

Continuing Competence Program Manual

Approved by Council
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This document replaces the previous *Continuing Competence Program and Rules* document.

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1 Introduction

The *Health Professions Act* defines competence as “the combined knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment required to provide professional services”. Continuous study and self-assessment of educational needs are fundamental and lifelong responsibilities of a professional. Technological advancement through research, innovations in patterns of healthcare delivery, and development of new clinical procedures accentuate the need for regulated members on the General register (registrants¹) to remain current.

To formalize its commitment to continued competence and to meet the mandate of the *Health Professions Act*, the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta (the College) Council has appointed a Competence Committee and established a Continuing Competence Program through the Continuing Competence Standard of Practice.

Details of the program are described in this manual. Through participation in this self-directed program, registrants maintain competence and enhance their provision of professional services.

1.1 Confidentiality

Information related to participation in the Continuing Competence Program is confidential and any person who has access to or comes into possession of such information shall not publish, release, or disclose the information in any manner except as necessary to carry out powers, duties, and obligations under the *Health Professions Act*.

2 Program Activities

The components of the College’s Continuing Competence Program are:

- program credit requirements (section 3)
- mandatory courses or learning activities (section 4)
- competence assessments (section 5)

Failure to meet the requirements of the College’s Continuing Competence Program may result in one or more actions to be taken (section 6).

¹ Throughout this document, regulated members on the General register will be referred to as registrants.

3 Credit Requirements

3.1 Reporting Period

All registrants must satisfy the program credit requirements within each assigned 3-year reporting period commencing November 1 following registration on the General register.

3.2 Reporting Requirements

3.2.1 A registrant must obtain a *minimum of 45 program credits* in each 3-year reporting period. It is recommended that, whenever possible, registrants obtain 15 credits per year.

3.2.2 Program credits exceeding the minimum of 45 credits in one reporting period cannot be carried over or transferred to another reporting period. However, these program credits may continue to be recorded in the registrant's record.

3.3 Reporting Program Credits

It is the registrant's responsibility to determine their specific continuing competence needs and to pursue activities for program credit that meet these identified needs. The registrant must be able to justify that reported learning activities have significant intellectual or practical content related to their practice of dental hygiene, oral health, or the professional responsibility and ethical obligations of the registrant.

Registrants have a basic professional responsibility to read newsletters and other College communications to keep their practice current. Under the College's Continuing Competence Program, credit may be claimed for continuing competence learning activities beyond this basic responsibility. Learning activities that occur within the practice environment, such as in-service courses offered for registrants, may be claimed for program credits.

Program credits cannot be claimed for activities that occur as part of the expectations of the dental hygienist's regular provision of dental hygiene services. For example, if giving presentations to junior high school classes is a routine part of a dental hygienist's regular employment, this activity is not eligible for continuing competence program credits.

3.3.1 It is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure each learning activity is reported into the College's registrant portal as soon as possible after completion of a learning activity.

3.3.2 Registrants can review their program credits in the College's registrant portal. It is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure accuracy of the information. Providing false or misleading information may be considered unprofessional conduct.

3.3.3 Supporting documentation must be uploaded with each entry. Multiple supporting documents may be added.

3.3.4 Supporting documentation is expected to provide evidence of the registrant's participation in the course or activity, including actual time spent on the activity. Supporting documentation includes but is not limited to one or more of the following:

- course completion certificate;
- course schedule and outline of course content;
- conference agenda indicating session(s) attended;
- online course outline, learning objectives, and confirmation of successful completion of the course examination;
- copy of transcripts;
- copy of article in its published format;
- copy of presentation(s);
- copy of official CPR certificate

3.3.5 If supporting documentation is not available, registrants may complete the prompted self-reflection questions. Self-reflection questions are not accepted for some credit categories, as noted below.

3.3.6 Supporting documentation must be retained by the registrant for 4 years from the activity completion date.

3.4 Allowable Program Credits Per Learning Activity

3.4.1 Registrants can report only actual hours of attendance or participation. Credits must be reported in 15-minute increments.

3.4.2 Typically, one program credit is awarded per hour of participation unless otherwise determined by the College or Competence Committee.

3.4.3 Registrants cannot claim program credits for any learning activity taken a second time within a 12-month period, with the exception of CPR.

3.5 Program Credit Categories

The following categories are established for the purpose of assigning Continuing Competence Program credits:

- Unlimited Continuing Competence Program Credit Activities (*no limit per reporting period*);
- Limited Continuing Competence Program Credit Activities (*maximum 20 program credits per 3-year reporting period*).

In addition, some subcategories have limited credits that can be claimed. These are described in more detail below.

3.6 Unlimited Program Credit Activities

Learning activities encompass a variety of formats. In recognition of the diversity of learning opportunities, the following areas have been identified.

3.6.1 Educational Courses or Sessions

Part-time or full-time advanced dental hygiene education, continuing competence courses, presentations, seminars, conferences, or clinical sessions may be eligible for program credits. Recommended course providers include:

- (a) Accredited dental hygiene programs, dental programs, universities, colleges, and technical institutions;
- (b) Provincial, state, national, and international dental hygiene and dental regulatory authorities (including the College), associations, and their component societies;
- (c) Federal government health agencies, including the Canadian Forces, and provincial or local government departments of health or public health;
- (d) Hospitals accredited by the Canadian Council of Hospital Accreditation;
- (e) Provincial, state, national, and international oral health specialty organizations recognized by the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) or the American Dental Association (ADA);
- (f) Other healthcare organizations or organizations related to the provision of dental hygiene services;
- (g) Study club learning activities

3.6.2 Formal Advanced Education Courses or Programs

Registrants engaged in part-time or full-time studies related to the practice of dental hygiene may qualify for program credits. The course or program must be offered by a recognized post-secondary educational institution. Each “unit of course weight” (ucw) will qualify for hour-for-hour program credits. For example, if 1 ucw = 13 hours, then the course is eligible for 13 program credits; if 3 ucw = 39 hours, then the course is eligible for 39 program credits.

Registrants must provide proof of successful completion of courses in this category *in the form of a transcript*. Self-reflection questions will not be accepted.

3.6.3 Self-Directed Study

Registrants may participate in self-directed study activities through any format, including online learning. To be eligible for program credit hours, self-study activities must include all of the following:

- (a) clearly defined learning objectives;
- (b) supporting literature references;
- (c) post-course examination which adequately evaluates the participant’s comprehension;
- (d) direct feedback of the examination results by the sponsor to the participant; and
- (e) completion and submission of the prompted self-reflection questions

Program credits are to be reported according to the actual amount of time spent covering the material and taking the examination. Registrants should keep detailed records of time spent on self-directed study activities.

Registrants must provide proof of successful completion of self-directed study *in the form of (d) and (e) above*.

3.6.4 Research Activities

Registrants, who engage in specific research activities over and above their educational program requirements and/or regular employment or contractual obligations, may qualify for program credits. This includes but is not limited to:

- (a) development of a research project;
- (b) literature review for a research project;
- (c) facilitation of focus groups for research purposes;
- (d) analysis of participant responses;
- (e) research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters or Doctorate. Credit is only granted in this category for research completed in a graduate program that does not assign “units of course weight” (ucw). Research conducted in courses that are assigned “ucw” should be claimed for credit under Section 3.6.2;
- (f) presentation of a research paper or abstract at a scientific meeting.

Note: Although participation in dental hygiene research is encouraged, responding to a survey or questionnaire does not qualify for program credits.

3.6.5 Publications

The publication of articles is eligible for program credits. All articles must be relevant to the practice of dental hygiene. Publication of articles may be eligible for program credits as follows:

- (a) for each article written and published in a peer-reviewed health or oral health scientific journal/publication: **15 program credits**.
- (b) for each paper, written to present the practitioner’s original research, and published in a refereed oral health scientific journal/publication: **15 program credits**.
- (c) articles written and published in oral health college/association publications: **2 program credits**.
- (d) published reviews of books related to dental hygiene practice: **3 program credits**.
- (e) published reviews of chapters of oral health-related books will be granted program credits on an individual basis.
- (f) chapter(s) written in a reference or textbook: **maximum 25 program credits**.
Co-authorship credits are proportional to the number of authors: e.g., 4 authors = 1/4 of 25 credits; 3 authors = 1/3 of 25 credits

3.6.6 Directed Study (Mentoring)

Directed study contracts may be initiated to address a specific learning need. Examples may include teaming up with an educator with advanced skills and knowledge in continuing care facilities or teaming up with a colleague with expertise in a specific area of dental hygiene practice.

- (a) A formalized learning contract must exist between the mentor and the mentee.
- (b) Both the mentor and mentee may apply for program credits.
- (c) Registrants may qualify to receive program credits for mentoring and mentoring preparation.

To qualify, the learning activity and number of program credits must be approved by the Competence Committee prior to initiation of the activity. Requests must be submitted using the *Request for Pre-determination of Program Credits (Directed Study/ Mentoring)* form.

3.6.7 Developing and Delivering Educational Courses

Registrants may claim program credits for developing and delivering educational courses outside their regular employment or contractual obligations.

Submissions for program credits in this category must include evidence of:

- (a) clearly defined learning objectives;
- (b) detailed course outline; and
- (c) supporting literature references.

3.6.8 Jurisprudence Examination

The College's Jurisprudence Examination may be completed for a **maximum of 2 program credits, per reporting period**. Access to take the examination can be obtained by contacting the College. Completion of the Jurisprudence Examination as part of a registration, reinstatement or transfer requirement does not count towards program credits.

3.7 Limited Program Credit Activities

Registrants can obtain a **maximum of 20 limited program credits out of the total 45 program credits** in their 3-year reporting period. Excess program credits accumulated in this category are not included in the reported total of program credits, but they are retained as part of the registrant's record.

Learning activities may encompass a variety of formats. In recognition of the diversity of learning opportunities, the following areas have been identified.

3.7.1 Annual General Meetings

Annual general meetings of national or provincial oral health professional associations may be claimed for program credit. **Maximum of 3 program credits per permit year.**

3.7.2 Self-Assessment Package

Evidence of completion of the College's Self-Assessment Package may be reported for program credit once per year. **Maximum of 2 program credits per permit year.** Completion of the Self-Assessment Package or other forms of self-assessment is

currently optional. The Self-Assessment Package may aid registrants in determining individual learning needs and developing a learning plan to maintain competency.

3.7.3 Volunteering

Dental hygiene volunteer activities can be claimed to a **maximum of 7 program credits per 3-year reporting period**. Any hours reported for program credit in this category cannot also be claimed for practice hours.

Registrants must provide proof of volunteer hours for credit in this category by submitting a completed and signed *Submission for Program Credit – Volunteering* form available on the College's website.

3.7.4 Mental Health and Wellness Activities

Any activities specifically targeting the registrant's own mental health and wellness can be claimed for program credit (hour for hour).

Completion of the self-reflection questions is required to claim credit in this category. The reflection must demonstrate the relevance of the activity to the profession of dental hygiene.

Although the College recognizes the value of extracurricular activities (e.g., weekly yoga class) and self-interest learning in maintaining life balance, such activities will not be considered for program credit.

3.7.5 Other Activities Approved by the Council, the Registrar, or the Competence Committee

Selected activities approved by the Council, the Registrar, or the Competence Committee may be claimed for the number of program credits communicated by the College.

4 Mandatory Education

The College will establish mandatory courses or learning activities to be completed within a specified time-period. Each mandatory learning activity may be claimed for program credits as determined by the College or Competence Committee.

4.1 Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

Council-approved CPR requirements are outlined in the [CPR Policy](#).

A registrant applying for renewal of a practice permit must provide evidence of holding a CPR certificate at the level required by the Council.

Completion of CPR certification qualifies for hour-for-hour credit up to a maximum of 3 hours per permit year.

5 Competence Assessments

When directed by the Registrar or Competence Committee, a registrant must participate in a competence assessment which may consist of one or more of the following.

5.1 Review of Continuing Competence Program Records

5.1.1 The College maintains the ability to seek additional verification of the registrant's attendance, participation, and/or completion of activities. This includes verification of time reported for hour-per-hour program credits.

5.1.2 If College staff or the Competence Committee has questions about any reported learning activities, further information will be requested from the registrant. If requested, the registrant must provide additional information or documentation related to the learning activity(ies) in question.

5.1.3 Random audits may be conducted to validate participation in the continuing competence program. A registrant may be subject to a documentation review regarding program credits. If requested, the registrant must provide the College with supporting documentation for all learning activities reported for the period being reviewed. The registrant may be required to provide any of the listed documentation types in 3.3.4.

5.1.4 The Competence Committee has the authority to adjust the number and category of credits accepted for any reported activity.

5.2 Practice Visits

5.2.1 As authorized by the Continuing Competence Standard of Practice, the Competence Committee may carry out practice visits as part of the Continuing Competence Program.

5.2.2 The Registrar or Competence Committee may direct that a selected registrant or group of registrants participate in a practice visit for the purpose of assessing continuing competence.

5.2.3 The registrant(s) must co-operate with members of the Competence Committee and any person appointed under section 11 of the *Health Professions Act*.

5.2.4 A registrant may request that the Competence Committee carry out a practice visit regarding the registrant's practice (e.g., a registrant may request a practice visit to aid in the positive advancement of practice standards in their practice environment).

5.3 Other Competence Assessments

As directed by the Registrar or Competence Committee, registrants may be required to participate in other competence assessments, including:

- (a) examinations;
- (b) individualized assessments of professional competence;
- (c) interviews; and/or
- (d) any other type of evaluation as required by the Registrar or Competence Committee.

6 Actions to be Taken

If a dental hygienist has not completed the required CCP activities, has not maintained proper records, or has unsatisfactory results on a competence assessment, the Registrar and/or Competence Committee may take one or more of the actions listed below.

6.1 Direction From the Registrar or Competence Committee

The Registrar and/or Competence Committee may direct a registrant to undertake one or more of the following:

- (a) correct any problems identified in the competence assessment;
- (b) complete specific continuing competence requirements or professional development activities within a specified time;
- (c) complete examinations, testing, assessments, training, work experience, education or counselling;
- (d) complete additional competence assessments,
- (e) practice under the supervision of another registrant for a specified period of time;
- (f) limit their practice to specified professional services, restricted activities or practice settings;
- (g) refrain from practicing specified professional services, restricted activities or in specified practice settings;
- (h) limit supervision of one or more of the following:
 - a. dental hygienists;
 - b. students of dental hygiene;
 - c. registrants of other colleges;
 - d. students of other regulated professions;
- (i) report to the Registrar and/or Competence Committee on specified matters on or by specified dates.

6.2 Denying Annual Permit Renewal

Application for renewal of a practice permit may be denied when a registrant:

- Fails to meet the requirement of 45 credits in the relevant 3-year reporting period
- Fails to complete any mandatory education within the time-period specified.
- Fails to participate in and/or complete the requirements of a competence assessment.

6.3 Imposing Conditions on a Registrant's Practice Permit

Conditions may be imposed on the registrant's practice permit, including but not limited to, conditions that are listed in section 40.1 of the *Health Professions Act*.

6.4 Review of Decision

An application for renewal that is issued subject to conditions or denied may be eligible for a review of decision according to section 41(1) of the Health Professions Act.

Any registrant who wishes to request a review must submit a written request for a review to the Registrar along with any associated fees as set by Council. The written request must set out the reasons why the application should be approved with or without conditions.

6.5 Referral to Complaints Director

Referrals will be made to the Complaints Director when a registrant:

- Has intentionally provided false or misleading information;
- Has displayed a lack of competence that has not been remedied by participating in the continuing competence program;
- May be incapacitated; or
- Has displayed conduct that constitutes unprofessional conduct that cannot readily be remedied by means of the continuing competence program