



Continuing Competency Program Requirements

Component of the CDHNS Quality Assurance Program

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1 Definitions in this Document

Act: The Dental Hygienists Act of Nova Scotia.

Anniversary date: January 1 of the following year.

CDHNS: The College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia. Used interchangeably with *the College*.

College: The College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia. Used interchangeably with *CDHNS*.

Continuing competency: The maintenance of competence (combined knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment) and the enrichment of the provision of professional services.

Continuing Competency Committee: The Continuing Competency Committee of the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia.

Council: The Council of the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia.

Discipline committee: The Investigation Committee or the Hearing Committee.

Member: A member who is on the register of the College and holds a practising licence.

Practising licence: A practising licence issued under subsection 17(1) of the Act; the licence authorizing a member to engage in the practice of dental hygiene.

Program credit hours: Used interchangeably with *credit hours* and *credits*. Program credit hours are the unit (hours) of credit awarded to a member for undertaking a learning activity in accordance with this document. General credit hours are set in each category. Where the hours are not predetermined, the Continuing Competency Committee can assign hours.

Three-year cycle: The current three-year period in which the member is collecting credits in the Continuing Competency Program.

2 Quality Assurance Program

2.1 Continuing Competency Program

Lifelong learning is a hallmark of a profession. It is fundamental to professional development and remaining current in one's discipline. It is of particular importance in light of the rapid changes in health care delivery, technological advances, regulatory changes and the development of new clinical procedures. Quality assurance refers to activities and programs intended to assure or improve the quality of care. To acknowledge its commitment to continuing competency and to meet the mandate of the Dental Hygienists Act and Regulations, the College has developed a professional Quality Assurance Program which **requires** program credit hours for all members who hold a practising or a non-practising licence.

2.2 Personal Scope of Practice

Under the Act, members have a professional responsibility to practise within their own personal scope of practice. It is the member's responsibility to determine their unique learning needs and to seek courses and other forms of learning which meet those self-identified needs.

2.3 Continuing Competency Learning Activities

All learning activities shall have significant intellectual or practical content related to the practice of dental hygiene, oral health, or the professional responsibility and ethical obligations of the member. The Continuing Competency Committee will consider the individual member's practice setting or environment when reviewing any requests for credits under the Continuing Competency Program. Learning activities that support the regulated member's specific learning needs and areas(s) of practice will be considered. This may include, but is not limited to, activities related to client assessment, dental hygiene diagnosis, treatment planning, implementation, evaluation, health promotion, research, epidemiology, communications, ergonomics, hazardous materials, health and safety, recordkeeping, administration, and conflict resolution.

2.4 Pertinent Areas of the Nova Scotia Dental Hygienists Act and Regulations

Dental Hygienists Act

Section 7 (4)

The Council may, with the approval of the Governor in Council and subject to this Act, make regulations

- (d) respecting a quality assurance program, including requirements for members to participate in any such program, and including continuing education requirements or practice-hour requirements of members for registration or licensing.

College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia Regulations

Regulation 8 (1)

- (d) for an applicant who graduated from an accredited dental hygiene program more than 3 years before their application, they must
 - (i) have completed, in the 3 years immediately before their application, 45 hours of continuing competency requirements approved by the Council, and
 - (ii) have been practising dental hygiene in the 3 years immediately before the date of their application.

Regulation 8 (1)

- (h) for an applicant who intends to engage in self-directed clinical practice and for an applicant applying for a practising licence 2 years after being issued an initial licence under the Act, they must
 - (i) have successfully completed the self-initiation module, or
 - (ii) have equivalent education or experience to that provided by the self-initiation module, as determined by the Registrar.

3 Continuing Competency Program Requirements

These requirements are drawn in compliance with the Dental Hygienists Act of Nova Scotia Section 7 (4) (d) and the Regulations 8 (1) and (2).

3.1 Requirements

3.1.1 A minimum of 45 credit hours in a three-year cycle is required. Each category has different minimum and maximum credits. The CDHNS recommends that members complete 15 credits in each year of the cycle.

Table 1: Credit requirements for three-year cycles

Cycle	Credits	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
3 years	45	Minimum 15	Maximum 30	Minimum 5 Maximum 15

As of January 1, 2018, all CDHNS members are required to enter and submit their credit hours online. Supporting documentation must be retained by the member and made available for audit purposes, upon request.

3.1.2 Generally, one credit hour is awarded per hour of participation or attendance, unless otherwise determined by the Continuing Competency Committee.

3.1.3 No course may qualify for more than 25 program credit hours.

3.1.4 A maximum of 10 credit hours per 24 hour period may be claimed.

3.1.5 **Formal Advanced Education Course or Programs.** Members engaged in part-time or full-time studies related to the practice of dental hygiene may qualify for program credit hours. The course or program must be offered by a recognized education institution (either on campus or via distance education). Each unit course weight (ucw) qualifies for hour-per-hour program credit hours to a maximum of 25 program credit hours per course. For example:

- 1 ucw = 13 contact/lecture hours = 13 credit hours
- 2 ucw = 26 contact/lecture hours = 25 credit hours
- 3 ucw = 39 contact/lecture hours = 25 credit hours

3.2 Reporting Period

- 3.2.1 The College establishes the implementation date (anniversary date) for the Continuing Competency Program Requirements.
- 3.2.2 Only first-time registrants of the College are awarded credits from the date of licensure. The three-year cycle begins on the next anniversary date (January 01) following licensure. Only the *Knowledge of Dental Hygiene Practice in Nova Scotia: Jurisprudence* course and the *Self-Initiation* course taken prior to licensure may be applied to the first cycle.
- 3.2.3 Individuals who take a planned leave from practising may request **in writing** to have their three-year cycle interrupted up to a maximum of one year. Requests must be made at the time the individual leaves practice. The three-year cycle will be extended to include the unexpired term and will conclude on the appropriate December 31. A maximum of one extension per cycle will be granted. If members do not advise the CDHNS at the time they leave practice, their three-year cycle remains the same.
- 3.2.4 An individual who, for health reasons, parental leave, or other personal reasons, is unable to pursue credits for more than a cumulative six-month period during a three-year cycle will be eligible to apply to have their cycle extended for a maximum of one year to conclude on the appropriate December 31. It is the responsibility of the licensee to apply, in writing, to the Registrar for an extension of the cycle as soon as possible prior to completion of the present three-year cycle. Documentation is to be submitted if requested. A maximum of one extension per cycle will be granted.
- 3.2.5 An individual who is removed from the Register for late payment of fees or as a result of disciplinary activity does not begin a new cycle upon reinstatement. The original three-year cycle remains in effect.

4 Recording and Audit

- 4.1 Recording and verification of mandatory program credit hours is the responsibility of the member.
- 4.2 Documentation for program credit hours should include:
- the member's name
 - date
 - speaker's name and qualifications
 - topic
 - course/presentation description
 - length of the presentation

If the documentation does not include the information above, use the CDHNS certificate of attendance for verification.

- 4.2 A copy of the continuing competency record is available to members online for personal use. Starting in 2018, all members are required to record their continuing competency documentation online through the *Member Login* on the website.
- 4.3 An annual audit of continuing competency requirements is performed on registrants randomly selected by a third party at the end of each group's cycle. Members who are selected for audit will be notified and required to submit their Continuing Competency Record Form or complete their online record and submit appropriate verification of programs attended. Other documentation may be requested by the Continuing Competency Committee.
- 4.4 The Registrar and Continuing Competency Committee reserves the right to audit or view a member's Continuing Competency Record at any time.
- 4.5 For audit purposes, verification must be maintained for the member's current cycle and the member's previous cycle.
- 4.6 Falsification of any records or information is considered professional misconduct and an offence under the Act.

5 Assigning Program Credit Hours

- 5.1 Credits obtained prior to commencement of a three-year cycle do not count towards necessary credits for that cycle, except first-time registrants, as in 3.2.2.
- 5.2 Credits are not carried forward from a previous cycle. All credits acquired must be obtained within the assigned three-year cycle. Forty-five credits is a required minimum.
- 5.3 Continuing education taken as a result of a Council or a discipline committee ruling cannot be used towards the total number of credits necessary to satisfy the Continuing Competency Program requirement.
- 5.4 The Continuing Competency Committee has the authority to approve or disapprove credits for courses or equivalents that it considers to be of questionable content to the practice of dental hygiene. Courses and credits may be approved in part or in whole by the Continuing Competency Committee.

6 Continuing Competency Program Categories

All learning activities shall have significant intellectual or practical content related to the practice of dental hygiene, overall health, or the professional responsibility and ethical obligations of the member. The Continuing Competency Committee will consider the individual member's practice setting or environment when reviewing any requests for credits under the Continuing Competency Program. Learning activities that support the member's specific learning needs and areas(s) of practice will be considered.

The following three categories are established for the purpose of assigning program credit hours.

6.1 Category 1: Scientific/Clinical Experiences

A **minimum of 15** credit hours in each three-year cycle **must** be obtained from this category.

- 6.1.1 Learning activities that contribute significantly to the scientific, clinical, and ethical aspects of the member's practice of dental hygiene will generally be eligible for program credit hours.

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- 6.1.2 Annual CPR is required for licence renewal. The following apply to the course:
- a) Must be a minimum of Basic Life Support/Level C (must cover CPR for adult, child, and infant; and AED). CPR for Health Care Providers is recommended.
 - b) Must be offered by a recognized institution.
 - c) Must include both classroom instruction and a practical component.
 - d) Must be delivered in accordance with the recommendations of the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR).
 - e) Must be completed no longer than 12 months prior to application for the CDHNS licence or licence renewal.
 - f) A **maximum** of 9 credit hours is permitted per cycle for CPR courses.
 - g) A Certificate of Attendance **must be completed** and signed by the provider of the course in order to be eligible for credits.
- 6.1.3 A maximum of 5 credit hours per cycle is permitted for First Aid training, including mental health first aid.
- 6.1.4 The following sponsors of a continuing education course or equivalent would likely be approved for credit hours if their course fulfills the Category 1 criteria:
- a) Accredited dental hygiene and dental programs, universities, and colleges.
 - b) Provincial, state, national, and international dental hygiene and dental regulatory authorities, associations, and their societies.
 - c) Federal government health agencies, including the Canadian Forces.
 - d) Provincial and local government departments of health.
 - e) Hospitals accredited by the Canadian Council of Hospital Accreditation.
 - f) National and international dental hygiene and dental organizations recognized by the Canadian or American Dental Hygiene or Dental Associations.
 - g) Interdisciplinary associations/commercial organizations if the learning activity is applicable to dental hygiene.
- 6.1.5 Individual scientific self-study courses qualify for credit hours if the member successfully completes a monitored post-course examination, presentation, or paper.

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- 6.1.6 A maximum of 2 credits per year is granted to attendees at Dalhousie School of Dentistry Table Clinics and Dental Hygiene Presentations.
- 6.1.7 Attendance at scientific presentations at conventions or meetings.
- 6.1.8 A maximum of 1.5 credits per cycle is granted to members who participate in the training/refresher course provided by the Public Health Dental Hygienists for the purpose of administration of the Fluoride Mouthrinse Program.
- 6.1.9 A maximum of 2 credits per cycle is permitted for WHMIS training.
- 6.1.10 A maximum of 15 credits granted for the *Self-Initiation* course.

6.2 Category 2: Development and Delivery of Dental Hygiene Educational Activities

A **maximum of 30** credit hours in each three-year cycle may be obtained from this category.

- 6.2.1 Members may apply for program credit hours for developing and delivering educational activities outside of their regular employment or contractual obligations. Developing and delivering educational activities as part of the member's regular obligations is considered practice hours.
- 6.2.2 The number of credit hours obtained will vary according to the activity involved. Credit hours awarded are as follows:
 - a) Presenters receive 2 credit hours per 1-hour presentation time. These include formal courses, lectures, or talks at dental hygiene meetings, school or community presentations, and study club presentations. Presenters are required to submit a course description/syllabus along with their verification of attendance to receive credits. Program credit hours for each presentation may be claimed only once per 12-month period.
 - b) 10 credit hours are given for each dental hygiene-related article published in a refereed journal of dental hygiene/dental literature.
 - c) Where a dental hygiene-related article is authored by more than one person, each author receives credit hours proportionate to the total number of authors.
 - d) Authors of books or chapters in books are awarded credits on an individual basis.

- e) The presenter of a research paper or abstract at a scientific meeting receives 5 credit hours.
- f) A learning contract can consist of a variety of learning activities (e.g., literature review, clinical practice, internship, etc.) designed to meet a specific learning objective. A formal learning contract must exist between a mentor and one or more individuals. The contract is subject to approval by the Continuing Competency Committee. Total credit hours are based on the recommendation of the mentor as the reasonable amount of time necessary to learn the material.

6.3 Category 3: Professional Promotion and Responsibilities

A **minimum of 5** and a **maximum of 15** credit hours in each three-year cycle must be obtained from this category.

- 6.3.1 These experiences are to encourage professional responsibility and ethical obligations of members as well to encourage intra- and inter-professional co-operation, and encompass non-scientific/non-clinical experiences as well as other presentations that do not belong in Category 1.
- 6.3.2 The following would likely be approved for credit hours under this category:
 - a) A course attended for all aspects of practice management, including communication courses, directly of benefit to the practice of dental hygiene.
 - b) A course attended for non-clinical office software training that benefits recordkeeping in the dental office (e.g., radiography equipment orientation and training).
 - c) Professional Ownership: representing the CDHNS to another agency, participation on Council or a Committee, or other recognized CDHNS activities.
 - d) Participation or attendance at interdisciplinary health associations, health committees, or health boards.
 - e) Participation or attendance at meetings and presentations of dental hygiene societies or study clubs.
 - f) Participation or attendance at interdisciplinary health conferences, whether local, provincial, national, or international.

- g) Participation in the delivery of the Nova Scotia Fluoride Mouthrinse Program. Upon request, a letter will be issued by the Public Health Dental Hygienist to verify participation. Volunteers receive a maximum of 5 credits per cycle.
- h) Individual self-study courses related to practice management and professional responsibility qualify for credit hours if the member successfully completes a monitored post-course examination, presentation, or paper.
- i) A maximum of 5 credits per year is awarded for volunteering clinical hours. An example is Gift From the Heart.
- j) Special consideration is given to members responsible for planning a health promotion event. Requests are considered on an individual basis upon request from the member with supporting documentation to a maximum of 2 credits per year. To claim credits for planning a health promotion event, the member must provide evidence that the event occurred.

7 Other Considerations

Consideration will be given to other areas of study on an individual member basis with proper documentation and notification. It is the member's responsibility to notify the College regarding all changes in status or other situations.

7.1 Full-Time Study

Degree completion, graduate study, internships, residencies, and members engaged in an approved full-time program fulfill their requirements for their current cycle. Refer to 3.1.5 for further details regarding program credit allocation.

7.2 Study Clubs

7.2.1 Credits

7.2.1.1. Presentation by Study Club Members

Members of registered/approved study clubs who present receive 2 credit hours per 1-hour presentation time in Category 2. See 6.2.2 (a).

Study club members who attend this presentation receive hour-per-hour credit in Category 3.

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7.2.1.2 Presentation by Non-Study Club Members

Study club presentations, related to the practice of dental hygiene by a presenter who is not a member of the study club but is a subject matter expert in the presentation area, are accepted for Category 1 or 3 credits depending on the subject matter and proper verification.

7.2.2 Registration/Membership

Study clubs must be registered/approved by the Registrar and must provide the following information:

- 1) Name of study club
- 2) Subject matter
 - a) can be of specific interest to oral health
 - b) can be of general interest to the practice of dental hygiene
 - c) can be of interest to overall health
- 3) Membership
 - a) minimum of five members
 - b) name of chairperson, including address
 - c) name of members, including address
 - d) members must be licensed health professionals
- 4) Verification
 - a) Study clubs are responsible for recording and providing documentation of all presentations. Documents must record the date, speakers name and qualifications, topic, course objectives, and length of the presentation. Each member in attendance should receive a signed Certificate of Attendance for the presentation.
 - b) The chairperson must record the date, time, and duration of the meeting and must ensure that each participant of the study club signs in to each meeting. This attendance information must be kept by the chairperson for verification should any individual member of the study club be audited.

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5) Annual Report

- a) A CDHNS member of the study club must submit the College's Study Club Annual Report form to the CDHNS by December 31 each year. The form itemizes each meeting.
- b) Study clubs that do not submit their annual report by December 31 will be removed from the College's list of recognized study clubs. To be reinstated as a recognized study club, the study club must pay a \$50.00 reinstatement fee and must submit the Study Club Annual Report form. Failure to pay the fee and submit the report with CDHNS results in no credits being award for continuing competency activities completed during the preceding year.

7.3 Appeal of Audit

A member may request a review of a Continuing Competency Audit by a Review Panel consisting of three Continuing Competency Committee members. The members of the Review Panel cannot have performed the original audit.

The following **forms** are available on the website:

- CDHNS Continuing Competency Record Form
- CDHNS Certificate of Attendance
- Study Club Annual Report