



COTNS Continuing Competency Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Continuing Competency?

Continuing Competency is the ongoing ability of an Occupational Therapist to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills, and judgment required to practice safely and ethically in any given role or setting.

What is the Continuing Competency Program (CCP)?

The Continuing Competency Program is a quality-assurance framework for assessing the ongoing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and judgment of therapists practicing Occupational Therapy in Nova Scotia. The program provides a process for Occupational Therapists to demonstrate that they maintain their competency and thus enhance their practice over time.

Why after all these years do we need a Continuing Competency Program?

The public expects all health care professionals to be competent. The Occupational Therapists Act of 1998 requires the College to provide a Peer Assessment Program. This will assist occupational therapists to assess their abilities and skills, and document activities/outcomes required to meet occupational therapy standards of practice. In addition, occupational therapy governing bodies and other health care professions across Canada are all expected to have a Continuing Competency Program.

Did members participate in developing this process?

Members were consulted during focus groups and education sessions in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Recommendations from these focus groups were incorporated into the development of the Continuing competency Portfolio. In addition, members received updates through the College's newsletters.

Is the Continuing Competency Portfolio mandatory?

Yes. On June 22nd, 2007, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the regulation changes necessary to implement a mandatory Continuing Competency Portfolio for all occupational therapists licensed in Nova Scotia. All therapists in Nova Scotia are expected to maintain a Continuing Competency Portfolio on an annual basis in order to qualify for registration. There are no exceptions. All therapists will have to declare on their annual registration form that they are committed to participating in the Continuing Competency Program.

Do I have to maintain the Continuing Competency Portfolio every year?

Yes. The Continuing Competency Portfolio is a dynamic document that will need to be updated at least annually. Some natural occasions for updating a portfolio may include preparing for a new role/project or following a critical learning experience.

The completion and inclusion of mandatory items, such as the Self-Assessment Tool, Peer/client Feedback and Professional Development Plan, should occur within the time frames established by the College.

Is the portfolio still relevant if I practice in a non-clinical/ non-traditional OT role?

Yes. All occupational therapists are required to maintain a current portfolio whatever their practice/employment situation.

The Continuing Competency Program tools are designed to apply to all types of practice. The optional materials members include will reflect their unique situation or practice area.

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How do I know what to include in my portfolio?

Items such as the professional practice overview, assessment and professional development plans and college documents are mandatory. Examples of optional items are outlined in each section. Members are encouraged to personalize the portfolio to best reflect their practice area, competency, skills, and development plans. Quality is more important than quantity! Members need to choose items that demonstrate that they are practicing safely, ethically, and competently according to the College's Standards of Practice.

How current do items included in the portfolio have to be?

Time frames for mandatory items will vary:

- a. COTNS registration documents and proof of malpractice insurance
 - Current within the year of practice
 - OR current within one year of the date of issue
- b. Proof of malpractice insurance
 - Current within the year of practice
- c. Resume/CV – complete with up to date information

Time frames for optional items:

These will likely reflect a member's practice and development for the current year OR within five years of the current area of practice. There may be older items that are considered significant for inclusion (certificates, reference lists, published papers, etc.)

What should I do with documents that are too lengthy to fit in my portfolio?

The portfolio needs to be easy to use so members can review and reflect on its contents regularly. Including lengthy documents could hinder this.

Documents can be summarized or referenced in the appropriate section. Placing the document on a computer disc could also allow the document to be included in its entirety or otherwise be available upon request.

Can I include items that are not on paper?

Yes! Feel free to use individual judgment and creativity. The inclusion of pictures, videotapes, audiotapes, CD ROMs, and other means of presentation is encouraged. The scope of the portfolio is likely broader than what can physically fit into the binder. These may be stored in the clear plastic sleeve in the portfolio or separately.

What do I do about updating my portfolio when I'm on a leave of absence, maternity/paternity leave or when I am between jobs?

It is the individual's responsibility to maintain competency and participate in the Continuing Competency Program as long as they hold a certificate of registration. The required items in the portfolio must be completed at the established times. Current practice information and learning goals will likely reflect an individual's situation.

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What will happen if I am selected for random review?

Competency Review will be a structured process to review a member's practice in relation to the Standards of Practice and provide them with feedback. This process is being developed and input from the membership will be sought for its design and process. The random reviews will not begin until the implementation of the Peer Assessment Program, which is expected in 2009.

Do I have to use the binder the College sends me? What if I already have my own portfolio?

Members are not required to use the binder provided by the College. However, in order for the College to be able to review professional portfolios effectively and efficiently, it is important that portfolios follow the basic format provided by the College. The required contents must be present. If members prefer to house them in a different binder/folder, that is their choice.

Can I use my Continuing Competence Portfolio for purposes apart from the College?

Definitely! The portfolio is your own. It is expected that members will use the professional portfolio for personal and professional purposes, unrelated to the College. For example, the professional portfolio may be helpful to showcase skills to potential employers, business partners, or clients or it may be incorporated into the performance review process.

I am a new grad – what should I include in my portfolio?

New graduates are required to include the same documents as all other COTNS registrants, while recognizing that they are at the beginning of their career and they will collect additional documentation as their career progresses. Refer to 'Portfolio Samples' listed on the web.