

# Professional Membership of OCCA

*Dr. Laura Merritt*

Recognition of your experience, talents and skills can be problematic as you advance through your career. There is no greater accolade than your peers recommending you for professional membership. Through membership of OCCA, many of our members have achieved a professional accreditation that is widely accepted by the coatings and chemical industries, and other academic bodies.

With this in mind, I interviewed Jim Bury and David Clayton about OCCA's professional memberships and the issues of eligibility, the different professional levels and who decides which membership is most suitable. Jim is a past OCCA President, current OCCA Council member and retired Group Leader R&D at Crown Paints. David is a past OCCA Vice President, past OCCA Council member and retired Technical & Quality Manager at Crown Paints. David is Chairman of the Awards & Registration Committee, supported by Brenda Peters (secretary), Prof. Long Lin and Prof. Jim Guthrie.

## Where do I start?

This depends on whether you are a student or apprentice or working in industry. Students and Apprentices can join with a reduced fee and after attending two OCCA events can claim the membership fee back. If you are in industry, whether in a commercial or a technical role, you will automatically become an ordinary member and then can apply to progress to a Professional membership.

## Do you need to be a Chemist?

You do not have to be a chemist or Technician, our membership includes all disciplines including Sales, Marketing, Quality Control, Regulatory, Production and Consultants. You are not required to have a Degree or Technical qualification; however, you need to show that you are actively involved in a relevant industry. Attendance at OCCA webinars and seminars raises your profile and illustrates your interest in developing your skills and knowledge.

## Applying for Professional Grade Membership

Many years ago, applicants were interviewed by the Membership Committee, but today applicants only need to complete a form supplied by our Admin Team: [admin@occa.org.uk](mailto:admin@occa.org.uk)

The professional membership form is straightforward and quick to complete and will require a basic explanation of your relevant industry experience plus submissions from sponsors. If you have any problems with the form, it is best to contact the Admin Team and they can direct the enquiry to the appropriate person. The completed form is forwarded on to the Awards & Registration Committee, who review all the applications for professional membership.

## OCCA Awards & Registration Committee

The committee discusses all the applications, supporting information and sponsors. They typically take 2-4 weeks to approve an application and award the appropriate professional grade. They will assist members to progress through the professional grades as they advance through their career. The Professional Grades are not dependent on education qualifications or job title but reflect industry experience. For example, a 'Paint Technician' with no tertiary education can reach the most senior professional grade, passing from the junior grades over a few years.

## Who can sponsor my application?

A sponsor will ideally be an OCCA member but can be a senior colleague. They should know you personally, through working together or engaging with you in the course of your work, for example in a commercial function. Attending the same OCCA events is also helpful. For our international members, the committee will review your application with supporting evidence, if you are not in close contact with other OCCA members.

## I don't know any OCCA Professional Grade Members

The Registration & Awards Committee or OCCA Council can recommend sponsors for you or alternatively ask for additional evidence to support your application.

## I am currently in Technical Sales and would like to obtain professional membership

The committee would review your attendance of technical events and your contribution to OCCA and the industry. Most commercial people are required to have a good technical background to be effective and evidence of this knowledge via industry contacts would be essential.

## Do I have to attend OCCA events?

We would always encourage you to attend one or two events each year. As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, OCCA have moved all its events online, including weekly webinars, AGM and social events. This has made our events more accessible to not just UK-based members, but also our international members. Our future plans include organising international online events to engage and get to know our International members.

## Will my application be rejected?

The committee will ensure that the individual has reached a certain standard and has worked in a relevant industry for a certain number of years. They will decide on which professional grade best represents their experience and award accordingly. Historically only a few applicants have been asked to supply additional information and re-submit an application.

### What happens if I am no longer a member of OCCA?

Your professional membership can no longer be validated and you will lose your listing on the professional register, the right to use the professional grade and the use of letters after your name. However, by renewing your membership of OCCA you will regain your right to use the professional grade.

### Why do the professional memberships cost more?

The professional membership register requires additional administration in terms of keeping the list current and registering the member list with other bodies, such as the Science Council and Royal Society of Chemistry, who ensure standardisation across similar disciplines.

### What are the benefits of becoming a professional member?

Professional memberships are awarded by industry peers in recognition of an individual's experience and contribution to industry. Professional Membership is recognised widely not just in the coatings industry, but also the allied industries and academic bodies, such as The Royal Society of Chemistry. For career progression, it can replace or support traditional academic qualifications. Each professional membership is regularly reviewed, and progression can readily be achieved. Most importantly, you can add letters after your name and join an elite register of industry professionals.

For information and assistance with professional membership, please contact Ann-Marie Etherington at [admin@occa.org.uk](mailto:admin@occa.org.uk).

## Summary of OCCA Membership Grades

<i>Student Membership</i>	Designed for those in the early stages of their career and in the process of obtaining academic or vocational training, e.g. apprentices, young chemists.
<i>Ordinary Membership</i>	Entry-level membership for those not qualifying for Student or Professional membership status. It is a stepping-stone for progression to higher levels.
<i>Professional Membership</i>	3 levels of Professional Grade membership
<i>LTSC</i> <i>Licentiate of the Technology</i> <i>of Surface Coatings</i>	Experience: 3 years in industry Sponsors: 2 Associates (ATSCs)
<i>ATSC</i> <i>Associate of the Technology</i> <i>of Surface Coatings</i>	Experience: 7 years in industry Sponsors: 1 Associate (ATSC), 1 Fellow (FTSC)
<i>FTSC</i> <i>Fellow of the Technology</i> <i>of Surface Coatings</i>	Qualification: Significant contribution to industry, education & OCCA Sponsors: 3 Fellows (FTSCs)



### Join OCCA now

To become a member, email  
[admin@occa.org.uk](mailto:admin@occa.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/occaorg/](https://www.facebook.com/occaorg/)

[www.linkedin.com/groups/2493100](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2493100)

[www.twitter.com/occa\\_news](https://www.twitter.com/occa_news)

[www.occa.org.uk](http://www.occa.org.uk)

## The Oil and Colour Chemists' Association

Membership of OCCA – the coatings industries' international members organisation and educational charity – offers the following benefits:

- Opportunities to attend technical meetings, seminars, exhibitions, conferences and symposia
- Internationally recognised professional accreditation
- A subscription to Surface Coatings International (SCI) which contains technical articles, news and updates
- Advertising in SCI at competitive and attractive rates
- Social events for networking

# Continuing Professional Development

Brenda Peters

## So, what is Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?

Put simply, CPD is the way people continue to learn and develop throughout their careers, so they keep their skills and knowledge up to date and can continue to work safely, legally and effectively. All of OCCA's activities can be used for CPD, whether it is attending conferences or symposia, reading SCI, mentoring, joining committees or, in the current climate, participating in webinars.

## Why is CPD important?

To maintain a high level of competence, any true professional must keep up to date with the latest developments in their field in order to remain competitive and employable.

You may have had to undertake CPD as part of your membership of another professional body, or by your employer, or another organisation. You may not have had to undertake CPD by any individual or organisation, but you may have been undertaking it anyway as part of your professional development.

## What is OCCA's approach to CPD?

OCCA's approach to CPD is based on Science Council and Engineering Council guidelines, it is not prescriptive about the number of hours of activity needed to maintain an individual's competence. CPD is not about how much time you spend doing something or sitting in a lecture room, it is about how much value you capture and take from what you do, and the lessons you learn as a result. CPD is about setting yourself objectives and monitoring your progress against them. Most activities both within and outside the workplace are relevant to your professional development and learning. It is for you to extract and use the experiences to further yourself and your profession. The main thing is to undertake reflective analysis of what you have done. Reflection allows you to take responsibility for your personal growth and helps you identify the benefits of a particular activity. Reflection should be a normal part of your working life. Those who regularly plan, do, record and reflect on their learning tend to be better at identifying opportunities for personal development.

Having a record of your CPD activities can contribute to Professional Membership from Licentiate, through Associate to Fellow.

## How can OCCA help with CPD?

OCCA are currently running weekly webinars that are free for members to attend: a certificate of attendance is available on request. Normally there are regional meetings, symposia and conferences; however, in the current climate, there are plans to hold these virtually. The Surfex exhibition has been postponed to 2021, so a virtual exhibition will be held in October, with all the lectures and talks broadcast as webinars. Reading SCI, writing articles and giving lectures are all classed as CPD. Volunteering to join regional section committees or the Council, and mentoring other members also count towards CPD.

Brenda Peters is a CPD assessor for the Science Council, which requires all registrants to revalidate their CPD annually. Registered Science Technicians, Registered Scientists and Chartered Scientists must maintain a continuous, up-to-date and accurate record of their CPD activities. CPD activities are a mixture of learning activities relevant to current or future practice. These include:

- work-based learning (e.g. supervising staff or students, reflective practice)
- professional activity (e.g. involvement in a professional body, mentoring)
- formal/educational activities (e.g. writing articles/papers, further education)
- self-directed learning (e.g. reading journals, reviewing books/articles)
- voluntary work, public service, etc.

Most importantly you must reflect on how you believe that your CPD activities have improved the quality of your work, or, if this has not been the case, you must consider why this has happened, and what you will do next to make sure your CPD will improve the quality of your work in the future. You also need to reflect on how your CPD benefits the users of your services (whether as an employee, customer, student, etc), either directly or indirectly.

As we go through life, we are learning all the time: reflecting on what we have learned is all part of Continuing Professional Development.

*As an assessor for the Science Council, Brenda will be happy to offer mentoring or answer any queries for members wishing to undertake CPD within OCCA (contact via [membership@occa.org.uk](mailto:membership@occa.org.uk)).*

## OCCA Weekly Webinars

Our hugely popular Summer Series, comprising 15 webinars, ran from May through to the end of August. The webinars were offered free of charge for members, Corporate Sponsors and students from our recognised Educational Partners. Non-members were also offered the unique chance to participate in these sessions. All sessions were recorded and are now available for download via our Members' Area of the website, together with pdf copies of many of the presentations.

We are already in the planning phase for a 'Spotlight on our Educational Partners' event, which will run for 4 weeks in September, followed by Series 2 of our Weekly Webinars – our Autumn Series – which will run for 10 weeks from Weds 7th October – Weds 9th December. Full details of the Autumn Series will be announced via our website and social media platforms in due course.

# Science Council Update

Laura Merritt

Over the last few months, OCCA has been attending Science Council meetings (via Zoom) for discussions on Membership, Marketing and Event Management. Soon to be added to this portfolio will be Apprenticeships, which OCCA already actively support and promote.

## Professional Registration of Technicians & Scientists

We have been engaging directly with the Science Council about becoming a Licensed Body to support our members in the process of becoming a Registered Technician (RSciTech), Registered Scientist (RSci) or Chartered Scientist (CSci). These qualifications are recognised across all scientific disciplines and ensure the exacting standards required by the global community of professional scientists.

OCCA would need to apply and become approved to hold a license. In addition to being accepted by the licensing body, there is an annual fee required and we would need at least two OCCA members to be trained as assessors.

As a Licensed member of the Science Council, OCCA could raise and reinforce the standards of professionalism, the depth and breadth of knowledge within our sector of science and bring wider awareness of the paints and coatings industries.

The science council are currently running free virtual workshops about the professional register including a general introduction, how to successfully apply and sessions focused on specific competencies and application tips.

**Free Science Council Workshops:** [sciencecouncil.org/science-council-digital-workshops-return](https://sciencecouncil.org/science-council-digital-workshops-return)

The proposal to join as a Licensed Body will be discussed at the next full OCCA Council meeting and the outcome will be reported later in the year.

## Event Management - Science Council tips for Zoom

Event management in the virtual world has become the focus not just of OCCA, but also other organisations and associations. With OCCA's AGM fast approaching, it is worth considering the Science Council's top tips for holding a successful zoom meeting or event.

- Use a wired internet connection if possible. If using wireless internet, we recommend you position yourself close to your router and place your router on a table or chair rather than the floor.
- Please ask those that you live with to refrain from downloading or streaming content during the event.
- Switch WiFi off on devices you are not using for the event, such as tablets and smartphones.
- Some electrical devices, including those which work wirelessly, can affect your connection. Ensure that such devices are away from your router. These could include halogen lamps, dimmer switches, stereos and computer speakers and baby monitors. Electrical devices, such as TVs, computer monitors and microwave ovens, can also affect your WiFi if they are too close to your router.
- If you are experiencing any difficulties while taking part in the discussion, try turning off your camera, as using just your microphone will use less bandwidth. We recommend adding a profile photo to your account in the event.
- If you are taking part in the discussion, we recommend using a headset for the best quality sound.

## Showcasing Science

The Science Council has launched a 'Showcasing Science' campaign, which aims to showcase the work of scientists during the pandemic.

OCCA has already reported the activities of our industry, our members and the organisation of virtual OCCA events during the global pandemic in the May/June issue of SCI. We will submit these articles to the Science Council to promote awareness of the paints and coatings industry's contributions to the Covid-19 effort.



## About the Science Council

Over the last few years, the Science Council has established itself as a leading voice for the professional practice of science, independent of discipline. The Science Council is a membership organisation for professional bodies and learned societies across science, bringing together a range of disciplines and sectors to reflect the multi-disciplinary practice of science in today's society.

The Science Council provides a voice on policy and ethical issues affecting the science community, fostering debate and the exchange of ideas across the network, supporting member organisations to be more effective in meeting the needs of the science community and attracting the next generation into fulfilling science careers.

