There is a range of roles and job titles linked to teaching in the adult and further education [1] and training sector in Northern Ireland. These include teachers, trainers, lecturers and tutors who may work for different types of education and training provider, and who may teach across a wide range of academic and vocational areas, and from essential skills through to degree or higher level qualifications. They are often referred to as ‘dual professionals’, being skilled as both teachers and technical professionals in their own right.

This article focuses on lecturers in further education (FE) colleges [2], and on essential skills tutors. Essential skills tutors may work in FE colleges, for training providers or in other organisations receiving government funding to deliver essential skills (literacy, numeracy and ICT).

Continuing professional development (CPD) for those working in the adult and further education (FE) and training sector covers a wide range of activities which are designed to improve practice. CPD activities are usually identified during the performance management process.

The (2009) Professional Standards [3] for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector support initial education and continuing professional development across the sector. They provide a reference point that organisations can use to support staff development and allow individuals to identify areas for their own professional development. They cover the following six domains:

- professional values and practice
- learning and teaching
- specialist learning and teaching
- planning for learning
- assessment for learning
- access and progression.

**CPD and performance management**

There are no statutory requirements for lecturers in further education (FE) to undertake continuing professional development (CPD), apart from the requirement to gain an initial teaching qualification for those entering the profession without one. See the article on ‘Initial Education’ [4] for more information. Full-time lecturers in FE colleges are, however, entitled to an annual minimum of five days (36 hours) of professional development, which are incorporated into colleges’ CPD strategies.

A 2015 evaluation [5] of CPD in Northern Ireland’s six FE colleges found that the main priority for CPD is to ensure that full-time lecturers maintain their specialist expertise, particularly in areas with rapidly changing technology. There is also a focus on upskilling lecturers in priority sectors of the economy, which includes building colleges’ capacity to deliver courses up to master’s [6] level.

The FE ‘Threshold Scheme’ (see the subheading ‘Salary scales’ [7]) in the article on ‘Conditions of
Service’) offers lecturers an incentive to undertake CPD. Under the scheme, lecturers seeking an additional salary payment are required to review their work over the past three years against four agreed threshold criteria, and to select evidence to show that these have been met. Criterion 1 ‘Professional Development’ requires evidence that lecturers are taking responsibility for their own professional development, and that they are using the outcomes:

- to improve their teaching;
- improve students’ learning; and
- to make an active contribution to the policies and aspirations of the college.

Potential sources of evidence may include:

- membership of internal / external working groups,
- development / introduction of new initiatives,
- co-ordination roles undertaken (e.g. subject area co-ordinator),
- relevant personal research,
- observation of teaching or other learning / management activities,
- pastoral responsibilities.

Lecturers are also required to take part in an appraisal scheme. This forms part of the centrally agreed contract for lecturers in FE colleges (NI FE Lecturers’ Contract, May 11). The organisation of the scheme is a matter for the individual college. Schemes are intended to enable individuals to review their performance, and agree and identify priorities and objectives for their professional development in the context of the college’s development plan.

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Links
[1] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-75_en#FurtherEducation(FE)
[3] https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/190/
[4]
[6] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/glossary-75_en#Master'sDegree