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# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

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POLICY & GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MEMBERS

Approved by the Institute's Council June 2025



**IRISH PLANNING  
INSTITUTE**

Institiúid Pleanála Na hÉireann



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## **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)**

### **CPD Policy & Guidance Note for Members**

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# 1. Introduction

The Irish Planning Institute's mission is to advance spatial planning, as grounded within contemporary Irish planning and development legislation, in the interest of the common good by serving, improving and promoting the planning profession.

The Institute promotes and fosters ethical professional practice standards by its members and plays a leading role in spatial policy development.

The Institute represents a highly skilled profession, and capacity building is required to continue to grow the knowledge and skill set of planners. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is held to be one way of adding value to the profession and for promoting career-long learning and maintaining professional competence.

The purpose of this guidance note is to:

1. Outline the need for Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
2. Set out the policy of the Irish Planning Institute on CPD.
3. Clearly set out the members' requirements with regard to CPD.
4. Provide supporting guidance and advice on meeting the CPD obligations and demonstrating compliance.
5. Explain how CPD is monitored.
6. Explain the consequences of non-compliance.

## **1.1 THE ROLE OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an important part of delivering best practice in the planning profession in Ireland and ensuring that the profession and its members are appropriately equipped for the future. CPD should form a core activity of all planners.

The Irish Planning Institute, in common with almost all other professional planning associations require its members to undertake CPD. The purpose of CPD is to ensure that the Irish Planning Institute as a professional organisation can guarantee that its members are kept up to date and trained in ongoing developments in the planning field, assisting members in maintaining and enhancing their skills and knowledge to benefit their careers, clients, employers and the profession itself.

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In order to support individual planners in maintaining and developing their expertise, the IPI is committed to promoting opportunities for and validation of CPD of their individual members. This is both in the interests of the individual member themselves and in the interest of maintaining the confidence of the public in the profession.

The IPI recognises the support (both financial and facilitating training leave) in the area of the continuous professional development of planners in Ireland provided by the private and public sectors. IPI members who are employers or managers are encouraged to support their staff in meeting their CPD requirements. Investment in CPD and staff development is good management practice and part of an organisation's long-term investment in its future. Employers and managers are encouraged to frame their budgets and work programmes to support their employees' participation in a range of CPD activities. Access to CPD can also play a significant role in staff motivation, retention and enhancement of the quality of planning service provided by the organisation. This will be recognised by an Institute recognised employer scheme.

## **1.2 THE BASIS FOR CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The basis for Continuing Professional Development is the Institute's Constitution as agreed at the AGM in December 2024 which includes the main object of the IPI as being '*To advance the art and science of urban, rural, regional and marine planning in Ireland for the benefit of the community*'. A number of subsidiary objects which are incidental and ancillary to the attainment of the above are identified in Article 4 which includes at c):

*"To encourage and contribute to the development of planning education in Ireland with special emphasis on the provision of ongoing CPD/ professional development planning education and on the organisation of relevant discussion and lectures."*

The Constitution or Bye-Laws under it may also set specific requirements for members/potential members to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) as a condition of attaining or retaining membership.

The significance that the Institute places on CPD is reflected in a number of important documents that govern the operation of the Institute, in particular:

1. The Institute's Statement of Strategic Priorities 2023-2027, which demonstrates the Institute's commitment to sustainability in Education and Professional Development through promoting and delivering sustainability-, biodiversity- and climate-focused learning in revised education guidelines and CPD policy.

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2. The Institute’s Education Guidelines 2025 identifies that CPD is a core activity of all planners, promoting career-long learning and maintaining professional competence. The Guidelines also state that an important element of the Institute’s role is to encourage members to maintain and develop their expertise (knowledge and skills) throughout their careers. The Institute is committed to promoting opportunities for and validation of CPD of their individual members. This is both in the interests of the individual member themselves and in the interest of maintaining the confidence of the public in the profession. As such, an essential part of CPD is to keep up-to-date the core competencies acquired in their initial education, whilst also ensuring the development of personal skills as an important part of CPD.
  3. The Institute’s Bye-Law Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct Obligation 2.13 states, “All members shall take reasonable steps to maintain their professional competence throughout their working lives and shall engage and encourage other members to engage with the Institute’s Continuing Professional Development programmes.”

### **1.3 DEFINITION OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

For the purposes of the Irish Planning Institute, Continuing Professional Development is defined as

***“the ongoing maintenance, improvement and development of the knowledge, skills, values and personal qualities required in professional life. “***

***IPI Education Guidelines 2025***

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## 2. Requirements of the Continuing Professional Development Policy

The Institute's CPD policy applies to all existing IPI members on a 1-year cycle (1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December of the calendar year) basis.

The successful operation of the CPD policy relies on members assessing for themselves the credits to be attributed to each CPD activity. Guidance on the credit for each type of CPD activity is given in Section 2.1 below.

The Institute's requirements for CPD may also be relevant to prospective members if required in the Institute's Constitution and/or Bye-Laws.

### ***2.1 KEY REQUIREMENTS OF THE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR MEMBERS***

Each individual member is personally responsible for maintaining and updating their professional competence. The IPI's Constitution and/or Bye-Laws may specify the minimum annual CPD that must be undertaken by a planner to maintain membership of the IPI.

The key requirements of the Institute's CPD policy are as follows:

1. Members are required to accrue the relevant number of CPD credits as specified in the Constitution and/or Bye-Laws and provide evidence of compliance. It is worth noting that undertaking CPD does not necessarily require attending paid courses and that there are many ways in which to undertake CPD.
2. There are 4 categories of activity that the Institute recognise as qualifying for CPD.
  - a. **Category 1:** Learning events, training, fieldtrips, seminars, conferences, workshops, and courses to develop knowledge, skills and values.
  - b. **Category 2:** Contributions to the Profession.
  - c. **Category 3:** Self-directed Learning.
  - d. **Category 4:** Non-planning related courses to develop knowledge, skills and values.
3. Each cycle a minimum of 5 credits must come from activities in Categories 1 or 2 set out in detail in Section 4 below.

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4. Members can accrue credits for CPD events and training they attend, events that they deliver and CPD activities that they participate in alone. These do not have to be IPI events and can be internal training, self-directed learning etc. Certain events or activities may carry a greater weighting, as per the suggested credits for some activities set out below.
  5. Each individual member is responsible for recording their CPD credits on a provided logbook template; this requires noting learning outcomes from the activity to demonstrate subsequent learning. Members should retain documentation showing proof of compliance.
  6. The Institute may approve external CPD events.
  7. The Institute acts as the monitor for members' CPD activities. The IPI audits CPD credits to ensure members are meeting their professional development obligations. The IPI can conduct random audits each year, reviewing members' CPD records and potentially requesting further evidence like event confirmation or attendance records. Failure to comply with CPD requirements can have consequences.

### **3. Activities & Undertakings Qualifying as Continuing Professional Development**

The Institute will build on its provision of CPD opportunities to members, both centrally and through the branches. While members are encouraged to support the IPI's national and branch events that are tailored to meet members' needs, the Institute recognises that CPD is more than training courses and seminars and can come from a wide variety of activities. The Institute will conduct regular reviews and assessments to ensure its offering reflects the needs of members.

CPD includes a wide range of learning activities related to enhancing member's professional knowledge and skills. Most CPD activities attract 1 credit per hour of learning.

For any activity undertaken by a member in fulfilment of their CPD requirement, the particular event/programme of study must come within one of the subject areas set out in the 8 Core Competences set out in Appendix A (attached).

While credits are accumulated for attendance at an activity, the subsequent learning must be explained via the CPD logbook. The onus is on the participating member to judge whether the activity has improved their competence as a professional planner, however CPD activities must generally be:

1. Of significant intellectual or practical content dealing primarily with planning related matters; or

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2. Relevant to a practitioner's immediate or long term requirements in relation to the practitioner's professional development; and
  3. Conducted by professionals or bodies that have qualifications and experience deemed relevant to either directly or indirectly to one of the subjects of the 8 Core Competencies in Appendix A.

For those elected to Corporate Membership 'mid cycle' the CPD requirement will be determined pro rata from the date of their election to 31<sup>st</sup> December of that year.

**Please note that where the activity is considered an integral part of one's work, and there was no learning outcome, that activity cannot be counted as CPD. Work activities can/should only be counted for CPD purposes, if it can be justified that they were non-routine and contributed to your knowledge, experience and development as a planning professional.**

## 4. Calculating CPD Credits

As outlined in Section 2 above the Institute recognises that activities qualifying for CPD generally fall into four main categories:

**Category 1:** Learning events, training, fieldtrips, seminars, conferences, workshops, and courses to develop knowledge, skills and values.

**Category 2:** Contribution to the Profession.

**Category 3:** Self-directed Learning.

**Category 4:** Non-planning related courses to develop knowledge, skills and values.

### ***Category 1: Courses, Education and Training to develop knowledge, skills and values.***

This category of activity should lead to members developing their planning related knowledge, skills and values that involve the identifiable development of new approaches, applications, values or techniques of direct application to planning.

#### **(a) Learning events, fieldtrips, seminars, conferences, workshops.**

The following credits apply to learning events (including professional conferences, seminars, workshops, study tours, field trips)

One day's attendance at IPI or IPI approved (or equivalent) learning events	Up to <b>7</b>
One day's attendance at non IPI or non IPI approved (or equivalent) learning events	Up to <b>5</b>

Half day's attendance at IPI approved (or equivalent) learning events	Up to <b>4</b>
Half day's attendance at non IPI or non IPI approved (or equivalent) learning events	Up to <b>3</b>

In the case of IPI organised or approved events, the organiser will specify the number of CPD credits available, subject to the maximum set out above.

## **(b) Education and training formal courses organised by a recognised planning school and Others <sup>1</sup>.**

There is recognition of the role that can be played by education providers within the CPD process. This can range from the provision of single one-off lectures or events of interest to the profession, to much more significant provision of training opportunities, including specific modules, diplomas, or further degrees. Such CPD activity may relate to specific topics in which the educational institute has an expertise or may gather together wider thinking on an emerging area of interest.

Third level module (5 ECTS <sup>2</sup> credits) full time or part time, at an IPI accredited planning school in any CPD cycle (one hour of contact teaching time in a recognised planning module as equivalent to one hour of IPI CPD credit)	<b>24</b> IPI credits
Third level module (5 credit ECTS), full time or part time, in another relevant subject in any CPD cycle.	Up to <b>15</b> IPI credits

Where the delivery of a third level programme of study is divided between two calendar years, only a maximum of 7.5 credits of the total 15 maximum credits, may be claimed within one calendar year per academic year.

For members taking more than one module, IPI CPD credits can be claimed for third level education up to a maximum of **100** IPI CPD credits/hours in any CPD year.

**Note: Third level education alone cannot meet full CPD requirements since a minimum of 5 CPD credits / hours must be obtained from category 1(a) or Category 2 in any CPD year.**

## ***Category 2: Contribution to the Profession.***

This category of activity includes:

<sup>1</sup> Recognised planning school: A department, school or unit within a university or HEI that provides a programme (or programmes) in planning accredited by the Irish Planning Institute

<sup>2</sup> ECTS – European Credit Transfer System

1. Research and analysis to investigate new areas of professional interest or planning concern requiring preparation of a paper or report;
2. Membership of a committee and/or other services aimed at developing the planning profession;
3. Preparation of submissions on legislation etc., where this is not an integral part of the Members' work, including on behalf of the IPI;
4. Presenting lectures and papers, CPD workshops, conference presentations;
5. Guest lectures and/or presentations to educational courses relating to the planning profession;
6. Publishing articles and papers;
7. Mentoring (both the person being mentored and the mentor are eligible to record credits unless it is considered an integral part of one's work);
8. Involvement in planning-related professional committees for the planning profession, such as, professional associations, academic institutions or community groups.

Certain Institute activities are eligible for the following credits:

President of IPI	<b>16</b>
Member of the Board of Directors	<b>12</b>
IPI Committee Convener	<b>15</b>
IPI Committee Member	<b>10</b>
Chair of an active IPI Branch Committee with minuted meetings	<b>10</b>
Editor of Pleanáil	<b>10</b>
Member of an active Branch Committee with minuted meetings	<b>6</b>
IPI Working Group member	<b>8</b>
Member of an IPI accreditation team	<b>6</b>
Facilitator of an IPI Accreditation Team	<b>2</b> (in addition to the points above)
Article accepted for publication in Pleanáil	<b>6</b>
Attendance at the Institute's AGM	<b>2</b>

### ***Category 3: Self-directed Learning.***

This category of activity includes informal learning, structured reading of planning and related planning publications [e.g. architecture, landscape architecture, and earth sciences], distance and self-taught

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courses, which contribute to the personal development of planning or non-planning knowledge, expertise and skills.

***Category 4: Non-planning related courses to develop knowledge, skills and values.***

This category of activity involves the development of general professional knowledge, skills and values through activities in a non-planning field that contribute to personal development, for example human relations, time management, stress management, communication skills, conflict resolution, management skills (e.g. participation in voluntary local community project developments, Information and communication technology training).

**In each CPD cycle, five credits MUST be made up of activities drawn from Categories 1(a) or 2.**

## **5. Approved Events, Programmes and Courses**

Many other organisations, professional, educational and commercial, deliver programmes and events that are of educational value to IPI members. Some of these may be approved by the IPI for CPD purposes, confirming they are in an area relevant to the professional development of planners. Approval provides a “mark of quality” indicating it is of relevance and it achieves a high-quality standard.

Applications for approval of CPD credits and information provided shall be reviewed and considered by the Institute's Technical and Education Committee for assessment in line with our educational guidelines or otherwise delegates to an appropriate person. Applications must be in an area relevant to the professional development of planners.

Examples of “sister” professional institutions and organisations that provide lectures and other events of relevance to spatial planning practitioners: include the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, Engineers Ireland, the Irish Georgian Society, the Irish Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Irish Architectural Foundation.

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## 6. Advice for Planners Not Working Full Time

The Institute recognises that some members may not be able to fulfil their CPD obligations due to unemployment, leave of absence, maternity/paternity leave, parental leave or illness or unforeseen circumstances. The Institute will continue to be supportive of members if they find themselves in difficulty in completing the required CPD credits.

Accepting a reduced annual minimum credit requirement of CPD for members in special circumstances during the audit process is at the discretion of the Membership Committee.

### ***Unemployed members.***

The Institute will take a supportive approach to members who are unemployed in order to assist them to fulfil their CPD obligations, noting that much of the Institute's CPD content annually is free and that reduced unwaged membership rates may be available.

### ***Parent's leave or illness.***

The Institute recognises that members on maternity, paternity, adoptive or parent's leave or dealing with serious medical illness (either themselves or caring for someone else) will not be working and may have limited time and resources to fulfil their CPD obligations.

In such circumstances, members are typically exempt from CPD requirements for the duration of this leave.

Useful sources of CPD for members not working full time could include reading and research to keep up to date, keeping in touch days with your workplace and formal and informal discussions either with other planners face-to-face or through online networks.

### ***Retired Members.***

Retired members of all categories are not obliged to fulfil the CPD obligation.

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## 7. Monitoring CPD

The Institute recognises that the CPD system relies on self-assessment; therefore, it is incumbent on the Institute to monitor the operation and implementation of the CPD system in order to maintain its integrity and to ensure equity between members in fulfilling CPD obligations.

The Institute can carry out CPD monitoring each calendar year by taking a random sample of members and assessing their CPD records for the previous year. If necessary, the Institute may request the provision of further evidence (such as confirmation of attendance from event organisers, checking IPI records to ensure attendance took place at the respective CPD, training materials, etc.) to authenticate their records. In addition, each item in the members CPD records should include a short explanation of the learning outcome for the member.

Those members in the random sample who do not meet the requirements in any one year will be audited the following year.

The IPI will continually monitor its CPD policy to ensure its accessibility, currency, relevance and workability and welcomes constructive suggestions from participants, employers and other interested parties on CPD topics and/or ways in which the CPD policy can be improved.

## 8. Non-Compliance

Non-compliance in CPD will be taken to be:

- a. the non-submission by a member of evidence of CPD activities in the specified format in the absence of a declaration claiming exemption.
- or
- b. Members who submit logs but the logged activities fall significantly short of the required level in the absence of a declaration claiming exemption.

Non-compliance may be a grounds for the removal of membership under the Constitution or relevant Bye-Law.

The Institute will always take a supportive approach to the small number of members who may, for various reasons, have real practical difficulties in meeting the requirements.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Core competencies of modern professional planning practice.**

In the Irish Planning Institute's Education Guidelines 2025 eight competency headings have been identified as being 'core' or central to modern professional planning practice.

The eight 'core' competences are as follows:

**Core Competence 1: The Rationale of Planning (*The History, Theory and Philosophy of Planning*)**

**Core Competence 2: Socio-economic Spatial systems (*Society and Economy; Infrastructure and Resources*)**

**Core Competence 3: Built Environment (*Human settlement, nature of place and place-making*)**

**Core Competence 4: Natural Environmental Spatial Systems and Climate Change (*Natural and Cultural Environment*)**

**Core Competence 5: Planning Skills and Techniques (*Assessment Techniques, Consultation and Communication*)**

**Core Competence 6: Independent Research**

**Core Competence 7: Planning Instruments (*The Political, Legal and Institutional Contexts of Planning*)**

**Core Competence 8: Planning 'Products' (*Spatial Planning at various scales (from Local to Transnational)*)**

The Institute's Education Guidelines 2025 identify for each of the eight core competencies, core subject areas as well as others which are specialist or optional. These specialist and optional subjects may be suitable for further personal specialisation as CPD by members. CPD offers planners an opportunity to explore other specialist or general training and education in other related or relevant subjects according to their own interest or the strengths and capacity of the educational institution.

# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Last updated 6 June 2025

**Note these FAQs do not formally form part of the Institute's CPD Policy and are updated regularly as an aid to members to understand their CPD obligations.**

### **1. WHAT IS CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?**

The IPI defines CPD as the on-going maintenance, improvement and development of the knowledge, skills and personal qualities required in professional life.

### **2. WHY IS CPD IMPORTANT FOR PLANNERS?**

The Irish Planning Institute's mission is to advance planning by serving, improving and promoting the planning profession for the benefit of the community and the common good. CPD should form a core activity of all planners. CPD is regarded as a way of adding value to the profession and for promoting career-long learning. The Institute represents a highly skilled profession, but capacity building is required to continue to grow the knowledge and skill set of planners. Compulsory CPD is an important part of delivering best practice in the planning profession in Ireland and ensuring that the profession is appropriately equipped for the future.

### **3. HOW MUCH CPD DO I NEED TO DO?**

Currently each Corporate / Fellow member is required to accrue and record a minimum of 20 CPD point per annum. This must be relevant to your development as a planner. The CPD calendar operates from 1 January to 31 December each year.

### **4. DO I HAVE TO SUBMIT MY CPD?**

Members should record their CPD on a provided logbook template and if audited this and appropriate documentation should be provided. Members failing to comply with the monitoring process may be in breach of the Constitution and it may be grounds for removal of membership.

### **5. IF I ATTEND AN IPI EVENT IS THIS AUTOMATICALLY LOGGED TOWARDS MY CPD?**

No, it is the responsibility of the Member to record their CPD.

### **6. DO GRADUATE, STUDENT OR AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEED TO SUBMIT CPD?**

No Graduate or Student Members are not required to accrue or record CPD currently.

### **7. HOW DO I DECIDE HOW MANY CPD POINTS I SHOULD RECORD FOR EACH ACTIVITY?**

The successful operation of the CPD policy relies on members assessing for themselves the credits to be attributed to each CPD activity. In the case of IPI organised or approved events the organiser will specify the number of CPD credits available. When you are recording an activity, you should ask yourself, how many hours of learning did I get from this? Generally, the rule of thumb is one hour of learning equals one CPD point. The CPD policy of the Institute provides further information.

## 8. DOES THE IPI MONITOR CPD?

The Institute carries out CPD monitoring each calendar year by taking a random sample of members and assessing their CPD records for the previous year. These members will be required to submit their CPD records in a completed template. If necessary, the Institute may request the provision of further evidence (such as confirmation of attendance from event organisers, checking IPI records to ensure attendance took place at the respective CPD, training materials etc.) to authenticate their records. Evidence for each item in the CPD record should include a short explanation of the learning outcome for the member.

## 9. WHAT COUNTS AS CPD?

CPD generally falls into four main categories, the list is not exhaustive but outlines generally the activities which may be pursued;

- Courses, Education, Conferences and Training to develop knowledge, skills and values
- Contributions to the Profession
- Self-directed Learning
- Non-planning related courses to develop knowledge, skills and values

## 10. WHAT RECORDS DO I NEED TO MAINTAIN?

In addition to logging CPD credits, if audited documentation should be retained by members regarding their CPD activities, this may include;

- Emails e.g., Booking confirmations;
- Certificates for Course Attendance;
- Training Materials.

## 11. HOW CAN I TRANSFER ECTS CREDITS TO IPI CPD POINTS?

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a standard for comparing the study attainment and performance of students of higher education across the European Union and other collaborating European countries. For successfully completed studies, ECTS credits are awarded. ECTS is also designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. more can be learned about ECTS at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources/european-credit-transfer-accumulation-system_en).

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Under the system one ECTS credit normally equates to 20-30 hours of learning time. This is often divided between direct contact hours with an instructor and self-directed study.

60 ECTS credits are usually the equivalent of a full year of study or work placement at undergraduate or bachelor degree level. Postgraduate degrees usually comprise of between 90-120 credits.

#### 12. I AM RETIRED; DO I STILL NEED TO COMPLETE CPD?

Members paying the reduced “Retired” subscription are not obliged to record their CPD.

#### 13. I AM CURRENTLY NOT WORKING IN PLANNING; DO I STILL NEED TO DO CPD?

Yes. The Institute will be supportive of members who are no longer working in planning but still interested in continuing their membership of the Institute. Given the scope of the categories and the individual circumstances of the member concerned, we will work to ensure that members no longer working in planning have the opportunity to maintain and improve their professional competence in planning while unwaged or working in another sector.

#### 14. I AM ON A CAREER BREAK; DO I STILL NEED TO DO CPD?

Yes. The Institute will be supportive of members who are on a career break. Given the scope of the categories and the individual circumstances of the member concerned, we will work to ensure that members on a career break have the opportunity to maintain and improve their professional development.

#### 15. WHO DO I CONTACT WITH ANY QUERIES?

If you have any queries relating to this policy, then please don’t hesitate to contact the IPI Head Office by phone on +353 1 8788630 or email at [info@ipi.ie](mailto:info@ipi.ie).