



Continuing Competency Program Requirements

Component of the CDHNS Quality Assurance Program

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Table of Contents

1	Definitions in this Document	1
2	Quality Assurance Program	2
2.1	Continuing Competency Program.....	2
2.2	Individual Scope of Practice	2
2.3	Continuing Competency Learning Activities	2
2.4	Pertinent Areas of the Nova Scotia Dental Hygienists Act and Regulations	3
3	Continuing Competency Program Requirements	4
3.1	Requirements.....	4
3.2	Three Year Cycle.....	5
3.3	CC Requirements for Transfer from Non-Practising to Practising Licence	5
4	Recording and Audit	6
5	Assigning Program Credit Hours.....	7
6	Continuing Competency Program Categories	7
6.1	Category 1: Scientific/Clinical Experiences	7
6.2	Category 2: Development and Delivery of Dental Hygiene Educational Activities	9
6.3	Category 3: Professional Promotion and Responsibilities.....	10
7	Other Considerations.....	11
7.1	Full-Time Study	11
7.2	Study Clubs.....	12
7.3	Appeal of Audit	13

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.

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

Discipline committee: The Investigation Committee or the Hearing Committee.

Hours of credit or credit hours: The unit of credit approved for each learning activity in accordance with this document. To remain consistent with the language used in the Act and Regulations, we are using the term hours and credit hours. In the past, the CCP has used program credit hours, program credits, *credit hours*, and *credits*. All of these terms are considered synonymous with “hours”. General credit hours are set in each category.

Member: A member who is on the register of the College.

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.

Quality Assurance Committee: The Quality Assurance Committee of the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia.

Three-year cycle: The current three-year period in which the member is collecting hours 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** all members holding or seeking a practising licence to engage in prescribed hours of learning, which are measured for purposes of this policy as hours of credit or credit hours. Accordingly, members who hold practising licences and seek to renew them must meet the credit hours requirements. In addition, members who hold a non-practising licence must meet the credit hours requirements when applying to transfer to the practising licence class, i.e., members who graduated more than 3 years before applying for transfer must complete 45 hours of continuing competency requirements approved by the Council, in the 3 years immediately before their application. (See Section 3.3. CC Requirements for Transfer from Non-Practising to Practising Licence)

2.2 Individual Scope of Practice

The Act sets out areas that are authorized for practice by dental hygienists holding a practicing licence. However, each individual member may not have the education, training or experience to engage in all areas authorized for practice. Members have a professional responsibility to practise only within their individual scope of practice. This means that although certain areas may be authorized for practice generally by members of the profession, an individual member may only engage in those aspects of practice for which the member is competent.

It is each member's responsibility to determine their unique learning needs and to seek courses and other forms of learning which meet those self-identified needs, and which will contribute to setting the limits of their individual scope of practice.

2.3 Continuing Competency Learning Activities

In order to qualify as hours of credit for purposes of this policy, 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 Quality Assurance

Committee will consider the individual member's practice setting or environment when reviewing any requests for approval of credit hours 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

The requirements set out in this document are 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, with certain hours required in each of three different categories, discussed in detail later in this document. Each category has different minimum and maximum hours. The CDHNS recommends that members complete 15 hours in each year of the cycle. For Category 1, see Section 6.1. For Category 2, see 6.2. For Category 3, see 6.3.

Table 1: Hour requirements for three-year cycles

Cycle	Hours	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
3 years	45	Minimum 15	No Minimum Maximum 30	Minimum 5 Maximum 15

As of January 1, 2018, all CDHNS members are required to enter and submit their hours online for their current cycle e.g., if your current cycle is January 1, 2017 to Dec 31, 2019, you must submit all activities completed for that cycle through the online system. Supporting documentation must be retained by the member and made available for audit purposes, upon request.

- 3.1.2 Generally, one hour of credit is awarded per hour of participation or attendance, unless otherwise determined by the Quality Assurance Committee.
- 3.1.3 No course may qualify for more than 25 credit hours.
- 3.1.4 A maximum of 10 credit hours in any 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 hours of credit. 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 13 hours of credit to a maximum of 25 hours per course. For example:

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

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

3.2 Three Year Cycle

- 3.2.1 The College establishes the implementation date for the three-year cycle of Continuing Competency Program Requirements.
- 3.2.2 For first time registrants, the three-year cycle begins on the January 1 closest to their date of licensure. The cycle renews every three years thereafter.
- 3.2.3 For first time registrants, to the extent that credit hours are earned *after* licensing, but prior to the January 1 cycle start date, those credit hours can be included in the first cycle.
- 3.2.4 An individual who is late in renewing their practising licence, or who had their licence suspended as a result of disciplinary activity does not begin a new cycle upon reinstatement. The original three-year cycle remains in effect.

3.3 CC Requirements for Transfer from Non-Practising to Practising Licence

A CDHNS Non-Practising Member may apply to transfer from a non-practising class to the practising class at any time during the licensing year. Regardless of when the application is made, all CDHNS's legislated requirements for obtaining a practising licence must be met. These requirements include a completed application for transfer, all necessary documents, and appropriate fees. (See Section 8 to 10 of the Regulations.)

This section focuses on the requirements for continuing competency only. The full transfer requirements are outlined in a document posted for Members in the Library of their Member Profile home page.

For Non-Practising Members who graduated three or more years ago from the date of application to obtain a practising licence, the Member must provide evidence that they have obtained 45 credit hours in the preceding three years.

- 3.3.1. Upload your continuing education activities on your Professional Development Record of your Member Portal. [See the CDHNS CC Cycles FAQ document in the 'Library' of your

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

Member Profile under the subfolder 'Practice Protocols & Policies' for more information on how to upload your continuing education activities.]

- 3.3.2. Members who do not meet this criterion will be required to meet alternate criteria and will be contacted by the Registrar.

4 Recording and Audit

- 4.1 Recording and verification of credit hours is the responsibility of the member.

- 4.2 Documentation for 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 a copy of their online record and submit appropriate verification of programs attended. Other documentation may be requested by the Quality Assurance Committee.
- 4.4 The Registrar and Quality Assurance 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 Hours obtained prior to commencement of a three-year cycle do not count towards necessary hours for that cycle, except first-time registrants, as in 3.2.2.
- 5.2 Hours are not carried forward from a previous cycle. All hours acquired must be obtained within the assigned three-year cycle. Forty-five hours during each three-year cycle are 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 hours necessary to satisfy the Continuing Competency Program requirement.
- 5.4 The Quality Assurance Committee has the authority to approve or disapprove hours for courses or equivalents that it considers to be of questionable content to the practice of dental hygiene. Courses and hours may be approved in part or in whole by the Quality Assurance 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 Quality Assurance Committee will consider the individual member's practice setting or environment when reviewing any requests for approval of hours 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 hours.

6.1 Category 1: Scientific/Clinical Experiences

A **minimum of 15** 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. Examples of the types of learning activities that qualify in this category are set out below.

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

6.1.2 Annual CPR is required for licence renewal and as set out below may be claimed as hours of credit. The following apply to the course.

- a) The level of CPR certification must include, at a minimum, classroom instruction and practicum experience related to:
 - (i) one and two-person rescuer chest compressions for adults, children and infants;
 - (ii) one and two-person rescuer adult, child and infant bag-valve mask technique and rescue breathing;
 - (iii) relief of choking in adults, children and infants; and
 - (iv) use of an automated external defibrillator (AED).
- b) Must be offered by a recognized institution.
- c) Must be delivered in accordance with the recommendations of the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (ILCOR).
- d) Must be completed no longer than 12 months prior to application for the CDHNS licence or licence renewal.
- e) A **maximum** of 9 hours is permitted per cycle for CPR courses.

6.1.3 A maximum of 5 credit hours per cycle is permitted for First Aid training

6.1.3.1 Successful completion of the 2-day Mental Health First Aid Canada (Mental Health Commission of Canada) qualifies for a total of **12 credits** per cycle based on the following breakdown: **5 credits** for the first aid training and an additional **7 credits** in category 1 for the mental health component

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 outlined in section 6.1.1:

- 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.

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

- 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.
- 6.1.6 A maximum of 2 hours of credit 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 hours of credit 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 hours of credit per cycle is permitted for WHMIS training.
- 6.1.10 A maximum of 15 hours of credit are granted for the *Self-Initiation* course.

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

A **maximum of 30** credit hours of credit 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 employment or contractual obligations is considered practice hours, but not credit hours.
- 6.2.2 The number of credit hours obtained will vary according to the activity involved. Credit hours may be obtained as follows:
- a) Presenters receive 2 credit hours of credit 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. Credit hours for each presentation may be claimed only once per 12-month period.

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

- 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 credit hours on an individual basis.
- e) The presenter of a research paper or abstract at a scientific meeting receives 5 credit hours.

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 Quality Assurance 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 may 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.

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

- 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 credit hours per cycle.
- h) Individual self-study courses related to practice management and professional responsibility qualify for hours if the member successfully completes a monitored post-course examination, presentation, or paper.
- i) A maximum of 5 credit hours 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 credit hours per year. To claim 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 Categories for Hours Obtained through Study Clubs

7.2.1.1 Presentation by Study Club Members

Members of registered/approved study clubs who present receive 2 hours of credit 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.

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 credit hours 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

CDHNS Continuing Competency Program Requirements

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.

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 credit hours 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 Quality Assurance Committee members. The members of the Review Panel cannot have performed the original audit.

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

- CDHNS Certificate of Attendance
- Study Club Annual Report