



# CPD RESEARCH PROJECT

2023 - 2024

WHITEPAPER

# The CPD Standards Office



## Foreword

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A decade ago, I embarked on a research project to explore perceptions of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The findings were sobering: professionals across various fields lamented the low quality of training. Sessions were often seen as box-ticking exercises, with outdated uninspiring content. The prevailing sentiment was one of frustration and disengagement, highlighting a critical need for change.

Today, the landscape of CPD has evolved dramatically. Our latest research has found a more dynamic and responsive CPD environment: Individuals are actively investing in their professional development, technology is reshaping accessibility, and more generations in the workplace are enriching learning experiences.

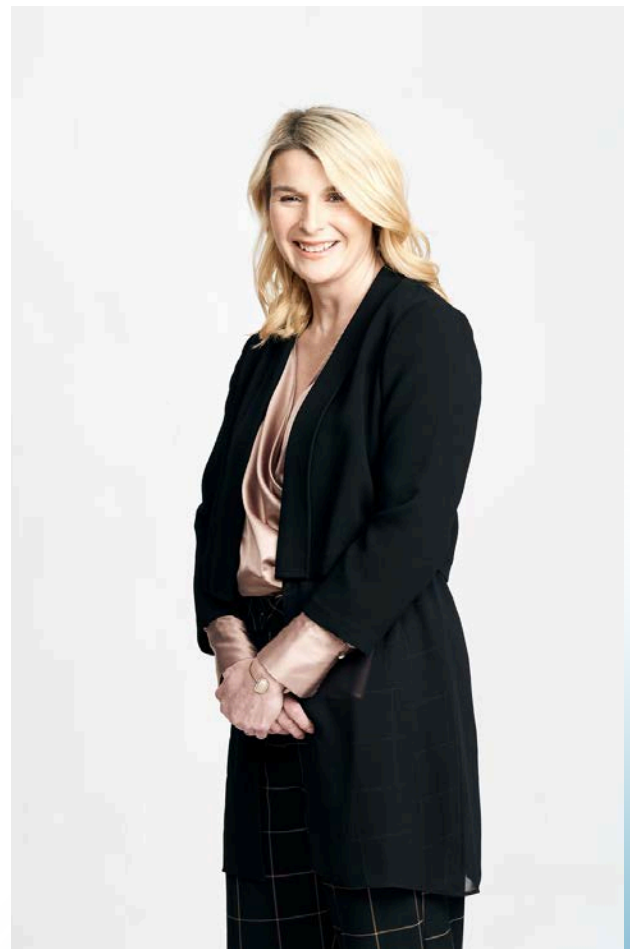
Our findings also highlight significant challenges. The rising cost of living made it difficult for professionals to invest in their own development. The quality of CPD training also remains a concern.

Furthermore, CPD standards and policies have progressed, with a greater emphasis on relevance and practical application of knowledge. Professional bodies and training providers are adopting innovative approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners.

As you explore this report, I hope it provides valuable insights and inspiration.

Together, we can make CPD a more effective and accessible tool for everyone.

*Amanda*





## Enhancing Careers, Maximising Profits, and Expanding Opportunities

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is vital for professionals to enhance their skills, stay updated with industry advancements, and progress in their careers.

This whitepaper looks into various aspects of CPD, from the perspectives of individual professionals, training providers, and professional bodies.

Our research highlights the diverse needs and preferences for CPD across different generations, the current state of the CPD market, and strategies for optimising CPD offerings.

By exploring these themes, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of CPD's role in professional growth and offer actionable insights for enhancing CPD practices to meet the evolving demands of the workforce.



The Research Project explored these following

# BIG QUESTIONS



## **CPD Learning Experiences and Careers**

- What value do young people and professionals associate with CPD?
- What are the relationships between CPD, employability and salary/remuneration?
- How do we create 'good CPD habits' to forge successful careers?



## **Professional Development Policy and Standards**

- How are professional standards defined in 2023?
- What are the relevant criteria to accredit different types of CPD learning?
- What are the best frameworks for creating positive and successful learning experiences?



## **The Influence of Technology on CPD Learning**

- How will artificial intelligence and chatbots change learning?
- What is the effectiveness and learning impact of face-to-face, digital and virtual learning experiences?
- How has technology shaped blended learning? What are the ingredients of a successful blended experience?



# CPD Research Findings 10 years ago and today

Over a decade ago, The CPD Standards Office was founded following the completion of the biggest (to date) CPD Research Project, utilising the findings of the research to inspire CPD accreditation criteria.

Reflecting on the evolution of CPD over the past decade, our current insights reveal both continuities and shifts in perception and practice. Initially, the CPD Research Project identified a widespread dissatisfaction among professionals regarding CPD's effectiveness and relevance, often viewing it as poorly executed or merely a box-ticking exercise.

Today, while some scepticism remains, there's a notable increase in recognising CPD's value in enhancing job performance and career advancement. Modern CPD efforts have responded by emphasising higher quality standards and more relevant content, aiming to transform CPD into a more respected and personally driven initiative.



# OVERALL SUMMARY



## FOR INDIVIDUALS

- CPD has increasingly become a personal initiative.
- A significant shift towards self-directed and self-funded professional development.
- Professionals are taking control over their career growth.
- Many view CPD as essential for securing promotions and new job opportunities.
- 90% of surveyed professionals reported that CPD played a crucial role in their career advancements.

## FOR CPD TRAINING PROVIDERS

- The landscape is intensely competitive yet full of opportunities.
- There is a gap between current CPD offerings and the evolving needs of professionals.
- By aligning more closely with market demands and job role requirements, CPD can become a valuable venture.
- Adding more value to their offerings is key for providers.



## FOR PROFESSIONAL BODIES

- Staying relevant and providing value to members is crucial.
- Professional bodies, institutes, and trade associations promote the skills and interests of their members and offer development opportunities.
- Innovating CPD offerings will reinforce their importance in the professional world.

# Definitions of CPD

Let's review some of the available definitions for Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

## CPD AS DEFINED BY THE CPD RESEARCH PROJECT

**"Continuing Professional Development (CPD) involves intentionally developing the knowledge, skills and personal qualities an individual requires to perform their professional responsibilities successfully and stay current and competent within their role."**

This definition emphasises the intentional aspect of CPD, focusing on the active maintenance and enhancement of competencies needed for professional responsibilities.

## CPD AS DEFINED BY THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS RESEARCH NETWORK

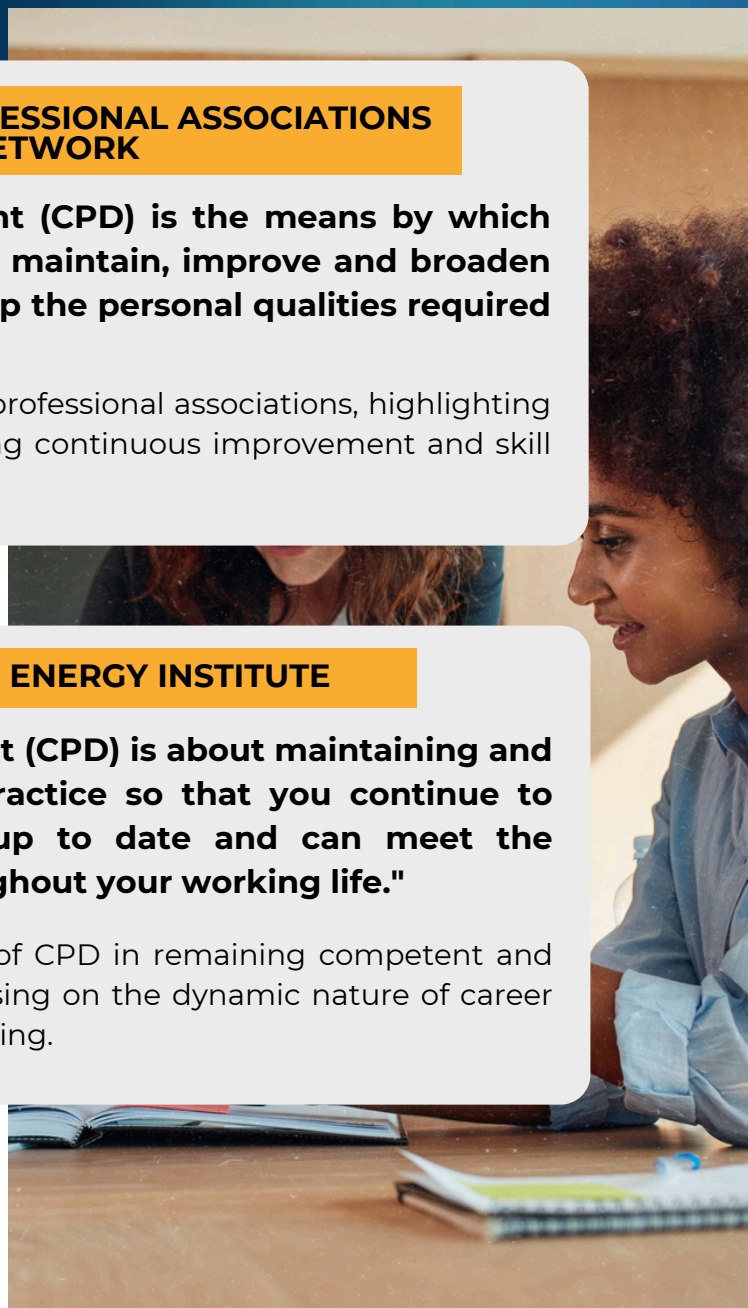
**"Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives."**

Here, CPD is framed within the context of professional associations, highlighting the role of these organisations in facilitating continuous improvement and skill development among their members.

## CPD AS DEFINED BY THE ENERGY INSTITUTE

**"Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is about maintaining and developing your competence and practice so that you continue to meet professional standards, stay up to date and can meet the challenges that come your way throughout your working life."**

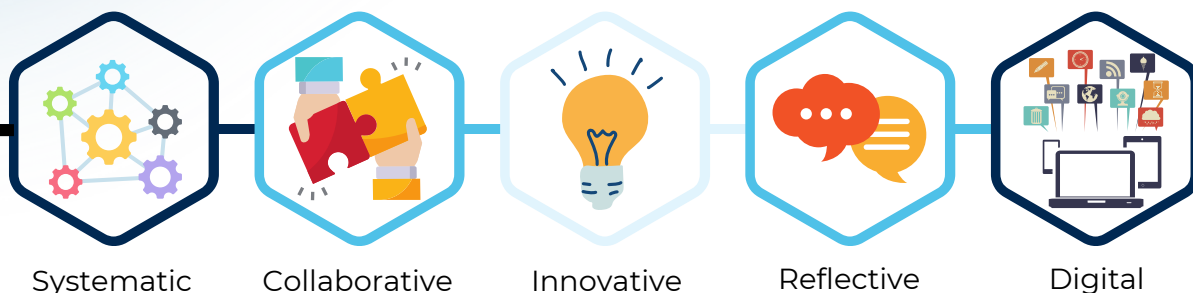
This definition underscores the relevance of CPD in remaining competent and adaptable to professional challenges, focusing on the dynamic nature of career progression and the need for ongoing learning.



# Moving Forward – CPD in 2024 and Beyond

Although there isn't a single, exact definition of CPD adopted by all organisations, understanding its core elements helps to clarify its purpose and benefits.

Recently, CPD has begun moving to a 2.0 definition, moving from a descriptive approach to considering the dynamic dimensions of CPD that contribute to its effectiveness.



## Five Dimensions of CPD

Drawing from the work of Steve Mann and Katie Webb (2022), the following five dimensions are crucial for effective CPD:

- 1 Systematic:** CPD should be structured and integrated into professional practice, starting from pre-service education and continuing throughout a professional's career.
- 2 Collaborative:** Engaging in CPD with peers enhances learning through shared experiences and collective problem-solving.
- 3 Innovative:** CPD should involve transformative practices that start with or involve practitioners, fostering continuous improvement and adaptation.
- 4 Reflective:** Reflective practice is essential, encouraging professionals to critically evaluate their experiences and incorporate new insights into their work.
- 5 Digital:** Incorporating digital tools and platforms is now integral, especially highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated the adoption of digital learning solutions.

By understanding and implementing these dimensions, professionals and organisations can ensure that CPD activities are effective, relevant, and impactful.

# CPD for You

## CPD Research Findings on CPD for Professionals

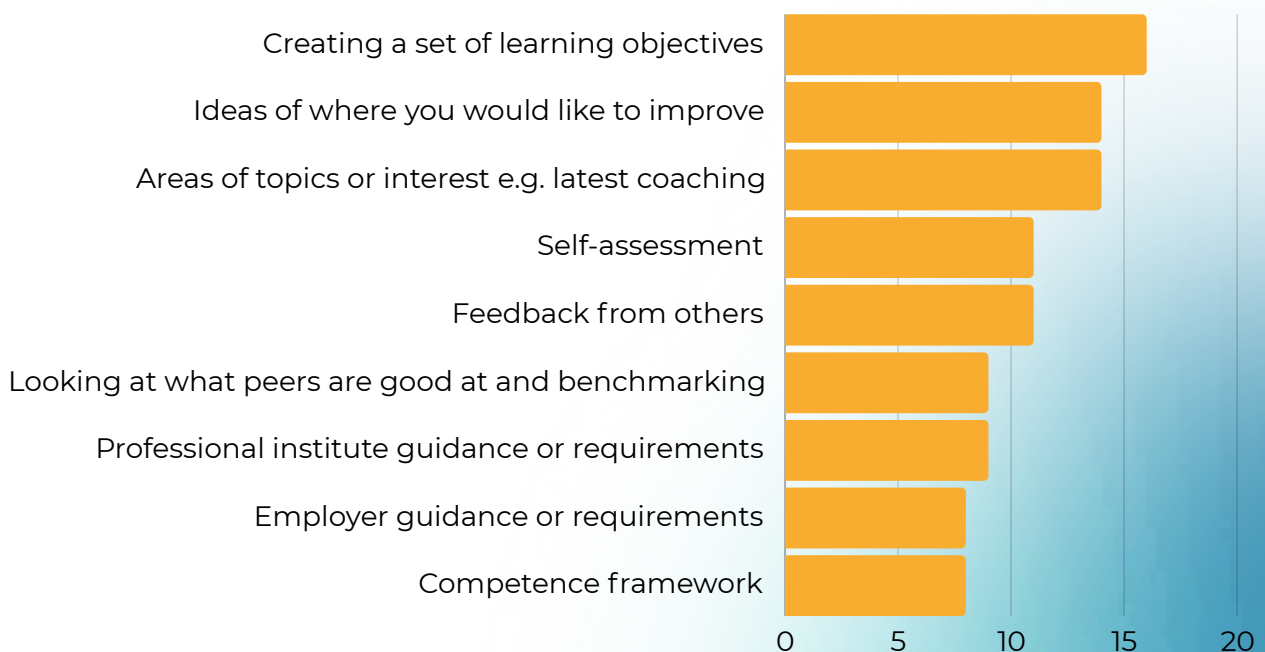
As the professional landscape continues to evolve, the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in fostering career progression has become increasingly significant.

This section explores how CPD empowers individual professionals by enhancing their skills, boosting employability, and providing the tools needed for upward mobility in their careers.

### Planning CPD

These planning strategies reflect a proactive and targeted approach to professional development, where CPD is not just an obligatory activity but a personalised and strategic effort to advance one's career and capabilities.

#### What do you use in your CPD or PD planning?



# CPD for You

## Planning CPD

Our research shows that professionals take a structured approach to CPD, emphasising the importance of setting clear learning objectives. According to the survey data:



16%

Sixteen per cent of respondents prioritise creating a set of learning objectives to guide their CPD activities, meaning that 84% of them don't.

This poses the question of whether people know how to create individual learning objectives, even if they have been exposed to the concept at any point during their life or education.



14%

Fourteen per cent focus on identifying specific areas or topics where they would like to improve, such as the latest coaching techniques.



14%

Another fourteen per cent choose CPD based on their areas of interest, ensuring engagement and relevance to their professional needs



11%

Self-assessment and feedback from others, each cited by eleven per cent of the participants, are also crucial, as they help in identifying skill gaps and areas requiring enhancement.

# CPD for You



## Positive Experiences in CPD

Participants have reported a variety of enriching experiences through CPD that have significantly contributed to their professional growth.

Our research provided the following insights:

- **Workplace training** and organised courses are highly valued for their structured learning environments.
- **Practical training sessions** that allow for the hands-on application of concepts were particularly appreciated for their direct relevance to daily work.
- **Online self-paced learning platforms**, like YouTube courses, offer flexibility and control over the learning pace, which is particularly favoured by those with tight schedules.

“The workshop fostered a collaborative environment, enabling networking with professionals from diverse industries”.

“The course was three days long and I was allowed enough time to completely indulge myself in the training material without having to worry about work”.

“The format of the training was diverse and interactive, including lectures, case studies, group discussions and hands-on simulations”.



# CPD for You

## Negative Experiences in CPD

However, not all CPD experiences have been favourable. Some of the challenges highlighted include:

- **Failure to secure employment** post-training suggests a disconnect between CPD activities and job market demands.
- **Hostile working environments** and inexperienced managers hinder are reported to the effective application and integration of new skills.
- **CPD sessions led by inexperienced trainers** or those that are irrelevant to the actual work requirements are seen as a waste of time and resources.
- **Difficulties in sourcing high-quality CPD training** that offers memorable, positive and successful CPD learning
- A significant issue is the **lack of workplace training opportunities**, leaving professionals to seek CPD solutions externally, which may not always align with specific job requirements.

“The training content was out of touch with the actual needs of my sales job”.

“Training was very long and boring too much classroom and being talked to, little involvement”.

“Those who provided the courses had no experience in using the tools. They were only qualified to provide the courses, so the experience was not enriching”.

# Personal CPD Responsibility & Financial Implications

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the way professionals approach Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

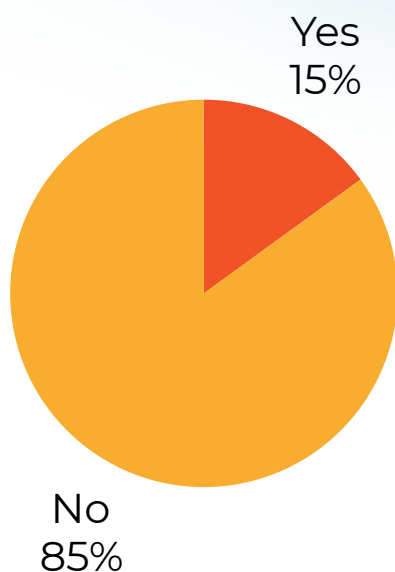
Traditionally seen as an employer-driven and employer-funded endeavour, the trend has increasingly moved towards individual initiative and personal investment in professional growth.

This change reflects a broader transformation in the workforce, where professionals are taking charge of their own learning paths to stay competitive and relevant in rapidly evolving industries.

The research highlights that a significant number of professionals now view CPD not just as a mandatory activity enforced by employers, but as a crucial element of their personal and professional development.

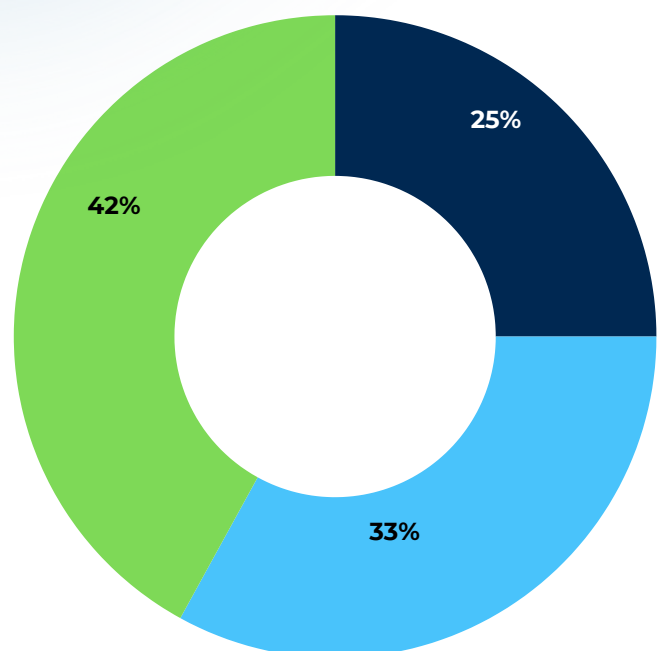
This shift is driven by the understanding that continuous learning and upskilling are key to career advancement and job security in today's dynamic job market.

**Are you currently undertaking formal CPD for yourself, your professional institute or for any other organisation such as an employer?**



**How do you fund your professional learning and CPD?**

- Employer funds all of my professional learning
- A mixture of personal and employer funding
- Mostly out of my own pocket

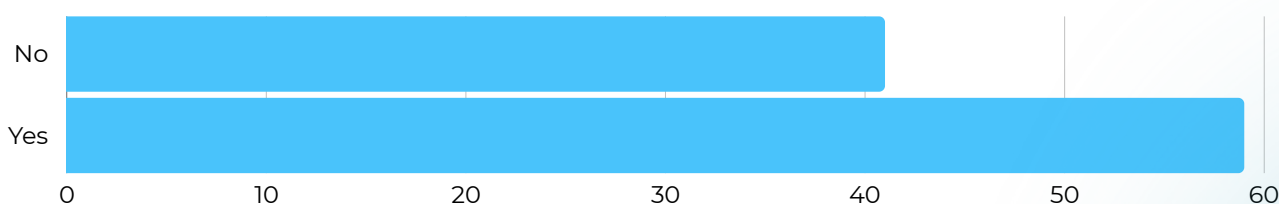


## Effects of Inflation and Cost-of-living Crisis on CPD

More than half of the survey respondents have acknowledged that the inflation (internationally) and the cost-of-living crisis in the UK have hindered their ability to afford continuing professional development.

While some quote the costs of training as the issue, others recognise that the need to spend more time working in order to sustain their income has affected their ability to dedicate time to learning activities.

### Has the cost of living crisis affected your access to professional training or personal development in anyway?



**“The cost of living crisis has impacted my access to professional training and personal development. Increased living expenses may limit the financial resources available for courses or workshops. The economic strain can create barriers to investing in educational opportunities, hindering my ability to pursue valuable learning experiences.”**

**“Due to lack of funds, it may not be possible to pay for training courses or to afford the transportation and accommodation required to attend training.”**

**“Money is most definitely tighter than it has been and there has been course opportunities that have come up that I would have like to have participated in but had to turn down due to finances.”**

# CPD for You

## Impact of CPD on Career Progression

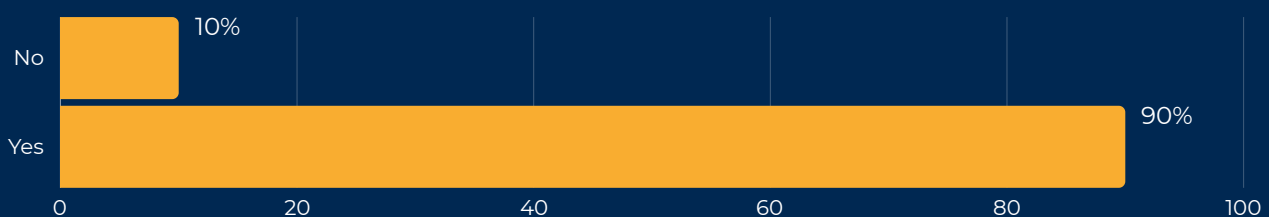
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a critical role in professionals' career trajectories, fostering skill enhancement and significantly boosting career advancement opportunities. Insights from the 2023 research highlight how professionals who actively engage in CPD are often better positioned for upward mobility in their careers.

## Engagement and Career Outcomes

The analysis revealed that professionals committed to CPD frequently report positive career outcomes.

For example, the data suggests that full-time employed respondents who participate in CPD activities are more likely to pursue and achieve promotions and recognise opportunities for career advancement.

### Have you ever had a promotion, or secured a new job, as a result of completing a professional training course?



## Career Satisfaction

Despite the strong engagement in CPD activities, there is an interesting paradox where some professionals, even those who invest heavily in CPD, expressed dissatisfaction with their career progression.

This could suggest a gap between CPD activities and career expectations or perhaps a mismatch in the types of CPD opportunities available and the specific career advancement goals of these individuals.

# CPD for Others

In today's competitive educational landscape, **training providers** face the dual challenge of enhancing their offerings and ensuring they are precisely aligned with the evolving needs of professionals across various industries.

As **stewards of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**, training providers play a pivotal role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow by fostering essential skills and competencies.

The 2023 CPD Research Project reveals key insights into the current state of CPD, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that training providers encounter.

With a growing demand for high-quality, relevant, and accessible CPD, providers are uniquely positioned to achieve increased customer satisfaction and business growth by innovating their programs and delivery methods.

This section will explore the strategic implications for CPD providers, focusing on how they can optimise their programs to meet market demands, engage more effectively with their target audiences, and, ultimately, drive business growth through enhanced CPD offerings.

By understanding the broader market dynamics and the specific needs of professionals, training providers can refine their approaches to CPD, ensuring they offer valuable and impactful learning experiences.

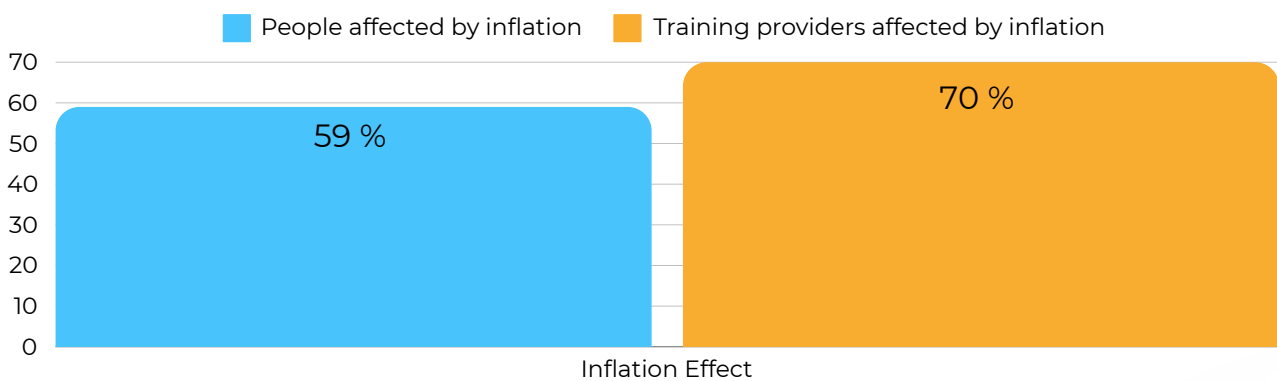


# CPD for Others

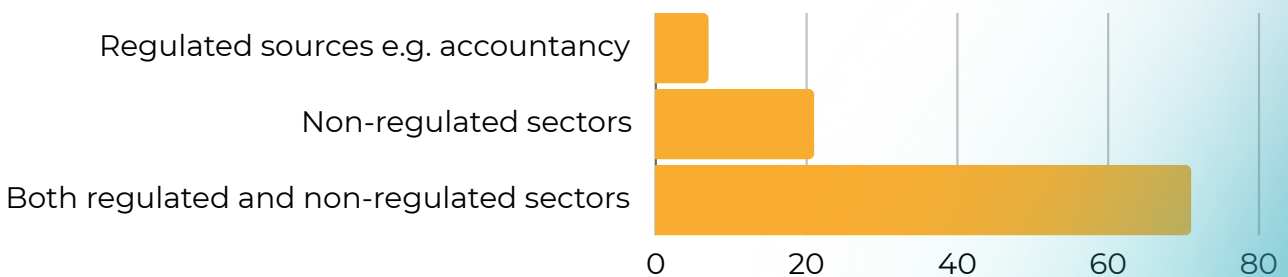
## State of the Market

The research highlights significant trends in the provision of CPD, revealing how training providers are adapting to meet the needs of a broad professional audience.

Although only 59% of individuals report the cost-of-living crisis affecting their ability to engage in CPD, 70% of the surveyed training providers have seen an impact on their business. The main concerns that businesses have quoted are the increased business costs, including consumables and wages.



- CPD offerings reflect a broad market reach, with 71% of activities available to both regulated and non-regulated sectors.
- In contrast, only 7% of activities are exclusively tailored for regulated sectors, and 21% cater solely to non-regulated sectors.



# CPD for Others

## Promotional Strategies

The financial struggles of both companies and learners are well-reflected in the promotional strategies employed by training providers.

As the research suggests, a significant number of training sessions are offered at free entry, which is a clear indication that audiences need additional assurance before an investment in training is made.



Of trainers leverage free tasters or mini-courses to attract potential learners, an effective strategy for showcasing the quality and relevance of their offerings. This also complements those who are seeking free training due to the “cost of living crisis”.

## Promotion tactics vary widely



Through networking events.



Via referrals, indicating the importance of direct engagement and community trust.



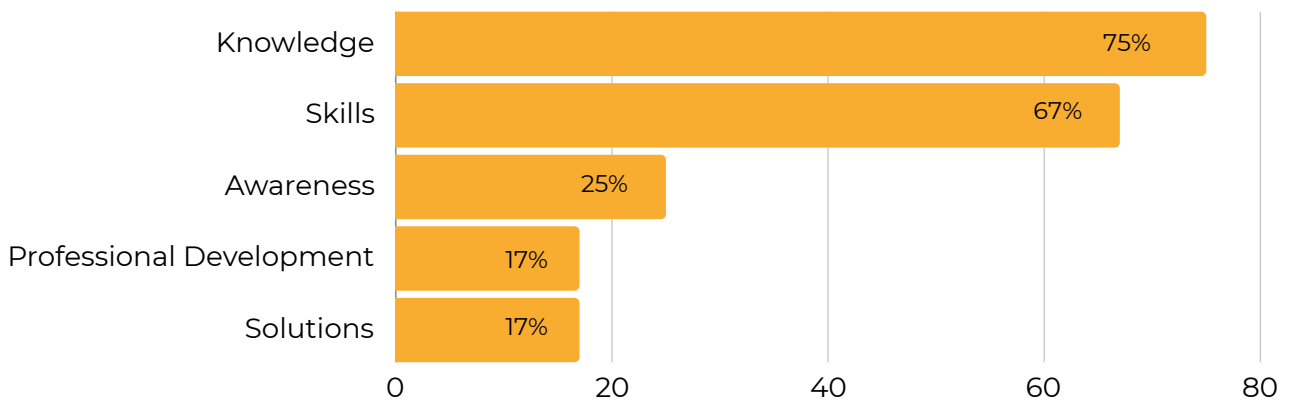
Social media, customer base outreach, other promotions, and word of mouth each account for 23%, demonstrating diverse approaches to reaching prospective learners. According to the survey, many training providers are not taking advantage of modern digital marketing tools and techniques.

# CPD for Others

## Purposes of CPD Training

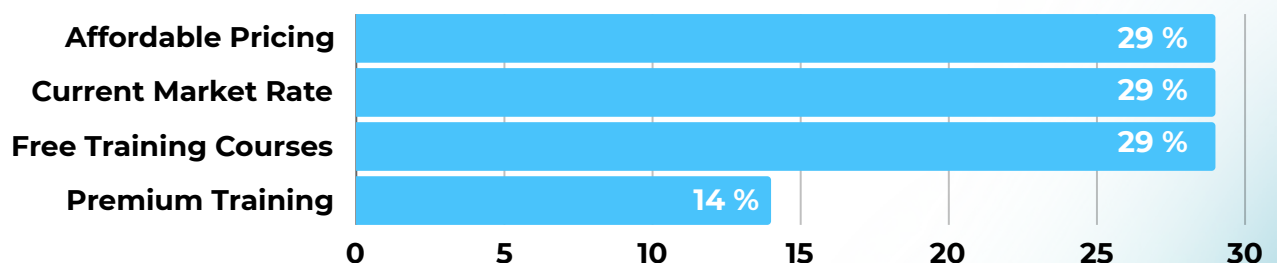
The CPD Research Project of 2010 revealed that CPD training was focused exclusively on knowledge provision. According to our latest research data, the primary objectives of CPD learning from CPD training providers illustrate a comprehensive approach to professional growth:

### What top 3 things do your delegates benefit from?



## Pricing Models

The pricing strategy for CPD programs shows a commitment to accessibility and value, which is reassuring that fees are not a barrier for professionals:

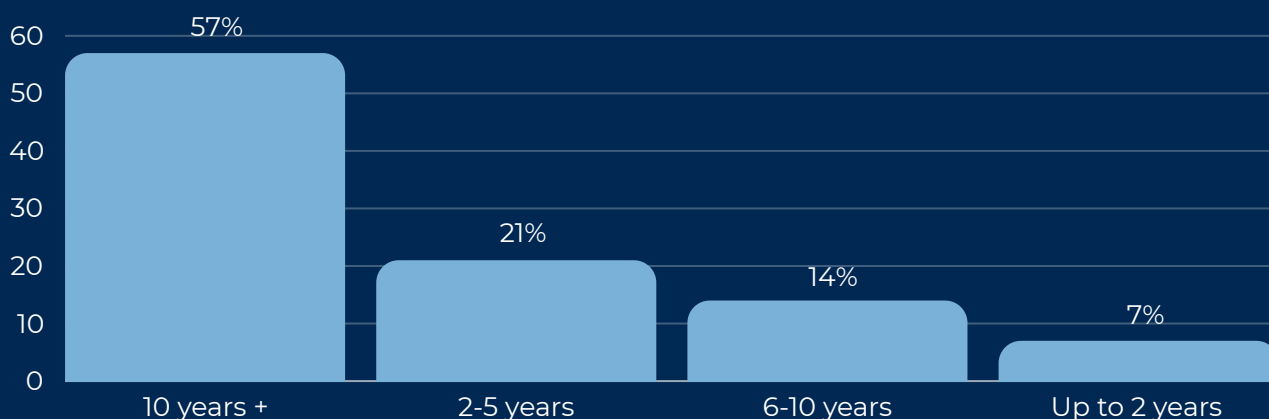


# CPD for Others

## Trainer Experience

According to the results from our research, which cannot be considered for generalisation, the tenure of trainers in the CPD industry provides insights into the maturity and stability of providers:

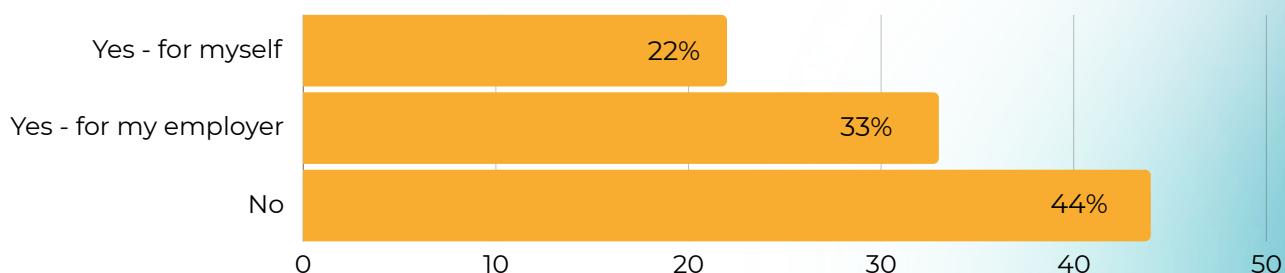
Number of years your organisation has been in business.



In the landscape of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), training providers are not merely facilitators but also participants in the learning process.

However, findings from the 2023 CPD Research Project suggest a troubling gap: many providers themselves are not consistently engaging in CPD, which could signal a deeper misunderstanding of its full scope and potential benefits.

### Are you currently taking CPD for yourself or for any other organisation such as an employer?

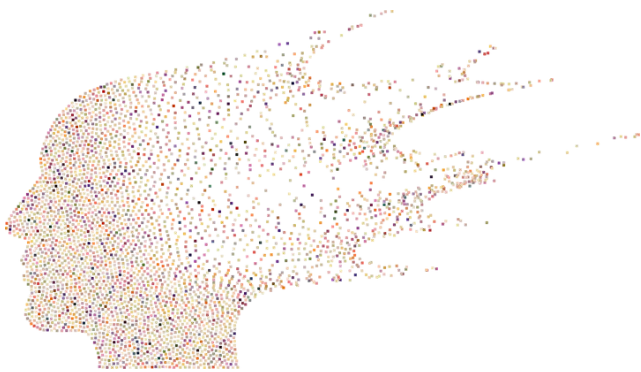


# CPD for Others

## Are Training Providers Ready to Train?

### Lack of Provider Engagement

Our data reveals a paradox where training providers, those tasked with delivering professional development programs, often do not participate actively in CPD themselves. This disconnect raises concerns about their ongoing readiness to train others and their ability to stay abreast of the latest industry standards and educational methodologies.



### Misunderstanding of CPD's Role

There appears to be a widespread misconception among CPD training providers about the nature of CPD. Instead of viewing it as an opportunity for continuous improvement and staying competitive, some see it merely as a compliance requirement.

This misunderstanding undermines the effectiveness of the CPD they deliver, as they might not fully incorporate the most current or relevant content or may lack the ability to motivate learners through personal example.

### Consequences for Business Growth

By not engaging in CPD, providers miss out on critical opportunities for business growth and development. CPD is not only about maintaining standards but also about innovating and adapting to new challenges.

Providers who neglect their own development may find themselves ill-equipped to offer programs that meet the evolving needs of professionals.

# CPD for Others

## How Training Providers Can Enhance Their CPD Offering

In an era where professionals constantly navigate through rapidly changing industry landscapes, training providers have a crucial role in designing CPD offerings that meet immediate educational needs and support long-term career growth.

### DESIGNING CPD WITH CAREER GROWTH IN MIND

**Career-Oriented Training:** CPD courses must have a clear career trajectory. Training providers should align programs with learners' professional goals and stages, offering courses that advance their careers.

### INCORPORATING BITE-SIZED LEARNING

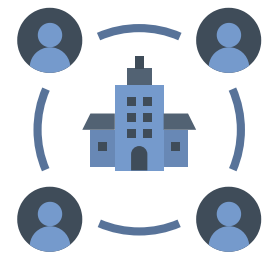
**Convenience and Retention:** Bite-sized learning modules deliver CPD in compact, manageable segments. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, learners forget new information unless it's reinforced. These modules provide short, focused bursts of content that can be revisited easily, enhancing retention and allowing busy professionals to learn at their own pace.

### FLEXIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING SOLUTIONS

**Adaptability for Self-Funding Learners:** Recognizing that many professionals self-fund their CPD, providers should offer flexible payment plans to make learning more accessible and remove financial barriers to professional growth.

**Weekend and Self-Directed Options:** Self-funded learners often engage in CPD during personal time. Offering weekend courses or self-directed online platforms increases participation, allowing professionals to balance work and development goals effectively.

# CPD for Everyone



**Professional Bodies act as guardians and voices of different professions,** setting standards and advocating for continuous improvement within their respective fields.

These organisations determine the CPD policies for the industries they represent and establish the sector's minimum requirements for ongoing learning and development.

The CPD Research Project has engaged with these bodies through semi-structured interviews and surveys, gaining valuable insights into how they shape and influence CPD practices across the professional landscape.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research suggests that **professional bodies have been undergoing significant changes** over the last decade. While professional standards are still matched against competency frameworks, these frameworks are expanding to encompass a larger number of diverse skills.

**Amongst the new skills in demand are** sustainability management, leadership and management, conflict resolution, wellbeing, and others.

**Ethics** is also making a particularly interesting comeback.

Perhaps one of the most significant changes revealed by our data is the inclusion of these skills in CPD policies – a significant shift from the previous focus on more technical skills.



# CPD for Everyone

## Understanding Professional Standards

Professional standards set out the skills, knowledge and behaviours that represent technical and ethical competence for a profession and support professional growth.

Professional bodies are responsible among other things for setting the conditions for signing off members as fit for practice, and maintaining a minimum standard of competence (Lester, 2014).



The 2023 research found that most professional bodies define their 'professional standards' in the context of a competence framework. These competence frameworks are used to explain the requirements that members must meet to become members and the career progression they must follow.



Some bodies mentioned that they use professional standards to provide professionals with a defined career navigation framework through a systematic progression and exploring multiple career paths.



Other professional bodies are flexible on what CPD their members can undertake and allow for a more fluid approach to career progression, catering to modern-day's consistently changing environment.

# CPD for Everyone

## Challenges in Upholding Professional Standards and CPD Policy

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) plays a critical role in professionals' career trajectories, fostering skill enhancement and significantly boosting career advancement opportunities. Insights from the 2023 research highlight how professionals who actively engage in CPD are often better positioned for upward mobility in their careers.



### CPD Record-Keeping

Many of the professional bodies we interviewed as part of the research project mentioned having challenges keeping track and monitoring the CPD activities of their members as they do not have automated systems in place that allow them to do this.

### Misconceptions About CPD

Professional bodies are often faced with having to explain why their members should be involved in CPD training as it is perceived as something that adds extra burden to the work of their members.



### Age Issues

We found that varying generations find it harder to understand what constitutes CPD, and there is confusion about whether 'free CPD' is valid and of good quality.

# CPD for Everyone

## Prevailing Myths

Historically, CPD has often been narrowly perceived as merely 'going on a course'.

There is a long-standing myth that all CPD consists of attending live instructor-led training courses delivered in a traditional classroom setting.

Yet, this is not the message that a CPD policy carries; instead, there is a lot of emphasis within CPD requirements that many individuals are likely to be undertaking relevant CPD within their everyday work practices.



Over recent years, many CPD schemes have been repositioned, and the communications and guidance for undertaking **CPD made clearer**.

Overall, the message does seem to be getting through, with institutes anecdotally reporting that they see a broader range of learning activities on CPD records.

It is simply a question of **recognising and recording it accordingly**. However, the 'going on a course' myth continues to prevail, and understandably, many professional institutes and membership organisations find this belief from their membership highly frustrating.

They continually strive to **counteract the notion** that costly and time-consuming classroom training represents the sole option for CPD.



# CPD for Everyone

## Adapting to Changing Generational CPD Requirements

In today's workforce, there are more generational cohorts than ever before, each with unique CPD preferences and expectations.

The research shows that younger professionals, especially Generation Z, prefer online and digital learning for its flexibility and instant access, while older generations favour traditional, face-to-face learning and view CPD as a formal requirement.

Professional bodies recognise these trends and adapt their CPD offerings to be relevant and engaging for all age groups. They incorporate modern technologies like VR and AI to meet younger professionals' tech-savvy expectations and offer flexible options like micro-learning modules and weekend training to accommodate self-funding professionals with busy schedules.

By addressing diverse CPD needs across generations, **professional bodies demonstrate their flexibility** and commitment to meeting the evolving requirements of professionals.



# CPD for Everyone

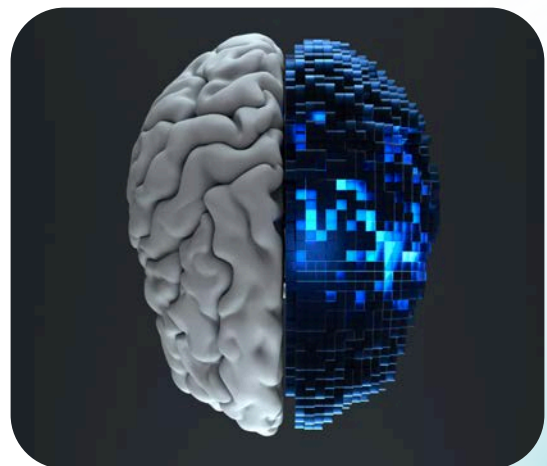
## Monitoring the Development of AI

Professional bodies are increasingly aware of the potential impacts of AI-facilitated tools on qualifications and CPD policies. Many are beginning to explore how AI might reshape professional roles and the necessary skills, with some already implementing measures to address these changes.



A common concern among these organisations is the potential for AI tools to falsify CPD records and compromise the integrity of assessments. As AI technologies like ChatGPT become more advanced, there is a need to review and update policies to prevent misuse and ensure the authenticity of CPD submissions.

Some professional bodies are incorporating AI into their productivity tools and learning platforms, leveraging AI to recommend personalised learning paths and enhance the overall CPD experience. Others are focusing on security measures to prevent AI-generated responses in exams and exploring how AI can be used to support, rather than replace, professional skills.



Overall, professional bodies are taking a proactive approach by forming committees and working groups to address AI-related challenges and opportunities. This ensures that CPD policies remain relevant and robust in an AI-influenced landscape, helping professionals stay current and competent in their fields.

# CPD for Everyone

## Academic Perspectives

**Despite being a widespread and essential practice across professions, CPD remains significantly under-researched in academic circles.**

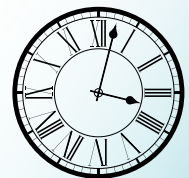
This gap was highlighted back in the mid-1990s (Paisley & Paisley, 1996; Sadler-Smith & Badger, 1998), and the situation has seen little improvement since then.

Although there isn't sufficient CPD-focused research, there are thousands of studies on adult learning. This broader body of work can provide valuable insights into effective learning strategies that can be applied to CPD.



Decisions surrounding CPD policies are frequently made by professional bodies and governments without substantial grounding in academic research or scientific evidence.

**It is particularly intriguing that while CPD engages various stakeholders, including policymakers and practitioners, it often lacks a strong foundation in scientific inquiry.**



**Many studies have debated and questioned the very definition of CPD and what constitutes effective professional development.**

In terms of adult learning, it is notoriously difficult to measure the actual learning achieved by an individual. Assessing what an individual can do as a result of CPD, how they have been impacted, or the effectiveness of the learning intervention presents significant challenges.

# CPD for Everyone

## Academic Perspectives

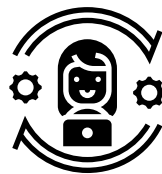
There are ongoing discussions about CPD policies, whether they should be input-based (focused on a set number of hours), output-based (with individuals setting learning goals), or outcomes-based (evaluated by a third party). Additionally, there are questions about whether CPD should be system-led or individually-led.



**Newmann & Cunningham (2009) highlight the complexities in measuring CPD effectiveness:**



Professionals often struggle to reflect on the impact of their CPD learning experiences.



Learning is a continuous, evolving process with no definitive endpoint, and it should be presented accordingly.



Professional bodies cannot effectively measure the impact of their CPD policies across their membership due to limitations in sampling and auditing processes.



Organisations and employers face challenges in measuring the impact of CPD learning on their bottom line.



Overall, there is a pressing need for more scientific and practitioner research to better understand CPD and push the frontiers of knowledge further.

This would address some of the enduring questions about effective CPD and yield clearer answers and a deeper understanding of how CPD 'is evolving.

# CPD Research Project



## Conclusion

The insights from the 2023-2024 CPD Research Project underscore the critical role CPD plays in enhancing individual skills, driving professional advancement, and fostering organisational development. Despite its widespread adoption, there remains a significant gap in the academic research and scientific inquiry into CPD, pointing to a need for more rigorous and comprehensive studies.

**The whitepaper highlights the multifaceted nature of CPD, exploring its definitions, the current state of the market, and the perspectives of individual professionals, training providers, and professional bodies. Key findings indicate a shift towards self-directed CPD, the need for flexible and accessible learning solutions, and the impact of economic factors on professional development.**

Training providers are urged to align their offerings with career growth, incorporate bite-sized learning modules for better retention, and ensure their programs are financially accessible. Robust CPD accreditation is also required to ensure consistent quality of CPD training activities and positive learning experiences.

Professional bodies must continue to advocate for high standards and effective CPD practices while addressing the challenges in policy implementation and member engagement.

**As we look to the future, it is essential to bridge the gap between practice and research in CPD, integrating academic insights with practical applications to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of professional development initiatives. By doing so, we can ensure that CPD remains a dynamic and valuable tool for empowering professionals and driving industry standards forward.**



# The CPD Standards Office

## The Organisation Behind The CPD Research Project

The CPD Standards Office was founded as a direct outcome of the comprehensive CPD Research Project initiated in 2010.

The organisation pioneered the first accreditation service using academic research criteria in different delivery modes, allowing training providers to understand the best industry standards whether they delivered face-to-face training, online modules, webinars, events, or others.

The foundational research, conducted in collaboration with prestigious institutions such as Kingston Business School and many Professional Bodies and Regulators, aimed to evaluate and enhance CPD's effectiveness across various professions. Over the years, the research has continued on a smaller scale, maintaining its rigour and relevance. The 2023 project marks a significant renewal effort designed to benchmark the progress and shifts in CPD practice over the past decade, ensuring that CPD remains a dynamic and valuable tool for professional development.

Through this whitepaper, we aim to dissect these dynamics, presenting data-driven insights and forward-thinking strategies that can help all stakeholders harness the full potential of CPD. The goal is to foster an environment where ongoing professional development is a shared priority, benefiting individuals, organisations, and the entire professional ecosystem.

# CPD Research Project



## Research Methodology

The CPD Research Project of 2023 aimed to gather comprehensive insights into the state and impact of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) across various sectors. The research engaged a diverse group of respondents, including 550 individual professionals, training providers, and professional bodies.

To ensure a robust and multifaceted understanding, the research employed a mixed-methods approach. Data was collected through detailed surveys designed to capture quantitative information and semi-structured interviews that provided qualitative insights. This combination of methods allowed for a thorough exploration of the perceptions, experiences, and challenges associated with CPD.

The surveys facilitated the gathering of broad, statistical data, while the semi-structured interviews enabled a deeper dive into the nuanced experiences of respondents. This methodology ensured that the findings were both comprehensive and rich in detail, offering valuable perspectives on the current practices and future directions of CPD.



# CPD Research Project



**Thank you to all of our participating organisations, including:**



**A special mention to the following organisations...**

- Association of Project Management
- CPD Standards Office Accredited Training Providers
- Professional Associations Research Network (PARN)

# CPD Research Project

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# CPD RESEARCH PROJECT

2023 - 2024

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