



Nova Scotia Regulator  

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OF

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DENTISTRY AND DENTAL ASSISTING

# Continuing Competence Program<sup>1</sup>

This will come into effect when the PDBNS migrates under the [Regulated Health Professions Act](#) in 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> Approved by the PDBNS Board 2025-04-07

# Preamble

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The Nova Scotia Regulator of Dentistry and Dental Assisting (the “NSRDDA”) is the organization which oversees the practices of dentistry and dental assisting in the province. The role<sup>2</sup> of the NSRDDA, with respect to the practices of dentistry and dental assisting, is to:

- protect the public from harm;
- serve and promote the public interest;
- preserve the integrity of the professions of dentistry and dental assisting, subject to the public interest; and
- maintain the public confidence in the ability of the NSRDDA to regulate dentistry and dental assisting.

One of the ways the NSRDDA fulfills its role is through quality assurance measures such as the Continuing Competence Program for dentists and dental assistants.

## Continuing Competence

There are many ways that dentists and dental assistants strive to maintain their continuing competence. This includes the incorporation of self-assessment in day-to-day practice, measured against practice standards and guidelines as well as emerging research and technologies.

In addition to this, dentists and dental assistants are required to engage in formalized experiences to maintain continuing competence. This can include courses, study groups, committee involvement, and a variety of other experiences.

## Cycles

Each registrant has a 3-year competence cycle. Cycles begin on January 1 in the calendar year after a registrant is first licensed and run until December 31 of the third year of their cycle.

Dentists must obtain  
a minimum of  
90 continuing competence credits in  
each 3-year cycle

Dental assistants must obtain  
a minimum of  
36 continuing competence credits in  
each 3-year cycle

Registrants must log their continuing competence experiences within their Alinity profile. More information about cycles and other procedural matters can be found in the General Guidelines beginning on page 7.

## Cycles and Audits

At the end of each cycle, the continuing competence committee will perform a random audit of registrants’ continuing competence. The process for this is outlined in Appendix D.

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with Section 6 of the [Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)](#), modified for profession-specific context.

# Categories of Continuing Competence Experiences

Continuing competence experiences which qualify for credit under this program fall into 3 categories. There are minimum and maximum requirements for each category for both dentists and dental assistants.

Category	General Description	Minimum and Maximum Credits
<b>Category 1</b>	<p>Category 1 continuing competence experiences are COURSES on scientific or clinical subject matter.</p> <p>The courses must be delivered by an approved sponsor as outlined in Appendix B.</p> <p>They may be either in-person or online.</p> <p>These courses or their educational equivalents shall have significant intellectual or practical content directly related to the practice of dentistry.</p> <p>Courses on ethics and WHIMIS qualify in Category 1.</p>	<p>Dentists are required to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours in Category 1.</p> <p>Dental assistants are required to complete a minimum of 12 credits in Category 1.</p> <p>If they wish, dentists and dental assistants may fulfill all their continuing competence requirements with Category 1 experiences.</p>
<b>Category 2</b>	<p>Category 2 experiences are NOT COURSES but pertain to scientific or clinical subject matter.</p> <p>Like Category 1 experiences, they shall have significant intellectual or practical content directly related to the practice of dentistry.</p>	<p>There is no minimum requirement for Category 2 experiences. In other words, dentists and dental assistants do not need to have any Category 2 experiences unless they choose to.</p> <p>Dentists may claim up to 60 credits in Category 2 (subject to the guidelines which follow).</p> <p>Dental assistants may claim up to 24 credits in Category 2 (subject to the guidelines which follow).</p>
<b>Category 3</b>	<p>Category 3 experiences are NOT SCIENTIFIC OR CLINICAL.</p> <p>They are meant to encourage professional responsibility and ethical obligations of the dentist or dental assistant.</p>	<p>There is no minimum requirement for Category 3 experiences. In other words, dentists and dental assistants do not need to have any Category 3 experiences unless they choose to.</p> <p>Dentists may claim up to 30 credits in Category 3 (subject to the guidelines which follow).</p> <p>Dental assistants may claim up to 12 credits in Category 3 (subject to the guidelines which follow).</p>

# Category 1

- A minimum of 30 Category 1 credit hours are required for dentists in each cycle.
- A minimum of 12 Category 1 credit hours are required for dental assistants in each cycle.

Type of Experience	Description / Criteria	Credits Awarded / Limits
a) In-person lecture on scientific or clinical topics	These courses or their educational equivalents shall have significant intellectual or practical content directly related to the practice of dentistry.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of lecture.
b) Hands-on course on scientific or clinical topics	The same criteria set out in Category 1a) apply.	2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of hands-on experience. Note: Be sure to calculate the doubled hours in your submission.
c) Hybrid lecture / hands-on course on scientific or clinical topics	The same criteria set out in Category 1a) apply.  Registrants must report what portion of the course was lecture versus hands-on. They are responsible to “double” the time for hands on as Alinity will not.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of lecture.  2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of hands-on experience.
d) BLS/CPR/ACLS/PALS	To be approved for credit, courses must be in-person. Credit can be claimed in successive years of a registrant’s cycle.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of training, to a maximum of 12 credit hours per cycle.
e) Live webinar on scientific or clinical topics	The same criteria set out in Category 1a) apply.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of the live webinar.
f) Online asynchronous (“on- demand”) lecture on scientific or clinical topics	The same criteria set out in Category 1a) apply.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of lecture. (Verification of attendance required, but not necessarily a post-test.)
g) Participation in an approved Category 1 study club	In order to be approved as a Category 1 study club, it must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be highly structured,</li> <li>• include both didactic instruction and hands-on clinical experience, and</li> <li>• meet on a periodic, scheduled basis.</li> </ul>	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of lecture.  2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of hands-on experience.
h) Management of medical emergencies in the dental office	This is a mandatory requirement once per 3-year cycle. The course may be in-person or online and must be a minimum of 3 hours in duration.  The course must cover all the topics outlined in Appendix C.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of the course, regardless of whether there is a hands-on component.
i) Lectures on scientific or clinical topics at a regional society meeting	The same criteria set out in Category 1a) apply.  NOTE: Where the content is applicable, a maximum of 50% of the time spent at a regional society meeting may be claimed for Category 1 credit.  The remainder of the time may be claimed in Category 3, to a maximum of 5 hours per meeting.	Credit for 50% of the meeting time will be awarded in Category 1 if the criteria in Category 1a) are met.  Credit for the remainder of the meeting time will be awarded in Category 3 to a maximum total of 5 credit hours per meeting.
j) Table clinics		1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance.

## Category 2

- A maximum of 60 Category 2 credit hours may be claimed by dentists in each cycle.
- A maximum of 24 Category 2 credit hours may be claimed by dental assistants in each cycle.

Type of Experience	Description / Criteria	Credits Awarded / Limits
a) Faculty position	Credit will be awarded for a full-time or part-time faculty position (lecture or clinician) with direct student contact.	1 credit hour will be awarded for every 7 faculty hours to a maximum of 20 credit hours per year.
b) Presentation of an approved course	These include formal courses, lectures or talks at dental meetings and study club presentations.	2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of presentation time.
c) Publication of an article	Credit will be awarded for publication of a dentally-related article published in a refereed journal of dental literature.	20 credit hours will be awarded for each article published.  Where a dentally-related article is authored by more than one person, each author will receive credit hours proportionate to the total number of authors.
d) Author of a book or chapter in a book	To be approved for credit, the book or chapter of a book must be on a dentally-related topic.	Credit will be awarded on an individual basis.
e) Presentation of a research paper	Credit will be awarded to the presenter of a research paper or abstract at a scientific meeting.	5 credit hours will be awarded for each presentation.
f) Expert witness	Credit will be awarded for being an expert witness in a legal or regulatory matter pertaining to dentistry or dental assisting.	A maximum of 20 hours will be awarded.
g) Attendance at an approved study club.	These are study clubs other than Category 1 study clubs described in Category 1g).	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance.  2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of hands-on activity.  Note: If the presenter is not a member of the study club, credit will be awarded in Category 1 or 3 (depending on the subject matter).
h) Learning contract	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 formalized learning contract must exist between a mentor and one or more individuals which is subject to approval by the continuing competence committee.	Total credit hours will be based on the recommendation of the mentor as the reasonable amount of time necessary to learn the material.
i) Examining bodies	Credit will be given for work as an examiner for a national examining body for dentistry or dental assisting.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of participation in examination development or evaluation to a maximum of 20 credit hours per year.

## Category 3

- A maximum of 30 Category 3 credit hours may be claimed by dentists in each cycle.
- A maximum of 12 Category 3 credit hours may be claimed by dental assistants in each cycle.

Type of Experience	Description / Criteria	Credits Awarded / Limits
a) Course on practice management	Credit will be awarded for attendance at a course or session pertaining to practice management.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance.
b) Attendance at a meeting	<p>Credit will be awarded for participation or attendance at meetings of dental or dental assisting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• committees,</li> <li>• regulatory bodies,</li> <li>• societies, and</li> <li>• professional associations.</li> </ul> <p>The organizations may be local, provincial, national or international.</p>	<p>1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance or training related to board/committee work to a maximum of 5 hours per meeting or training.</p> <p>Verification of attendance may be in the form of an agenda or other document (redacted as needed) indicating the registrant's presence.</p>
c) Attendance at a convention or conference	<p>Credit will be awarded for attendance at a dental conference or multidisciplinary health conference up to 5 credit hours per conference.</p> <p>With verification, additional credit may be awarded for individual experiences (e.g., lectures) as part of the conference.</p> <p>In such cases, experiences falling under a single category can be input in Alinity as a single entry.</p> <p>It is the registrant's responsibility to group experiences into proper categories for credit to be awarded.</p>	<p>A maximum of 5 credit hours will be awarded for attendance at each conference, whether it is a single-day or multi-day conference.</p> <p>PLUS</p> <p>Credit hours will be awarded for individual experiences within the conference as outlined to the left.</p>
d) Personal development course	Credit will be awarded for attendance at a course for personal development, directly of benefit to the practice of dentistry or dental assisting (e.g., communication, bookkeeping).	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance to a maximum of 5 hours per course.
e) Mental health and wellness	Credit will be awarded for attendance at a course or session pertaining to mental health and wellness.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance to a maximum of 5 hours per event.
f) Equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation	Credit will be awarded for attendance at a course or session pertaining to equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance to a maximum of 5 hours per event.
g) Sexual misconduct or gender-based / intimate-partner violence	Credit will be awarded for attendance at a course or session pertaining to sexual misconduct or gender-based / intimate-partner violence.	1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance to a maximum of 5 hours per event.
h) Volunteering	<p>Credit will be awarded for volunteering in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clinical dentistry (e.g., on a dental "mission" or in a pro bono clinic for low-income persons)</li> <li>• public outreach regarding oral health (e.g., presentation at a school, service organization)</li> <li>• raising awareness of the profession (e.g., career day at a high school).</li> </ul>	<p>1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of volunteering to a maximum of 5 hours per day.</p> <p>Verification of the volunteering must be provided by the organizing body.</p>

# Study Clubs

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Most often, a registrant attending a study club activity will receive credit in Category 2.

- 1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of attendance.
- 2 credit hours will be awarded for each hour of hands-on activity (if applicable).

The following situations are exceptions in which credit for study club attendance will be awarded in a category other than Category 2:

1. Approved Category 1 study club	<p>Credit will be awarded in Category 1 credit for participation in an approved Category 1 study club.</p> <p>In order to be approved as a Category 1 study club, it must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• be highly structured,</li><li>• include both didactic instruction and hands-on clinical experience, and</li><li>• meet on a periodic scheduled basis.</li></ul> <p>A study club organizer who believes that their study club should be recognized as a Category 1 study club must apply in writing to the registrar, outlining the justification for their position. The registrar will then bring the matter before the continuing competence committee.</p>
2. External presenter (at a study club which is not a Category 1 study club)	<p>Credit will be awarded in Category 1 or 3 (depending on the subject matter) to all present if the presenter at the study club is not a member of the study club (e.g., a guest lecturer or presenter).</p>

Study clubs must be registered and approved by the registrar and will appear on the NSRDDA website.

Registrants wishing to have a study club approved must submit the following information in writing:

1. The name of the study club
2. The subject matter (which can be specific to dentistry or of general interest pertaining to dentistry)
3. Membership information, including
  - the names of the members, of which there must be a minimum of 5 and who all must be licensed healthcare professionals,
  - the name of the chair, and
  - the practice addresses of all members, including the chair.

## Full-Time Study

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A registrant's enrollment in full-time study (e.g., post-graduate study, internships, residencies) related to dentistry will fulfill that registrant's continuing competence requirements for the period of their full-time study.

A new three-year continuing competence cycle for that registrant will commence on January 1 in the calendar year following successful completion of the program.

# Appendix A – General Guidelines

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1. Continuing competence cycles will be three years in length, beginning on January 1 of the first year of the cycle.
2. New registrants whose date of initial registration is in a month other than January will have a continuing competence cycle beginning on January 1 of the following calendar year. Once their cycle begins, they will be able to claim credit for all qualifying continuing competence activities which have taken place after their date of initial licensure, even those prior to the January 1 start of their cycle.
3. Recording and verification of continuing competence activities are the responsibility of the registrant.
4. All licensed registrants are required to log their continuing dental education experiences and upload verification within the Alinity portal on an ongoing basis. Licensees must also retain their own copies of verification for one year following cycle completion. Hard copies of verification must be made available if requested by the Continuing Dental Education Committee and/or in response to an audit.
5. Credits obtained prior to commencement of a three-year cycle do not count toward necessary credits for that cycle, except for new registrants, as outlined in Guideline 2.
6. Surplus credits accumulated in a three-year cycle cannot be carried forward to the subsequent cycle.
7. Continuing education required to be taken as a result of a regulatory process (e.g., complaints, professional conduct) cannot be used towards the total number of credits necessary to satisfy the continuing competence requirements.
8. Falsification of any information will be considered professional misconduct.
9. Independent study which is not examined or monitored will not qualify for credit hours.
10. There will be no prior approval of courses (other than what is implicit in the Guidelines). Courses that do not fit the criteria contained within the Guidelines will be assessed only after they have been taken.
11. Registrants or groups of registrants who wish to provide dentally-related courses outside of the context of an approved study club must do so through an approved sponsor.
12. The continuing competence committee is given the authority to approve or disapprove credits for courses or equivalents that it considers to be of questionable content to the practice of dentistry.
13. A registrant who is not renewing their license for the coming year due to reasons of health, moving from the province, etc. must inform the registrar in writing. The registrant's three-year cycle will be maintained and the requirements prorated according to the [continuing competence proration table](#).

Should such a registrant have their license reinstated at a future point following the continuing competence cycle in which they relinquished their license, they will be assigned a new cycle beginning on January 1 of the calendar year in which their license is reinstated. Their continuing competence requirements will be prorated according to the time remaining in their cycle at that time.



Despite the proration or requirements, a course on the Management of Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office will still be mandatory once per continuing competence cycle.

A registrant who is dissatisfied with the decision of the registrar regarding the proration of their continuing competence cycle may appeal the registrar's decision to the continuing competence committee within 30 days of receiving the decision.

14. A registrant who is removed from the register for late payment of fees or as a result of disciplinary activity does not begin a new cycle upon reinstatement. The original three-year cycle remains in effect.
15. A registrant who, for health reasons, is unable to pursue continuing education credits for more than a cumulative six-month period during a three-year cycle will be eligible to apply to have their continuing competence requirements for the current cycle modified according to the [Continuing Competence Proration Table](#). It is the responsibility of the licensee to apply, in writing, to the registrar for the proration, as soon as possible prior to completion of the present three-year cycle. Supporting documentation is to be submitted if requested.

A registrant who is dissatisfied with the decision of the registrar regarding the proration of their continuing competence cycle may appeal the registrar's decision to the continuing competence Committee within 30 days of receiving the decision.

16. Any licensed registrant who is audited and found to not have completed the minimum requirements set out in this document shall be ineligible for license renewal until they have obtained the required credit hours to meet the requirements of this program.

In this situation, any credits obtained to fulfill the requirements for a previous cycle cannot be used to fulfill the requirements for the current cycle.

17. A registrant who is in dispute with the continuing competence committee with respect to the continuing competence credits recorded for them may appeal the matter to the NSRDDA board and the finding of the board shall be final and binding.

## Appendix B – Approved Sponsors

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A course or its equivalent delivered by one of the following types of sponsors would likely qualify for credit in Category 1 (assuming all other criteria for the category are met):

- a. Accredited oral health education programs at post-secondary institutions
- b. Provincial, state and national professional associations for oral health professions
- c. Regional societies for oral health professions
- d. Federal government health agencies, including the Canadian Armed Forces
- e. Governmental departments of health or public health
- f. Hospitals accredited by Accreditation Canada
- g. National and international oral health organizations recognized by the Canadian or American Dental and Dental Assisting Associations
- h. A dental industry organization delivering a dentally-related course
- i. A health organization not related to dentistry delivering a dentally-related course

# Appendix C – Management of Medical Emergencies

All registrants are required to complete a course on the Management of Medical Emergencies in the Dental Office at least once per cycle.

The course may be in-person or online and must be a minimum of 3 hours in duration.

If the course is online and asynchronous (i.e., “on-demand”, not live), course verification must indicate the successful completion of a post-course quiz/examination.

## Credit Awarded

1 credit hour will be awarded for each hour of the course, regardless of whether there is a hands-on component.

An inexhaustive list of course providers can be found [at this link](#).

Acceptable courses must cover all the following topics:
a. Basic Physiology
b. Emergency Preparedness
c. Equipment and Supplies
d. Vasovagal Syncope (Loss of Consciousness)
e. Acute Coronary Syndrome / Myocardial Infarction / Angina
f. Foreign Body Aspiration / Airway Obstruction
g. Allergy / Anaphylaxis
h. Acute Asthma / Bronchospasm
i. Diabetic Emergencies
j. Seizures
k. Stroke / Cerebrovascular Accident

# Appendix D – Committee Terms of Reference, Governance, and Audit Process

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1. The board shall appoint a continuing competence committee consisting of:
  - a) at least two licensed dentists,
  - b) at least two licensed dental assistants,
  - c) the registrar, and
  - d) the deputy registrar.
2. Terms for committee members are three years.
3. Committee members may be appointed for a maximum of three consecutive three-year terms.
4. From among the dentists on the committee, the board shall appoint a chair and a vice-chair of the continuing competence committee.
5. The quorum for a meeting of the committee shall be 50% of the members and must include a minimum of one dentist and one dental assistant.
6. The continuing competence committee shall:
  - a) administer the continuing competence program in accordance with guidelines recommended by the committee and approved by the board,
  - b) recommend to the board approval of amendments to the general guidelines or any other element of this document,
  - c) perform an annual audit of continuing competence experiences through a random process wherein 15% of licensed dentists and 15% of licensed dental assistants are selected for audit,
  - d) approve continuing competence activities and assign credit for such activities,
  - e) notify registrants selected for audit regarding,
    - the result of their audit, and
    - if there are deficiencies, what the deficiencies are and the deadline to have obtained the required credit hours to meet the requirements of this program, and
  - f) establish other requirements for the proper administration of the continuing competence program, including appropriate delegation of duties to the registrar and other staff.
7. The registrar shall:
  - a) maintain the records of the continuing competence program,
  - b) serve as the administrator of the continuing competence program in conjunction with other staff, and
  - c) report on the activities of the committee and the administration of the program in:
    - operational reports to the board,
    - periodic publications for registrants and the public, and
    - as required by the Department of Health and Wellness.

# Document History

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A draft version of this document was first approved by the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia on January 31, 2025 for circulation to registrants for consultation.

The final version was approved by the Board on April 7, 2025 to come into effect when the PDBNS is migrated under the [\*Regulated Health Professions Act \(RHPA\)\*](#) later in 2025.

Approximate date of next review by continuing competence committee: 2028 (or sooner as required)