



## COTNS Continuing Competency Program

### History of the COTNS Continuing Competency Program:

In 2003, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia (COTNS) Board appointed a Peer Assessment Committee to develop and administer a peer assessment program for Occupational Therapists in N.S., in accordance with the Occupational Therapy Act 6(3) (e), 16, 64 and 65. The committee was renamed in 2005 as the Continuing Competency Committee with a revised mandate which include: to develop, implement and evaluate the Continuing Competency Program and develop a structure for the administration of the Peer Assessment Program.

Between 2003 and 2004 the committee conducted a comprehensive review of current practices on continuing competency programs used by health professions in Nova Scotia and by Occupational Therapy regulatory bodies across Canada. The committee also conducted several focus groups across the province to obtain the perspectives of the membership in regards to the content of the peer assessment process. Based on the feedback and review, the committee developed a framework and a set of principles for a continuing competency program. The committee continues to work very closely with the College in consultation with legal adviser to ensure that the Continuing Competency Program is in accordance with the Occupational Therapy Act of NS.

In October of 2004, the College hired a part-time Coordinator whose duties include: to coordinate the development, implementation and evaluation of the Continuing Competency Program. In the spring of 2005, the College initiated Regulations for Section 12 and 17 of the Act to authorize the Board to implement a Mandatory Continuing Competency Portfolio. The College is awaiting approval on these proposed regulation changes from the Governor in Council.

By the fall of 2005, the framework for the Continuing Competency Portfolio was completed and pilot testing of Sections 1, 3 & 4 of the portfolio conducted in the spring of 2006. The committee is currently working on Section 2 which is the Assessment and Professional Development Plan. The goal is to conduct a pilot test of this section in the spring of 2007.

### Components of the Continuing Competency Program:

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. The continuing competency processes rely heavily on *the Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (ACOTRO, 2000). The COTNS adapted this document in December 2003 as the Standards of Practice of Occupational Therapists in Nova Scotia. The Continuing Competency Program has two main components:

1. The Continuing Competency Portfolio: The portfolio provides structure and tools for members to keep themselves current and competent through assessment and professional development activities. The portfolio is divided into the following sections:
  - Section 1 - Professional Practice Overview
  - Section 2 - Assessment and Professional Development Plan
  - Section 3 - Personal Addition
  - Section 4 - College Documents
2. The Peer assessment: This is the evaluative component of the Continuing Competency Program. It provides a mandatory audit process to ensure that members maintain their competency.

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## Timelines for Implementation:

ITEM	START DATE	COMPLETION DATE
Development of Committee Structure by COTNS Board	Jan 2003	June 2003
Environmental Scan and membership consultation on the development framework for Continuing Competency Portfolio	Fall 2003	November 2004
Membership Consultation on portfolio design and content	June 2005	September 2005
Completion of content on section 1, 3 & 4 of portfolio	June 2005	October 2005
Pilot test with 18 volunteers: Continuing Competency Portfolio: Section 1: Professional Practice Overview Section 3: Personal Additions Section 4: College Documents	November 2005	May 2006
Analyze and share Pilot feedback with membership	May 2006	June 2006
Revise and print Continuing Competency Portfolio	July 2006	October 2006
Distribution of CC Portfolio to membership	July 2007	Ongoing
Develop & Implement the Self-Assessment Tool & Professional Development Plan	August 2006	December 2008
Develop & Implement the peer assessment protocol	April 2008	May 2009
Inform public and employers of the continuing competency program	Jan 2009	May 2009
Evaluation of the Continuing Competency Program	April 2009	May 2010

Thanks to the members (past & present) of the Committee as well as many occupational therapists who have participated and contributed to the ongoing development of program.

Current Members of the Continuing Competency Committee include:

- Joanne Comeau (chair)
- Jennifer Saunders
- Karen Landry
- Susan Sparkes
- Dorothy Edem (coordinator)

Submitted by Dorothy Edem  
Continuing Competency Coordinator  
E-mail: contact through the college at [admin@cotns.ca](mailto:admin@cotns.ca)