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## 1 - About CPD and the Society's scheme

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** is how professional geologists and Earth scientists **keep their skills and knowledge up to date.**

The Geological Society defines CPD as:

*"The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for carrying out professional and technical duties throughout a working life."*

In simpler terms, CPD is **an organised way to maintain and improve your technical and professional competence**, while also giving assurance to others that you are professionally capable. It helps you stay competent in your work, grow professionally, and gives confidence to your **employers, clients, and the Society** that you are **capable and skilled.**

CPD recording is **mandatory** for all Chartered Fellows (CGeol and/or CSci) and for Fellows aspiring towards Chartership as set out in the Society's Codes of Conduct ([Regulation FP/07](#) Section A4.16) and described in [CPD Regulations \(FP/13\)](#). Recording CPD is also very strongly advised for other Fellows who are professionally active.

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## 2 - What counts as CPD

### **Introduction**

The scheme is intentionally flexible, allowing you to record a wide variety of activities against your personal goals. It is based solely on time (hours), rather than a weighted points system, and activities are grouped into six main categories:

- **Formal learning** – Structured courses or training programmes, usually with a set curriculum (e.g. conferences, workshops, university courses or company training schemes.).
- **On-the-Job Professional Development** – Training or instruction delivered in the workplace (e.g. inductions, supervised training, workplace-based courses). Project work that expands

experience or presents challenges (e.g. tasks that have not been undertaken previously, tasks that require research or new learning, tasks that present technical challenges).

- **Informal learning or training** – Unplanned or less structured learning (e.g. attending seminars, lunchtime talks, learning from colleagues).
- **Self-directed study** – Independent learning you organise yourself (e.g. reading books or journals, online research, e-learning modules).
- **Professional practice** – Activities that use and develop your professional skills (e.g., mentoring, reviewing papers, committee work, management roles).
- **Other** – Activities outside your main role that develop transferable skills (e.g. volunteering, public outreach, personal development courses).

If you're unsure whether something counts as CPD, ask yourself:

- Does it **improve my skills, knowledge or competence** relevant to my work?
- Does it contribute to my **career development** or personal development plan (PDP)?

If the answer is yes, then it can be recorded as CPD.

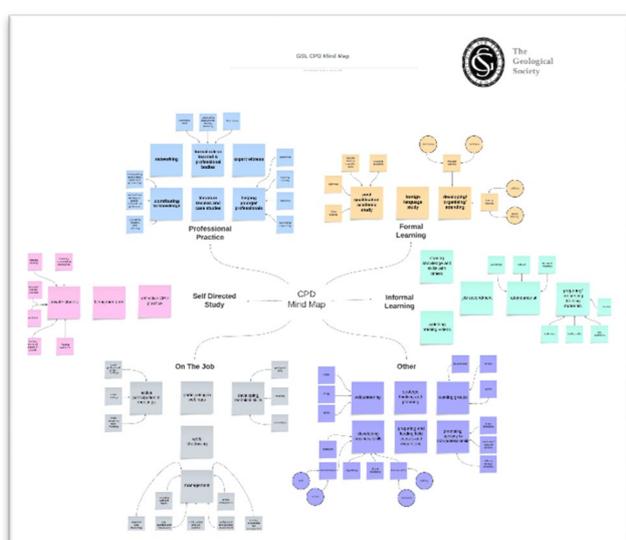
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## The value of On-the-Job professional development

Some of the **most effective learning happens at work**, with support from colleagues or mentors. The **style of support matters**: tackling problems and meeting challenges as part of a cohesive team is particularly effective.

Work experience, whether in a **structured or regulated setting** or in situations requiring **innovation and problem-solving**, is also a very strong way to achieve CPD goals. Informal discussions with **specialists or colleagues** can be highly valuable too.

For these reasons, the Society's CPD scheme requires On-the-Job CPD to constitute a minimum of **33% of the total annual CPD hours**.



## CPD Mind Map and Activity Lookup

To help you understand the range of CPD activities, the Society has developed a **Mind Map** specifically for the CPD scheme. This is available on the **Society's website** as a **downloadable PDF**.

In Table 1 below you'll find **examples of CPD activities**, which makes it quick and easy to find the right category when recording your CPD.

**Table 1 – CPD Categories: Examples of Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Main Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Main Category</b>
Academic research	Formal Learning	Multi-professional project meetings	On-the-Job
Being mentored	Self-Directed Study	Negotiating	Other
Client meetings	On-the-Job	Networking	Professional Practice
Coaching/tutoring	Professional Practice	Reading newspapers/magazines	Other
Oral communication	Other	Committee work	Professional Practice
Written communication	Other	Contract preparation & management	On-the-Job
Participating in courses	Informal Learning	Participating in webinars	Informal Learning
Data analysis	On-the-Job	Peer guidance & discussions	On-the-Job
Diplomas	Formal Learning	Preparing/leading field courses & excursions	Other
Distance learning	Self-Directed Study	Presenting lectures/teaching	Professional Practice
Examining	Professional Practice	Press interviews	Other
Expert witness	Professional Practice	Professional & business development	On-the-Job
External courses – conferences	Formal Learning	Project management	On-the-Job
External courses – seminars	Formal Learning	Reading technical papers/journals	Self-Directed Study
Reading textbooks	Self-Directed Study	Financial skills – bidding/marketing	Other
Referee/peer review of papers/books	Professional Practice	Focus groups	Other
Reflective CPD practice	Self-Directed Study	Focused internet research	Self-Directed Study
Reviewing/summarising publications	Self-Directed Study	Foreign language study	Formal Learning
Forums	Other	Sharing knowledge & skills with others	Informal Learning
Geological skills	On-the-Job	Site inductions	Informal Learning
GSL committee work	Professional Practice	Sponsoring	Professional Practice
GSL assessing/reviewing/auditing	Professional Practice	STEM activities	Other
H&S training & site inductions	On-the-Job	Strategic thinking & planning	Other
Higher degrees	Formal Learning	Study to develop specialist skills	Formal Learning
Internal courses – briefings	Formal Learning	Talks to Interest group	Other
Internal courses – tested training	Formal Learning	Teamwork & leadership	On-the-Job
IT & computing	Other	Technical meetings	Informal Learning
Job secondment	Informal Learning	Toolbox talks	Informal Learning
Leadership	Other	Watching training films or YouTube presentations	Informal Learning
Lectures	Informal Learning	Webinars	Self-Directed Study
Literature reviews & case studies	Professional Practice	WISE activities	Other
Managing staff & teams	On-the-Job	Work shadowing	On-the-Job
Mentoring	Professional Practice	Multi-disciplinary team meetings	On-the-Job
Modelling	On-the-Job	Writing/editing papers, books, conference proceedings	Professional Practice

### 3 - Recording CPD

#### Format

You have several options for recording your CPD:

- on the MyGSL Portal
- using your company template
- using the [GSL Logbook](#)
- using your own spreadsheet

It is not mandatory for Chartered Fellows or Chartership candidates to use the Geological Society's [CPD Logbook](#) or online portal to record their CPD. However, if you choose to use your own or a company template, your record must still be fully compliant with GSL guidelines.

Please review the [GSL Logbook](#) to see examples of a CPD plan, activities, and reflections. Make sure your record also includes a summary table showing the total hours completed in each CPD category.

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#### CPD Hours

You should record at least 90 hours of CPD per year if you are in full-time employment, and a minimum of 30 hours must be from On-the-Job training. The remaining 60 hours of CPD should be spread across at least two of the other five CPD categories. The minimum amounts of annual CPD for Chartered Fellows relating to their employment status are given in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Minimum amounts of annual CPD for Chartered Fellows in relating to employment status**

Work Status of Fellow	Minimum annual CPD (total hours)	Minimum hours On-the-Job learning	Minimum hours career development (excl On-the-Job)	Maximum annual carry-over of excess hours
1. Early career (pre-Chartership) Fellows	≥ 90	30	30	20
2. All Fellows in full-time employment or on sabbatical leave	≥ 90	30	30	20
3. All Fellows in part-time employment (e.g. job sharing)	≥ 50	16	16	10
4. All Fellows on extended leave (carers, parental leave, prolonged illness, etc.)	≥ 40	0	20	8

Work Status of Fellow	Minimum annual CPD (total hours)	Minimum hours On-the-Job learning	Minimum hours career development (excl On-the-Job)	Maximum annual carry-over of excess hours
5. Retired Fellows offering occasional professional services, wishing to retain Chartered status, or unemployed Fellows	≥ 50	0	0	10

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### When to Record CPD

The best time to record a CPD activity is **soon after it happens**, while the details are fresh in your mind. Don't forget to **save any evidence** of participating in the activity. (Supporting evidence for CPD is not required as part of the Chartership application. We only ask for a record of your CPD activities.)

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### Auditing

Each year, a proportion of Chartered Geologists and Chartered Scientists are selected for **CPD audits** to ensure records are being maintained. If you are selected, you will need to provide a **written account of your CPD activities** that is compliant with the Society's CPD scheme.

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### Other forms of Chartership

- **Chartered Scientist (CSci):** The Science Council requires annual confirmation that professional standards are being maintained via CPD. The Society helps CSci Fellows by tracking CPD and conducting annual audits.
- **European Geologist (EurGeol):** The Society also supports EurGeol holders by maintaining CPD records in line with European Federation of Geologists (EFG) requirements.

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### Exceptions

The CPD scheme recognises that sometimes **work patterns change**, making it hard to meet the usual CPD targets. General guidelines are shown in Table 2 to reflect alterations like part-time working and extended leave. In addition:

- If you are **retired or temporarily out of work**, alternative CPD requirements apply. Maintaining Chartership titles during retirement assumes you may still consult, participate in Chartership panels, or engage in professional activities, so some CPD is still expected but no longer mandatory.
- If you are on extended leave (Table 2, row 4), 50% of these hours may, exceptionally, be allowed with pre-arranged dispensation by the Society.

- If you think your situation warrants an **exception**, or for any other reason, contact the **Fellowship Department**. Exceptions are considered and approved (or not) by the Vice President, **Professional Matters**.
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### **Make sure you do a mix of activities**

Making the most of **On-the-Job learning** and taking the initiative with **Self-directed study** is strongly encouraged. The **Other** category is there to remind you that you can also develop useful, transferable skills outside of your main role, through activities in both your professional and personal life.

**Think about all aspects of your career** when planning your CPD. Don't just focus on your technical skills. It's also important to develop:

- your understanding of the wider sector you work in;
- interpersonal skills, such as teamwork and leadership; and
- knowledge of processes that help you work effectively, like problem-solving, decision-making, and performance review.

This balanced approach ensures your CPD supports both your current role and your future career goals.

### **4 - How to complete a compliant CPD record**

The Society's CPD scheme follows a simple cycle of **plan → act → reflect**, designed around experiential learning.

**A compliant CPD record consists of four key elements:**

1. A 5-year Career Aspiration Plan (CAP)
  2. **PLAN** - An annual CPD plan (separate for each CPD year)
  3. **ACT** - A record of your CPD activities (separate for each CPD year)
  4. **REFLECT** - An annual CPD reflection (separate for each CPD year)
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### **Create a 5-year Career Aspiration Plan (CAP)**

Your Career Aspiration Plan (CAP) sets out your key professional goals for the next five years. Think of it as the "big picture" view of where you would like your career to go. This might include milestones such as completing a postgraduate degree, changing roles, gaining experience in a new area of expertise, achieving Chartership, or becoming a Chartership Assessor.

The CAP is not fixed — it can be adjusted as your circumstances and interests evolve. Its purpose is to help guide your development, keep you focused on long-term goals, and provide a framework for reflecting on your progress.

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### **PLAN – Your annual CPD plan**

Your annual CPD plan is where you set specific goals for the year, breaking down the bigger aims from your Career Aspiration Plan (CAP) into smaller, more achievable steps.

For example, if your CAP goal is to achieve Chartership in 2026, your annual plan might include scheduling regular meetings with your mentor/supporter, attending a Geological Society Chartership talk, and developing your portfolio of projects.

Your yearly goals don't all need to be completed within a single year. The purpose of breaking them into smaller steps is to make them more achievable, provide structure, and give you a clear sense of progress.

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### **ACT – Record your CPD activities**

This is the section where you keep a record of the CPD activities you complete throughout the year. Each activity should link back to the goals you set in your annual CPD plan and, ultimately, to your long-term Career Aspiration Plan (CAP). Recording your activities helps you track progress, stay accountable, and build evidence of your professional development.

Your CPD record must include the following for each activity:

- ✓ **Event date**
- ✓ **CPD category**
- ✓ **Brief description** of the event, including the provider if it was a course
- ✓ **Time spent**, not necessarily on the total activity, but the amount of learning time you considered relevant to count as CPD (see section 2)
- ✓ **Evidence of participation** – keep a record! (For Chartership candidates, you do not need to submit the actual evidence, but you must have it available for audit.)

#### **Remember:**

- At least **33% of your annual CPD hours** must come from the *On-the-Job* category.
- Establish a **weekly reminder** to update your CPD record. Consistency makes the process easier, and recording activities while they are fresh ensures accurate records and maximises learning outcomes.

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### **REFLECT – Your annual CPD reflection**

At the end of each year, take time to reflect on your CPD. This reflection is where you look back at the activities you completed, assess how they helped you progress towards your annual goals and your long-term Career Aspiration Plan (CAP), and consider what you have learned.

Reflection is also about identifying gaps, challenges, or areas where you'd like to grow further. This process helps you adjust your plans for the coming year, ensuring your CPD remains purposeful, balanced, and relevant to your professional development.

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## **5 - CPD at a glance - key points**

- **Plan → Act → Reflect** – CPD is a cycle. You set goals, carry out activities, and then reflect on what you have learned.
  - **Four parts of a compliant record:**
    1. A 5-year Career Aspiration Plan (CAP)
    2. An annual plan
    3. A record of your CPD activities
    4. An annual reflection
  - **Record keeping** – Each activity must include:
    - Date
    - CPD category
    - Brief description (and provider if relevant)
    - Time spent
    - Evidence of participation (keep this safe!)
  - **Categories of CPD** – Six types: On-the-Job, Professional practice, Formal learning, Informal learning, Self-directed study, and Other.
  - **Balance** – At least 33% of your annual hours must be from On-the-Job learning.
  - **Consistency** – Update your record regularly-while activities are fresh.
  - **Think big picture** – CPD is not just technical training: it also includes sector knowledge, leadership, teamwork, and transferable skills.
  - **Flexibility** – Your plan can change. The important thing is to stay purposeful, structured, and reflective in your development.
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**Download:**

- [CPD logbook](#) – containing examples of a compliant CPD record
- [Mind-Map](#)
- [CPD Regulations](#)
- The [Summer 2024 issue of Geoscientist](#) includes tips and advice from Assessors.