

EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

Six Ways to Learn about Standards as a Young or Emerging Professional

By Carolyn Hull

Beginning a career in standards can be daunting, but it is ultimately rewarding. Standards and conformity assessment help ensure safety, support trade, and contribute to society.

When I started as a standards professional, I had work experience but not specifically in standardization. Based on my experience, here are six ways to learn about standards and conformity assessment to start your career.

Take SES courses

SES is there for you with introductions to standards and other courses that you can take online at your own pace. For me, learning where to find standards (to use just one example) was extremely insightful. There are thousands of standards out there—where can you find them? How do standards support trade and the economy? What is the best way to run a technical committee meeting? SES courses can provide answers.

Network

Take the opportunity to learn from your colleagues who have been developing standards for years *and* who are new to the field. Don't discount colleagues who may also be new to standardization, as you can gain valuable knowledge from those with less or similar experience levels to you. Fresh tools and

cutting-edge technology are being developed every day. Other standards professionals can help you learn about these and upgrade your work experience.

Some organizations, like the US National Committee (USNC) have official mentorship programs. Take advantage of these to learn from those who may have more experience. It can also be helpful to obtain the perspectives of those outside your organization.

Also, know that as someone newer to standardization or conformity assessment, you bring fresh eyes to practices and processes and can see opportunities for change and improvement where necessary.

Take specific standards courses

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and other organizations have classes available on their specific standards development processes and other related topics. In addition to presentations, many classes include simulations of developing a standard from start to finish that can make the process come alive.

Apply to programs for young and emerging professionals

The IEC and other similar standards organizations host programs for young and

emerging professionals. I highly recommend taking advantage of these! The IEC Young Professionals program includes attending the General Meeting and provides detailed courses on IEC standards and conformity assessment processes, as well as extensive relationship-building opportunities.

Attend the SES Annual Conference

The yearly conference is a wealth of learning and networking opportunities. For instance, the last conference addressed informative topics such as information on new and emerging electric vehicle technologies, building consensus as a committee chair, and the potential for drafting standards using GitHub. The SES Annual Conference has been invaluable in my career in delivering classroom-style learning, inspiring new ways

of working, and building connections in the field.

Get started!

Maybe you are already participating in standards or conformity assessment activities. However, if you are just starting out, do not be afraid to dip a toe in the waters. Observe a committee or volunteer in some capacity.

The best way to learn about standards, as with many things, is to participate. Our industry is welcoming and supportive of those new to standardization, so do not be shy. Before long, you will participate confidently in the process and represent your organization's views.

Do you have other ideas for learning about standardization? Share them at SES Connects, our new online forum. <https://connects.ses-standards.org/home>



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