# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD)
## GUIDELINES

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PIA’s Commitment to and Provision of PD
These Guidelines have been prepared to accompany the revised PIA Professional Development (PD) Policy, to be effective from 1 July 2006. They have been developed to expand upon some aspects of the policy, to assist members in their understanding of the policy’s intentions and requirements, what can ‘count’ as PD, etc. The PD Policy can be obtained from the PIA website at: http://www.planning.org.au

The revised PD policy is in line with PIA’s Strategic Directions 2005-2010 and is intended to demonstrate PIA’s commitment to raising standards of professional competence of planners and improving the standing of the profession, by confirming the compulsory nature of PD, and by instituting a process for monitoring and auditing of members’ compliance.

The policy is accompanied by PIA’s commitment to ongoing expansion of the range, type and accessibility of PD to members. It provides a degree of flexibility to enable members to meet the variety of circumstances in which they find themselves, to meet their individual professional needs and ambitions, and to recognize the constantly changing professional environment and the broadening membership base of the Institute. In doing this, it is expected that members will embrace the spirit of PD, and assess for themselves whether the PD activities they undertake are genuinely and demonstrably relevant to their career / professional development, in accordance with the policy document.

Opportunities provided by PIA to enable members to acquire PD points include:
- Divisional PD activities tailored to their members interests and needs and jurisdictional requirements
- National and Divisional annual congresses/conferences – which not only meet and explore members current and future needs but also provide valuable opportunities to interact with and build networks with non-planning professionals who work closely with planning,
- Access to PD via electronic means, including CD-ROM and on-line learning.
- Writing of technical articles for publication in journals and newsletters
- Presenting or speaking at PD activities or functions
- Committee representation or participation;
- Participation in PIA programs such as ‘promoting planning as a career’ and mentoring of young planners
- Structured workplace learning
- Structured reading
- Ongoing identification, via the website, of non-PIA activities which reflect the constantly changing and broader ranges of knowledge, skills, values and technologies planning professionals need to develop career relevant non-planning skills, as part of their life-long learning, and which may be eligible as PD

1.2 Purpose of PD
High levels of tertiary education and experience are required for membership of PIA. PD enables members to maintain and build upon those initial competencies as their careers progress, and as the planning profession embraces new and broader ranges of knowledge, skills, values and technologies.

PD is defined as:
“The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner’s working life” (RTPI: 2003)

PD is any activity which:
- extends or updates professional knowledge, skills or judgment
- develops skills complementary to professional planning
- maintains professional competence

The underlying principle of PD is that it must be relevant and extend members’ professional practice, knowledge and skills. PIA provides programs of state and territory-based PD activities, and
information on appropriate courses run by a range of other reputable organisations which members can attend, or access remotely. Members must decide which activities best meet their individual professional and career requirements. Those activities may include:

- PD needed to undertake current planning work
- PD which keeps you informed of planning issues not directly related to day-to-day work
- PD which develops skills complementary to professional planning activities which are designed to help career progression or to maintain competence, e.g. managerial, IT skills,

PD should be structured, forward-looking, and based on a clear set of learning objectives and a logical framework tailored to the individual member’s professional and career needs.

In addition to demonstrating PIA’s commitment to raising the standards of planners’ professional competence and improving recognition of planning as a profession, the PD policy aims to help members view PD as a benefit to their ongoing career and personal professional development, rather than a burden. In doing this PIA acknowledges that its role is to expand the range and accessibility of PD opportunities, to help members to understand and meet the PD requirements, and that this requires a supportive, rather than punitive approach.

In the longer term, the PD policy also aims to satisfy external regulators and work towards achieving parity with an increasing number of overseas professional planning organisations, beyond the reciprocal agreement PIA currently has with the New Zealand Planning Institute.

2. PD REQUIREMENTS

2.1 PD & PIA Membership
PD is a requirement under the PIA Code of Professional Conduct. It is compulsory for all Corporate Members of PIA, and is strongly recommended for all other categories of members.

Documentation supporting members PD compliance must be retained for two years after the conclusion of each consecutive two-year PD period.

Whilst PD is compulsory for Corporate members and is highly recommended for all others, there is recognition that some members may encounter circumstances when they will genuinely find it difficult to meet their PD obligations. In those instances, members are encouraged to contact PIA (see para 3.2 below)

2.2 PD Points and Categories
The underlying principle of PD is that it must be relevant and extend members’ professional practice, knowledge and skills.

PIA distinguishes between PD and work experience/practice. Whilst some PD learning activities may be employment related it is expected that these will not form the majority of PD activities undertaken. It is expected that PD will include a mix of activities and topics which enrich members’ competence and lifelong career experience and needs. PD activities undertaken by members must fall within at least two of the following activities.

PIA Corporate Members are required to achieve a minimum of 60 PD points over a consecutive two-year period, in at least two of the five PD categories, with a minimum of 20 points achieved each year.

The majority of PD activities will attract 1 PD point per hour of activity. However, PIA acknowledges that for some PD activities and learning environments, greater effort is required and outcome achieved; such activities will attract 2 PD points per hour of activity.

The following PD activities attract 1 PD point per hour of activity

- **Conferences, seminars, lectures, study tours**
  This involves attendance at conferences, seminars, lectures, participation in study tours, where the focus is on developing or broadening knowledge on subjects and issues that affect the profession, or planners’ competencies. These activities do not involve any assessment. PD hours can be claimed only for attendance at formal technical sessions; not for social, networking or travel time. PIA National Congress and Divisional conferences would fall into this category.
• Informal Learning Activities
This involves the structured (see para 5 below for more detail) reading of publications, distance and self-taught courses which contribute to the personal development of planning or non-planning knowledge, expertise and skills, such as communications, marketing, business, language, computer skills which do not involve assessment. These activities must be structured and demonstrably related to career/professional development. Routine reading of journals and technical press, which should form part of members’ everyday professional activities, is not recognised as PD, unless structured or formally assessed.

• Profession and Community Service
This involves committee and other services aimed at developing the planning profession, including service on formal committees of PIA, involvement in editorial and peer review activities, involvement in formal mentoring of graduate planners which contribute to the ongoing professional development of others, input to overseas aid projects. Further details of such activities can be obtained from PIA.

In recognition of the greater effort required and output achieved, the following activities attract 2 PD points per hour of activity:

• Formal Education & Training Activities
This involves formal face to face and distance education, intensive short courses and workshops (including PIA’s CPP Planning Practice course) where formal instruction or hands-on experience is provided by PIA or a recognised educational institution. It also involves tertiary study by course work which leads to a qualification at a recognised tertiary institution, and tertiary teaching where significant preparation of course material is involved.

• Preparation and Delivery of Presentations, Papers, Publications, Instruction
This involves preparation of material for publication which is subject to peer review, preparation and presentation of technical papers or research reports for conferences, courses, seminars, conduct of intensive workshops, if these contribute to the advancement of other planners’ competencies.

Members are welcome to seek advice from PIA National Office on the eligibility of activities for PD points.

2.3 Recording of PD Participation
Members are required to maintain clear and complete records of their PD activities in order to claim credit for them. Only activities which have actually helped to increase competence or effectiveness in planning work should be included. Clear details of each activity should be recorded separately, rather than being lumped together, and should clearly indicate the nature of the activity, eg conference/seminar, professional service, formal education, preparation/delivery of presentations/papers.

Full details of PD participation must be retained for two years after the conclusion of each consecutive two-year period of PD, and include:

• documentary evidence of members PD participation: which may include registration forms/receipts; details of the content/level of PD activity, including course notes/outlines; and, where applicable, assessment details.
• the date an activity was undertaken
• description of course/activity
• course provider
• relevant PD category/points accruing
• a brief assessment of the value of the activity to the member’s lifelong professional development

A preferred format for recording members’ PD participation can be accessed via the PD webpage, or can be obtained by contacting PIA. Facility will also be available on the PIA website whereby members can record their PD details electronically, from July 2006.
3. **PD COMPLIANCE**

3.1 **Compliance Monitoring and Implications of Non-Compliance**
Confidential audits of members will be conducted nationally on an ongoing basis according to a protocol approved by National Council and made available via the PIA website. Members selected for audit will be required to provide full details of their PD participation as outlined at para 2.3 above.

From 1 July 2006, all Corporate members who are CPPs will be audited on completion of each two-year PD cycle. Non-CPP Corporate members will be audited on a random basis at the conclusion of each two-year PD cycle.

Members whose audited records do not appear to indicate compliance with the PD requirements will be contacted with explanation of why the records do not comply, and seeking further information until the level of compliance is accurately ascertained. PIA acknowledges that in some instances records provided may have been incomplete, a misunderstanding of the requirements may have arisen, or the member may have been experiencing difficulties. During this period of communication PIA will provide strong support and assistance to help members overcome real or perceived problems in meeting their PD requirements and is unlikely to sanction any member who provides evidence of a real attempt to comply with those requirements.

However, PIA is committed to the high standards required by the PD policy and members who fail to provide evidence of a real attempt to comply with the PD requirements will be dealt with under the Code of Professional Conduct in the same way as contravention of other requirements of that Code, and this could ultimately result in termination of membership.

The information obtained from the monitoring process will also assist in the ongoing evaluation of the PD program.

3.2 **Exemptions from PD**
Exemption from PD requirements will be given in exceptional circumstances and will be confidentially administered on a case by case basis. Whilst it is anticipated that circumstances for which exemptions may be given, will be minimal, especially as the range of PD opportunities and delivery modes is expanded, PIA acknowledges that some members may experience genuine difficulty in meeting their PD obligations. In those cases members should contact PIA in writing at info@planning.org.au. It is expected that instances which do arise will be unique to individual members, and no attempt will be made to predetermine what these may be.

4. **ADVICE to members**

4.1 **PD – an opportunity not a burden**
PD should not be regarded as a burden, but as an opportunity for members to develop and steer their careers in a direction that will maximise their potential.

The benefits of PD include:
- building on and improving existing skills
- keeping abreast of best practice and changes in planning practice
- understanding and applying technological advances
- meeting the quality of service and professional competence which the public expects
- taking opportunities to engage with other professionals to discuss and solve common problems
- preparing for employment/career changes
- maximising professional potential in a rapidly changing and increasingly global environment

4.2 **PD Delivery – expansion of options**
Where they have the desire and capacity to do so, the PIA Divisions will continue to be key providers of PD to their members. PIA, on a national basis, will identify and initiate PD opportunities of interest to the membership at large.
Initiatives are being introduced to record selected Divisional and nationally arranged PD events, making them available via eg CD-ROMs, DVDs, or on-line, and where possible copies of papers will be made available.

In addition, it is recognised that there is a need to expand the type, range and variety of topics and delivery modes accessible to members nationally, especially to those in rural and regional areas, and on topics which, whilst not technically specific to planning, are relevant to non-planning aspects of a member’s professional practice. Such education and training opportunities, provided by reputable external education and training organisations, will be identified and posted on the PD webpage for members’ information on an on-going basis.

4.3 What counts as PD
PD is not only about attending events, nor do only PIA events ‘count’ as PD. It is not necessary that activities which members participate in are assessed by PIA beforehand. Members, after becoming familiar with the PD requirements and in recognition of their own needs, should be able to assess for themselves whether any activity is genuinely appropriate for PD, is likely to be acceptable under the auditing process and embraces the spirit of PD policy. Members are encouraged to contact PIA if they require clarification of any aspects of the PD Policy.

Whilst there is no requirement that members undertake PIA organised PD activities, they are strongly encouraged to do so. PIA organised PD activities are generated largely by the voluntary efforts of Divisional PIA members, and their topics are specifically tailored to meet the particular interests and needs of planners within the Division, especially on legislative and legal issues, and other recent state/territory based initiatives, thereby ensuring maximum relevance. The voluntary input to the program enables fees to be kept to a reasonable level, especially when compared to other, similar, but less targeted events.

The PIA National Congress and the Divisional Annual Conferences form part of the PIA/Divisional PD programs, and are specifically constructed to meet the needs of PIA members. These larger scale events not only provide content tailored to meet and explore PIA members current and future needs, but they provide valuable opportunities, especially for rural and regional members, to interact and build networks with other like-minded professionals, to discuss common problems, and share experiences. The broader ranges of participants at National and Divisional conferences, also provide opportunities to meet with non planning professionals who work closely with planning – be they from commonwealth, state or local government, the private sector (including professionals from other related disciplines, expert consultants, developers and entrepreneurs), academia, interstate or overseas, many of whom can bring new approaches to a range of issues and provide ongoing problem-solving collaboration.

PD embraces not only technical aspects of planning. Non-technical ‘soft skills’ are increasingly important as professionals progress to new phases of their careers or take on new responsibilities, adapt to changing technologies or meet increasing expectations of both employers and the public. Non technical ‘soft skills’ include a diverse range of topics, for example: communications, marketing, financial, language, IT and various management, skills, legal studies – where these are demonstrably career/profession relevant.

These activities are not confined to areas covered by established (or proposed) PIA Chapters. They may extend to other areas but must be genuinely and demonstrably relevant to a member’s career / professional practice. PIA acknowledges that planning is a broad-based profession requiring a range of skills. As such each member’s PD content will depend upon their individual needs as a professional planner and their current or anticipated employment/career circumstances.

Although PIA distinguishes between PD and work experience/practice (see para 2.2 above), it acknowledges that instances may arise when members are confronted by problems in the course of their work, which pose significant challenges to their current expertise. PIA acknowledges that the learning outcome from identifying the problem and searching for a solution can significantly increase members’ knowledge and expertise. Such learning, provided it arises from a systematic and structured approach, and is accompanied by clearly documented benefits to meeting the individual
member’s personal PD needs, can be claimed as PD activity. Publication of the work in a PIA or other professional journal will also attract PD points.

Documentation in support of such structured learning should include identifying a clear set of learning objectives, and a logical framework for achieving those objectives and, on completion, preparation of a statement of the value of the program to the individual’s professional development/expertise. The objectives will guide the structure of the activity, and clearly identify the outcome/s which are expected to be achieved. The framework, should include, but not be limited to, identification of area/s of research, analysis and interpretation, and application. Records should be kept of research materials, the aim of the research, journals and other publications accessed, dates research is undertaken and time devoted to it, and the knowledge gained.

4.4 Feedback and Input to PIA’s PD Program

PIA is continually monitoring its PD program to ensure its currency, relevance and workability and welcomes constructive suggestions from participants, employers and other interested parties on PD topics and/or ways in which the PD program could be enhanced.

All members are encouraged to contact their Divisions with suggestions on ways of ensuring that the PD programs remain relevant to them. These suggestions may include: topics for inclusion in the programs, speakers, locations/venues for activities, preferred formats/timing; they may include constructive comment on deficiencies in the program so that the organisers can improve and maximise their program’s relevance and accessibility. It may also include offers for assistance with design of particular events, or offers to share experiences or expertise by presenting at PD events. Active involvement in the organisation of PD events clearly contributes to the ongoing professional development of others and attracts PD points as ‘Professional and Community Service’; preparation and presentation of papers for PD events attract higher points (see para 2.2).

5. PD – MEETING MEMBERS SPECIAL NEEDS

The obligation to maintain professional competence falls equally on all members, irrespective of the kind of work they do or their employment status, as the level of competence required of them will not change. PIA provides members with a range of PD delivery and cost options, and allows them significant discretion in choosing from a wide range of types of PD activities which best suit their circumstances and enable them to meet the minimum PD requirements.

Members working part-time, taking time off work to raise a family or those in partial retirement, for example, could consider informal learning activities such as structured reading, involvement in professional activities such as the PIA mentoring program, participation in Divisional activities such as promoting planning as a career to schools, as ways of meeting their PD requirements. Members should contact their State/Territory Division or PIA nationally for information on these activities.

Structured reading is a means by which members can maintain currency of knowledge in the rapidly changing regulatory, technical and societal environment at minimal cost. It can assist them not only in meeting their PD obligations, but, importantly for those members not in full-time employment, also ensure they are better prepared for return to the workforce.

Structured reading can be undertaken by identifying and documenting a clear set of learning objectives, and a logical framework for achieving those objectives and, on completion, preparation of a statement of the value of the program to the individual’s professional development. The objectives will guide the structure of the activity, and clearly identify the intended changes/outcomes which are expected to be achieved within the framework. The framework should include identification of the area/s of research, analysis and interpretation, application and the outcome or changed behaviour. Records should be kept of the research materials, eg the aim of the research, the journals and other publications accessed, the dates research is undertaken and time devoted to it, and the outcome of the research in terms of knowledge gained/ behaviour changed.

6. PIA MEMBERS WHO ARE EMPLOYERS AND MANAGERS
PIA members who are employers or managers are encouraged to support their staff in meeting PD requirements.

Investment in PD and staff development is good management practice and part of an organisation’s long term investment in its future. Employers and managers are encouraged to frame their budgets and work programs to support their employees’ participation in a range of PD activities. Access to PD, whether formal or informal, should be provided equitably to all staff. This is important not only for developing the ongoing total skill and competency base of an organisation, but to make staff feel valued. It can play a significant role in staff motivation and retention.