In 1999, as a response to a national strategy to create and sustain a leading economy in Ireland, a framework of good practices for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), to be put in place by employers of engineers, was established by Engineers Ireland.

In 2001, the Irish Government, through the National Training Fund, fully endorsed and financially supported the programme, matched by Engineers Ireland.

Today, Engineers Ireland’s CPD Accredited Employer standard is the national benchmark for organisations across all sectors of engineering.

The framework has won much international acclaim.

Scores of documented case studies from our annual competition show the recommended CPD activities being used to advance performance, bring about measurable business benefits and, in the process, create and sustain thousands of jobs.

The spirit of partnership and collaboration, which has been the secret of the success of the CPD scheme since its inception, is reflected in this latest revision.

The lessons learned from the CPD achievements of the leading engineering employers across Ireland, of all sizes, from all sectors, are woven into the new standard.

Detailed semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of CPD participant organisations to capture their knowledge and their ideas.

Best-practice internationally was extensively assessed. Key research papers were reviewed and distilled.

Our long-standing industry body, the CPD Standing Committee, was consulted, together with a specialist CPD Advisory Group formed thanks to generous research funding received for this project.

All engineering-centric employers will benefit from the application of this standard - be they a small indigenous consultancy firm, a budding new technology start-up, a construction company re-shaping to face new realities, or, a booming medical device firm trying to hire top talent to fill numerous vacancies due to growth.

Engineers Ireland thanks all those who participate in the national CPD scheme and all those who continue to contribute so much to its success, including the Irish Government as our co-funders.

Together we can look forward to the next era of CPD successes guided by the very grounded, applicable and highly pragmatic strategies which this CPD standard encompasses.

Aidan Harney, Chartered FCIPD,
CPD Director,
Engineers Ireland

Learn, Adapt, Grow

The Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard

“The revised standard offers strategic options for the tailoring of CPD systems and practices to circumstances, needs and ambition.”

www.engineersireland.ie/cpdemployers
A roadmap for recovery which all engineer-based organisations could avail of to mobilise their workforce towards innovative solutions

Lionel Alexander, MD & VP, HEWLETT PACKARD (LEIXLIP)

What is really impressive about the Engineers Ireland programme is that it goes far beyond requiring a specific number of hours training... and gets to the core of what it takes to be a learning organisation.

Fred Barry, Chief Executive, NRA

With rapid growth in our employment level, the CPD programme has helped to ensure staff retention and to consolidate the talent bank at our facility.

Declan Slemon, Facilities Director, BOSTON SCIENTIFIC GALWAY

The CPD Accreditation programme provides the company with clear courses of action through the accreditation criteria to ensure that the company continues to develop our staff in the most efficient way in order to add value to the company, our clients and our staff.

David Went, Group HR Manager, RPS CONSULTING ENGINEERS

CPD continues to be a beneficial tool to the success of our organisation and will continue to do so in the future.

Brendan Kenny, Head of HR, COMREG

CPD has been extremely useful in allowing us to respond to emerging markets.

Thomas Duffy, Managing Director, DUFFY CHARTERED ENGINEERS

The CPD accreditation process was extremely beneficial and provided a good learning opportunity for the organisation as well as focus for technical and engineering staff. It also provides a good framework for continuous improvement in business processes and staff development.

Frank Curran, Director of Services, Housing Corporate Affairs, WATERFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

CPD continues to be beneficial to PM; there is a greater awareness by staff of the importance of CPD to their careers.

Una Healy, Training & Development Officer, PM GROUP

Our involvement with CPD has continued to lead us to develop programmes and initiatives which have been of great benefit to the organisation.

Sinead Scott, HR Consultant, ESB INTERNATIONAL

Contents

Fundamental principles of the Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard 4

Key Players: CPD roles 5

Summary of Key Changes 6

Using the Revised Standard 7

Audits and Accreditation 7

Pragmatic CPD Advancement 8

Criterion Evidence Indicators 9

CPD as a Strategic Enabler 12

Criterion 1: CPD Policy, Committee and Strategy 15

Criterion 2: Adaptability through creativity and innovation 25

Criterion 3: Performance Management aligning CPD outcomes 35

Criterion 4: Mentoring during key transitions; Coaching conversations 45

Criterion 5: Competence Maps and talent support programmes 57

Criterion 6: Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management 67

Criterion 7: External ‘learning’ linkages 77

Appendix A 86

Appendix B 88
Fundamental principles

of the Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a vital part in keeping staff skilled, companies agile and our economy competitive.

The failure to engage in CPD equates to ‘arrested adaptation’ at an individual- or organisational-level.

Engineers Ireland expects individual engineers and technical professionals to actively engage in CPD, through their career, in order to maintain their professional technical and non-technical capabilities.

Engineers Ireland also recognises that the employer holds the key to an effective CPD scheme. For this reason, our standard is awarded to employers which Engineers Ireland closely guides, supports and audits.

The CPD Accredited Employer standard is not highly prescriptive. Instead, it is designed to permit the necessary flexibility to facilitate both small and large organisations and to recognise the widely differing CPD needs of businesses that span the full range of technologies and markets.

“In essence, the Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard provides a framework for employers to make better choices regarding learning and development initiatives in their organisations.”

Organisations which adopt and commit to the best-practices suggested by the CPD standard will see real business benefits. They can benchmark with other organisations that put CPD to good use in innovating and adapting, to reflect the ever-changing environments in which engineering professionals work and learn.

THE PROCESS

Formal contact between Engineers Ireland and the Employer

Agree CPD Accreditation as an Organisation Goal

Gap Analysis, review status of CPD systems and practices

Implement CPD Systems and Practices

Written Submission to Engineers Ireland

Engineers Ireland Accreditation Audit

CPD ACCREDITED EMPLOYER – Award for up to 3 years

Recognition and PR

Networking and benchmarking

1. The Employer

ROLE
- Cultivate a culture that promotes and facilitates learning and adaptability
- Participate in the CPD Accredited Employer scheme, putting in place CPD support systems and implementing good CPD practices
- Recognise and celebrate business achievement through use of CPD

2. Engineers Ireland

ROLE
- Ensure engineering employers in Ireland have knowledge of best international practice with regard to CPD
- Engage, support and add-value to employers involved in CPD
- Award professional titles, including that of Chartered Engineer, and accredit the engineering courses of higher education institutes in Ireland

3. Individual engineers/technicians

ROLE
- Take personal responsibility for their own CPD
- Actively contribute to the CPD processes of their employer
- Engage with Professional Bodies and Learned Institutions to uphold professional engineering standards

4. The Irish Government

ROLE
- CPD Accredited Employer standard funding contribution, through the National Training Fund
- Promote the importance of upskilling and CPD for job creation

5. Higher education sector

ROLE
- Foster stronger industry-academia linkages for professional development
Summary of Key Changes

A more strategic standard

The design of the original CPD scheme started in 1998, with five basic criteria for CPD Accreditation, to begin to highlight to employers the benefits of CPD.

Since then a series of refinements has been introduced. These began with making Performance Management essential as a basis for more aligned learning and development initiatives. Subsequently, knowledge sharing was identified as an emerging practice and was introduced to the standard to reflect the aspirations of a ‘smart economy’.

In 2008/2009, the standard was extensively revised again to include areas of significant new emphasis including Advanced Knowledge Management, Competency Frameworks and the need to actively Foster Creativity & Innovation.

The past year has seen the Engineers Ireland Executive team involved in the most thorough and in depth CPD research to date. The result is a revised CPD framework which has guidance for all employers on how to use CPD in a more strategic manner, to suit their situation.

“The framework provides a clear and structured tool which top management teams can consider in line with their business plans to address step-changes in their operating environment.

The CPD framework recognises that organisations will mould their CPD activities to their culture and context.”

Strategic CPD Solutions Matrix

Engineers Ireland’s latest research and analysis indicates that organisations which excel at continuously adapting, while delivering high-performance, simultaneously match their CPD initiatives to two factors, as shown on the Strategic CPD Solutions matrix:

(i) the rate or pace of change in their product/service sector and,
(ii) the requirements of their core and emerging customers/markets.

The Strategic CPD Solutions Matrix sets out three broad ‘levels’ of CPD good practice for consideration.

Level A: ‘Primary’ CPD
For organisations with a portfolio of strong, stable existing products and services, with a steady rate of change (of technology, materials, codes and standards, legislation/compliance requirements etc) and serving an established customer-base, it can be appropriate for CPD initiatives to focus mostly on core initiatives (‘Primary’ CPD).

Level B: ‘Advanced’ CPD
For organisations operating in sectors with more frequent technological churns and where organisations are expanding into new business bases, CPD solutions naturally need to be more advanced to match the ambitions of the business (‘Advanced’ CPD).

Level C: ‘Transformational’ CPD
For organisations with a sustained agenda of technology transformation and innovation, targeting new customers in emerging markets (as well as maintaining core portfolios), then CPD practices which enable ongoing rapid, step-changes are a necessity (‘Transformational’ CPD).

Traditional firms and start-ups

Our latest research also shows that an organisation’s competitive position within its sector influences strategic CPD choices.

For example, a ‘traditional’ company may pursue more ‘Transformational CPD’ in the hope of crafting a new product, process, service or business model that would dramatically alter its prospects of a growth curve.

Early-stage enterprises, especially those funded by venture capital, warrant more investment in higher-order CPD practices also to ensure they learn from and capture vital lessons-learned from operations which will help protect and grow the company.

The point is that a management team should assess how far its current CPD capacity is from its ideal and arrive at a CPD strategy it believes will ‘close the gap’.
Using the revised standard

“How it works”

The CPD standard now has seven criteria. Under each criterion there are three elements, matched to the three Levels of CPD Practice:

- **Level A** = ‘Primary’ CPD
- **Level B** = ‘Advanced’ CPD
- **Level C** = ‘Transformational’ CPD

These Levels are colour-coded throughout this booklet to make them very easy to follow.

The seven CPD criteria are as follows:

1. **CPD Policy, Committee and Strategy**
2. Adaptability through creativity and innovation
3. Performance Management aligning CPD outcomes to organisational strategy
4. Mentoring during key transitions; Coaching conversations
5. Competence Maps and talent support programmes
6. Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management
7. External ‘learning’ linkages

**Audits and Accreditation**

To achieve initial accreditation to the CPD Accredited Employer standard, an employer must:

- Satisfy the three elements of Criterion 1
- Satisfy Criteria 2-7 at minimum Level A i.e. all of the ‘Primary’ CPD elements

The initial accreditation audit visit leads to a written report and recommendations. This report notes the effectiveness of an organisation’s CPD systems and processes based on the Strategic CPD Solutions Matrix i.e. based on:

(i) Their sector’s pace of change (of technology, materials, codes and standards, legislation/compliance requirements etc); and,
(ii) Their customer / market focus.

An organisation is awarded official CPD Accreditation for one, two or three years based on how closely its CPD systems and processes align with its position on the Strategic CPD Solutions Matrix.

See Appendix B for detailed Award Descriptors for use in assessing duration of award (1-3 years) for the Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard.

Second and subsequent CPD accreditation audits should then confirm planned and appropriate advances, moving up at least one ‘Level’ in a minimum of two CPD criteria. The two criteria where advancement will be evidenced should be chosen, aligned to an organisation’s strategy and business goals.

In this way, our revised CPD standard encourages a gradual improvement in organisational learning and development.

The ‘Primary’, ‘Advanced’ and ‘Transformational’ bands (A, B & C) present grounded, applicable options for improvement, allied to specific business plans and strategic ‘thrusts’.

Organisations will gradually ‘transition’ from one band to a higher-level of CPD practice by displaying advancement, up at least one ‘Level’, in a minimum of two key CPD criteria at each re-accreditation audit.

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**SPECIAL NOTE: Pre-2013 standard-holders**

Pre-2013 CPD Accredited Employer standard-holders will be expected, at their first re-accreditation audit after January 1, 2013 to:

- Satisfy the three elements of Criterion 1
- Satisfy Criteria 2-7 at minimum Level A i.e. all ‘Primary’ CPD elements,

PLUS

- Address a minimum of two other CPD elements at minimum Level B ‘Advanced’ CPD.
Criterion 1: CPD Policy, Committee and Strategy

Thought-leadership and resourcing for aligned learning & development

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**1A.** A Policy outlining the importance of CPD, clearly communicated to all staff

**1B.** A cross-functional CPD Committee with a Charter that sets out clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), reported to Senior Management

**1C.** A CPD Strategy outline covering the next 6-36 months

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Criterion 2: Adaptable through creativity and innovation

Transformation through learning at multiple levels

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**2A.** The development and nurturing of creativity in engineering professionals

**2B.** Pro-active practices for continuously finding and solving problems and implementing solutions

**2C.** Learning ‘feedback’ loops inform further innovations as well as staff recognition/reward

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Criterion 3: Performance Management aligning CPD outcomes

The virtuous cycle of CPD and competence upkeep

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**3A.** A minimum average of 5 days CPD Inputs per annum, recorded for all engineers and technicians

**3B.** Organisational strategy is clearly connected to individual-level Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

**3C.** Learning Outcomes from key CPD programmes are measured

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Criterion 4: Mentoring during key transitions; Coaching conversations

Learning relationships for knowledge exchange and behaviour change

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**4A.** Mentoring initiatives have clear strategic aims

**4B.** Training or guidance ensures best-practice for all mentoring and coaching stakeholders

**4C.** Line-managers enhance staff performance and development through coaching conversations

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Criterion 5: Competence Maps and talent support programmes

The behavioural repertoire underpinning excellence

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**5A.** An essential skills matrix for engineer/technician functions

**5B.** Competency Frameworks available for key engineering roles/grades

**5C.** A competence-based approach adopted for talent development

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Criterion 6: Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Management

Managing what your organisation knows

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**6A.** Knowledge Sharing behaviours are promoted

**6B.** Organisation-wide awareness of Knowledge Management (KM)

**6C.** KM processes, practices, and measurement are formalised and integrated with core business activities

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Criterion 7: External ‘learning’ linkages

The wider environment as a source of CPD

**Evidence for Accreditation**

**7A.** Strategic learning linkages at corporate and at individual level

**7B.** Formal collaborations and benchmarking

**7C.** Engineering contributions recognised at local, national or international level
Case Study 3: A hi-tech manufacturer in the biomed sector

Having achieved excellence in matters of quality, cost control and compliance, this highly successful multinational manufacturer had CPD systems and practices structured to match its high-compliance requirements in a regulated sector when it first gained CPD Accreditation. The audit report encouraged the top management team to examine the effect its all-pervasive ‘total compliance’ culture was having on learning and development. When they did so, they got a surprise. Levels of quality and compliance were very high but levels of creativity and innovation were not, leading to a dearth of new products in the pipeline.

The new CPD strategy for the organisation prioritised good practices in 2A, in order to balance high compliance levels with high levels of creativity. With ‘Creativity’ firmly embedded as a required behavioural standard, the organisation’s focus is now on transforming this capability from 2A to 2C over the coming years to ensure flexibility and adaptability among engineering staff.

Case Study 1: A start-up firm in the alternative energy sector

A strong focus on more strategic CPD was needed to transition from being purely a R&D company to a much more commercially-focussed organisation.

The start-up company adhered to the Engineers Ireland CPD framework to put in place all the basic required CPD systems and processes for accreditation i.e. satisfied all elements of Criterion 1 and satisfied Criteria 2-7 at minimum Level A i.e. all ‘Primary’ CPD elements.

Knowing the value of lessons learned to a new operation, the top management team then made the strategic decision to invest in their knowledge management capability, shifting from 6A to 6C, in the process. At the same time, a strategic overview of key research links with a number of Universities globally led to a gradual move from 7A to 7B. The company has excelled, winning a number of major international contracts, with exciting plans for further growth.

Case Study 2: A long-established engineering consultancy company

The company recognised that a new approach was required to adapt and alter the company’s business and to place an increased emphasis on international sales. A Strategic Plan was developed to scale for international growth.

CPD played a fundamental part in the implementation of the strategic plan. The organisation developed an understanding that to make the required ‘step-change’ to become an international player, new job performance behaviours would have to be clearly defined and communicated to all staff.

Beginning with all basic required CPD practices (as above) the company then strategically transformed from 3A to 3C, by implementing, tracking and measuring personal development plans (PDPs) with Learning Outcomes, linked to the company’s short-term mission. The strategic shift, through CPD, led to several multimillion dollar contracts being won and today the organisation is prioritising building capacity from 6A to 6B.

The CPD Standard as a strategic enabler: Helpful examples

As an organisation we embraced CPD activities as an important element of our strategy and it is an essential foundation in the success of DePuy (Ireland).

Gary Clerkin, World-wide Director of Manufacturing Engineering & Technology
DEPUY ORTHOPAEDICS

CPD fits well with our overall strategy for developing talent within the organisation. It has helped us to recognise the need to invest time and effort in growth planning for our technical and engineering employees.

Kelly Henry, Learning Specialist
ABBOTT IRELAND PHARMACEUTICAL OPERATIONS (AIPO)

As a management team we found the CPD Accreditation process incredibly beneficial from a number of perspectives. We have a clearer appreciation of which CPD initiatives we should focus on over the next period of time in the context of our own unique business challenges.

Roisin Foley, HR Manager
OPENHYDRO TECHNOLOGY LTD

Achieving the Engineers Ireland CPD Accredited Employer standard allowed us an opportunity to look at ways of connecting all of our Learning & Development initiatives to increase their strategic leverage. CPD has proved a most worthwhile journey for our firm and is a process we are committed to sustaining.

Tony Horan, MD,
O’CONNOR SUTTON CRONIN

Now read on to learn how your organisation can optimise its use of CPD....