



Second SER Feedback Report - from 2008 CPD Returns

Introduction

During 2008 SER completed the second year of audited CPD Returns. This second report is being circulated to inform members of the scheme, professional institutions and other interested organisations regarding the outcome of the process. This report follows the first report issued in December 2008 and it is hoped that this information will continue to assist scheme members with the preparation and planning of CPD in future years and assist professional bodies and training organisations with the preparation of programmes and events.

The 2008 CPD Programme

The 2008 CPD Returns were issued to the appropriate Certifiers in February 2009 with the request that they be completed online by 31 March 2009.

In February 2009 there were 437 Certifiers who were notified that they were required to make a CPD return for 2008. During March 2009 two e-mail reminders were also sent. Eventually 432 returns (98.86%) were submitted by members of the scheme.

The Results of the 2008 CPD Assessments

As in the previous year every CPD return was assessed by two members of the Scottish Registration Board but it was arranged that different assessors would be selected to assess individual 2008 CPD returns. Where returns were considered borderline or confusing individuals were asked to supply further information and in some cases were referred for consideration by a full meeting of the SRB. The wording of the classification “CPD Inadequate” used in the 2007 assessments was felt to be objectionable to some individuals, this classification was therefore renamed “CPD Failed to meet standard” for the 2008 assessments.

The breakdown of the outcome of these assessments is as follows:

CPD Approved	356	(307)
CPD Failed to meet standard 1 st time	51	(113)
CPD Failed to meet standard 2 nd time	14	(N/A)
CPD Not Approved	11	(10)
CPD Not Submitted	5	(5)

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The figures shown in brackets indicate the results from the previous year.

The number of returns that were classified as “CPD Approved” was significantly more and the number of returns that were assessed as “CPD Failed to meet standard” was significantly less than the previous year which is encouraging.

Members of the scheme whose 2008 CPD returns were classified as either “CPD Not Approved” or “CPD Failed to meet standard” (for a second successive year) were invited to an interview to discuss areas of difficulty. The majority of those interviewed were able to satisfy the panel regarding their 2008 CPD as a result of resubmitted revised returns. Those not able to satisfy the panel were suspended from membership of the scheme.

In most of these cases the initial submissions were rejected because of insufficient information having been provided in the initial submission, particularly where there was some doubt as to the relevance of the CPD claimed to certification. The provision of a more detailed submission would have resulted in a significant time saving to both the SER assessors and the individual certifiers.

The 5 Certifiers who failed to submit a 2008 CPD return by the final deadline of 31 August 2009 were suspended from the scheme from noon on 1 October 2009 until such time that they have made a satisfactory return.

CPD Content

Both the Guidance Note 7 and the CPD Return clearly state that the submission should only include CPD that is directly relevant to the role of an Approved Certifier and their certification activities. Although there has been an improvement in this respect for 2008 returns some Certifiers still appear to misunderstand this basic requirement. Certifiers in this category are encouraged to further study Guidance Note 7 and the SER Feedback Report from 2007 CPD Returns, both of which are available on the SER website.

Certifiers should clearly understand that “directly relevant to certification activities” means “technical” CPD specifically related to aspects/elements of buildings covered by regulations 1.1 and 1.2. Where this is not obvious for any aspect of CPD undertaken certifiers should provide more information to justify the relevance of their activities otherwise they run the risk of this being discounted by the assessors and therefore increasing the possibility that they will be assessed as not meeting the requirements.

CPD is a holistic activity, not just relating to attendance at courses, and should contain an appropriate balance of activities including attendance at meetings / courses / seminars, private study, work based learning etc. Certifiers should be aware that CPD returns which are overly reliant on one topic, or type, of learning may be marked down on this basis.

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Assessors Guidance

In order to provide Certifiers with some advice regarding the assessment process the following guidance notes have been prepared by the Scottish Registration Board. It is hoped that these guidance notes will assist Certifiers in the completion of future CPD returns.

1. Absence of Learning Points:

Where no learning points have been provided within the return assessors will seek to have these submitted by requesting further information via the online system. If this does not produce the necessary information then the assessment will be completed on the basis of the information submitted with the return even if this involves rejecting the stated CPD training.

2. NCE / Journal General Reading:

Where CPD hours are submitted in respect of reading IStructE Journal, ICE proceedings, NCE and various similar technical magazines assessors will consider the amount of detail provided in the learning points to assist in their judgement of the validity and quality of the CPD.

If reference is made to specific articles and papers (which are relevant to certification) and learning points are stated then the hours claimed will be allowed in full (unless they appear to be grossly disproportionate to the topic).

Where only a vague and general statement about reading magazines is made with little or no detail or learning points stated then the benefit the certifiers will have obtained from such CPD will be considered to be limited and only part of the time claimed may be considered justified.

3. Training / Mentoring/Lecturing

In many cases certifiers have included mentoring junior staff, assisting in staff training or lecturing to staff, students and school children as part of their CPD. Once again these items will be considered in respect of the relevance of the topic and the level of information and detail provided, with particular emphasis on any new knowledge or benefit the certifier may have gained as a result of these activities.

Where lecturing or providing training is being carried out in respect of a topic which will involve the certifier in a significant level of research and the development of additional knowledge then the hours claimed will be allowed in full (unless they appear disproportionate to the topic).

Where a lecture is being prepared based on the certifiers existing knowledge and experience he/she will personally achieve limited benefit (although it is recognised that preparing a lecture usually involves a beneficial clearing and ordering of the mind from which the certifier may gain further insight into his/her topic and in feedback from a general discussion by an audience).

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In respect of mentoring junior staff the “acceptable” hours will be discounted unless the certifier has demonstrated a strong case for personal learning from the exercise.

Certifiers must clearly demonstrate the increased knowledge they have gained from these activities to enable the assessors to make a judgement as to how much relevant time should be credited to such activities.

4. CDM / Safety Training

Whilst an up to date awareness of the requirements of the CDM Regulations and General Health and Safety obligations is obviously an essential requirement for designers as certifiers we are confirming the compliance of the buildings with the Scottish Building Regulations and Technical Standards and except where specifically included or implied in these documents certification does not require assessment of the Health and Safety Risks during construction or operation of the building.

CDM and Safety training should therefore not be considered relevant as part of an SER CPD submission except where detailed and relevant learning points are stated in the submission. Once again the assessors’ judgement of the relevance of the CPD will be based on the information provided in the submission.

5. IT / Software Training

A fairly wide variety of IT and software issues have been submitted as part of certifiers CPD ranging from researching purchase of new software to updating/uploading previous software, learning or familiarising new programmes or training staff on the use of programmes.

The first test of relevance is what is the programme and is its use relevant to certification activities? General “office” software, use of library search programmes, and/or design programmes unrelated to the scope of certification will be discounted in full. Programmes meeting this test, including Structural design and Analysis programmes, will then be further considered in respect of the following:

Researching the purchase of new programmes and updating / uploading previous software will again be discounted as there will be limited relevant benefit obtained.

Where the certifier is gaining familiarity with analysis / design programmes, whose primary use will be in the role of designer, it is recognised that the certifier must be familiar with the workings and the limitations of the programme to enable him/her to assess the suitability of the designs produced. Some allowance may be made for such activities where they are included within a submission however such activities should only form a limited proportion of the overall CPD and once again the assessor’s judgement will

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reflect the level of detail/justification provided and any clear benefits which have been gained from such activities.

Again clear learning points should be stated and the assessors will base their judgement on these.

6. SER Audits (including preparation for and response to)

Whilst certifiers will obviously gain considerable benefit from the audits this will be considered as the normal execution of their certification duties, rather than CPD, and a maximum of 2 hours will be permitted (reflecting the fact that there would be some benefit gained against such activities).

7. Sustainability

This heading covers a wide variety of topics included in CPD returns and whilst generally it is not directly related to certification the impending increases in energy standards to be incorporated in the Technical Standards from 2010 will have significant impacts on structural design and lead to developments which the certifiers will require to be aware of.

Where the CPD submitted has clear relevance to the structural engineering aspects of buildings, and detailed learning points are provided, CPD under this heading will be allowed only where the certifier has demonstrated it's relevance and where the hours claimed are considered to be commensurate with any benefits gained, for example a 1 day sustainability seminar may only have 1 hour which is relevant to structural certification / engineering.

All other cases of general reading or course attendance related to sustainability where there is no specific linkage to structure and certification, either in the topic or the stated learning points, will be discounted in full.

8. Waterproofing / Gas Protection

Again whilst these may have implications on the structural design of buildings the scope of SER certification does not cover these issues therefore they are of little relevance and the assessors' judgement will be based on the justification provided.

9. Seismic Design / Loading

Whilst Seismic effects may be considered for some categories of structure this is not a requirement of the Building Regulations or Certification for Building Warrant. On the other hand developing an understanding of structural response to Seismic loading brings in useful structural concepts of dynamics and energy.

It is therefore considered appropriate that some allowance for CPD relating to Seismic activities should be allowed where submitted, however this will be

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limited in respect of the relevance of the benefits in understanding gained from these activities.

10. Foreign Projects / Standards and Codes

This was a feature of a number of submissions in the 2008 CPD assessment and given the current economic circumstances it is likely that more certifiers employed by the bigger practices will become involved in the design of projects overseas which will require them to learn about alternative codes of practices, building regulations and practices.

Such activities have no obvious relevance to certification in Scotland and will therefore be discounted in full unless clear and relevant learning points are stated.

11. SUDS / Flooding

Although these topics may be relevant to Planning Applications, and in some cases Building Warrant Applications, these are clearly outwith the scope of certification and any CPD submitted in respect of these topics will be discounted in full.

12. Work Based Learning

The 2008 submissions saw an increased reliance on work based learning and given the current economic conditions it is anticipated that this trend will increase into 2009 submissions, and probably beyond, as companies training budgets are reduced.

It is recognised that project related work based learning can be a valid and valuable part of an individual's CPD, however this only applies where the certifier is working on something new to extend his/her knowledge and capabilities or updating his/her knowledge in a given field.

In judging the value and relevance of such activities assessors will rely heavily on the stated learning points to make a judgement on whether or not the certifier will have learned anything new and beneficial through the activities registered or whether he/she is more likely to have just been carrying out his/her normal duties using existing knowledge and experience.

Assessors will make a judgement as to the benefits gained and decide on how much of the recorded CPD to allow as valid, if necessary requesting further information from the certifiers.

December 2009