MONITORED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME HANDBOOK.

Institution of MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

Version 1.0

Improving the world through engineering

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Monitored Professional Development Scheme (MPDS) Handbook** is the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' definitive reference for all stakeholders involved in the delivery, support, and assessment of structured professional development for engineers.

This handbook consolidates the full scope of MPDS policy, expectations, and best practice into a single, accessible resource. It is intended for use by:

- **Developing Engineers (DEs)** – to understand their responsibilities and navigate their journey to professional registration.
- **Mentors and Delegate Mentors** – to guide and assess DEs in line with UK-SPEC competences.
- **Scheme Administrators (SAs)** – to manage scheme operations, reporting, and compliance.
- **Scheme Owners** – to provide strategic oversight and ensure alignment with organisational goals.
- **Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs)** and **Line Managers** – to support scheme integration and professional culture.
- **IMechE Accreditation Assessors** – to evaluate scheme quality and effectiveness.

The handbook outlines:

- The structure and principles of MPDS
- Roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders
- Accreditation and reaccreditation processes
- Reporting and assessment expectations
- Good practice examples and implementation tools

It is both a compliance document and a developmental guide – supporting organisations in delivering high-quality engineering development and helping engineers achieve Chartered or Incorporated status.

Readers are encouraged to use this handbook actively: to plan, reflect, improve, and embed a culture of professionalism and continuous learning.

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the *Monitored Professional Development Scheme (MPDS) Handbook* – a definitive resource from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) designed to support the professional growth of the next generation of engineers.

This handbook brings together the full breadth of MPDS knowledge, expectations, and best practice into a single, accessible reference. Whether you are a Developing Engineer, Mentor, Scheme Administrator, Scheme Owner, or Accreditation Assessor, this document is your companion throughout the MPDS journey.

MPDS is more than a framework – it is a commitment to excellence. It reflects our shared belief that professional development should be structured, supported, and purposeful. It empowers engineers to grow with confidence, organisations to nurture talent with clarity, and the profession to uphold the highest standards of competence and integrity.

This handbook is built on the principles of partnership, adaptability, and continuous improvement. It is designed not only to inform but to inspire – to help every stakeholder play their part in shaping engineers who are not only technically capable, but also ethically grounded, professionally engaged, and ready to lead.

We invite you to use this document actively: to plan, to reflect, to challenge, and to improve. In doing so, you contribute to a culture where engineering development is not just supported—but celebrated.

Together, we are improving the world through engineering.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of MPDS

The MPDS is the IMechE's flagship framework for supporting graduate engineers on their journey to professional registration. It is more than a graduate training programme – it is a structured, quality-assured pathway that integrates work-based learning, mentoring, and competence-based assessment.

MPDS is designed to help Developing Engineers (DEs) acquire the full range of competences defined by the UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence (UK-SPEC), as set by the Engineering Council. It provides a clear, supported route to becoming a Chartered Engineer (CEng) or Incorporated Engineer (IEng), typically within four to five years of graduation.

The scheme is built on the principle that professional development should be intentional, monitored, and aligned with both institutional standards and organisational goals. It enables employers to nurture engineering talent, benchmark development against national standards, and demonstrate a commitment to engineering excellence.

1.2 The UK-SPEC Framework

At the heart of MPDS is UK-SPEC. This standard defines the competences and commitment required for registration as a professional engineer. These are grouped into five key areas:

- A: Knowledge and understanding
- B: Design and development of processes, systems, services, or products
- C: Responsibility, management, or leadership
- D: Communication and interpersonal skills
- E: Professional commitment

MPDS enables DEs to develop and demonstrate these competences through structured work experience, formal training, and regular assessment. The scheme ensures that development is not left to chance but is planned, supported, and reviewed in a way that is transparent, consistent, and aligned with national expectations.

1.3 Partnership Approach

MPDS is delivered through a three-way partnership between the DE, their employer, and the IMechE. Each party plays a distinct and essential role:

- The **Employer** provides a structured development environment, including access to mentors, training opportunities, and a variety of work experiences. Employers commit to supporting DEs through placements, feedback, and performance reviews.

- The **DE** takes ownership of their development, engages proactively with the scheme, and maintains accurate records of progress. DEs are expected to reflect on their experiences, seek feedback, and work toward competence-based goals.
- The **IMechE** accredits and monitors schemes, provides training and support for Mentors and Scheme Administrators (SAs), and ensures that the scheme remains aligned with UK-SPEC. The IMechE also supports DEs in preparing for professional registration and the Professional Review Interview (PRI).

This partnership model ensures that development is collaborative, supported, and accountable. It also fosters a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement within participating organisations.

1.4 Outcomes and Expectations

The ultimate goal of MPDS is to prepare engineers for professional registration. For most DEs, this means achieving CEng status after approximately four years on the scheme, or IEng status after three years. However, MPDS is not a time-served process – progression is based on competence, not duration.

Developing Engineers are assessed against four levels of competence, which reflect increasing levels of responsibility, autonomy, and professional judgement:

- **Level 1 – Aware**: Demonstrates a basic understanding of the activity. Performs routine tasks under close supervision with minimal responsibility.
- **Level 2 – Familiar**: Applies knowledge in a range of contexts. Requires supervision in more complex situations. Begins to take individual responsibility and show autonomy.
- **Level 3 – Skilled**: Operates effectively in complex or non-routine situations. Demonstrates significant autonomy and responsibility. May supervise or guide others.
- **Level 4 – Expert**: Applies expertise across a wide range of complex or non-routine contexts. Exercises substantial personal autonomy and contributes to the development of others.

To be considered ready for registration, a DE must typically demonstrate:

- At least three competences at Level 3 (Skilled)
- At least two competences at Level 2 (Familiar)

These levels are assessed through annual reviews and mentor scoring, supported by evidence from quarterly reports and development activities.

MPDS also prepares DEs for the final stage of registration – the PRI. Through structured development, reflective reporting, and mentor support, DEs build the confidence, competence, and professionalism required to succeed.

2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Overview

A successful MPDS is built on collaboration. Each stakeholder – whether strategic, operational, or developmental – plays a vital role in supporting DEs on their journey to professional registration. The following roles are not just administrative or supervisory; they are integral to creating a culture of learning, accountability, and professional growth.

2.2 Scheme Owner

2.2.1 THE STRATEGIC ANCHOR OF MPDS

The Scheme Owner is the senior figure who holds ultimate accountability for the MPDS within an organisation. Typically, a CEng in a senior engineering leadership role, the Scheme Owner is not only the scheme's sponsor but also its strategic architect and advocate. Their influence is critical in ensuring that the scheme is not just operational but thriving – aligned with both IMechE standards and organisational goals.

A Scheme Owner's commitment is often the clearest indicator of a scheme's health. Their visibility, authority, and engagement set the tone for how professional development is valued across the business.

2.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIC FUNCTIONS

The Scheme Owner's role is broad and high impact. It encompasses leadership, governance, advocacy, and resource management. Key responsibilities include:

- **Strategic Oversight**: Ensuring that the MPDS is aligned with the organisation's engineering strategy, talent development goals, and succession planning. The Scheme Owner ensures that the scheme is not siloed but integrated into the wider business.
- **Resource Allocation**: Securing and allocating the financial, human, and operational resources necessary to support the scheme. This includes funding for training, mentor development, and DE placements.
- **Governance and Compliance**: Chairing or actively participating in the MPDS Steering Committee, reviewing scheme key performance indicators (KPIs), and ensuring that the scheme remains compliant with IMechE accreditation requirements.
- **Scheme Promotion**: Acting as a visible champion of the scheme within the organisation. This includes promoting the value of professional registration, recognising DE and mentor achievements, and advocating for the scheme at senior leadership level.

- **Accreditation Leadership**: Leading the organisation's preparation for accreditation and reaccreditation visits. The Scheme Owner is expected to meet with accreditation panels, demonstrate strategic commitment, and respond to feedback or conditions.
- **Mentor and DE Engagement**: Supporting the recruitment and development of mentors, and engaging directly with DEs through annual reviews, informal check-ins, or recognition events.

2.2.3 AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE

The Scheme Owner must have the authority to influence line management, training functions, and operational planning. They are often the senior line manager of those involved in the scheme – Mentors, DEs, placement supervisors, and the SA – or have clear delegated authority from those who are.

This authority is essential for:

- Ensuring that DEs are given meaningful placements and development opportunities.
- Supporting the resolution of competence gaps or reporting issues.
- Driving improvements to the scheme based on feedback or performance data.

2.2.4 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SCHEME COMMUNITY

A strong Scheme Owner is not distant or symbolic – they are engaged and accessible. Best practice includes:

- Attending DE induction sessions to welcome new participants and set expectations.
- Participating in Steering Committee meetings and annual scheme reviews.
- Meeting with DEs annually to discuss their development and experience.
- Supporting mentor forums and encouraging cross-functional collaboration.

In high-performing schemes, the Scheme Owner is known to DEs and Mentors alike – not just as a figurehead, but as an active supporter of their development.

2.2.5 SUPPORTING A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALISM

The Scheme Owner plays a key role in embedding a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement. This includes:

- Promoting the importance of UK-SPEC and professional registration across the organisation.
- Encouraging DE involvement in STEM outreach, community engagement, and professional networks.
- Recognising and celebrating DE and mentor achievements through internal communications, awards, or events.
- Ensuring that the scheme is reviewed regularly and integrated into the organisation's quality management systems (e.g. ISO 9001).

2.2.6 THE IMPACT OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHEME OWNER

When the Scheme Owner is engaged, empowered, and proactive, the scheme benefits from:

- Stronger alignment with business goals and engineering strategy.
- Higher DE engagement and retention.
- More consistent mentor support and development.
- Greater success in achieving and maintaining accreditation.
- A culture where professional development is valued and visible.

In short, the Scheme Owner is the keystone of MPDS. Their leadership ensures that the scheme is not just a process, but a pathway to excellence – for individuals, teams, and the organisation as a whole.

2.3 Scheme Administrator

2.3.1 THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE SCHEME ADMINISTRATOR

The SA is the operational cornerstone of a successful MPDS. While mentors guide individual development and Scheme Owners provide strategic oversight, it is the SA who ensures the scheme functions day-to-day with consistency, compliance, and care. Often based in HR, Learning and Development, or Engineering Support, the SA is the scheme's organiser, communicator, and quality controller.

A well-supported SA is not only a record-keeper but a proactive enabler of professional development. They are often the first point of contact for DEs and Mentors, and the key liaison with the IMechE. Their influence extends across the scheme's lifecycle – from onboarding and reporting to accreditation and celebration.

2.3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND CORE FUNCTIONS

The SA's responsibilities are broad and require a blend of administrative precision, interpersonal skill, and strategic awareness. Key duties include:

- **Registration and Onboarding**: Ensuring all DEs are appropriately registered with the IMechE and that their academic qualifications are verified. This includes managing the MPDS registration form, confirming mentor assignments, and recording any approved previous experience. *See Appendix 8.2.6 for a full breakdown of SA responsibilities.*
- **Mentor Coordination**: Maintaining an up-to-date register of Mentors and Delegate Mentors, verifying their professional registration status, and ensuring they complete mandatory training every three years. The SA may also facilitate initial meetings between DEs and Mentors.
- **Monitoring and Reporting**: Tracking the submission and approval of quarterly reports and annual assessments. The SA ensures that DEs and Mentors meet reporting deadlines and intervenes when delays occur, arranging remedial meetings or notifying the IMechE if necessary.
- **Scheme Health and Compliance**: Maintaining scheme KPIs, such as reporting timeliness and mentor training compliance. The SA ensures that

MPDS Tools records are accurate and aligned with company systems, and that the scheme remains audit ready.

- **Accreditation Support**: Preparing documentation for accreditation and reaccreditation visits, coordinating with IMechE staff, and ensuring that all stakeholders are briefed and available. The SA plays a key role in demonstrating the scheme's effectiveness and responsiveness to feedback.
- **Communication and Liaison**: Acting as the main point of contact between the company and the IMechE. The SA manages queries, escalates issues, and ensures that all parties are informed and engaged.
- **Recognition and Engagement**: Supporting the celebration of DE achievements, such as professional registration, through internal communications, events, or awards. The SA may also coordinate DE and mentor forums and encourage participation in STEM outreach and community engagement.
- **Training and Development**: Ensuring the Scheme Administrator has completed appropriate MPDS training, particularly when new to the role. This supports consistent scheme delivery and is a condition of accreditation where coordination or compliance issues have been identified. *See also Section 4.6.2 for how this requirement may be applied as a condition during accreditation.*

2.3.3 SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Beyond administration, the SA helps shape the culture of the scheme. They are often the first to notice when a DE is struggling or when a Mentor needs support, and initiate raising the issue with the Scheme Owner to ensure appropriate action is taken. They may facilitate peer networks, organise training sessions, or initiate scheme improvements based on feedback.

In high-performing schemes, the SA is included in mentor training to gain a deeper understanding of the development process. They may also participate in regional or national SA networks to share best practice and stay informed of changes to MPDS policy or tools.

2.3.4 TOOLS, TRAINING, AND RESOURCES

The SA is expected to be proficient in using MPDS Tools and to support others in doing so. The Institution provides access to a range of resources, including:

- A training webinar (accessible via the 'MPDS Tools for Scheme Administrators')
- Useful documents and templates (available via the IMechE webpage)

The SA should also maintain a checklist for each DE to ensure that all key milestones are met and that records are complete and compliant, with their Initial Professional Development (IPD) and competence progression being actively monitored.

For detailed guidance, visit the website. If you require access or support, please contact ipd@imeche.org.

2.3.5 CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICE

The SA role can be demanding, particularly in large or multi-site schemes. Common challenges include:

- Managing reporting delays or mentor availability
- Ensuring consistency across departments or locations
- Supporting DEs through periods of suspension or transfer

Best practice includes:

- Holding regular check-ins with DEs and Mentors, and the Scheme Owner to ensure alignment, support, and responsiveness across all levels of scheme delivery.
- Using dashboards or spreadsheets to track progress
- Participating in Steering Committee meetings and scheme reviews
- Maintaining a list of all professionally registered engineers in the company to support mentor recruitment

2.3.6 THE IMPACT OF A STRONG SCHEME ADMINISTRATOR

A capable and committed SA can transform a scheme from functional to exceptional. They ensure that DEs are supported, Mentors are engaged, and the scheme is continuously improving. Their work underpins the credibility of the scheme and contributes directly to successful professional registration outcomes.

2.4 Developing Engineers

2.4.1 THE CENTRAL ROLE OF THE DE

DEs are the primary participants in the MPDS. They are not passive recipients of training but active agents in their own professional journey. The success of MPDS ultimately depends on the engagement, motivation, and ownership demonstrated by each DE.

A well-supported DE is one who understands the purpose of MPDS, is committed to achieving professional registration, and is proactive in seeking out opportunities for growth. The scheme is designed to provide structure and support, but it is the DE who must drive their development forward.

2.4.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

DEs are expected to take full responsibility for their professional development. This includes:

- **Engaging with the Scheme**: Registering with the Institution (typically as an Associate Member), completing the MPDS registration form, and beginning to use MPDS Tools within the first three months of joining the scheme.
- **Planning Development**: Collaborating with their Mentor to create a personalised training plan that maps UK-SPEC competences to placements,

projects, and training activities. This plan should be reviewed and updated regularly.

- **Reporting Progress**: Submitting quarterly reports and annual assessments via MPDS Tools. These reports should be reflective, evidence-based, and aligned with UK-SPEC. DEs are expected to meet submission deadlines and respond to Mentor feedback.
- **Seeking Feedback**: Engaging in regular meetings with their Mentor (at least quarterly) to review progress, discuss challenges, and plan future development. DEs should be open to feedback and willing to act on it.
- **Participating in Placements**: Completing a series of structured placements or assignments that provide exposure to a broad range of engineering functions. DEs should prepare for each placement by identifying expected learning outcomes and reflecting on achievements upon completion.
- **Demonstrating Competence**: Using tools such as the Competence Development Template to track progress against UK-SPEC and identify gaps. DEs should take ownership of addressing these gaps through targeted development activities.
- **Preparing for Registration**: Working toward achieving the required competence levels (typically three at Level 3 and two at Level 2) and preparing for the PRI. This includes selecting and presenting evidence, writing a professional review report, and participating in a mock interview where available.

Reminder
DEs are expected to take ownership of their development by submitting reports on time, meeting regularly with mentors, and proactively addressing competence gaps.

Below is a reminder of what DEs should do each year to stay on track with MPDS expectations:

Year	Key Actions
Year 1	Register with IMechE, complete MPDS form, meet mentor, submit Q1–Q3 reports, complete Annual Assessment
Year 2	Continue Q1–Q3 reports, Annual Assessment, review training plan with mentor
Year 3	Submit Q2 report (Q1/Q3 optional), Annual Assessment, begin preparing for PRI
Year 4	Submit Q2 report (Q1/Q3 optional), Annual Assessment, confirm readiness with Mentor, apply for PRI

A DE enrolled on MPDS cannot act as a Mentor, DM, or SA under any circumstances.

- **Mentors** must be professionally registered (CEng or IEng).
- **DMs** may be experienced engineers but cannot be DEs.

- **SAs** must be independent of DE responsibilities to ensure impartiality and compliance.

2.4.3 DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY AND STRUCTURE

A typical MPDS journey spans four years, though progression is based on competence rather than time. The structure usually includes:

- Years 1–2: Three quarterly reports and one annual assessment per year. DEs are expected to explore a variety of roles and functions, building a broad foundation of experience.
- Years 3–4: At least one quarterly report (typically Q2) and one annual assessment per year. DEs begin to specialise, take on greater responsibility, and prepare for registration.
- The maximum reporting duration for anyone using MPDS Tools is six years. This refers to active time spent submitting reports and assessments; periods of suspension (e.g. parental leave, sabbaticals) do not count toward this limit.

Throughout the scheme, DEs may participate in:

- Technical and personal skills training
- Cross-functional projects
- STEM outreach and community engagement
- Graduate forums and peer networks

2.4.4 SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

DEs are supported by a network of mentors, SAs, line managers, and peers. They should:

- Attend induction sessions to understand the scheme structure and expectations
- Use the Scheme Handbook and MPDS Tools to guide their development
- Participate in DE forums to share experiences and learn from others
- Seek support from the SA if issues arise

In high-performing schemes, DEs also benefit from:

- A "buddy" system with previous DEs
- Access to mock PRIs and professional review preparation sessions
- Opportunities to meet with the Scheme Owner or senior leaders

2.4.5 OWNERSHIP AND PROFESSIONALISM

The most successful DEs are those who take ownership of their development. This means:

- Being proactive in identifying and pursuing development opportunities
- Reflecting critically on experiences and learning from challenges
- Demonstrating professionalism in all aspects of work and reporting

- Committing to continuous improvement and lifelong learning

DEs should recognise that technical expertise alone is not sufficient. Professional registration requires a holistic set of competences, including leadership, communication, and ethical responsibility.

2.4.6 RECOGNITION AND PROGRESSION

As DEs progress through the scheme, their achievements should be recognised. This may include:

- Internal awards or recognition events
- Inclusion in company newsletters or communications
- Opportunities to mentor others or contribute to scheme improvement

Upon successful completion of MPDS and achievement of professional registration, DEs transition from learners to leaders – ready to contribute to the profession and support the next generation of engineers.

2.5 Mentors

2.5.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING IN MPDS

Mentoring is at the heart of the MPDS. It is more than a procedural requirement – it is a relationship built on trust, guidance, and professional growth. A well-supported DE benefits not only from structured feedback but also from the wisdom, experience, and encouragement of a mentor who understands the journey to professional registration.

Mentors play a pivotal role in shaping the professional identity of DEs. They help interpret the UK-SPEC competences, provide developmental feedback, and ensure that the DE's experience is aligned with the expectations of the IMechE and the engineering profession.

2.5.2 WHO CAN BE A MENTOR?

MPDS mentors must be professionally registered engineers – either Chartered (CEng) or Incorporated (IEng)—with a sound understanding of UK-SPEC and the MPDS process. In cases where a CEng is not available, an IEng may mentor a DE working toward IEng registration. If an IEng is mentoring a DE aiming for CEng, the DE will still require a CEng sponsor at the point of professional registration.

In addition to registered mentors, organisations may appoint Delegate Mentors (DM) to support DEs, particularly in geographically dispersed teams or where mentor capacity is limited. DMs are experienced engineers who may not be professionally registered but are familiar with UK-SPEC and the MPDS process. They cannot approve reports but can provide valuable feedback and day-to-day support.

DEs are not eligible to act as mentors or DMs under MPDS. Mentors must be professionally registered (CEng or IEng), and DMs must be experienced engineers independent of DE responsibilities.

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2.5.3 MENTOR-TO-DE RATIOS

To ensure quality and consistency, the IMechE recommends that a mentor supports no more than two DEs. In exceptional circumstances, this may be extended to three, but only for a limited period. Where DMs are used, the overall number of DEs supported by a mentor must be adjusted accordingly. For example, a mentor with no direct DEs may support up to four DMs, each of whom may support up to two DEs.

2.5.4 THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring is a multifaceted role that includes:

- **Manager of the Relationship**: Setting expectations, maintaining regular contact, and ensuring the DE is placed in meaningful assignments.
- **Interpreter**: Helping the DE understand the organisation's culture, the MPDS framework, and the path to professional registration.
- **Coach**: Encouraging the DE to stretch themselves, take initiative, and reflect on their development.
- **Assessor**: Reviewing quarterly reports and annual assessments, providing constructive feedback, and scoring competences.
- **Counsellor**: Supporting the DE through challenges, helping them build confidence, and fostering a commitment to lifelong learning.

Mentors are expected to meet with their DEs regularly – typically quarterly – to review progress, discuss objectives, and plan future development. These meetings should be structured, reflective, and forward-looking.

2.5.5 MENTOR TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Initial mentor training is mandatory for all MPDS mentors, with refresher training required every three years. Training is available through regional workshops, in-company sessions, online modules, and peer-to-peer learning. Mentors are responsible for recording their training in the MPDS/SRS tools, and SAs should maintain up-to-date records for accreditation purposes.

Approved mentor training formats include:

Training Format	Description	Access
Online LMS Module	Self-paced UK-SPEC training	learn.imeche.org
Full-day Seminar	In-depth, peer-based training (regional or online)	Mentoring for MPDS
In-house Workshop	Delivered by IMechE consultant	Via mdm@imeche.org
2-hour Briefing	Delivered by Membership Development Manager	Via mdm@imeche.org

While training is not mandatory for DMs, it is strongly recommended to ensure consistency and alignment with scheme expectations.

2.5.6 BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring is a powerful tool for both personal and organisational development. For mentors, it offers opportunities for CPD, cross-functional collaboration, and professional recognition. For organisations, it supports talent development, succession planning, and a culture of continuous improvement. For DEs, it provides a structured, supportive environment in which to grow into confident, competent professional engineers.

2.5.7 COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

Without clear objectives and regular engagement, mentoring can lose focus. Overly directive mentoring may stifle initiative, while lack of structure can lead to missed development opportunities. Mentors should avoid becoming gatekeepers or champions at the expense of objectivity. Instead, they should foster independence, encourage critical thinking, and maintain a balanced, developmental approach.

2.6 Delegate Mentors

2.6.1 THE ROLE OF DMS IN SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT

DMs are a vital extension of the mentoring framework within the MPDS. While they do not replace the formally registered mentor, they provide essential day-to-day support, particularly in large, multi-site, or resource-constrained organisations. Their presence ensures that DEs remain engaged, guided, and supported – especially when their registered Mentor is not co-located or readily available.

DMs are often experienced engineers who, while not necessarily professionally registered, possess the technical knowledge, interpersonal skills, and familiarity with UK-SPEC required to support a DE's development. Their contribution is especially valuable in maintaining continuity, accessibility, and responsiveness within the mentoring relationship.

2.6.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND SCOPE

DMs are not authorised to approve reports or assessments, but their role is nonetheless substantial. Their responsibilities include:

- **Providing Local Support**: Acting as the first point of contact for DEs on a day-to-day basis. This includes answering questions, offering guidance, and helping DEs reflect on their experiences.
- **Facilitating Development**: Supporting the DE in identifying learning opportunities, preparing for placements, and interpreting feedback from line managers or mentors.
- **Monitoring Engagement**: Helping to ensure that DEs remain on track with their development plans and reporting schedules. DMs may prompt DEs to prepare reports, attend mentor meetings, or reflect on recent experiences.
- **Liaising with Mentors**: Maintaining regular communication with the registered mentor to ensure alignment and consistency. DMs may provide informal feedback to the mentor on the DE's progress or flag any concerns.

- **Participating in Forums**: Engaging in mentor forums, training sessions, or scheme meetings where appropriate. This helps ensure that DMs are aligned with the scheme's expectations and can contribute to a consistent mentoring culture.

2.6.3 ELIGIBILITY AND APPOINTMENT

DMs are typically:

- Experienced engineers who are familiar with the MPDS process and UK-SPEC.
- Individuals working toward professional registration themselves.
- Engineers based in the same location or department as the DE, providing proximity and accessibility.

The appointment of a DM should be agreed upon by the SA and the registered mentor. DMs must be registered with the Institution and granted read-only access to the DE's MPDS Tools records.

2.6.4 RATIOS AND CAPACITY

To maintain quality and manageability, the IMechE provides clear guidance on mentor-to-DE ratios when DMs are involved:

- A registered mentor with no direct DEs may support up to four DMs.
- Each DM may support no more than two DEs.
- Where a mentor has their own DEs in addition to supporting DMs, the total number of DEs supported must be adjusted accordingly.

This structure ensures that all DEs receive adequate attention and that mentors are not overextended.

2.6.5 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

While DMs are not required to complete formal mentor training, it is strongly recommended. Training helps DMs:

- Understand the MPDS framework and UK-SPEC competences.
- Provide consistent and constructive feedback.
- Support DEs in preparing for professional registration.

Training may be delivered through in-house sessions, online modules, or peer mentoring. SAs should encourage DMs to participate in training and maintain records of their involvement.

2.6.6 BENEFITS OF THE DM ROLE

The DM role offers significant benefits to all parties:

- **For DEs**: Increased accessibility to support, more frequent feedback, and a stronger sense of connection to the scheme.
- **For Mentors**: Reduced pressure and improved coverage, especially in geographically dispersed teams.

- **For DMs**: A valuable development opportunity, enhancing their mentoring skills, deepening their understanding of UK-SPEC, and preparing them for future registration as mentors.
- **For the Organisation**: Greater resilience and flexibility in scheme delivery, improved DE engagement, and a stronger mentoring culture.

2.6.7 BEST PRACTICE AND INTEGRATION

To maximise the impact of DMs, schemes should:

- Clearly define the DM role and communicate it to all stakeholders.
- Ensure DMs are introduced to DEs early and included in induction processes.
- Encourage regular three-way communication between DEs, DMs, and mentors.
- Include DMs in scheme forums, training, and recognition activities.

In high-performing schemes, DMs are not seen as secondary or substitute figures – they are recognised as integral contributors to the DE's development journey.

2.7 Line Managers

2.7.1 THE OPERATIONAL ENABLERS OF DEVELOPMENT

Line Managers are the bridge between strategic development goals and day-to-day engineering practice. While mentors guide DEs through the professional standards and SAs ensure the scheme runs smoothly, it is Line Managers who provide the real-world context in which DEs apply their learning, develop their competences, and grow into professional engineers.

A Line Manager's role in MPDS is not incidental – it is essential. They are responsible for creating the conditions in which DEs can thrive: assigning meaningful work, setting clear expectations, and providing feedback that supports both technical and professional growth.

2.7.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND CORE CONTRIBUTIONS

Line Managers contribute to MPDS in several key ways:

- **Providing Developmental Work**: Assigning DEs to projects, placements, or roles that are aligned with their training plan and mapped to UK-SPEC competences. This includes ensuring that DEs are exposed to a variety of functions such as design, manufacturing, project management, and quality assurance.
- **Setting Objectives**: Collaborating with DEs and mentors to define clear, challenging, and achievable objectives for each placement or assignment. These objectives should support both technical learning and the development of broader professional skills.
- **Offering Feedback**: Providing regular, constructive feedback on performance. This may be through informal conversations, structured

reviews, or formal performance appraisals. Feedback should be specific, developmental, and aligned with the DE's competence goals.

- **Supporting Reflection**: Encouraging DEs to reflect on their experiences, identify learning outcomes, and consider how their work contributes to their overall development. Line Managers can help DEs see the bigger picture and connect day-to-day tasks to long-term goals.
- **Collaborating with Mentors**: Maintaining open communication with the DE's mentor to ensure that work assignments are supporting competence development. Line Managers should be aware of the DE's progress and any areas where additional support or exposure is needed.
- **Participating in Reviews**: Attending placement reviews, contributing to performance assessments, and supporting the DE's preparation for the PRI. In some schemes, Line Managers may also be involved in mock PRIs or Steering Committee discussions.

2.7.3 CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Line Managers play a critical role in shaping the DE's experience of the workplace. A supportive environment includes:

- **Access to Resources**: Ensuring that DEs have the tools, information, and support they need to succeed in their roles.
- **Time for Development**: Recognising that professional development is part of the DE's role – not an add-on. This includes allowing time for training, reporting, and mentor meetings.
- **Encouragement and Recognition**: Celebrating DE achievements, encouraging participation in STEM outreach or professional activities, and reinforcing the value of professional registration.

In high-performing schemes, Line Managers are briefed on the MPDS framework and UK-SPEC competences. They understand their role in supporting the DE's journey and are committed to helping them succeed.

2.7.4 ALIGNMENT WITH ORGANISATIONAL GOALS

Line Managers are uniquely positioned to align the DE's development with the organisation's strategic objectives. This includes:

- Assigning DEs to projects that are high-impact and strategically relevant.
- Encouraging DEs to contribute to innovation, process improvement, or cross-functional initiatives.
- Supporting DEs in understanding how their work fits into the broader business context.

This alignment not only enhances the DE's learning but also increases their engagement and sense of purpose.

2.7.5 CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICE

Common challenges for Line Managers include balancing operational demands with development needs, managing DE expectations, and ensuring consistency across departments or locations.

Best practice includes:

- Holding regular one-to-one meetings with DEs.
- Participating in mentor and DE forums to share insights and align expectations.
- Using structured placement plans and feedback templates.
- Collaborating with the SA to monitor progress and address issues early.

2.7.6 THE IMPACT OF AN ENGAGED LINE MANAGER

When Line Managers are engaged and informed, DEs benefit from:

- Richer, more varied development experiences.
- Stronger alignment between work and competence development.
- Greater confidence and readiness for professional registration.
- A more positive and productive workplace experience.

Line Managers are not just supervisors – they are developers of talent, enablers of growth, and key contributors to the success of MPDS.

2.8 Industry Liaison Officers

2.8.1 THE BRIDGE BETWEEN IMECHE AND INDUSTRY

Industry Liaison Officer (ILOs) serve as vital connectors between the organisation and the wider professional engineering community. While not a mandatory role in every scheme, where appointed, ILOs play a strategic and communicative function that enhances the visibility, alignment, and effectiveness of the MPDS.

An effective ILO ensures that the organisation remains informed, engaged, and responsive to developments in professional standards, registration processes, and institutional expectations. They help translate external guidance into internal action and ensure that the organisation's voice is heard within the Institution.

2.8.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND STRATEGIC VALUE

The ILO's role is multifaceted and may vary depending on the size and structure of the organisation. Core responsibilities typically include:

- **Institutional Engagement**: Acting as the primary point of contact between the organisation and the IMechE or other Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs). This includes receiving updates, disseminating information, and coordinating responses to consultations or policy changes.
- **Scheme Advocacy**: Promoting the value of MPDS and professional registration within the organisation. ILOs may present at internal events, support recruitment campaigns, or brief senior leaders on the benefits of accreditation.
- **Feedback and Representation**: Gathering feedback from DEs, mentors, and SAs and relaying it to the Institution. ILOs may also represent the organisation in external forums, working groups, or regional networks.

- **Accreditation Support**: Assisting with the preparation and coordination of accreditation and reaccreditation visits. This includes ensuring that documentation is complete, stakeholders are briefed, and the organisation is well-represented.
- **Professional Development Promotion**: Encouraging participation in STEM outreach, CPD activities, and IMechE events. ILOs may also support DEs and mentors in accessing resources, training, or networking opportunities.

2.8.3 POSITIONING WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

The ILO role is often held by a senior engineer, HR professional, or SA with a strong understanding of both the organisation's development strategy and the expectations of the IMechE. In some cases, the ILO may also be the Scheme Owner or a member of the Steering Committee.

Regardless of their formal title, ILOs must have the credibility, communication skills, and institutional knowledge to influence both internal and external stakeholders.

2.8.4 ENHANCING SCHEME VISIBILITY AND IMPACT

A proactive ILO can significantly enhance the visibility and impact of MPDS within the organisation. This includes:

- Ensuring that professional development is recognised in performance reviews, promotion criteria, and talent development plans.
- Promoting success stories, such as DEs achieving registration or mentors receiving recognition.
- Facilitating cross-functional collaboration and knowledge sharing between departments, sites, or business units.

In larger organisations, the ILO may coordinate a network of local champions or site-based contacts to ensure consistent engagement across the business.

2.8.5 SUPPORTING A CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALISM

ILOs contribute to a culture where professional development is not just supported but celebrated. They help embed UK-SPEC into the language of the organisation and ensure that DEs and mentors feel connected to a broader professional community.

This cultural alignment supports:

- Higher DE engagement and retention
- Greater mentor participation and satisfaction
- Stronger alignment with accreditation standards
- Enhanced organisational reputation within the engineering profession

2.8.6 BEST PRACTICE AND INTEGRATION

To maximise their impact, ILOs should:

- Maintain regular contact with IMechE Membership Development Managers (MDMs)
- Attend regional or national ILO forums or briefings
- Collaborate closely with the SO, SA, and mentors
- Ensure that institutional updates are shared promptly and clearly
- Advocate for the scheme at all levels of the organisation

In high-performing schemes, the ILO is a visible, respected figure who champions professional development, connects people and ideas, and ensures that the organisation remains at the forefront of engineering excellence.

2.8.7 FURTHER SUPPORT AND CONTACT

For further guidance on the role of ILOs, or to connect with your local MDM, please contact the IMechE Membership Development team at mdm@imeche.org. They can provide tailored advice, resources, and support to help you maximise the impact of your MPDS and professional development initiatives.

2.9 Summary of Stakeholder Responsibilities

Role	Key Responsibilities
Scheme Owner	Strategic oversight, resource allocation, scheme integrity
Scheme Administrator	DE/mentor registration, reporting oversight, liaison with IMechE
Mentor	Guide DEs, review reports, assess competence, attend training
Delegate Mentor	Local support, read-only access, feedback to mentor
Developing Engineer	Submit reports, arrange meetings, own development
Line Manager	Provide opportunities, feedback, support development
Industry Liaison Officer	Communicate between company and PEIs, share updates

3 SCHEME STRUCTURE

3.1 Purposeful Design

A MPDS is not merely a collection of placements or training activities – it is a deliberate, structured framework designed to develop professional engineers. It provides an engineered environment in which DEs can grow, reflect, and ultimately demonstrate the competences required for professional registration.

The scheme must be intentional in its design, inclusive in its delivery, and rigorous in its monitoring. It should reflect the organisation's size, sector, and engineering disciplines, while remaining aligned with the UK-SPEC. A purposeful structure ensures that development is not left to chance but is planned, supported, and continuously improved.

At its core, MPDS is a partnership between the DE, the employer, and the IMechE. It transforms individual experiences into a coherent journey toward competence and registration.

3.2 The Development Journey

A well-structured MPDS guides DEs through a progressive journey of professional growth. This typically begins with a comprehensive induction, followed by a series of structured placements or assignments that expose the DE to a wide range of engineering functions – such as design, manufacturing, project management, research and development, quality assurance, and supply chain operations.

In the early stages, DEs are encouraged to explore and build a broad foundation. As they progress, they begin to specialise, take on greater responsibility, and prepare for professional registration. By the final year, most DEs will be in a substantive role where they are expected to operate with increasing autonomy and accountability.

Throughout this journey, DEs are supported by a mentor, a SA, and a wider network of line managers, training staff, and peers. The scheme evolves with the DE, responding to their development needs, performance feedback, and emerging opportunities.

3.3 Core Components

Every accredited MPDS must include the following core components:

- **Structured Induction**: An introduction to the organisation, its engineering functions, and the MPDS framework, including company values, business strategy, UK-SPEC, and development expectations.
- **Training Plan**: A personalised plan mapping UK-SPEC competences to placements, projects, and training activities. Developed collaboratively and reviewed regularly.

- **Placements and Assignments**: Purposeful, varied roles (typically 4–6 months) across departments, with defined learning outcomes and supervisor feedback.
- **Formal Training**: Technical and personal development courses (e.g. communication, leadership, ethics, health and safety) aligned with the DE's plan.
- **Mentoring**: Regular engagement with a professionally registered mentor who provides structured feedback, guidance, and assessment.
- **Reporting and Review**: Quarterly reports and annual assessments submitted via MPDS Tools, supporting reflection and mentor scoring.
- **Governance and Oversight**: A Steering Committee or equivalent body overseeing scheme performance, compliance, and continuous improvement.

3.4 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring is a continuous process that ensures the scheme remains effective, compliant, and responsive. Key elements include:

- **Quarterly Mentor Meetings**: Structured discussions to review progress, challenges, and future objectives, supported by quarterly reports.
- **Annual Assessments**: Comprehensive reviews including mentor scoring against UK-SPEC competences, forming critical milestones.
- **Placement Reviews**: Supervisor feedback at the end of each assignment, shared with the mentor to inform development.
- **Scheme Health Checks**: Regular reviews of KPIs such as reporting timeliness, mentor training compliance, and DE progression rates.
- **Performance Integration**: Alignment with company appraisal processes to ensure consistency and relevance.

3.5 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

An effective MPDS is one that evolves. Quality assurance is not just about compliance – it is about learning, adapting, and striving for excellence. Best practice includes:

- **Documented Processes**: Clear, accessible documentation covering roles, responsibilities, reporting procedures, and development pathways. This may include a Scheme Handbook, training plan templates, and reporting guides.
- **Integration with Business Systems**: Alignment with the organisation's quality management systems (e.g. ISO 9001), performance appraisal processes, and talent development frameworks.

- **Feedback Loops**: Mechanisms for collecting and acting on feedback from DEs, mentors, and other stakeholders. This may include surveys, focus groups, or DE forums.
- **Mock PRIs**: Opportunities for DEs to participate in mock PRIs, supported by trained assessors or experienced mentors. These sessions build confidence and readiness for registration.
- **Recognition and Celebration**: A culture that values professional development and celebrates success. This may include internal awards, newsletters, or events recognising DE and mentor achievements.

3.6 Flexibility and Adaptability

While MPDS is a structured scheme, it is also designed to be flexible and resilient. Organisations are encouraged to tailor the scheme to their context, provided that the core principles and standards are maintained. This includes:

- Adapting placement structures to suit project-based or consultancy environments
- Supporting DEs who join mid-career or with significant prior experience
- Accommodating part-time, remote, or international placements
- Integrating MPDS with graduate development programmes or apprenticeships

A successful MPDS fosters a culture of professionalism, learning, and continuous improvement. It is a shared commitment – supported by leadership, sustained by community, and celebrated through milestones. Above all, it is a place where engineers are not only trained, but transformed into confident, competent, and committed professionals.

4 ACCREDITATION AND REACCREDITATION

4.1 Purpose and Importance

Accreditation is the IMechE' formal recognition that a company's MPDS meets the standards required to support DEs in achieving professional registration. It is a mark of quality, assurance, and commitment to structured professional development.

For companies, accreditation affirms that their scheme is well-designed, well-resourced, and aligned with the UK-SPEC. For DEs, it provides confidence that their development is being supported in a way that is recognised and respected by the profession.

Reaccreditation is the process by which an existing scheme is reviewed and renewed, typically every three years. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the scheme's performance, address any areas for improvement, and demonstrate continued alignment with IMechE expectations. Together, accreditation and reaccreditation ensure that MPDS remains a robust, consistent, and effective route to professional registration.

4.2 Preparing for Accreditation

The accreditation process begins with registration. Companies submit a formal application to the IMechE, outlining the structure, delivery, and governance of their scheme. This includes details of the scheme's objectives, locations, assessment processes, and support mechanisms for DEs and mentors. Supporting documentation – such as a Scheme Handbook, training plans, and sample DE records – should accompany the application.

Once the application is reviewed and accepted, the company enters a registration period. For reaccreditation, this period is **6 months**, reflecting the expectation that existing schemes are already operational and compliant. For **new or returning schemes**, the registration period is **12 months**, allowing sufficient time to meet pre-visit reporting requirements.

During the registration period, the organisation must demonstrate that the scheme is active and functioning effectively. This includes:

- Registering DEs on MPDS Tools
- Ensuring that at least one DE has submitted two quarterly reports
- Confirming that mentor training records are up to date

Only once these conditions are met can an accreditation visit take place . For new schemes, the visit is typically conducted in person and must be arranged at least eight weeks in advance.

> *Tip*
> *Ensure at least one DE has submitted two quarterly reports and that mentor training records are up to date before scheduling an accreditation visit.*

For existing schemes undergoing reaccreditation, the process is similar but more streamlined. The typical format for reaccreditation visits is virtual; however, the final format is determined by the IMechE following a risk review of the submitted documentation. The company must ensure that all DE records are current and that mentor training is up to date before proposing two prospective visit dates.

As part of the registration process, the Institution conducts a risk review to determine the appropriate format for the accreditation visit. This review assesses the submitted documentation against defined criteria to evaluate the scheme's readiness and complexity. Based on this assessment, the Institution will confirm whether a virtual visit is suitable or if an in-person visit is required to ensure a thorough and effective evaluation.

4.3 The Accreditation Visit

The accreditation visit is a structured, evidence-based review conducted by a panel appointed by the IMechE. The panel typically includes a member of the Professional Development Standards Committee (PDSC) and a Professional Development Consultant (PDC) – both professionally registered engineers with experience in scheme assessment.

The visit is designed to evaluate the scheme's structure, delivery, and effectiveness. It includes meetings with:

- Senior management
- SAs
- Mentors
- DEs

The panel will review documentation, observe presentations, and assess the quality of DE records and mentor feedback. They will also evaluate the scheme's alignment with UK-SPEC and its ability to support DEs in achieving professional registration.

A template agenda is provided in advance, and the company is expected to submit a formal agenda including the names and roles of all attendees. The company must also provide:

- A list of principal sites and businesses covered by the scheme
- A list of attendees and their professional qualifications
- Employee statistics (e.g. number of engineers, CEngs, IEngs, DEs)

The visit concludes with a private panel discussion and a feedback session with the company. The panel does not make the final decision on the day but provides a recommendation to the PDSC.

4.4 Joint and International Accreditation Visits

Where a company operates a scheme that supports multiple disciplines or is affiliated with more than one PEI, a joint accreditation visit may be arranged. In such cases, one institution is nominated as the lead and coordinates the visit, but each PEI makes its own independent accreditation decision.

Joint visits follow the same structure and expectations as standard visits but require additional coordination to ensure that all institutions' requirements are met.

For companies operating internationally, the accreditation process is the same, but visits may be conducted virtually or, where appropriate, in person, based on the outcome of the Institution's risk review and logistical considerations. Host companies are responsible for covering the costs of international visits, including travel and accommodation.

4.5 After the Visit

Following the visit, the panel submits a formal report to the PDSC. This report includes the panel's findings, a recommendation on accreditation, and any proposed conditions or opportunities for improvement. The PDSC reviews the report and makes the final decision.

Possible outcomes include:

- Full accreditation (typically for three years)
- Accreditation with conditions, to be addressed within a specified timeframe
- Deferred accreditation, pending further evidence or improvements

If conditions are imposed, the company must submit a plan of action and provide evidence that the issues have been addressed. Accreditation may then be granted retrospectively from the date of the visit. In some cases, a monitoring visit may be required to verify compliance.

> *Note*
> *If accreditation is granted with conditions, you must submit a plan of action and evidence of resolution. Accreditation may be granted retrospectively, and a monitoring visit may be required.*

4.6 Accreditation Criteria

4.6.1 ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

The IMechE uses a clear set of criteria to assess schemes. Accreditation is granted when there is strong evidence of:

- Senior management commitment and strategic alignment
- A professionally registered Scheme Owner with authority and influence

- A structured, well-documented scheme aligned with UK-SPEC
- Adequate resources for training, mentoring, and development
- A history of high-quality IPD
- Responsiveness to DE needs and organisational change

Accreditation may be granted for less than the full three-year period if there are concerns about the scheme's maturity, consistency, or compliance. Accreditation may not be granted if the scheme lacks sufficient structure, support mechanisms, or alignment with UK-SPEC expectations.

4.6.2 CONDITIONS FOR ACCREDITATION

Where a scheme meets the core criteria but presents specific areas of concern, conditions may be applied to accreditation. These conditions must be addressed within a defined timeframe before full accreditation can be confirmed or continued.

Conditions are typically applied when there is evidence of:

- **Poor timeliness of reporting**, evidenced by quarterly or annual reports submitted more than 3 months late or consistently more than 6 months late
- **Mentor training not undertaken within the previous 3 years** and not recorded in MPDS Tools
- **SA training not undertaken** or not evidenced, particularly where the SA is new to the role or where scheme coordination issues have been identified.
- **No Mentors Forum or suitable alternative** for schemes operating across three or more sites
- **No Steering Group in place** where there are more than five DEs and/or two business units involved
- **Scheme documentation is fragmented, outdated, or inaccessible**, resulting in a lack of clarity around roles, responsibilities, processes, and expectations for stakeholders.
- A combination of the following issues (or one particularly severe issue):
  - DE reporting not up to date
  - Mentor training not up to date
  - Poor coordination between DEs, mentors, and the Steering Group
  - No involvement in resolving DE issues (e.g. placements, training gaps)
  - No evidence of support through years 3 to 4 of the scheme

Conditions must be specific, measurable, and time bound. The Institution will review submitted evidence to confirm resolution, which may include documentation or a follow-up monitoring visit. *For guidance on how conditions are reviewed and resolved post-visit, see Section 4.5 – After the Visit.*

4.7 Fees and Cancellation Policy

The IMechE charges a fee for all accreditation and reaccreditation applications. This fee covers administrative costs and the expenses of volunteer assessors. For international visits, the host company is also responsible for travel and accommodation costs.

If a scheduled visit is cancelled or postponed within 30 days of the agreed date, a cancellation fee equal to 50% of the current application fee will be charged. If cancelled within 7 days, the full fee is payable. A separate fee may also apply if a monitoring visit is required.

For current fee information and payment arrangements, companies should contact the IMechE's IPD team at ipd@imeche.org.

4.8 Appeals Process

4.8.1 PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

While the MPDS accreditation process is designed to be transparent, rigorous, and supportive, there may be occasions where an organisation disagrees with the outcome of an accreditation or reaccreditation decision. In such cases, a formal appeals process exists to ensure that concerns are heard and addressed fairly. This process is overseen by the IMechE and is intended to uphold the integrity of the accreditation system while providing organisations with a clear route to challenge decisions they believe to be incorrect or procedurally flawed.

4.8.2 GROUNDS FOR APPEAL

Appeals are not open-ended and must be based on specific grounds. An organisation may submit an appeal if:

- New, relevant information has become available that could not reasonably have been presented during the original accreditation process.
- Factual inaccuracies in the submitted documentation were not properly considered.
- There is evidence of procedural irregularity or administrative error during the visit or decision-making process.

Appeals cannot be made simply on the basis of disagreement with the outcome.

4.8.3 SUBMITTING AN APPEAL

If an organisation wishes to appeal, the first step is to write to the IMechE within 30 days of receiving the accreditation decision. At this stage, the IMechE will seek to clarify any misunderstandings or factual discrepancies through informal consultation with the original accreditation panel.

If the organisation remains dissatisfied, a formal appeal may be lodged within 90 days of the original decision. This must be submitted in writing by the Scheme Owner and include:

- A clear statement of the decision being appealed.

- The specific grounds for appeal.
- Any supporting documentation.
- A £500 appeal fee (refundable at the discretion of the Appeals Committee).

4.8.4 THE APPEALS PROCESS

Once a formal appeal is received, the IMechE will acknowledge it within five working days. The Chair of the Qualifications and Membership Board (QMB) will then determine whether there is a prima facie case for appeal. If so, an independent Appeals Committee will be convened.

The Appeals Committee is composed of individuals with no prior involvement in the original decision. It typically includes:

- Two members of the QMB (one acting as Chair),
- A representative from the Professional Review Committee,
- A Member or Fellow of the IMechE,
- An external representative from another professional engineering body.

The committee will meet within six weeks of the appeal being accepted. The organisation may send up to two representatives to present their case. The original accreditation panel may also be invited to provide context.

Following the meeting, the Appeals Committee will decide whether the case should be referred back to the PDSC for reconsideration. The PDSC will then review the appeal findings and either uphold or revise its original decision.

In rare cases, if the QMB Chair believes the PDSC has not adequately addressed the Appeals Committee's recommendations, the matter may be escalated to the full QMB for a final decision.

4.8.5 FINAL OUTCOME AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The organisation will be informed of the final outcome in writing within five working days of the decision. There is no further right of appeal within the IMechE. All parties involved in the process are expected to maintain strict confidentiality throughout.

4.9 Promoting Accredited Schemes

The IMechE offers organisations the opportunity to increase the visibility of their accredited MPDS. With consent, the Institution may:

- Display the scheme name, company name, and logo (hyperlinked) on the IMechE website.
- Feature the scheme in promotional activities and case studies.

This initiative is designed to celebrate best practice and strengthen engagement between industry and the engineering profession. Organisations interested in participating should contact the IPD team at ipd@imeche.org for further information.

5 DE REGISTRATION AND SCHEME ADMINISTRATION

***Note**: Scheme registration is covered in Section 4.2. This section focuses on individual DE registration and scheme operations.*

5.1 The Foundation of a Professional Journey

The registration process marks the formal beginning of a DE's journey through the MPDS. It is the point at which intention becomes commitment – where a graduate engineer steps into a structured, supported pathway toward professional registration.

But registration is not merely a formality. It is a carefully managed process that ensures each DE is appropriately prepared, supported, and aligned with the expectations of the IMechE. At the heart of this process is the SA, whose role is to orchestrate the many moving parts that make MPDS work.

5.2 The Role of the SA

The SA is the scheme's operational anchor. While mentors guide development and Scheme Owners provide strategic oversight, it is the SA who ensures that the scheme functions day to day. They are the first point of contact for new DEs, the guardian of scheme records, and the liaison between the organisation and the IMechE.

From the moment a DE is recruited, the SA is involved – checking membership status, verifying academic qualifications, assigning mentors, and ensuring that all documentation is complete and compliant. Their attention to detail and understanding of the MPDS framework are essential to the scheme's credibility and success.

5.3 Registering a DE

Before a DE can be registered on MPDS, they must first become a member of the Institution – typically as an Associate Member. In some cases, Affiliate or EngTech membership may be appropriate, and membership of another recognised PEI may also be accepted, subject to verification.

Once membership is confirmed, the DE completes the MPDS Registration Form. This form captures key information: academic background, employment details, mentor assignment, and any claims for previous experience. The SA reviews the form, checks that the mentor is professionally registered, and ensures that the scheme is accredited or registered with the IMechE. Once complete, the form should be sent to mpds@imeche.org.

Only when all conditions are met is the DE marked as 'active' on the MPDS system and granted access to the MPDS Tools. If any information is missing or unclear, the

registration is held until resolved. This careful gatekeeping ensures that every DE enters the scheme with the right support and structure in place.

5.4 Supporting Mentors and Maintaining Standards

Mentors are the cornerstone of MPDS, and the SA plays a key role in supporting them. This includes verifying their professional registration status, ensuring they are trained and recorded in the system, and monitoring their ongoing eligibility.

If a mentor's registration lapses, the SA must act swiftly suspending their access to MPDS Tools and advising affected DEs to find a new mentor. In larger schemes, the SA may also coordinate the use of DMs, ensuring that support remains consistent and accessible.

The SA is also responsible for maintaining accurate records of mentor training, ensuring that all mentors complete initial training and refresher sessions every three years. These records are essential for accreditation and demonstrate the organisation's commitment to quality mentoring.

5.5 Monitoring Progress and Reporting

One of the SA's most important responsibilities is to monitor the progress of DEs through the reporting process. This includes tracking the submission and approval of quarterly reports and annual assessments, following up on delays, and ensuring that reporting aligns with the DE's registration date and any approved previous experience.

The reporting schedule is structured but flexible. In Years 1 and 2, DEs are expected to submit three quarterly reports and one annual assessment. In Years 3 and 4, the requirement is reduced to one quarterly report (typically Q2) and one annual assessment, though additional reports are encouraged if new competences are being developed.

The SA ensures that reports are submitted on time, that mentors provide timely feedback, and that the overall reporting rhythm of the scheme is maintained. This consistency is not only essential for the DE's development – it is also a key indicator of scheme health during accreditation visits. *See Appendix 8.2.7 for the MPDS Administration Checklist.*

5.6 Managing Previous Experience

Many DEs enter MPDS with relevant experience gained through placements, internships, or prior employment. The scheme allows for this experience to be recognised up to 78 weeks for those pursuing CEng registration, and 52 weeks for those pursuing IEng registration. *See Appendix 8.2.2 for detailed guidance on previous experience claims.*

The SA plays a critical role in managing these claims. Working with the mentor, they ensure that claims are submitted at the point of registration, supported by evidence, and appropriately recorded in the DE's reporting calendar. Late claims are

only accepted in exceptional circumstances and must be submitted within six months of registration, provided no reports have yet been submitted.

This process ensures that DEs are not disadvantaged by their prior experience, while maintaining the integrity and structure of the scheme.

> *Reminder*
> *Claims for previous experience must be submitted at registration or within six months (if no reports have been submitted). Late claims require exceptional justification and must be supported by evidence.*

5.7 Suspension, Termination, and Transfers

Life is not always linear, and neither is professional development. DEs may need to pause their journey for a variety of reasons – parental leave, sabbaticals, career changes, or personal circumstances. The SA is responsible for managing these transitions with care and clarity.

Suspensions are recorded in the system, and the SA ensures that DEs are informed and supported. If a DE returns to an organisation with an active scheme, they may be reinstated. If the scheme has been cancelled, the DE must transfer to the Supported Registration Scheme (SRS).

In cases of prolonged suspension, non-compliance, or departure from the engineering profession, the DE may be formally terminated from MPDS. The SA may be asked to provide historical reports for review, ensuring that the DE's development record is preserved and accessible.

Transfers between organisations are also managed by the SA. Using the MPDS Transfer Form, the SA ensures that reporting continuity is maintained and that the DE's development is not disrupted. If the new employer is not accredited, the DE must transfer to SRS.

5.8 Completion and Professional Registration

The culmination of the MPDS journey is professional registration. Once a DE has completed their final annual assessment and achieved the required competence levels, they are encouraged to apply for registration within six months. Applications submitted after 18 months may require additional evidence or an extended final report.

The SA supports this transition by ensuring that all records are complete, accurate, and up to date. This includes confirming that:

- All reports and assessments have been submitted and approved
- Competence scores meet the requirements for registration

- Any outstanding issues have been resolved

The SA may also assist the DE in preparing their application, gathering supporting documents, and navigating the final steps of the process. Their support ensures that the DE's journey ends as it began – with structure, clarity, and confidence.

6 REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT

6.1 The Role of Reporting in MPDS

At the heart of the MPDS lies a robust and transparent reporting and assessment process. This process is designed not only to track the DE's progress but also to ensure that their development is aligned with the UK-SPEC. Reporting is not a bureaucratic exercise; it is a reflective and developmental tool that enables DEs to demonstrate their growing competence, receive feedback, and plan their next steps.

The reporting process is built around two core submission types: Quarterly Reports and Annual Assessments. These are supported by optional submissions – Plans and Evidence – which add depth and structure to the DE's development record. All submissions are made through the IMechE's Career Developer platform, which provides a secure and accessible environment for managing professional development.

6.2 Quarterly Reports

Quarterly Reports are the primary mechanism through which DEs document their development. Each report provides a concise summary (typically 200–500 words) of the DE's activities, learning outcomes, and progress against UK-SPEC competences during the quarter. Reports should be written in the first person and reflect on both achievements and challenges, including lessons learned from mistakes or setbacks. *See Appendix 8.2.3 for toolkit guidance on writing and submitting reports.*

The purpose of the Quarterly Report is twofold: to provide a record of development and to facilitate a structured conversation between the DE and their mentor. Reports must be submitted within two months of the end of the quarter and must be reviewed and approved by the mentor within that timeframe. Timely submission and review are essential, as they demonstrate that the DE is being actively monitored and supported.

> ☑ *Reminder*
> *Quarterly Reports must be submitted within 2 months of the end of each quarter. Mentors should review and approve them within the same timeframe to maintain scheme compliance.*

In Years 1 and 2 of the scheme, DEs are required to submit three Quarterly Reports per year (Q1, Q2, and Q3), followed by an Annual Assessment in Q4. In Years 3 and 4, the requirement is reduced to one mandatory Quarterly Report in Q2 and an Annual Assessment in Q4, although DEs are encouraged to continue submitting reports in Q1 and Q3 if they are actively developing new competences.

Top

MPDS REPORTING SCHEDULE BY YEAR AND QUARTER

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Annual Assessment
2	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Annual Assessment
3	Optional	Mandatory	Optional	Annual Assessment
4	Optional	Mandatory	Optional	Annual Assessment

6.3 Annual Assessments

The Annual Assessment is a comprehensive review of the DE's development over the course of the year. It includes a summary of activities, a self-evaluation by the DE, and a formal assessment by the mentor. The mentor scores the DE's performance against each of the five UK-SPEC competence areas, using a four-level scale:

- Level 1: Aware
- Level 2: Familiar
- Level 3: Skilled
- Level 4: Expert

To be considered ready for professional registration, a DE must typically achieve at least three competences at Level 3 and two at Level 2. These scores are not arbitrary; they reflect the mentor's professional judgement of the DE's ability to operate independently and effectively in a professional engineering context.

The Annual Assessment must be submitted and approved within two months of the end of the reporting year. It is a critical milestone in the DE's journey and is reviewed during accreditation visits to assess the health and effectiveness of the scheme.

6.4 Optional Submissions: Plans and Evidence

While not mandatory, Plans and Evidence submissions are strongly encouraged, particularly in the later stages of the scheme. These tools provide additional structure and clarity to the DE's development and can significantly enhance the quality of Quarterly Reports and Annual Assessments.

A Plan is a forward-looking document that outlines the DE's objectives for the upcoming quarter, including the competences they intend to develop. It helps the DE and mentor align expectations and focus development efforts. Plans are especially useful in Years 3 and 4, when development becomes more targeted and strategic.

Evidence submissions allow DEs to upload supporting documentation – such as project reports, presentations, or training certificates – that demonstrate their competence. Each piece of evidence is linked to specific UK-SPEC competences and can be referenced in Quarterly Reports and Annual Assessments. DEs may submit up to eight pieces of evidence per quarter.

It is important to note that sensitive or confidential information should not be uploaded. Instead, DEs should provide summaries or anonymised versions of documents, or indicate where the original can be found within the company.

> *Reminder*
> *Plans and Evidence submissions are optional but highly recommended. They help structure development and strengthen the DE's case for registration.*

6.5 Mentor Review and Feedback

Mentors play a central role in the reporting and assessment process. They are responsible for reviewing all submissions, providing constructive feedback, and scoring competences. Feedback should be timely, specific, and developmental, helping the DE understand their strengths and areas for improvement.

Mentors must also ensure that their own training is up to date and that they are familiar with the UK-SPEC framework and the MPDS Tools. Their comments and scores support the DE in preparing their submission and demonstrating competence.

6.6 Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The reporting and assessment process is subject to regular monitoring by the SA and IMechE. During accreditation and reaccreditation visits, assessors will review a sample of DE records to evaluate the quality and timeliness of submissions, the consistency of mentor feedback, and the overall effectiveness of the scheme.

Schemes that demonstrate strong reporting practices – characterised by timely submissions, thoughtful reflections, and meaningful feedback – are more likely to receive full accreditation and fewer conditions. Conversely, schemes with poor reporting compliance may be subject to additional scrutiny or monitoring visits.

7 GOOD PRACTICE

7.1 Purpose of Sharing Good Practice

The MPDS is intentionally flexible, enabling organisations to tailor its implementation to their unique structure, culture, and engineering disciplines. Within this flexibility lies a powerful opportunity: to learn from others. Sharing good practice is a cornerstone of continuous improvement and a vital part of the MPDS community. It enables organisations to benchmark their schemes, adopt innovative approaches, and ensure that DEs receive the best possible support.

Accrediting bodies regularly collect and share examples of commendable practices observed during scheme reviews. These examples span a wide range of themes – from mentoring and reporting to scheme structure, outreach, and cultural engagement – and serve as inspiration for both new and established schemes.

7.2 Themes in Good Practice

Across a wide range of accredited schemes, several recurring themes have emerged that illustrate what "good" looks like in MPDS delivery:

7.2.1 MENTORING EXCELLENCE

- Many schemes ensure mentors are not line managers, preserving objectivity and fostering trust.
- Mentor forums are used to calibrate scoring, share feedback strategies, and support peer learning.
- Recognition of mentoring contributions – such as 'thank you' letters or inclusion in performance reviews – helps reinforce the value of the role.

7.2.2 STRUCTURED DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

- Some organisations require DEs to prepare detailed placement plans and concise summaries of expected learning outcomes.
- DE representation on Steering Committees is a growing trend, giving DEs a voice in scheme governance.
- Study groups and formal mentor meetings are used to support structured development and peer collaboration.

7.2.3 REPORTING AND COMPETENCE TRACKING

- Tools such as KPI spreadsheets and custom tracking charts are used to monitor the timeliness and quality of DE reports.
- Some schemes map internal competencies to UK-SPEC, helping DEs identify development opportunities and align their progress with professional standards.

7.2.4 OUTREACH AND STEM ENGAGEMENT

- STEM outreach is widely encouraged, with DEs often participating in school visits, community events, and ambassadorial roles.
- Some schemes set minimum expectations for STEM engagement and provide CPD budgets to support participation.
- Community involvement is integrated into the DE experience, promoting broader professional development.

7.2.5 RECOGNITION AND CELEBRATION

- Ceremonies, celebratory events, and public acknowledgements are used to mark professional registration milestones.
- Financial incentives and internal communications are employed to recognise DE and mentor achievements.

7.2.6 SCHEME MANAGEMENT AND CULTURE

- Many schemes embed MPDS into strategic planning and performance frameworks, ensuring alignment with organisational goals.
- Dashboards and digital tools are used to manage placements and track development opportunities.
- Forums and committees empower DEs to shape their development environment and contribute to continuous improvement.

> *Tip*
> *During accreditation visits, panels often ask how your scheme reflects sector-wide good practice. Be ready to share examples of mentoring forums, DE involvement in governance, or STEM outreach.*

7.2.7 VISABILITY

- With consent, the IMechE may showcase accredited schemes through its website and promotional activities, helping to raise awareness and share success stories.

  For more information, please contact ipd@imeche.org .

7.3 Why Good Practice Matters

Good practice is not just about innovation – it's about impact. Schemes that adopt and adapt proven approaches tend to see:

- Higher DE engagement and retention
- Improved reporting quality and timeliness
- Greater mentor satisfaction and consistency

- Stronger alignment with UK-SPEC
- More successful professional registration outcomes

By learning from others, schemes can avoid common pitfalls, accelerate maturity, and foster a culture of excellence in professional development.

7.4 How to Use These Examples

Organisations are encouraged to reflect on the examples listed above and consider:

- Which practices could be adopted or adapted?
- What gaps exist in your current scheme?
- How can DEs and mentors be involved in shaping improvements?

During accreditation visits, panels may ask how your scheme reflects or responds to sector-wide good practice. Demonstrating awareness and action in this area is a positive indicator of scheme health and commitment.

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Purpose of the Appendices

The appendices serve as a practical toolkit for all stakeholders involved in the MPDS. They provide templates, checklists, reference materials, and exemplar documents that support the implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement of MPDS schemes. These resources are designed to complement the guidance provided in the main body of this document and to offer hands-on support for day-to-day scheme management.

Whether you are a SA setting up a new scheme, a mentor reviewing a DE's progress, or a DE preparing for professional registration, the appendices offer structured tools to help you succeed.

8.2 Contents of the Appendices

The following appendices are recommended for inclusion in any MPDS Scheme Handbook or internal documentation. They may be adapted to suit the specific needs of your organisation, but the core principles should remain consistent with IMechE expectations.

8.2.1 EXEMPLAR SCHEME HANDBOOK

A model document that outlines the structure, roles, responsibilities, and processes of a well-run MPDS. It includes guidance on induction, placements, mentoring, reporting, and scheme governance. This can be used as a template or benchmark for developing your own scheme documentation.

8.2.2 PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE CLAIM GUIDELINES

Detailed guidance for mentors and DEs on how to assess and approve claims for previous experience. This includes criteria for eligibility, evidence requirements, and the impact on reporting timelines. It ensures consistency and fairness in recognising prior learning.

8.2.3 MPDS TOOLKIT FOR DES AND MENTORS

A summary of the official IMechE toolkits, which provide step-by-step instructions for using MPDS Tools. These toolkits cover registration, reporting, scoring, and submission processes, and are essential reading for all new DEs and mentors.

8.2.4 COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT TEMPLATE

A matrix that maps UK-SPEC competences against typical work activities. It helps DEs and mentors plan development, identify gaps, and track progress. This tool is particularly useful during placement planning and quarterly reviews.

8.2.5 EXAMPLE STEERING COMMITTEE AGENDA

A sample agenda for quarterly or annual Steering Committee meetings. It includes suggested discussion points such as DE progress, mentor training, scheme KPIs, and feedback from accreditation visits. This promotes structured governance and accountability.

8.2.6 SA ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A detailed description of the SA's duties, including registration, reporting oversight, mentor pairing, and visit coordination.

8.2.7 MPDS ADMINISTRATION CHECKLIST

A practical checklist for SAs to ensure that all key tasks are completed on time. This includes DE registration, mentor assignment, report tracking, and preparation for accreditation visits. It supports compliance and reduces the risk of oversight.

8.3 Using the Appendices

These appendices are intended to be living documents. Organisations are encouraged to:

- Review and update them annually
- Tailor them to reflect internal processes and terminology
- Share them with all stakeholders during induction and training
- Use them as evidence of good practice during accreditation visits

Where possible, appendices should be integrated into the company's quality management system (e.g. ISO 9001) to ensure consistency and traceability.

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9 CONTACT INFORMATION

For support with MPDS, please use the following contact points depending on the nature of your enquiry:

ACCREDITATION

For MPDS Accreditation and Scheme Registration (including new applications, reaccreditation, and visit coordination):

Email: ipd@imeche.org

Phone: +44 (0)20 7304 6855

Web: www.imeche.org/mpdschemes

MPDS ADMINISTRATION

For General MPDS Administration Support (including DE registration, reporting issues, and Career Developer queries):

Email: mpds@imeche.org

Phone: +44 (0)20 7304 6969

Web: www.imeche.org/mpds

10 GLOSSARY

10.1 Terms

This glossary provides definitions and explanations of key terms used throughout this MPDS handbook. It is intended to support clarity and consistency for all stakeholders, including DEs, mentors, SAs, and accreditation assessors.

ACCREDITATION

The formal recognition by the IMechE that a company's MPDS meets the standards required to support DEs in achieving professional registration. Accreditation is typically granted for three years and is subject to periodic review.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

A compulsory submission completed by the DE and reviewed by the mentor at the end of each reporting year. It includes a summary of development activities, a self-evaluation, and competence scoring against UK-SPEC.

CAREER DEVELOPER

IMechE's online platform for managing professional development. It is used by DEs to submit reports and assessments, and by mentors and SAs to review progress and maintain records.

CHARTERED ENGINEER (CENG)

A professional registration status awarded by the Engineering Council to engineers who demonstrate advanced competence and commitment. Typically achieved after four years on MPDS.

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT TEMPLATE

A matrix that maps UK-SPEC competences against typical work activities. Used by DEs and mentors to plan development, identify gaps, and track progress.

DELEGATE MENTOR (DM)

An individual who supports the DE and their registered mentor, particularly when regular contact is difficult. DMs are not required to be professionally registered but must understand UK-SPEC. They cannot approve submissions.

DEVELOPING ENGINEER (DE)

A graduate engineer enrolled on MPDS and working toward professional registration. DEs are responsible for their own development and for submitting regular reports and assessments.

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ENGINEERING COUNCIL

The UK regulatory body for the engineering profession. It sets the standards for professional registration through UK-SPEC.

INCORPORATED ENGINGEER (IENG)

A professional registration status awarded by the Engineering Council to engineers who demonstrate competence in maintaining and managing applications of current and developing technology. Typically achieved after three years on MPDS.

MENTOR

A professionally registered engineer (CEng or IEng) who guides the DE through MPDS. Mentors provide feedback, assess competence, and support the DE's progression toward registration.

MONITORED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (MPDS)

IMechE's structured framework for supporting graduate engineers in achieving professional registration. It includes mentoring, structured development, and competence-based assessment.

MPDS TOOLS

The suite of online tools within Career Developer used to manage MPDS submissions, reviews, and records.

PLAN

An optional submission outlining the DE's objectives and intended competences for a given quarter. Plans help structure development and align expectations between DEs and mentors.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW INTERVIEW (PRI)

The final stage of the professional registration process. DEs present their development record and demonstrate competence to a panel of assessors.

QUARTERLY REPORT

A compulsory submission completed by the DE every quarter (except Q4, which is covered by the Annual Assessment). It summarises development activities and progress against UK-SPEC. In years 3 and 4, submissions for Q1 and Q3 are optional, though encouraged where there is meaningful progress to report.

REACCREDITATION

The process by which an existing MPDS scheme is reviewed and renewed. Typically occurs every three years and may be conducted virtually or in person.

SCHEME ADMINISTRATOR (SA)

The individual responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of MPDS within a company. Duties include registration, reporting oversight, mentor pairing, and coordination of accreditation visits.

STEERING COMMITTEE

A governance body that oversees the MPDS scheme within an organisation. It typically includes the SO, SA, mentors, and representatives from HR and line management.

UK STANDARD FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING COMPETENCE AND COMMITMENT (UK-SPEC)

The framework developed by the Engineering Council that defines the competences required for professional registration as CEng or IEng.

10.2 Acronyms

CEng: Chartered Engineer

DE: Developing Engineer

DM: Delegate Mentor

IEng: Incorporated Engineer

ILO: Industry Liaison Officer

MPDS: Monitored Professional Development Scheme

PEI: Professional Engineering Institution

PDSC: Professional Development Standards Committee

PRI: Professional Review Interview

SA: Scheme Administrator

UK-SPEC: UK Standard for Professional Engineering Competence

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 /imecheglobal

 /institution-of-mechanical-engineers

Institution of Mechanical Engineers
1 Birdcage Walk
Westminster
London SW1H 9JJ

+ 44 (0)20 7222 7899
enquiries@imeche.org
imeche.org