



Government Statistician Group (GSG)

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

for

Statisticians and Data Scientists

Policy and Guide

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome to the *Government Statistician Group (GSG) Guide to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)*. This *Guide* is applicable to both Statisticians and Data Scientists within the Statistics profession and is intended to help you through the process of identifying and meeting your learning and development needs.

2. Aims and Key Principles

- 2.1 Consciously updating knowledge and skills under the umbrella of a CPD framework should lead to key benefits both for individuals and for the GSS as a whole. It should have a positive impact on job satisfaction and motivation, promoting greater professional pride. Engaging in CPD can help refine specialist skills and confer professional recognition, thus enhancing career prospects. This can also empower individuals to take responsibility for their own development. Setting a common standard should also help bind the GSG together.

- 2.2 This Policy provides the context for the CPD process and has the following aims:

- continuously develop the professional skills of the whole of the GSG;
- set standards for managing and monitoring professional development across the GSG;
- underpin the *Statistician Competency Framework* and support the Civil Service Competency Framework;
- set the minimum requirements for the number of hours a statistician or Data Scientist should devote to professional learning every year;
- provide a process for recording and endorsing professional development throughout one's career; and,
- ensure a common approach to CPD is adopted across the GSG.

- 2.3 The policy is based on the following 10 principles which are discussed in more detail in Annex 1:

Principle 1: The policy applies to all members of the GSG – Statisticians and Data Scientists. Its principles may also be applied more widely to other analysts or producers of National Statistics.

Principle 2: The policy has been endorsed by the National Statistician as a vital tool to ensure that people acquire and retain the range of skills necessary to perform effectively throughout their careers. Heads of Profession are responsible for the implementation of the policy in their department.

Principle 3: Continuing Professional Development is defined broadly and embraces statistical, data science, wider analytical and general skills. It acknowledges that as statisticians/data scientists progress in their careers it is vital that they develop generalist skills such as consultancy and influencing alongside their specific professional skills.

Principle 4: There is a minimum level of CPD hours that GSG members must undertake – this can be averaged out over a 5 year rolling period. These requirements are explained in detail on page 8.

Principle 5: All members of the GSG will have a senior statistician/data scientist involved in the planning and appraisal of their learning – this will either be a member of their line management chain, a designated statistical/data scientist mentor, or a representative of the Head of Profession.

Principle 6: A standard form (CPD Log Book) will be used to plan and record achievements – this has been revised to better meet requirements.

Principle 7: The key requirement regarding CPD activity is that this must not simply repeat existing knowledge or skills but should refresh or augment old knowledge, and provide new insights, competencies or learning.

Principle 8: Line managers of those in the GSG will be expected to recognise CPD as a professional requirement of a statistician/data scientist and provide assistance to ensure that it is accomplished.

Principle 9: This policy and guide will be monitored by the GSS People Committee and reviewed periodically by Heads of Profession.

Principle 10: Further information on this policy and guide may be obtained from departmental Heads of Profession and/or the GSS Capability Team.

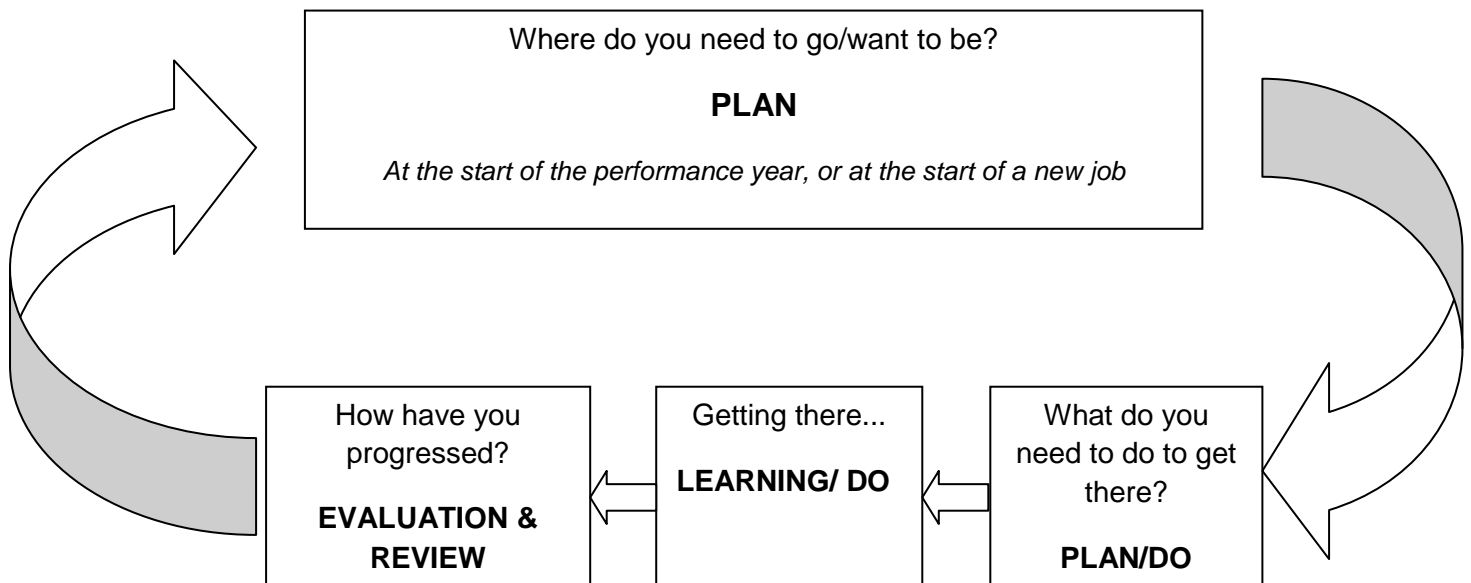
3. The CPD Cycle

3.1 Updating professional knowledge and skills is an ongoing process. It can be helpful to see CPD as a cycle based on the following maxim 'Plan, Do, Review':-

Plan: Assessing development needs and creating a plan to meet these needs. Personal Development plans need to be linked to CPD activity – mid and end year reviews can provide an excellent opportunity to ensure the planning process continues to meet the individual's needs.

Do: Performing the activities required to develop the skills identified. Unplanned activities should also be included – these needs may have become more apparent as the year has progressed. CPD log books should always be updated whilst the learning is fresh in the individual's mind.

Review: Evaluate the outcome of learning activities and consider how the new skills and competencies can be applied in day to day work situations. Personal reviews on the learning should be carried out by individuals then discussed with and endorsed by managers/mentors/HoPs.



4. Defining CPD Activities

- 4.1 Relevant CPD activity may include: formal qualifications, short training courses, conferences, seminars, reading, secondments, involvement in collaborative GSS initiatives, the acquisition of new statistical/data science skills in order to advise others who may be leading on an application, articles written/submitted to publications. Teaching/coaching – outside normal duties is also relevant (i.e. the development and presentation of new and revised material or to new audiences).
- 4.2 Another important means of CPD is work experience or on the job training and this can be very important in obtaining buy-in from managers and in ensuring a link between the learning activity and the day to day responsibilities.
- 4.3 The key requirement is that the activity is not simply repeating existing knowledge or skills but refreshing old knowledge, and providing new insights, competencies or learning. For example, some people may attend sessions at a conference and glean new knowledge at every session; others may find that only one or two sessions are teaching them something new and developing an area of competence. It is always the outcome not the method that matters: any activity can count as CPD so long as something new and relevant has been learnt. Statisticians/data scientists would also need to explain how they have used or intend to use that knowledge in their day to day roles.
- 4.4 Many departments will have no additional budget for managing formal training linked to CPD, but there is a wide range of inexpensive ways to meet CPD such as RSS meetings or seminars. It can also be useful to attend information sharing sessions led by expert colleagues. There may be ways to reduce the costs of training by booking group training sessions or requesting the delivery of ONS courses at your department (delivered by the Statistical Training Service). Many courses and qualifications such as the RSS Higher Certificate and the MSc in official statistics are modularised, so statisticians can select particular modules to complete rather than the entire programme. Many free-standing short courses and events on specific topics are also available.
- 4.5 HoPs can advise on shorter, more targeted statistical training that might be specific to particular departments – this could include training in a new area of expertise or refreshing previously acquired skills.
- 4.6 For more information on sourcing learning opportunities, please consult the Civil Service Learning portal or the GSS website, which will be reviewed and refreshed on a regular basis.
- 4.7 It is also important to consider activities that enhance broader skills such as influencing, negotiating, decision making, strategic awareness and so on. Participation in GSS wide initiatives such as fulfilling roles as international liaison officers, GSS conference organisers, etc can all offer excellent opportunities to demonstrate these skills. The Civil Service Competency Framework details skills and experiences required at each level; statisticians/data scientists aspiring for promotion should consider how they need to achieve the levels to enable them to reach higher grades.

5. Roles and Responsibilities in the CPD Process

- 5.1 CPD is specific to the individual and should be geared to current short and longer term career needs. Key development needs should be identified at the start of the year but unplanned activity will also be a major feature of the CPD Log Book. This should not be forgotten as any early formal planning will not have picked this up.
- 5.2 All members of the GSG will have a statistician/data scientist involved in the planning and assessment of their professional learning – this will be a member of their line management chain, a designated mentor, or a Head of Profession.
- 5.3 Specific responsibility for the identification, planning and provision of managing CPD is as follows:
- **Heads of Profession (HoPs)** are mandated to introduce and manage the CPD policy within their departments. HoPs are also responsible for identifying professional learning needs within their organisations. HoPs and line managers/mentors are responsible for working with their statistical/data science staff to help identify their skills gaps and to support a process for developing the skills. They are also responsible for ensuring that organisational and strategically identified needs are addressed. In addition, the role of managers/mentors/HoPs includes the monitoring, evaluation and endorsement of any professional development that is undertaken. They will also need to keep an eye on the running tally of CPD over a five year period to make sure that the individual is making up for any periods of low professional CPD activity. The following support is also important: coaching, championing professional development within wider teams and sharing professional expertise and knowledge.
 - **Each individual** is responsible for managing his/her own development and should play an active part in its planning, evaluation, recording and endorsement. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that CPD activity is recorded and signed off in their CPD log book. It is also important to keep an eye on the running tally of CPD over a five year period to make sure that the required levels are being achieved.
 - **GSG Interview Boards**, when assessing applications from members of the profession, will check that individuals are carrying out the minimum requirement of professional learning per year and over the five year period. Those applying for jobs from outside the GSS, and from other analytical professions, will also need to provide CPD evidence, as this will be a requirement of the application process. The GSS Capability Team will advise boards on how to collect this information.
 - **The GSS Professional Support Team**, via the GSS Capability Team, is the first point of contact for CPD policy, good practice advice, and maintaining the CPD site on Civil Service Learning and the GSS Website.

6. Recording CPD Activity

- 6.1 The 'CPD Log Book' allows the recording of a running tally of planned and unplanned learning and also reflects on the impact of the learning.
- 6.2 To ensure consistency of reporting across the GSG, two CPD Log Books have been developed – one for statisticians and one for data scientists. The purpose of the Log Books is to:
- help facilitate a discussion with managers/mentors/HoPs as a means of discussing, monitoring, evaluating and planning learning and development. The development discussion should examine the effectiveness of CPD over the past assessment period and inform plans for the next;
 - keep a running tally of CPD (planned and unplanned);
 - enable managers/mentors to comment on the CPD undertaken and how this has been applied;
 - build a record to present to GSG Interview Boards.
- 6.3 Information can be added as activities are completed - this is particularly important for any unplanned learning. The onus is on the individual to keep personal log books up to date. There is also an area for managers/mentors/HoPs to assess and endorse the learning.
- 6.4 The log book has recently been amended to enable individuals to indicate the competency and levels of that competency achieved by each learning activity. For advice on competencies and levels, please refer to the Statistician Competency Framework or discuss with your line manager/mentor/HoP where you are unsure.
- 6.5 The running tally of learning should be recorded throughout one's career and the record should move with individuals from job to job. Some external recruits to the GSG may already have developed a relevant CPD history, in which case this may be used for recording past development to add to their portfolio. As retrospective CPD will not be endorsed by managers/mentors/HoPs at this stage, please just include examples of the following learning activities: *academic qualifications and formal courses attended*. Please also include any ongoing learning activities at time of appointment.

7. Endorsing CPD Activity

- 7.1 CPD should be regarded as an ongoing activity throughout the year but it may be helpful to agree specific times for review and discussion with line managers or statistical/data science mentors. Some departments have specific time scales for agreeing and reviewing personal development plans and the CPD review could be linked to that.
- 7.2 CPD activity should be signed off by managers/mentors/HoPs. The information collected will help show managers and interview boards how statisticians/data scientists are developing professionally. The assessment should collectively record what has been achieved during the year and focus in particular on the competencies developed and how the learning was used. The endorsement should also confirm that the hours completed reflect 'real' learning i.e. learning that can be applied and reinforced in the individual's day to day role.

- 7.3 CPD log books, generally kept as an electronic record, should be printed off annually at least so that managers/mentors/HoPs and individuals can sign it off by hand (some review boards also require paper documentation). A break/transfer summary should also be completed if individuals or assessors move on mid year.
- 7.4 It is the responsibility of the Head of Profession to carry out an annual check that CPD policy is being implemented by both individuals and those assessing CPD activity.

GSS Capability

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gss.capability@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

Annex 1 – CPD Principles in more detail

Principle 1

This policy has been framed as a set of guidelines for all members of the GSG, Statisticians and Data Scientists, across all grades through to SCS. All members will be expected to comply with the policy and it will form part of their appraisal process as outlined on page 11.

The principles of the policy may also be applied more widely within the GSS to others working in an analytical environment or in the production of National Statistics. The development of this policy has taken into account equivalent policies for other professional groups. Whilst details on its operation and guidelines on the expected amount of CPD differ, the broad concepts are consistent. Heads of Profession in departments will be responsible for establishing if and how the policy is used outside the GSG.

The policy applies to all members of the GSG regardless of the particular post which they currently hold. The broad definition of CPD (Principle 7) and the assessment over a period of five years (Principle 4) should enable all those who wish to remain members of the group to comply even if they are working temporarily in a non-statistical post. Special arrangements will apply to those on career breaks, etc.

Principle 2

The GSS Competency Framework sets out the professional skills required at different levels of a member's career. It is a key component of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, Principle 7 Practice 6:

“Ensure that appropriately skilled people are employed in the statistical production process. Use an appropriate competence framework to set the requirements of statistical posts and the development needs of staff, and support staff in developing their statistical, management and subject area knowledge.”

Heads of Profession have an obligation to the National Statistician to support the continuing development of all members of the GSG by enabling them to participate in the training and personal development activities necessary to maintain and develop relevant statistical, technical and managerial competences. This is set out in the policy document 'Roles and Responsibilities of a Head of Profession'.

The policy is designed to sit alongside wider development initiatives such as the Civil Service Competency Framework which focuses on the core general competencies needed in the Civil Service.

Principle 3

CPD should be regarded as underpinning an individual's *overall* development and any policy should not simply be targeted at a particular competency. GSG policy follows this principle and therefore allows individuals and managers to tailor the particular activities at any time to reflect the different stages of the career path, different competencies required in specific posts and personal circumstances.

Principle 4

The policy states that a total of **60-100 hours** of CPD per year is expected of which **30-50 hours should be statistical/data science** – the 30 hours professional element is a compulsory minimum requirement but there is no upper limit (Part-time staff should manage their CPD on a pro-rata basis). Professional CPD is defined as anything that helps a person develop against the GSS Competency Framework. In the early stages of a career the upper end of this guidance will generally be required.

It is recognised that in some years more focus may be needed on non-professional competencies so statistical/data science development will therefore fluctuate. The minimum levels of professional CPD must be achieved **on an average basis over a five year rolling period**.

If, for whatever reason, time is spent outside of the GSG, then it is the responsibility of individuals to keep their statistical/data science development up to date. To facilitate this and ensure membership of the group is retained, it would be advisable to maintain links with a senior statistical/data science contact in your department. HoPs can advise on any 'Keeping in Touch' schemes available in individual departments.

Principle 5

All members of the GSG should have existing arrangements for obtaining advice and guidance on professional matters from their line managers, mentor, or Head of Profession. This policy reaffirms the importance of obtaining appropriate assessment and advice on CPD from a senior member of the GSG.

Heads of Profession in individual departments will have some flexibility to decide on the exact arrangements for delivery of the policy but will be responsible to the National Statistician for ensuring that all members of the group have appropriate arrangements in place.

Principle 6

CPD activity must be recorded and assessed in the CPD log-book(Excel). Individual members of the GSG are responsible for maintaining their CPD records.

The CPD log-book has been designed to ensure consistency of CPD recording across departments and to help staff to maintain a CPD portfolio across a departmental change of post. HoPs are responsible for developing and implementing specific arrangements in their own department. This involves taking into account the overarching departmental requirements for performance management with the intention of integrating GSG requirements with departmental needs as far as possible.

Further information on the log book and how to record CPD activity can be found on page 10. Copies of the CPD log book can be found via the Civil Service Learning portal or the GSS website.

Principle 7

The scope of 'relevant CPD' has deliberately been set widely to recognise both the different needs of individuals at different stages of their career and personal preferences in methods of learning. This is in line with the definitions used by other professional groups in government and by many outside organisations, e.g. the Royal Statistical Society.

Section 4 provides examples of appropriate CPD activity and how this should be recorded.

Principle 8

CPD evidence must also be provided by GSG applicants when applying for a new statistical/data science post. This evidence will form part of the assessment of suitability for the post at sift stage and you may also be questioned about your CPD activity at interview.

Some GSG members are line managed by non-statisticians/non-data scientists. This policy should enable those line managers to understand the CPD requirements and help individuals in their development discussions.

Principle 9

The policy and guide will be continuously monitored by the GSS People Committee who will welcome any feedback (via the GSS Capability Team).

Principle 10

A dedicated CPD site has been developed on Civil Service Learning and the GSS website for information on CPD.

Further information on all of these policies can be obtained from the GSS Capability Team.