

IFLA Guidelines for Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices



The present document is intended to alert the profession to the importance of investing in the development and maintenance of the expertise of staff. It aims to advise individuals, associations, and institutions in their efforts to assure ongoing learning for a profession that will be well qualified to provide excellent service to its publics. The audience for these guidelines comprises library/information practitioners, as well as those who are responsible for delivering educational experiences and offering and/or encouraging continuing professional development and workplace learning. While this document focuses mainly on the library context, it applies also to information professionals working outside of traditional environments.

Principles and Best Practices (summary)

The following summary outlines the key points of the revised *Principles and Best Practices*, organized according to the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and institutions upon whom professional development depends.

1.0 The learner

1.1 Principle:

The individual library and information professional is primarily responsible for pursuing ongoing learning that constantly improves knowledge and skills.

1.1.1 Rationale: Ethics codes generally include statements such as “Librarians and other information workers strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing their knowledge and skills” (IFLA, 2012a). Individuals are responsible to themselves, their profession and society.

1.2 Best practice:

The individual:

1.2.1 conducts regular self-assessment congruent with job responsibilities and aspirations;

1.2.2 participates in performance appraisals;

1.2.3 monitors developments that impact the profession and seeks out and uses opportunities to close competency gaps and to advance knowledge and skills;

1.2.4 develops a personal learning plan that will lead to both improvement in current performance and future career advancement; makes judicious choices of formal and informal learning resources based on the best available information;

1.2.5 seeks learning needed for present responsibilities before preparing for a new position.

1.3 Summary:

Best practice places responsibility for ongoing learning, based on regular assessment, on the individual practitioner. It demands actions to correct current performance gaps and to prepare for future responsibilities. There are several imperatives: one to support the employing organization's goals for excellent service, another to further one's own career development, and ultimately to contribute to profession-wide growth and improvement.

2.0 The employer

2.1 Principle:

Employers of library/information personnel are responsible for providing staff development programmes and support for continuing education.

2.1.1 Rationale:

"The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services" (UNESCO/IFLA, 1994). It follows that the organization responsible for providing service to its clientele is also responsible for enabling staff to maintain competencies and to continue to learn.

2.2 Best practice:

The employer's human resources policies show commitment to engaging all staff in ongoing learning. Evidence of such a commitment ideally includes:

- 2.2.1 designation of one individual with appropriate expertise to oversee staff development;
- 2.2.2 a system of regular needs assessment based on reviews of employees' performance in relation to the institution's mission and goals, resulting in learning plans for both individuals and staff as a whole;
- 2.2.3 access to a broad range of learning opportunities, both formal and informal, which follow best practices for continuing education design and delivery, in a choice of formats that meet identified needs and attend to different learning styles; opportunities begin with basic orientation for new staff, and proceed sequentially through advanced training;
- 2.2.4 consistent documentation of an individuals' participation in learning; recognition of learning through new assignments, and in compensation and promotion decisions;
- 2.2.5 a minimum of 0.5% to 1.0% of institutional budget earmarked for staff development;
- 2.2.6 approximately 10% of work hours provided to professionals for attendance at workshops, conferences, in-service training, and other educational activities, as well as for informal learning projects, including professional association and publishing work;
- 2.2.7 periodic evaluation of the staff development program.

2.3 Summary:

Best practice for employers requires organizational commitment and leadership from administration and designated staff development managers with expertise in adult continuing education; effective personnel policies and procedures; allocation of adequate budget and time for staff learning; and a multifaceted high-quality programme that delivers training and learning opportunities (see also 5.0, providers).

3.0 Professional associations, consortia, government agencies, and other bodies with library development responsibilities

3.1 Principle:

In the interest of advancing the profession, associations and other organizations are active providers, advocates, and arbiters of continuing professional development quality.

3.1.1 Rationale:

Professional associations can build consensus for quality by enabling the adoption of guidelines and systems such as provider approval programmes and recognition of members' professional development achievements; government bodies may be responsible for administering certification/licensure programmes.

3.2 Best practice:

Associations/organizations promote quality continuing education for the LIS profession.

In addition to following best practices in their role as providers of learning activities and events (see 5.0 below), associations/organizations also:

3.2.1 develop guidelines, recognition systems, certification/licensure processes;

3.2.2 identify topics and learning needs that should be addressed by the organization;

3.2.3 coordinate efforts in their area of expertise and/or geographical region and promote collaboration in continuing education provision, including train-the-trainer projects;

3.2.4 disseminate timely and accurate information about continuing education opportunities to their constituencies;

3.2.5 sponsor resources such as publications, electronic communication, and learning objects that inform education.

3.3 Summary:

Best practice for professional associations, governmental and other bodies concerned with library development begins with recognition of the importance of professional development for staff effectiveness, which in turn enables superior information services. Best practice ensures that there are resources and strategies that enable high quality continuing professional development and that there are incentives for librarians and information specialists to pursue continuous learning.

4.0 Library/Information Science (LIS) degree-granting programmes

4.1 Principle:

LIS educators motivate their students to continue learning after graduating, and are themselves lifelong learners. They conduct and disseminate research on continuing education and staff development, act as instructors/presenters in their areas of expertise, and advise on policy. LIS degree-granting programmes may also offer specialised continuing education opportunities to the profession.

4.1.1 Rationale:

Behaviours and attitudes are shaped by pre-service professional education; research is needed to provide evidence of the effect of high quality continuing professional development on the improvement of services.

4.2 Best practice:

Faculty members model professional excellence by continuing their own learning, conducting research, and acting as advisors to library/information associations, government bodies, and other organizations. They further the aims and quality of professional development when they:

4.2.1 convince students of the imperative of staying abreast of changes in technology and society that affect library/information services, while maintaining their own expertise;

4.2.2 acquaint students and practitioners with research on and best practice in continuing education and staff development; investigate successes and failures and long-range impacts; identify gaps in the profession's access to continuing education;

4.2.3 encourage efforts of LIS schools to provide continuing education and post-graduate certificate programmes where supported by needs assessment and by the parent university;

4.2.4 advise professional and government bodies on continuing education needs and practices.

4.3 Summary:

Best practice involves LIS educators in continuing professional development as researchers, advocates, consultants, and participants in continuing education provision.

5.0 All providers

5.1 Principle:

Providers of continuing learning activities, programmes, or products follow best practices for design, implementation, and evaluation.

5.1.1 Rationale:

Employers, professional associations, governmental or other organizations; information industry; higher education institutions; and entrepreneurs who offer continuing education have a vested interest in, and responsibility for successful outcomes for learners, their institutions, and the publics they serve.

5.2 Best practice:

Whether it is for a one-time event or for an institution's staff development programme, and regardless of whether delivery is face-to-face or electronic, the provider adheres to principles of instructional design and adult learning theory, and makes sure that there is evidence of:

5.2.1 expert and committed leadership;

5.2.2 instructional design based on needs assessment and SMART [specific, measurable, action-oriented, reasonable, time-bound] learning objectives;

5.2.3 appropriate activities that build on previous learning and include hands-on practice, learner interaction, and progress checks;

5.2.4 instructors who possess teaching ability, subject expertise, and sensitivity to learners;

5.2.5 effective management that assures that information about learning opportunities is disseminated; that adequate facilities, technology, and materials are available; and that learning participation is documented;

5.2.6 "transfer of training" from the learning event to application in practice;

5.2.7 evaluation of effectiveness.

5.3 Summary:

Best practice requires providers to have expertise in instructional design, presentation, administration, and evaluation of continuing professional development programmes.

Continuing Professional Development Online—Additional Quality Issues

Because instructional programmes of many kinds are increasingly available in electronic formats, it is important to consider what additional quality concerns are raised if learning is to happen online. There are differences to take into account, especially when designing and facilitating continuing education, as opposed to courses for students in an online basic degree-granting programme, especially when some of the enrollees are international.