Geomatics Continuing Professional Development; a UK Perspective

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Extended Abstract

The School of Civil Engineering and Geosciences at Newcastle University has delivered workforce training for many years with a broad portfolio of short continuing professional development (CPD) courses. During 2007/08 over 430 delegates will have attend courses in a variety of subjects and of increasing importance amongst these are those in the discipline of geomatics. Geomatics CPD offerings currently include; geographic information systems (GIS); survey computations and least squares adjustment; advanced data processing using GPS and land survey techniques for the none survey specialist. In the main all current courses have been developed in response to requests from industry and the growth in delegate numbers has come from both new and established. This increase in demand presents challenges for both the School and the individuals involved in CPD development and delivery. Moreover, increasing such outreach activities presents opportunities and challenges more widely across the University. In order to better understand the challenges of increasing CPD prevision, a study was undertaken with the aim of identifying key issues surrounding the provision of CPD. Whilst the study was school wide the findings are directly applicable to CPD courses in geomatics.

The paper will address the issues surrounding the provision of high quality geomatics CPD courses from within the UK's university system. Specific issues that will be addressed include:

The setting of appropriate and competitive course fees whilst ensuring all associated costs are met.

The benefits and inhibitors CPD activities present for the individual academic. The study demonstrated a very clear consensus that the lack of academic staff time available to invest in CPD activity, the relative merit of CPD activity compared to other activities, and the absence of a link between the staff generating the income and use of surplus, currently deterred individual academics from engaging.

The requirement for administrative support in relation to CPD development and delivery. The role of dedicated support in relation to CPD activity is explored. In particular, the difficulties of effective course promotion; accurate assessment of demand; competitive pricing of courses; and insufficient facilities were all highlighted as key issues. In this regard it was identified that any 'central university' financial levy on CPD income would remove the competitive edge of current and future courses reducing the motivation to develop new courses.

The competitive landscape of geomatics CPD provision from other UK universities and commercial training providers. An extensive comparison of course fees has highlighted the difficulty of remaining competitive whilst recovering costs.

Potential for e-learning in CPD. The advantages and disadvantages of an e-learning approach to CPD are considered within the context of geomatics.

The above elements have been identified as directly relevant to the long term sustainability and viability of geomatics CPD provision. The research explores each element through the use of qualitative questionnaire and quantitative research and offers tentative conclusions that will stimulate further debate.

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