

Continuing Professional Development Current Update

By IEM Training Board Committee

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) introduced the policy on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in 2003 and made it mandatory in 2006. Subsequently, The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) was appointed as the Certification Body (CB) by BEM. The role of CB includes endorsing all engineering CPD programs and accrediting training providers in Malaysia, automatically included in the IEM Training Board then.

OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the CPD program is to enhance the competency of professional engineers through lifelong learning. It is anticipated that professionals will stay abreast of new engineering development in their field and cope with any changes in codes and regulation. The program will include systematic maintenance,

improvement and broadening of knowledge; and the development of personal soft skills for carrying out his daily or routine functions as a professional engineer.

OVERVIEW

There are many variants in CPD programs adopted by various professions in different countries. In general, most professional bodies use 50 CPD as the average annual requirement where 1 CPD is equivalent to 1 contact-hour. The CPD program of BEM is aligned with the majority of worldwide engineering bodies in adopting the annual 50 CPD requirement. The Professional Engineers Board of Singapore (PEB) adopted 40 PDU, however, activities are divided into structured and unstructured programs. The Board of Architects Malaysia is adopting 10 CPD hour, but their 1 CPD is equivalent to half or one day depending on the event.

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PRESENT SCENARIO

Being the largest professional institution in Malaysia, IEM is providing its members with ample opportunities in CPD activities such as technical talks and visits, seminars, international conferences and meetings. The earlier 'complaints' of difficulties in attaining the 50 CPD is diminishing. Results from a recent random audit conducted by BEM have shown that most professional engineers can achieve the minimum requirement.

In line with BEM's recent request, the CPD program will only consider the actual contact hour for an event. For example, the usual one-day activity, which was given 8 CPD before, is now only given 5.5 to 7.0 CPD after deducting the time allocated for registration, tea and lunch breaks. For technical visits, the travelling time before and after the activity is not counted anymore. For instance, the registration and travel time to a distant facility such as the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) could take up 50% to 60% of the total time spent on a full-day technical visit.

Three years into the full implementation of the CPD program, we have seen improvement in the number of member participation in IEM activities. In fact, there are a number of non-IEM professional engineers who have joined IEM to enjoy the ample benefits offered including the opportunity to network. This could elevate the image of IEM and enhance the bond among the members. With the procurement of the new building, we are fortunate to see that many activities can be hosted to meet the increased demand of the members.

WHAT IS MISSING

Even though IEM has been very enthusiastic in granting CPD, there are a number of programs attended by professional engineers that did not apply for CPD approvals. Health awareness and volunteerism are among such categories. It may not be important to the organisers, but it appears that professional engineers will not be able to fully benefit from attending those programs to accumulate CPD hours. Unfortunately, this will not be realised immediately until a formal review of the current CPD policy is done by the BEM. Hence, awareness among freelance event organisers and other organisations have to be intensified.

The approval of programs for CPD is not enough if auditing is not done to ensure the compliance of the programs. It is also vital that the information entered by professional engineers in the relevant BEM forms is in order. This task is difficult due to the huge amount of data that has to be checked. Hence, the full usage of IT

is timely, as the potential provided by the modern tool is unlimited.

Resource sharing such as organising a technical talk/seminar with prominent speakers can be arranged via teleconferencing between HQ and the branches. Besides that, all CPD activities can be recorded in CD or DVD format for the benefit of members who cannot attend due to other commitments. An online CPD program can be arranged through the Internet. This way, the CPD program can be fully implemented with less constraint. This category is allowed in other organisations such as the Hong Kong Institute of Engineers (HKIE) and PEB.

WHAT IS NEXT

To make the CPD program efficient and effective in the concerted approach towards practical participation for engineers, important changes are needed. A joint effort is needed to ensure that the minimum quality of each activity is achieved. From a random audit conducted on some programs, the IEM Training Board would like to recommend the following for improvement:

- ensure that presentation material/content is received before the event
- ensure that the speakers and events are relevant to the members
- ensure that the level of target participants is stated in the flyer/notice (*i.e.* basic, intermediate or advanced)

The IEM Training Board is looking forward to recognise good programs/activities which have attained a high level of output if there is any proposal from the members. The criteria would be based on the quality of the presentation material/content and presentation skill.

CONCLUSION

The CPD program is designed as a tool to facilitate the profession in lifelong education. It is not merely to fulfil the CPD requirement and has to move beyond its current technical content. We must get ourselves ready for a much broader approach so as to increase our preparation for various tasks not limiting to construction, consultancy, education and research, but also in policy advocacy, planning, multi-disciplined services and working with communities. Let us work together to help the nation in transforming it into an advanced country by 2020. ■

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