

Frequently Asked Question about the Continuing Professional Development Program and Credit Tracking

Each year when dues are renewed, active members are required to sign a declaration advising that they are aware of Rule 16, Continuing Professional Development, and that they are working to meet its intent. As with any initiative of this sort, questions have arisen around how the Rule applies in certain situations. The College tracks these questions so that clarifications or improvements can be made over the next couple of years.

Members are advised that, as is the case with all things professional, the application of professional discretion is required by both members and (eventually) auditors. The documentation a member maintains in setting out CPD activities is one of the ways that others can see how the discretion has been applied.

Answers to the questions below have been determined by reviewing the Audit Committee Guidelines for the Continuing Professional Development Program. Guidelines are not Rules - they are suggestions and information for members to be aware of. Not all situations are covered by the guidelines, and those that are may not be covered absolutely. That takes us back to the point set out above - in general, exercising professional discretion/common sense with supporting written rationale is the best approach when recording activities and assigning CPD hours, particularly for those that are not clearly defined in the guidelines.

Frequently Asked Questions about CPD

1. I have not had time this year to meet my CPD requirement. Can I get an exemption from the CPD requirement?

No. All active members must meet the CPD requirements. The only members excused are Retired members, and those on temporary withdrawal. CPD hours are claimed over a 3 year period; therefore there is an opportunity in subsequent years to take sufficient training to enable the 100 hours to be met.

2. The program allows for 10 hours to be claimed for full time employment which is defined as 23 hours of applied biology work per week. I work significantly more than 23 hours per week. Can I claim more than 10 hours in this category?

No. Because “full time employment” can range dramatically across the profession, 23 hours was chosen as a base; working more hours does not entitle someone to claim more CPD credits.

3. If I am paid by my employer to attend a training course, can I claim the course hours as CPD credits or do they fall within the “full time employment” category?

Yes, the hours can be claimed as CPD credits and are not included in the “full time employment” category.

4. I don't like the way the CPD form that is attached to the Schedule is laid out. I think I have a better way to record my hours. Do I have to use the schedule form?

Yes, and no. How you track your CPD activities is up to you. However, if you are one of those selected for audit, you will be required to submit your CPD

activities on the schedule form. This is because the auditors are all volunteers, and having a standardized method of information presentation makes for a more efficient and consistent process.

5. I have CPD activities that are not covered off by the Program guideline. Does this mean that I can't count them?

No. The guideline is provided so the Audit committee has a framework to follow in conducting an audit, and so members understand what that framework is. Professionals are expected to use their discretion in all daily activities and it is accepted that discretion may be applied in determining which activities count as CPD the number of hours that can be applied. If you choose to meet CPD requirements in a manner that deviates from the guidelines, you will be required to demonstrate to the Audit Committee's satisfaction how the Program requirements have been met.

6. I see that once every 3 years I should take either a professional ethics course or write the College ethics exam. I have not seen anything on the exam. When and where is it offered? And, does the ethics course have to be offered by the College or APB to count as CPD?

There are no plans at present to proceed with developing the ethics exam. If one does become available, members will be advised via BioNews and the listserve. Any course addressing professional ethics can likely be counted towards CPD; it does not have to be a course offered specifically by the APB or College. In making your assessment on the applicability of the ethics course, you should consider whether the course material addresses professional ethics or environmental ethics – the former would count whereas the latter likely would not. One other thing to note: the schedule uses the word “should” as opposed to must when referencing the 3 year time frame for the ethics course. While it is not a requirement to take an ethics course every 3 years, members “should” consider why they would not want to take a course such as this and refreshers on a regular basis.

7. The “Professional Biology Category” sets out that a maximum of 15 hours per year can be claimed as self-study unless the member completes a learning plan. What exactly is a “learning plan” and what is its purpose? Do I, for example, need a learning plan if I want to take a Riparian Areas Regulation course?

A “Learning Plan” is a means for members to set out a course of action that enable a learning goal to be met. It documents goals, learning resources and methods, measures of achievement and outcome. The APB has provided a guideline for learning plans which is available at <http://www.apbbc.bc.ca/files/LEARNING%20PLAN%20GUIDELINES.pdf>

Learning plans are a way for a member to set out, for example, what would be required to acquire expertise in a new area, or significantly expand expertise/knowledge in a particular area of practice. A learning plan would not be filled by someone taking the RAR course if their only purpose was to take the RAR course. However, if someone who did not have expertise in stream assessment wanted to acquire or enhance expertise in this area, they could fill out

a learning plan which would include elements of both the professional and general areas of practice, which could include the RAR course.

8. I am required to take field based health and safety courses. Can I count those in my CPD hours, and if so, where would I put them?

Depending on the content of these courses and your area of practice, they may well count in the Professional Category. The best thing to do would be for you to set out where, in your opinion, the course should be counted and provide a short rationale for your decision (i.e. tracking the application of discretion) so that in the event you are audited, the Auditor would have the basis for your decision for discussion purposes.

9. I am part of a group that gets together each month to do a cleanup of our local beach. Can I count CPD hours for each time we set out on the beach?

If you were involved in the organization of the activity, and if the activity was to effect a cleanup of the shoreline, you could count 5 CPD hours per project organized – not 5 hours every time you hit the beach. Claiming hours for this type of activity would be a good example of where you should set out the hours claimed and provide a short explanation of what the event was and of your role, setting out the hours, in your professional discretion, you believe should be allocated.

10. What proof do I need to provide that I attended a course, or took part in a particular activity?

This is a point that the Audit Committee has wrestled with. The decision to date is that if a member sets out that they have done a particular thing and signs the CPD form, then the auditor should be able to take the member at their word. In the event the member is found to have acted in a manner not deemed professional, that behaviour would be examined and reported by the auditor or in extreme circumstances investigated by the Discipline Committee. As a College, we should be able to trust the honesty and professionalism of members. If this sentiment proves to be misplaced the College will have to re-examine the decision not to require receipts and other more formal documentation.

11. I became a member of the College in the later part of last year. Does the CPD requirement of 100 hours over 3 years mean “calendar” years or does it start from my gaining membership?

Ideally, for ease of administration, the preferred interpretation would be “calendar” year. However, it is recognized that this could impose difficulties for those who joined in the later part of the year. The auditors will exercise discretion when determining the time frame and how it applies.

12. My work now is mainly in administration, for example, project management and coordination – gone are the days when I was able to get into the field and actually practice the kind of field biology that attracted me in the first place. How can I meet my CPD requirements?

Because you are still using your biological expertise to inform the kinds of decisions you make, you are still practicing applied biology. Given your particular area of practice involves project management, courses in management, administration, etc may be claimed. Because you still have to meet due diligence in terms of deciding which professions need to be involved in a project, and then in decisions around which professionals will be used, you still should be following practice developments in the general areas involved in the projects you are coordinating and/or managing. Journal reading, discussions with colleagues, etc are legitimate CPD activities that can be claimed. Where your practice involves developing policy, following the various tribunal and court decisions may be of importance and, therefore, learning in these areas can also be claimed.