can be appropriately weighted.

6. Learning hours

The concept of learning hours in the CPD Policy is intended to recognise that the learning value of any particular activity (in whatever category) depends on the nature of the activity and its value to the individual. For example, experiential learning (i.e. learning by doing the job) typically occurs in activities that are not 100% learning in nature. As another example, typically only part of the time attending a conference is a genuine learning experience. To cater for this the Policy uses the concept of learning hours and uses the following definition:

$$\text{Learning Hours} = (\text{Actual Hours}) \times (\text{"CPD Value", in range 0-1}).$$

"CPD Value" is a *personal* assessment of the learning value of the activity to the individual. Determining the CPD value is not a precise science; all that is required is a reasonable and honest assessment of the learning value of the activity to the individual.

7. Minimum requirement of 60 learning hours in a 12-month period

The Society's CPD Policy requires a minimum of 60 learning hours per 12-month period. There has been a move away from so called 'input measures' in CPD schemes, such as counting the number of hours CPD undertaken. However, the use of learning hours in the RSS scheme, rather than actual hours, moves away from just counting time committed to activities; placing emphasis on the learning value of the time committed (i.e. an 'output measure').

Generally speaking, most practicing statisticians who are actively managing their professional development and career progression far exceed the minimum requirement of 60 learning hours. The same is also true of those moving into more focused roles in semi-retirement, where time needs to be spent keeping abreast of recent developments and the current 'business' environment so that experience and expertise can be applied in the most relevant and effective way.

8. Reflective practice

The assessment of learning hours requires some reflection on the value of an activity as a learning experience. When carrying out this reflection it is advisable to consider both how the activity has helped develop skills and knowledge to improve professional practice; and also how the activity has improved the delivery of services to your employer or client.

If such reflection of outcome or benefit is documented at the activity level it provides useful information that can be combined to make a periodic assessment of the overall value of a programme of CPD activities in advancing performance in the current job role and/or achieving longer term career progression. Such information is valuable

input to an employer's appraisal process, leading to goal setting for the next period which will help define the activities that would be valuable to undertake over the next period. This ensures that CPD activities are an integral part of performance improvement and career progression.

9. CPD to support professional activity

Professional activity may be technical or managerial, part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid. The term 'being professionally active' is loosely defined to include carrying out roles that require the application of skills and knowledge developed during an education and career as a professional statistician. What is important is that the CPD currently being undertaken as a professional statistician is relevant to maintaining and/or enhancing performance in the current role or to preparing for roles that may be aspired to.

10. Description of CPD activities

It is important that the description of activities presented in a CPD summary is sufficiently detailed to enable a reviewer to fully understand the nature of the activity and be able to appreciate its relevance to the current job role or to future career aspirations. To this end, it is important to avoid or explain acronyms. Also ensure that activities are sufficiently granular to enable a specific description to be given. For example, 'carrying out research' is too nebulous a description and such an activity needs to be broken down into its components, each of which may have a different outcome or benefit. For example, the above example may be broken down into the following activities; 'carrying out a literature review of xyz', 'networking with collaborators on xyz', 'developing methodology to analyse data arising from situation xyz' and/or 'preparing a publication entitled xyz for journal abc'.

It is hoped that the above points will aid understanding of the CPD Policy of the Society. You are strongly recommended to re-read the Policy to remind yourself of the overall Policy and in particular take a look at Appendix 1 which provides details on the scope and categorisation of CPD activities. The Policy can be downloaded from www.rss.org.uk/cpd .

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