



## CONTINUED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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A Navigational Tool for Teaching Musicians



TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE  
OF MUSIC & DANCE



Image credit: James Keats

## WHAT IS CPD?

The term Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is often used to refer to courses, workshops or INSET. But CPD is much more than that. It is the process by which you continue to learn and develop your skills, knowledge and experience, both formally and informally, over the course of your working life.

CPD is not something that can be done to you. It is something you do, sometimes unknowingly. Like eating well and keeping fit, it can be difficult to prioritise, particularly when you are busy or stressed. Sometimes CPD is required of you by others and feels onerous. But true CPD is yours. It is about achieving the results you want to achieve and can help you stay motivated and satisfied in your work. It can range from keeping up to date with legislation, technologies or new approaches, through to strategies for personal development that provide you with a sense of direction. Like other healthy habits, the trick is to find what works for you, your current circumstances and goals.

With freelance employment becoming so prevalent in music education, as a sector we need to think differently about how to support 'frontline' practitioners – teachers, workshop leaders, ensemble leaders, community

musicians, animators and more. When you juggle varied roles, navigating a clear trajectory can be tricky and taking time out for CPD a particular challenge.

- Can professional development be better integrated into working practices?
- What role can funded organisations play in supporting the wider workforce?
- Are networks and 'communities of practice' a way forward?

This tool aims to help you reflect on your own professional learning, take stock and consider next steps in your development.

## Step 1: YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Take a look back over the last year of your working life. Note how and what you have learned. Include whatever is significant to you, considering what you have learned about yourself as well as what works for others. Your learning may have been formal or informal, planned or accidental. It might help to think about learning that has come about from:

- Trying something new
- Learning from your mistakes or successes
- Seeking out solutions to a problem or challenge
- Learning from your personal life that has impacted on your work
- Connections between the different types of activities you are involved in
- Working with colleagues, observing others or networking
- Being mentored or mentoring others (formally or informally)

- Reading about new approaches or research
- Debating issues online
- Keeping up to date with legislation or best practice guidelines
- Attending training, a workshop or a conference

## Step 2: FIND YOUR DUE NORTH

What would you like to achieve in the next phase of your career? This could be in the year ahead, or in the next 3 or 5 years if you prefer. These prompts may help:

- How are you feeling about your working life now?
- Is there anything you would like to change or improve?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What would you like to do less?
- Do you feel under confident or less successful in any aspects of your work?
- Have you any particular strengths you would like to further develop?

# FIND YOUR DUE NORTH



Image credit: James Keats

## STILL WATERS RUN DEEP

If you are happy and satisfied in your current role, then for you CPD is likely to focus on deepening your knowledge and understanding or continuing to improve at what you do. This may involve seeking out new solutions, such as how to best support a student with specific needs or addressing a challenge such as motivating students to practice. Taking an interest in the work of others can provide inspiration, and you may also gain satisfaction from sharing your skills and experience within a community of practice.

## CHANGE OF DIRECTION

Whether you want to do more of what you enjoy best or make a bigger professional move, CPD can help you find and achieve new career goals. While this could involve gaining new knowledge and skills through training, it may equally require building new connections and networks or navigating different vocabularies or attitudes. You may not be sure what is next for you, in which case meeting with other practitioners or taking an accredited programme of study could provide inspiration and ideas for a pathway.

## FULL STEAM AHEAD

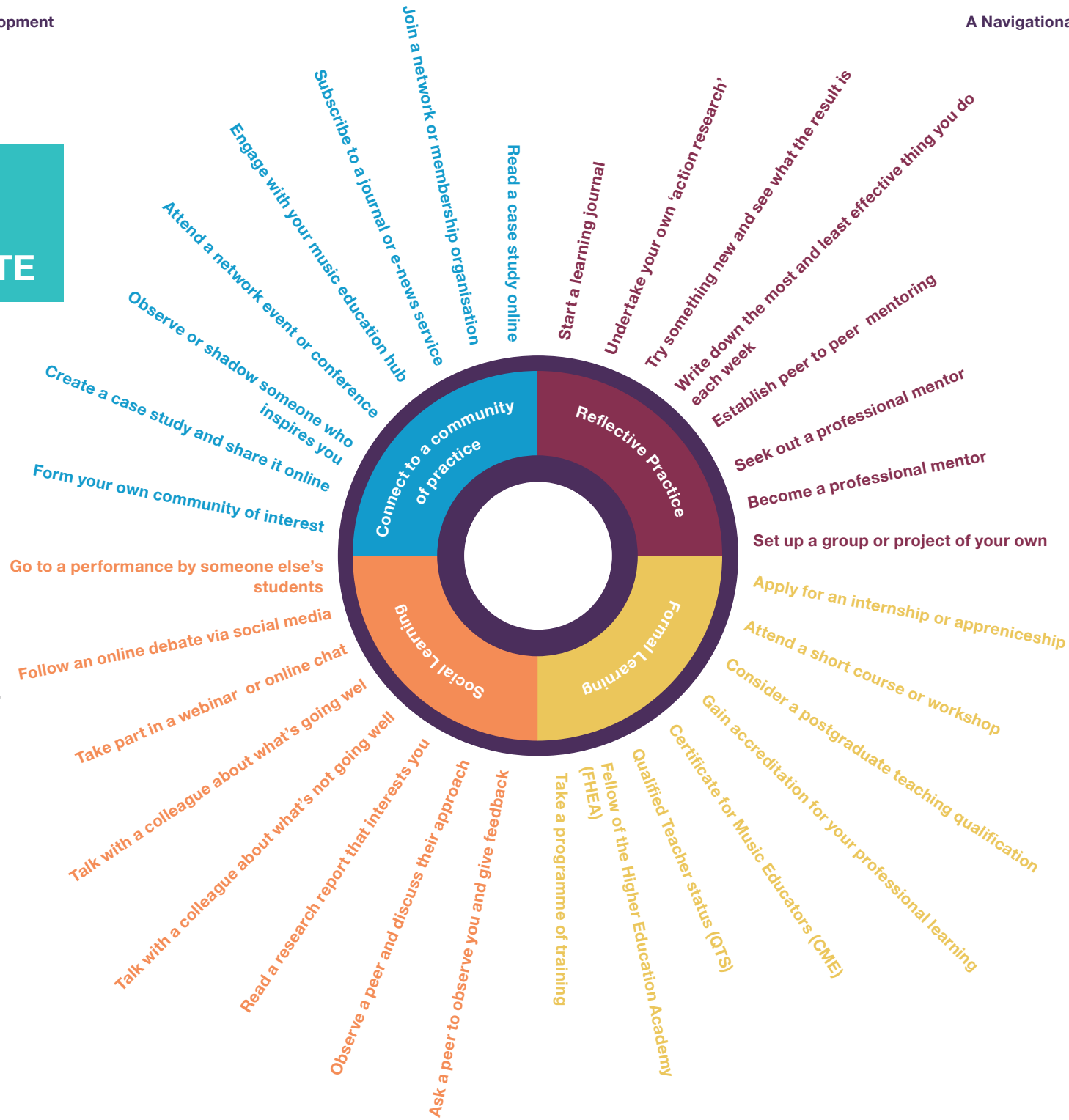
It is not uncommon for musicians to discover a vocation in teaching, education or community music some way into a musical career. If you are ready to take on more, then CPD can support you to progress into new opportunities or responsibilities. These areas may require knowledge and experience, but also 'people skills' and an understanding of wider contexts (political, social and educational). A formal programme of study can be a good option, but less structured routes such as finding a

professional mentor may better you depending on your circumstances. Undertaking action research or setting up your own projects can help you stand out from the crowd and develop areas of specialism. You might like to create a three or five year plan and identify CPD that will help you to achieve and meet your goals.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE  
OBSERVE  
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE  
ACTION RESEARCH  
NETWORK  
COACHING  
VOCATIONAL COURSES  
SKILLS BUILDING  
SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTARY  
FORM YOUR OWN COMPANY  
START YOUR OWN BUSINESS  
KEEP A LEARNING JOURNAL  
MENTORING  
ACCREDITED COURSES  
WORK PLACEMENT  
SHARING EXPERTISE  
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SHARING EXPERTISE

**Step 3:**  
**PLANNING YOUR ROUTE**

This wheel outlines some of the professional learning opportunities available to you as a musician, and is intended as a tool to help you plan your professional development route for the year(s) ahead. Some are simple steps to help embed professional learning in your working life or keep you motivated and inspired. Others will help you to make a step change in your career. Choose between one and three options and plot them over the next one, two or three years. More is not necessarily better in CPD.



## Step 4: WHERE NEXT?

### Start a learning journal

A Learning Journal is a good way to regularly reflect on your own learning. Note down insights or learning points from your day to day working life as well as ideas from training activities or events. These notes can be used to review your professional learning annually, and plan next steps.

### Connect to a community of practice

Freelance musicians can find they are working in isolation with few support mechanisms. Communities of practice are groups of professionals who learn from each other through sharing a common interest or objective. They

can provide support from those experiencing similar issues or act as a sounding board for advice. They include membership organisations, networks, online communities and creative collectives, but can also be informal groups of like-minded colleagues or friends.

It is worth reviewing your own communities of practice to consider how well they work for you. Who can you talk to about your work? What connections support your learning and development? Do networks exist that would help you achieve your goals? If not, could you start one? There can be much to learn from a community with which you share an interest but which is outside of your own area of practice e.g. in working with learners with specific needs.

" Communities of practice are groups of professionals who learn from each other "

### Action research

Action research is research undertaken by practitioners into their own practice. It has been widely used in the world of education since the 1980s and places value on the knowledge and experience of practitioners. Like other research, it involves asking a question or pursuing a line of enquiry, gathering and analysing a range of evidence (including your own thoughts and feelings) and using this to reflect on what you can learn. You might like to understand how well a specific approach you use is working, or to try out and evaluate something new. Action research does not need to be formal or public – it can be undertaken purely for your own interest – but you might like to share your experience or findings through a community of practice.

To share or find information on networks and communities of practice, or find further guidance on action research, join a music teacher forum at [www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/cpdmusic](http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/cpdmusic)



" Mentoring can be particularly supportive when taking on something new or entering a time of change "

## Observing and being observed

Observing others can help you to reflect on your own practices as well as how others approach their work. You may learn from the techniques, materials or structures they use and, where possible, the chance to interrogate why they have used these approaches or how they would develop an activity in future. Having another practitioner observe and discuss your own work can be equally valuable, if challenging if you are not used to it. You may wish to observe/be observed by someone more experienced than you or whose work you are interested in or admire. However, peer-to-peer observations – in which similar colleagues observe and

feedback to each other – can also provide real insight and opportunities for reflection. Informal observations can be organised between friends and colleagues, but you could also make an approach through an organisation, like a music hub, or community of practice. Place limitations on the amount of time you request, be reasonable and be mindful of sensitivities, safeguarding and confidentiality issues in your workplace.

## Mentoring

Mentoring involves a relationship with another practitioner – usually someone with more experience than you – that supports you to learn and develop your practice. An effective mentor will use techniques of listening, questioning and reframing to help you achieve clarity or make decisions, but may also be a good source of information, signposting and suggestions. Peer mentoring works on the same principles, but takes place between those of similar experience. Mentoring can be particularly supportive when taking on something new or entering a time of change. Becoming a mentor yourself can be rewarding and provide a forum to reflect upon and validate your own learning and expertise.

Music educators, particularly those in salaried roles, are often willing to mentor others on a voluntary basis, however be mindful that a voluntary mentor will often be balancing limited availability. An alternative is to build allocations for a mentor into your fee or budget when taking on a new project or as part of your business plan. When approaching a mentor, it is important to discuss time commitment and set boundaries, including the option for the mentor or mentee to end the arrangement. Be clear about any remuneration, frequency, mode of mentoring and end point.

## Accreditation, qualifications and formal study

Accreditation itself can act as a 'kite mark' for potential employers. The process of gaining accreditation can also prove valuable, requiring you to reflect upon your professional practice in relation to key ideas about teaching and learning. This can, in turn, stimulate a sense of direction for the future.

- Certificate for Music Educators which assesses knowledge and competency in core principles of musical learning and professional practice
- Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) which is not subject specific and required of classroom teachers employed in state-maintained schools
- Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA), non-subject specific accreditation for teachers in higher education  
Accreditation itself can act as a 'kite mark' for potential employers.

Accreditation can be gained through an accredited programme of study such as a PGCE, or through 'self-accreditation' routes, where you submit evidence of your knowledge and experience. Training organisations, Further Education and Higher Education institutions provide accredited programmes of study in music education and community music practices. Some have an academic or research focus while others combine skills based practical learning with an understanding of underpinning theory and ideas.

For further information please visit  
[www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/cpdmusic](http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/cpdmusic)



Image credit: Taz Kyprianou