



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

PRACTICE NOTE 4

A GUIDE TO CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(A GUIDE TO SELF DIRECTED LIFE-LONG LEARNING)

In mid 2002, the then Landscape Professions Registration Board produced a document intended to provide CPD guidance to Registered Landscape Architects. While that document addressed the specific needs of the Registered Landscape Architect, much of it is of value to the broader profession.

National Council endorsed that document and reproduces it here as "A Guide for Continuing Professional Development".

Members who are not Registered Landscape Architects should note the differences between this guide and current AILA policy.

- CPD is mandatory for Registered Landscape Architects; it is strongly recommended for non-registered AILA members.
- A minimum of thirty CPD points per year is required of Registered Landscape Architects; a minimum of fifteen points per year is recommended for others.
- Registered Landscape Architects are required to submit comprehensive proof of their CPD activities as a condition of continuation of registration; other members are not required to keep such records for AILA purposes.
- Non-verifiable activities, such as reading journals, do not contribute to the 'point score' of a Registered Landscape Architect, even though they are an essential prerequisite component of a program; current AILA policy allows such activities to be counted as 0.5 points per hour.

Preamble

Society has a right to competent, relevant and efficiently delivered professional advice. The professional advisor has a duty to maintain skills and knowledge at a level appropriate to current and foreseeable social expectations.

In highly codified professions it is possible to accurately predict needs and to operate targeted programmes of continuing education. Successful completion of such programmes is a prerequisite for continuing accreditation in many of the sub-disciplines of medicine, law and accountancy.

But, unlike those more traditional professions, landscape architects practice across a wide range of, continually evolving, sub-specialisations. They also work within a variety of business structures. Landscape architects, while professing certain beliefs in common, are proudly individual and innovative practitioners. This is a primary strength of the profession.

Therefore, while issues of common concern do exist, each landscape architect has unique continuing education needs. This document is a guide to the design of professional development programs relevant to the needs of each practitioner.

Recording CPD activities

The 'writing-up' of CPD does not need to be excessively time consuming.

For Registered Landscape Architects, the major fault to be avoided is to commence recording activities only when required for renewal every two years.

The professional approach is to keep on-going and adequate records. Even the simplest 'running' record of CPD will minimise the time needed to produce a summary

The Registration Board examiners have observed many methods of CPD recording and recommend either of the following.

Diary.

Keep a separate diary for CPD activities. Summarise activities on a daily basis and estimate their value. Insert copies of receipts and other evidence into an attached pocket. At renewal time, submit to your certifier either a copy of the diary or a précis of it together with the supporting material.

Spreadsheet.

This is the diary kept in electronic form (usually based on Microsoft Excel). Supporting documentation is scanned and appended. An electronic copy is submitted to the certifier with the renewal application.

Allocating Points

Three levels of learning activity are recognised in the literature.

- **(2 points)** Externally assessed activities: These produce the best outcomes and are granted two points per hour of involvement in the AILA CPD policy.
- **(1 point)** Verifiable activities: Since these activities are not subjected to independent valuation they are granted one point per hour of involvement.
- Non-verifiable activities. The real value of these tasks is as a contribution to higher level activities. Though essential they are of little value on their own except for maintaining awareness.

While CPD points are quoted above, they should be applied cautiously. Continuing education should be assessed on value of outcomes rather than by counting the time spent. The experience of the examiners is that most registered landscape architects are committed to CPD well in excess of the minimum thirty points per year. On average, assessment by counting points is only required for about 3% of cases.

CPD overview of definitions

An effective continuing education programme has two major components; **awareness** and **development**.

The culture of CPD among landscape architects in this country has historically been focussed on attendance at educational 'events'. These conferences, seminars, workshops and study tours are organised by professional bodies and perform a valuable service to us. However, most of these events only raise awareness of change. They are usually too short for the genuine skills development that is the basis of any commitment to lifelong learning.

In order to expand knowledge and skills, effort needs to be applied over an extended period of time.

Development (expansion) of knowledge and skills can be achieved through formal events such as residential workshops or short/long study courses. These are the most efficient way of learning but they are expensive and can be very inconvenient to the busy practitioner. The economic reality of offering such courses often makes them broader in coverage (and thus longer) than needed by any one participant. Self-managed development programmes, if properly designed, are as effective and form the core of any CPD plan.

Awareness.

Before identifying study topics the practitioner must maintain an appropriate level of knowledge of the particular practice environment.

- The goals, objectives and expectations of the chosen marketplace.
- The legal and economic contexts of the chosen market segment.
- Standard business practices of potential clients.
- Changes in law (statutes, regulations, standards, codes, court rulings and conventions) relevant to the practice and its products.
- Changes in expectations of society and government and the consequent changes in selection procedures, contracts and conditions of engagement.
- Taxation, superannuation, record keeping.
- Obligations as employer or employee.
- Design theory and practice.
- Business theory and practice.
- Graphics theory and practice.
- Changes in technology of materials, construction, data collection and information processing.
- Changes in the theory, technology and practice of communication.
- Changes in the structure and practice of allied professions.
- Developments in theory and technology in allied disciplines.

Awareness is maintained through reading (of professional journals), attendance at functions (seminars, conferences and trade shows) and via general networking activities.

These (usually random sampling) activities are the substance of most CPD programmes and contribute significantly to increasing breadth of knowledge. But rarely do they increase skill or improve depth of knowledge. *Eg. Listening to a seminar paper introducing a new development assessment regulation will not fully equip you with the skill to lodge an application. That would require study of reference material and some further advice.*

The internet is an ideal medium for awareness browsing. The web pages of the various professional institutes (here and overseas) promote events and email newsletters are usually informative.

It is not necessary to attend every seminar, conference or workshop. The promotional material is often enough for awareness purposes and can be easily supplemented by internet search or purchase of papers.

Keep a 'diary' of these investigations and follow up with supplementary activity for each 'issue' about once every three years.

Development .

Genuine acquisition or enhancement of skills or knowledge demands much more effort than awareness. Learning through research and study is very time consuming. The busy practitioner will only commit time to areas of greatest need (usually the most demanding client). But failure to continue learning increases the risk of skills and knowledge becoming obsolete.

The main areas of skills and knowledge for a landscape architect are identified in the AILA CPD policy and similar sources as:

- Professional practice; practice law, contract law, environmental law, contract administration and project management.
- Information technology; computers/multi media, product information, materials, techniques, detailing, specifying and documentation.
- Research; project and brief development, post occupancy evaluation.
- Theory; planning and design.
- Environmental issues; natural sciences, ecology, horticulture and environmental management and process.
- Social issues; cultural/heritage landscapes.
- Community participation; general communication processes and skills, public participation in design, consultation, evaluation.
- Business skills; management, marketing, professional communication.

Examples of Learning Activities

The following are some examples of learning activities for each level. This is meant as a guide and is not exhaustive. Creative learning activities are encouraged.

Externally assessed activities – some examples.

- Further tertiary study; by coursework at an approved tertiary institution, leading to a qualification such as degree, diploma, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, masters, etc.
- Supervised research; through a tertiary institution which contributes to relevant professional knowledge/skills or leads to a masters or doctoral degree.
- Publication; active participation as the author of a paper (or similar) that extends the knowledge/skill base of the profession and presented at a conference, seminar, workshop or training course and published via an appropriate medium.
- Tertiary teaching (when teaching is not the individual's main practice); involving preparation of course outlines, content, delivery and evaluation of student/teaching performance.

Verifiable activities – some examples.

- Special consultancy; extending the knowledge/skill base of the individual and/or the profession. (eg: work with other cultures, breaking new ground in practice opportunities.)
- Focussed individual research; relevant to the theory/practice of landscape architecture (involved the posing of a question/problem and detailing the outcomes).
- Institute and professional contributions; serving as an AILA national councillor or state group executive or as a member of the Registration Board or contributing to the development or revision of AILA or BDP policies.
- Training course; participation in and completion of a training course operated or endorsed by a BDP member organization.
- Conference, seminar, workshop; attendance at a conference, seminar or workshop relevant to or extending existing areas of practice.
- Adult education course; study at a sub-tertiary type course that extends relevant skills.
- Study tour; individually or group organised; those parts of the tour that are relevant to or extend existing areas of practice.
- Committee participation; representation as a landscape architect on a government or community sponsored committee, task force or the like.
- Teaching activities (when teaching is not the individual's main practice); involving a minimum level of preparation such as design studio tutorials, critiques, mentoring, talks, etc.

Non verifiable activities – some examples.

- Reading; a programme of reading relevant professional journals, reference works, technical papers and the like.
- Public lectures; attendance at a public lecture, exhibition, trade show or the like that is relevant to an area of practice.
- Literature search; a targeted programme of low level research using on-line databases or internet searching.

Planning a development programme.

The conscientious professional will design a development programme that addresses each of the main areas of skills and knowledge in turn over time. The time devoted to each issue will vary from weeks to years. A correctly designed programme of study will maximise efficiency of time spent.

- Identify the topic.
- Clearly define the goal. Break it down into a number of tangible components and describe the outcomes in simple statements. This facilitates completion evaluations.
- Realistically evaluate the current level of skill and knowledge. It is sometimes difficult to be realistic. *(For example – most landscape architects know far less about contracts and implementation processes than they think they do.)*
- Check the offerings of universities and other providers. Look at the graduate certificates and vacation schools as well as degrees and diplomas. While expensive, formal courses usually produce better results for the time spent.
- If necessary, establish your own study programme. Base it on the usual search-review-analyse-synthesise-report process and give it a reasonable degree of rigor. Rigor is best achieved through some form of peer review. This could be regular review by a mentor or you could submit a paper to a seminar, conference or journal or contribute to a workshop. Do not be afraid to share the results of your research. The benefits of becoming known as an expert in some area far outweigh the risk of commercial plagiarism.

Sample CPD programme.

This example is published for reference purposes. The awareness programme is applicable to most registered landscape architects. But the development example suits a specific need. The full development programme would normally consist of a series of such educational exercises at the rate of three to four each year supplemented by attendance at seminars, etc relevant to the particular practitioner. At times, however, they might be replaced by a single, larger study.

Awareness:

As the maintenance of a programme of awareness is fundamental to the concept of professionalism some propose that no CPD points should apply. The REGISTRATION BOARD policy is that, while these activities are essential, they can contribute, in total, a maximum of three points per year.

- Read (daily/weekly) relevant articles in local and national newspapers.
- Subscribe to Larch-L and read e-journal at least once a week.
- Subscribe to and read Landscape Australia and Architecture Australia.
- Visit the university library once a month and read *Landscape Architecture*, *Landscape Design*, *The Landscape Journal*, *Landscape Planning* and *Environmental Economics* and check recent acquisitions.
- Read relevant emails.
- Review all the promotional material (including the junk mail).
- Check web pages of AILA, ASLA, LI, RAIA, PIA and IEA once a month for news and events.
- Check web pages or newsletters of your clients' industry organizations. Subscribe to their mailing lists if possible.

Development:

Goal – to become proficient in the use of AS4122, General Conditions of Engagement of Consultants.

Time allotted – allow twelve to fifteen hours over a period of six weeks.

Mentor – ideally a member of the Institute of Arbitrators with a thorough knowledge of landscape architecture.

Data collection – a wide search could save time later; particularly if some work has already been done.

- Buy a copy of AS4122 and commentary notes (if available) from Standards Australia.
- Check for appropriate seminars, workshops or publications. (AILA, RAIA, IEA, SAA, universities, etc.)
- Check for published articles – use a librarian to check index services such as APAIS.
- Obtain copies of landscape architectural conditions of engagement produced by AILA and LI.

Analysis – You will not be able to plan this phase in detail until after data is reviewed. If you are able to attend a seminar or read a useful article, much of this phase can be bypassed.

- Read and study AS4122 until you thoroughly understand it.
- Compare the standard with the other conditions of engagement and note
 - a) Issues covered by the landscape architectural conditions that are absent from AS4122.
 - b) Issues in AS4122 that were not covered in the older documents.
 - c) The different methods of dealing with variables (such as brief, fees, services, times, disbursements, etc.).
- Research any issues that you do not fully understand.

Synthesis – These tasks will depend upon the analysis.

- Consult with mentor and colleagues to determine importance of 'landscape' specific issues.
- Determine appropriate manner (where as well as text) of incorporating these issues.

Test and review – Since you are probably modifying a legal document, it is worth the cost of a review.

- Write up a sample copy of AS4122 with Annexure completed and include additional clauses.
- Ask your solicitor to comment on it.
- Do likewise with your mentor.
- Revise in accordance with the comments.

Outcomes – refer to comments under 'Value' above.

- Prepare 'management' forms, etc appropriate to your office systems.
- Adjust standard proposal or quotation documents.
- Bring key staff 'up-to-speed' on the use of the standard.

Value - The number of CPD points gained depends upon the nature of the outcomes. This type of activity would usually be classified as 'Focussed individual research' and would attract one point per hour. But the 'outcomes' component could be worth two points per hour if the knowledge gained is of value to the profession and is 'published' in an appropriate forum.

Checklist – development programme.

We have traditionally expanded our skills and knowledge through reference books. Unfortunately, few landscape theory and practice references are available in Australian bookshops and importation is both expensive and time consuming (but on-line purchasing is becoming easier). Some university libraries have reasonable collections but most practitioners can only access these via the, unbearably slow, inter-library loan system. It is usually easier and quicker to access journal articles based upon the reference work. With the help of a librarian, and for a fee, a copy of almost any journal article can be obtained fairly quickly.

This checklist focuses on the data collection phase of a study. Subsequent data processing phases may be necessary to achieve required outcomes.

- Honestly assess skills and knowledge at least once a year. _____
- Identify skills/knowledge goals - Topic 1 _____
 (Define the required outcomes) Topic 2 _____
 Topic 3 _____
 Topic 4 _____
- Establish realistic times/target dates for each topic - _____
- Select an appropriate mentor - _____
- Review formal courses – enrol if appropriate - _____
- Identify appropriate seminars or workshops – attend if possible - _____
- Purchase and complete on-line courses from ASLA _____
- Plan a programme of self-education activities for other topics - _____
- Study professional journal articles – _____
 Landscape Australia _____
 Architecture Australia _____
 Landscape Design _____
 Landscape Architecture _____
 Landscape Journal _____
 Other _____
 Other _____
- Run keyword searches on appropriate data bases (use a librarian if necessary) _____
 - _____
- Subscribe to an online reporting service - _____
- Read appropriate reference works - _____
- Analyse data. _____
- Produce a 'trial' outcome (report, design, detail, etc). _____
- Test the 'trial' against previous practice. _____
- Revise outcome. _____
- Obtain opinions of others (mentor, colleagues, etc). _____
- Revise and produce appropriate implementation documents. _____
- Write up and publish if appropriate. _____

This document is an edited version of a paper prepared in 2003 by Michael A. Ryan FAILA (Registered) for the Landscape Professions Registration Board of Australia. The author acknowledges the encouragement and critical support of the members and registrar of the Landscape Professions Registration Board of Australia and of the AILA Executive Director.