

## Gathering the evidence



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The experience some years ago of organising a CPD workshop for academic colleagues, who for the first time could be asked to provide evidence of their CPD under the institute's new requirements, was best described as "a negative one".

There was a tendency to view the recording of CPD as a mechanistic and unnecessary process that offered little personal development.

This is not to suggest that these individuals were not aware of the importance of continuing professional development. Rather it was regarded as such an integral feature of their working lives, any process for recording it was seen as inadequate and taking up valuable time.

Times have moved on. In preparation for this short article I decided to take some "soundings" again from academic colleagues about the value of a planned and recorded approach to CPD. On this occasion the positive view of its contribution to personal development came as a pleasant surprise.

This may reflect the importance now accorded to formal CPD evidence at all stages of the CIPD qualification scheme or it may stem from more established internal organisational performance review and development processes for academic staff.

It could also be because of the direct personal experience of actually preparing personal development plans and records. The most likely explanation is that it is a combination of all three factors. The CPD element in the new professional qualification scheme means that academic staff now find themselves having to approach their own CPD in a more reflective and evaluative way if they are to provide informed guidance to students.

At a meeting where this very requirement was discussed, an impressively wide range of ideas emerged about CPD for academics.

These varied from the value of the process of recording CPD -providing opportunities for individual reflection -to identifying areas for personal development and encouraging the observation of workplace practice at first hand.

Links with professional practice were seen as essential to developing tutors. Tutors could encourage students to take a more critically evaluative approach to organisational strategies and practices as well as the theoretical concepts that are encountered in their studies.

The very nature of their work places academics who are in regular contact with HR professionals and other managers in a privileged position.

Teaching students from diverse backgrounds, combined with personal research and consultancy activities, provides many and varied opportunities for continuous development. This is not only gained through insights into different approaches to HR issues but also in revealing new areas for learning.

While it is argued that formal CPD requirements are likely to be seen as a support for planning individual development, academics working in the UK's further and higher education sector have never been busier and face increasing demands on their time.

This means that care must be taken to ensure that the benefits of encouraging individuals to plan and reflect on their development are not outweighed by the formal demands for the recording of CPD.

At first, the value of CPD for academics appears to lie essentially in the stimulus it can give to their personal development, but its real value is potentially wider.

If CPD leads to enhanced dialogues with practitioners, it provides a means of ensuring that academics widen their understanding of the business context and the organisational capabilities that are required in a working environment that is increasingly turbulent.

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