



College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia



**Continuing
Competency
Program**

Overview





Continuing Competency Program

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Continuing Competency Program

Introduction

The Continuing Competency Program of the College of Occupational Therapy of Nova Scotia [COTNS] is a quality assurance program premised on the belief that registered occupational therapists in Nova Scotia are competent professionals whose goals include maintaining and improving their level of competence based on accepted standards of practice. Occupational therapists are expected to continually upgrade their knowledge base and skills in order to deliver quality occupational therapy services. They achieve this by taking the responsibility to maintain and improve their professional performance on a continuous basis.

The Continuing Competency processes rely on the Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada (ACOTRO, 2000). This was developed jointly by the regulatory bodies for Occupational Therapy in all Canadian provinces. The COTNS adapted this document in December 2003 as its standard of practice.

Protection of the public's interests is the prime consideration in determining the College's continuing competency strategies. The fundamental responsibility for the continuing competency rests with the individual therapist.

As a professional, each therapist is expected:

- to be accountable for his/her actions;
- to be responsible for maintaining a current level of knowledge in his/her specific area of practice;
- to apply the College regulations, code of ethics, standards of practice, and practice guidelines that are relevant to the therapist's area(s) of practice.

A competent Occupational Therapist provides proficient, appropriate, effective, and ethical service. The service provided contributes to the best possible outcome for the client, with no unnecessary exposure to risk or harm.



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Overview

Mandate:

The purpose of the Continuing Competency Program (CCP) is to promote a reflective practice among occupational therapists in Nova Scotia by providing a structure that ensures therapists continue to maintain their knowledge and skills according to the College's standards. The program is designed to reflect, ensure, and demonstrate that therapists are competent practitioners.

Guiding Principles:

The Continuing Competency Program is guided by the following principles:

1. Occupational therapists are competent practitioners.
2. Member participation in the Continuing Competency Program is mandatory, as specified in the Occupational Therapists Act of Nova Scotia.
3. Occupational therapists are expected to be accountable for their actions.
4. Occupational therapists are responsible for maintaining a current level of knowledge and competency in their area of practice.
5. Occupational therapists are expected to meet the college regulations, code of ethics, and standards of practice as outlined in the Essential Competencies of Practice.
6. Continuing competency can be maintained and developed through a variety of formal and informal methods.
7. Efforts toward continuing competency must be economically feasible for both the COTNS and membership.
8. The program must be dynamic and flexible enough to be used by all occupational therapists, regardless of area of practice.
9. Confidentiality of members' information must be maintained.



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Components:

The CCP consists of the Continuing Competency Portfolio and Peer Assessment.

1. Continuing Competency Portfolio:
 - i.) Professional Practice Overview (Mandatory)
 - ii.) Assessment and Professional Development (Mandatory)
 - iii.) Personal Additions (Optional)
 - iv.) College Documents (Mandatory)
2. Peer Assessment
 - i.) Selection and training of Peer Assessors
 - ii.) Random Audit (Mandatory)

These two components are interdependent. The Continuing Competency Portfolio provides tools that members need to keep themselves current and competent through assessment and professional development activities. The peer assessment provides an audit process to ensure that members maintain their portfolio.

The Continuing Competency Committee:

The mandate of the Continuing Competency Committee is to develop, implement, and evaluate the Continuing Competency Program for occupational therapists in Nova Scotia. This is done to ensure a minimum standard of occupational therapy practice.

Declaration:

A member's declaration on the annual registration form provides the College with documentation that the member commits to participating in the Continuing Competency Program and has undertaken professional activities to comply with College requirements.



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Continuing Competency Portfolio:

Introduction:

The Continuing Competency Program requires registered occupational therapists in Nova Scotia to maintain a Continuing Competency Portfolio in accordance with the requirements of the Occupational Therapists Act.

Occupational therapists employ the Portfolio to identify and collect documented evidence related to aspects of professional competence. It is designed to be an individual, interactive, and dynamic tool that therapists can use to reflect upon their practice and competencies, demonstrate their professional growth, and adhere to established standards of practice. The Continuing Competency Portfolio shall be in a binder format.

Purpose:

The Continuing Competency Portfolio provides a framework:

1. To ensure that all therapists in Nova Scotia are taking steps to maintain their competence in compliance with the Occupational Therapists Act and the standards of practice as outlined in the Essential Competencies of Practice
2. To stimulate and support therapists in examining their practice and directing their own development of knowledge, skills, and abilities.
3. To assist therapists to record, organize, and store documents related to their self-assessment, learning activities, professional growth, and achievements.
4. To help therapists identify professional strengths and areas for improvement.
5. To help therapists identify strategies to enhance or maintain professional competence.
6. To serve as a communications tool for therapists to use to promote their knowledge, skills, competence, and achievements.
7. To publicly demonstrate that therapists in Nova Scotia are dedicated to safe and competent practice

The Process:

1. The College shall distribute information on the mandatory Continuing Competency Portfolio to its members on a timely basis.
2. The members shall keep all records of any continuing education and professional development activities undertaken in their portfolio (as specified).



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3. All mandatory components of the portfolio must be completed by all members as follows:
 - The Professional Practice Overview must be updated annually.
 - The Self-assessment and peer/client feedback completed annually.
 - The Professional Development Plan must be completed every two years.
4. Members shall declare on their annual registration renewal form that they are maintaining their Continuing Competency Portfolio. If the declaration is not made, the registration for renewing their license will not be processed and members stand the chance of losing their license to practice in Nova Scotia.

Components of the Continuing Competency Portfolio

The Continuing Competency Portfolio is divided into four (4) sections as follows:

Section 1: Professional Practice Overview

This section is where therapists can document past and present professional experiences that have shaped their practice.

Purpose of the section

- To give an overview of the occupational therapist's professional practice, including his/her current practice, and history/experiences that shape his/her current practice.
- To demonstrate compliance with the registration requirements.

Required Documents (Mandatory)

- Resume/CV – complete with up to date information
- COTNS registration document(s)
- Proof of malpractice insurance

Optional Documents *(some of these may be part of the detailed CV)*

- Occupational Therapy Educational diplomas/degrees
- Any special training certificates related to practice area



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- Copies of other diploma/degrees
- Volunteer work
- Fieldwork descriptions
- CAOT examination results
- University transcripts
- Job descriptions (current and/or previous)
- Sample of care/service protocol
- Educational documents (e.g. essays reports, exams, presentations, etc.)
- Achievements or awards
- Business cards or brochures
- Lists of board or committee participation
- Reference letters
- List of publications, workshops, In-service presentations
- List of courses taught
- List of funding agencies or grants received
- Membership in other professional associations

Section 2: Assessment and Professional Development

This section is where therapists are required to provide an overview of their current practice. It is divided into two mandatory sub-sections – assessment of current practice and professional development plan. The completed self-assessment document and other related documents (peer and client feedback) are placed in this section, together with the professional development plan.

Purpose of the section

- To demonstrate efforts toward competence in practice.
- To provide therapists with structures, and tools to assess their current practice and identify areas of practice for improvement.
- To provide therapists with structures and tools to design their professional development plan to ensure they continue to maintain their knowledge and skills and meet the Essential Competencies of Practice.

A. Assessment of Current Practice (Mandatory)

- **Self-assessment Tool** – This section is where therapists are required to provide an overview of their current practice. It is divided into two



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mandatory sub-sections – assessment of current practice and professional development plan. The completed self-assessment document and other related documents (peer and client feedback) are placed in this section, together with the professional development plan

- **Peer and client feedback** – This is a method whereby the therapist gets feedback from peers and clients regarding their performance on the Essential Competencies of Practice.
- **Identify practice issues based on the self assessment** – Based on the results of the self-assessment and peer and client feedback, the therapist identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses and then defines practice issues that require improvement

B. Professional Development Plan

After reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses, therapists will then formulate their professional development goals and activities that would enhance or develop their skills and knowledge. The Board will issue guidelines for the Professional Development Plan.

Section 3: Personal Additions

This section provides a place to keep items therapists feel are important and relevant, but which do not fit well in other sections. This section is completely optional.

Purpose of the section

- To include information and documentation not included elsewhere.

Optional Components – *may include*

- Student comments/feedback
(Thank-You card, letter of appreciation, etc)
- Teacher/mentor/facility comments
- Clients comments/feedback
(Thank-You card, letter of appreciation, etc)
- Result of Client satisfaction surveys
- Peers /colleagues comments
(Thank-You Card, letter of appreciation, etc)
- Performance reviews (employer feedback)



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Section 4: College Documents

This section provides a place for therapists to keep required college documents for quick access. This section is mandatory.

Purpose of the section

- To ensure that college documents are readily accessible to the therapist
- To store new/additional required college documents as they become available

Mandatory components

- Occupational Therapy Act
- Essential Competencies of Practice
- Code of Ethics
- COTNS Practice Guidelines

In addition to the items required for a continuing competency portfolio, the Board may issue policies and guidelines containing optional or recommended additional components.



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Peer Assessment Program

Introduction:

Under Regulation (64), the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia is required to have a Peer Assessment Committee (PAC) and a Peer Assessment Program (PAP) for members registered under the Occupational Therapy Act. The program is intended to be a quality assurance process whereby the continued competency of occupational therapists in Nova Scotia is demonstrated.

Purpose:

The peer assessment process adopts a consultative, collaborative approach in its assessment of members' practices. It is intended to help members enhance their practice standards and competence.

The Peer Assessment Committee:

The Peer Assessment Committee is responsible for the development, administration, and evaluation of the peer assessment program. The committee ensures that all occupational therapists are involved in the Continuing Competency Program.

Audit/Review Process:

1. The Peer Assessment Committee shall randomly select about 10 per cent of eligible members for mandatory audit/review on a yearly basis.
2. The review will be performed by a peer assessor, appointed by the Peer Assessment Committee, who has undergone thorough peer assessment training.
3. Each member shall participate fully in a mandatory audit when he/she is selected.
4. A member shall be given advance written notice by the Peer Assessment Committee.
5. A member shall provide to the PAC and/or assessor, in the form required, all information requested by the Committee or assessor. The assessor may inspect the premises where the member engages in the practice of occupational therapy.
6. Upon completion of an assessment, an assessor shall prepare a written report on his or her findings and submit it to the Peer Assessment Committee.
7. The committee shall provide the member with a copy of the Assessor's report.
8. Member shall comply with the remedial recommendations of the Peer Assessment Committee
9. Member is responsible for the costs incurred in implementing the remedial recommendations.



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Consequences for Non-compliance/Deficiencies:

1. Failure to cooperate and participate in the audit/review process, including failing to produce the Continuing Competency Portfolio, constitutes professional misconduct.
2. The committee will notify the college if a member does not maintain a Continuing Competency Portfolio and/or does not comply with a random audit. The committee may direct the College to issue a letter of warning to a member who has not complied. The member will be given specified length of time to meet the requirement of the program.
3. If the committee believes, on the basis of the reviewed report, that a deficiency occurs, and that a member's review has been found to be unsatisfactory, the committee may direct further investigation through the Investigation Committee.
4. Depending on circumstances, the committee may suggest to the College to impose terms, conditions or limitations on a member's license to practice for a specified period of time.
5. In some situations, the committee may suggest to the College that a member's license be temporarily suspended until he/she is able to demonstrate compliance with the program including improving identified deficiencies.
6. If the Peer Assessment Committee or an assessor learns, in the course of an assessment, that a member may be guilty of a disciplinary matter, the assessment shall be terminated, the member shall be advised and the matter shall be referred to the College to be dealt with as a complaint.

