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Introduction

To maximise your potential for lifetime employability, it is essential that you maintain high levels of professional competence by continually upgrading your skills and knowledge.

“Maximise your potential for life-time employability”

Continuing professional development (CPD) aims to create an environment that enables you to remain professionally competent throughout your working life. The British Institute of English Language Teaching (BIELT) helps you to do this by providing information and guidance to assist you to develop your expertise in recognising and planning your learning needs, recording the activities which you need to undertake to satisfy those needs, and thus maximise your employability.

The following sections deal with the questions most commonly raised by members and seek to provide “standard” answers. However, since continuing professional development is very much a personal matter, it is impossible to cover the circumstances of each individual.

These guidance notes attempt to appeal to the widest possible membership. You may therefore find that you are familiar with many of the ideas described in these notes, and in the BIELT CPD Portfolio documents that are also available. You should select the parts of these documents that are of greatest interest and applicability to your own level of professional development.

Why should I undertake CPD?

The job market is changing all the time. You may no longer be able to rely on your employer to identify and satisfy individual development needs. Additionally, you may well change jobs several times during your working life. Therefore, you need to take ownership of your career and its continuing development.

“Failure to find the time now could result in lots of spare time later”

These changes have increased the demands on people in all walks of life to keep documented evidence of their continued competence, and nowhere is this greater than in teaching, where the tools we use are developing all the time, where new materials are available every year, and where students' expectations are ever higher. In your own best interests you should be developing a personal portfolio of your professional activities and their relevance to your job competence and your career ambitions.

“If you think education is expensive, just try ignorance”

By undertaking CPD you will be:

- ✓ Demonstrating your continuing commitment to your profession
- ✓ Developing the good practice of regularly reviewing needs and selecting relevant learning practices
- ✓ Developing yourself as an individual
- ✓ Finding ways to make your present job more fulfilling

How do I go about it?

Professional development may be achieved in any of the following ways, depending on your circumstances, learning styles and the opportunities open to you.

- a) At home – private study such as distance learning; special projects or structured study which may involve reading, watching TV and video tapes and/or listening to radio programmes and audio tapes; writing papers for presentation or publication.
- b) At work – where, simply by day-to-day activities, relevant knowledge and skills are acquired by on-the-job learning and/or company provision.
- c) At events – such as presentations, lectures, seminars, conferences and also formal courses of study, whether or not they lead to an examination.

Who should take part?

All professional members of BIELT (Fellows, Members and Associate Members), except those who have retired, have an obligation to undertake CPD.

“Remember, CPD is not compulsory, but then neither is survival”

Members will seek to upgrade their professional knowledge and skill and shall maintain awareness of developments, procedures and standards which are relevant to their field, and will encourage their colleagues to do likewise.

Whose responsibility is CPD?

Be under no illusion – CPD is your responsibility. Others can help, but ultimately it is up to you to make the choices and to take the initiatives that will help you to increase and broaden your knowledge and skills and retain your employability.

Your employer has a role to play. That role may be greater if you are a permanent member of staff working for an employer with a comprehensive training and development scheme than if you are engaged on a six-month contract related to a particular piece of work – but in both cases the employer provides a learning environment.

If your employer provides formal training, ensure that decisions on what courses you should attend are joint decisions. Go into appraisals with ideas and proposals on what development you need. Training budgets may be a constraint – be prepared to negotiate. For example, offer to learn a new skill in your own time from manuals and tutorials in return for enrolment on a development course that you believe will improve your long-term competence or increase your potential.

Even if you do not receive formal training from your employer, there are many other ways to learn. Tap into the knowledge and skills of more experienced colleagues. Ask for help. Most people find such requests flattering and are willing to assist. Find out if you can use equipment in your own time or borrow books and manuals to help improve your knowledge and skill.

If you are a manager, see how you can make the most effective use of the facilities available to develop your staff. Treat staff development as one of your most important functions as a manager.

Your professional institute also has a part to play. BIELT provides support and guidance material in your CPD Portfolio; it puts on CPD events; it pools information about the availability of CPD events provided by others; it aims to offer a mentoring service to provide one-to-one help; it recognises the CPD achievements of its members and it promotes the concept of CPD to employers and society at large. But it cannot tell you as an individual exactly what CPD activities you need to do. That is up to you.

Where to Get Further information

~~BIELT has a CPD Administrator, whose main function is to put on CPD activities, and to provide information about CPD activities which are provided by other bodies. This information is published in BIELT Newsletters, and is available on the website at <http://www.bielt.org/cpd/simple-search.html>.~~

Local libraries are a good source of information about FE colleges, which put on increasing numbers of the sort of courses which might fall into the category of “future professional skills and knowledge”, many of them in the evenings. Your library may also have copies of some of the education and training directories, such as:

- Open Learning Directory – *Pergamon*
- Directory of Further Education – *CRAC*
- Directory of Vocational and Further Education – *Pitman*

Further information can also be obtained from:

NOTE: This information is no longer valid as of August 2013.

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~~The BIELT reference library, run jointly with the University of Bath, has the most comprehensive selection of ELT titles in the world. The catalogue is on the website at <http://www.bielt.org/library/simple-search.html>.~~