

Continuing Education Guidelines - 2004

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Continuing Education Guidelines - 2004

I. CONTINUING EDUCATION BACKGROUND

1. Previous Continuing Forestry Education Program (CFE)

- Since 1995, Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OPFA) members have participated in the Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut Forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) National Continuing Forestry Education program (CFE) that was managed co-operatively by the CIF/IFC National office and the OPFA. This program recognizes continuing education achievement by members in the form of CE Certificates for achieving 150 contact hours over a 3-year period.
- The OPFA participated in the CIF/IFC program until Dec 1st, 2001, at which time the OPFA Council adopted a mandatory Continuing Education program.
- OPFA members wishing to be recognized by the CIF/IFC program will need to contact the CIF/IFC national office.
- The CIF/IFC recognizes that provincial regulatory bodies will have differences in Continuing Education requirements. However, the CIF/IFC will still maintain a national program.

2. The Professional Foresters Act 2000

- The Act permits the OPFA to prescribe a continuing education program.
- The OPFA Continuing Education (CE) program will be based on 150 credit hours; however it is important to note that credit hours are accounted for differently than within the CIF/IFC program.

3. Membership Standards Committee

- The Membership Standards Committee developed mandatory “Membership Maintenance Standards” to satisfy the needs of the Association under the Professional Foresters Act 2000 with respect to:
 - Maintaining members’ overall professional competency
 - Maintaining the ability of members to perform at a high professional level within individual areas of practice or expertise.
- The Membership Standards Committee recommended that competency maintenance be addressed through continuing education in a combination of an *Association-Defined Component* and a *Member-Defined Component*. These standards were accepted by Council effective December 1st 2001 as a mandatory requirement for membership maintenance in the OPFA.

4. Continuing Education Committee (CEC)

- CEC was established to oversee the development and implementation of the CE program and to ensure that members are aware of the CE requirements, and CE opportunities available.
- CEC also works to ensure ongoing preparedness of professional foresters to meet the requirements of Ontario forestry practice in a changing world and to ensure that the public receives services based on the most current information available.

5. Continuing Education Program Update 2004

On February 2nd 2004 Council met to review recommendations from the Continuing Education Committee. The main recommendation was to simplify the existing Continuing Education Guidelines to reflect the wishes of the OPFA Members. Council approved the recommendations and a revised By-Law was voted on at the Annual General Meeting in Thunder Bay on April 30th 2004.

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTLINE

1. Introduction

- Council first approved the CE program in September of 2001. Following additional review by the CEC and OPFA members, Council approved adjustments to the program on March 7th, 2002 and directed an additional restructuring of the document for clarity.
- The key points in the Continuing Education Program include: *Mandatory Participation, Continuing Education Program Description, Credit Assessment and Non-Compliance.*

2. Mandatory Participation

Every person who is or becomes a member of the OPFA in any one of the following membership categories is required to fulfill the continuing education requirements as set out in By-law # 5. The membership categories are: **Full, Associate and Non-Resident.**

3. Program Overview

A. Purpose

The purpose of the Continuing Education Program is to ensure that all members remain informed and current with respect to the practice of forestry in Ontario. Members are expected to understand what learning is required to maintain competency and to take the necessary steps to acquire it.

B. Continuing Education Targets

- Each Full, Associate and Non-Resident member must accumulate at least 150 Continuing Education credits over a rolling three-year period, an average of 50 credits per year.
- The program is effective Dec. 1, 2001. The first three-year period runs to Nov. 30, 2004. (see Appendix 2)
- Members will utilize a credit-based system to demonstrate their adherence to the OPFA Continuing Educational requirements.
- At the time of membership renewal for 2004/05, each member must account for at least 150 credits within two subject areas (General Forestry and Specific Forestry see p.4-5)
- Each Full, Associate and Non-Resident member must accumulate at least 150 Continuing Education credits *within each subsequent three-year period* on a rolling basis.
- There is no requirement to accumulate any minimum number of credits within a given year except as may be necessary to reach the required three-year total of 150 credits.
- Current members will begin accumulating credits effective December 1, 2001.
- New Full and Associate members will begin accumulating credits upon admission to the Association. The first three-year period will begin December 1 of the year in which they are admitted.
- The Registrar is responsible for recording and monitoring member credits and for developing appropriate procedures and mechanisms.

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTLINE cont'd

C. Competency Standards

- The member must maintain competency to established standards where established, or not practice in that area (as per the Code of Ethics).
- Where competency standards have been developed by an appropriate agency for a specific area of practice (e.g. tree marking, compliance inspection, forest management planning), the member engaged in such practice must ensure they are aware of the applicable standards.
- Where competency standards have not been established by some appropriate agency, the member must be adequately familiar with the specific area of practice to make an informed decision regarding:
 - The competencies required to work successfully in that area of practice and
 - The degree to which their own competencies meet their forecast requirements.
- The member must maintain competency to the standards that are reasonably necessary to conduct work in the specific area of practice, or not to practice in that area (as per the Code of Ethics).

D. Subject Areas

There are two Subject Areas recognized by the Association for the purpose of obtaining credits. They are *General Forestry Awareness* and *Specific Forestry Awareness*.

i. General Forestry

This subject area focuses on keeping a member's general forestry awareness up to date. The purpose is to ensure that all members remain informed and current with respect to this broader subject area, considered to be essential to the practice of forestry in Ontario.

This broad subject area includes, but is not limited to the following:

- New forestry legislation and policy in Ontario (e.g. Forest Management Planning Training Module 1 – Introduction to Forest Management Planning)
- Revisions to existing forestry policy in Ontario
- Emerging approaches to forest ecosystem and landscape management of importance to Ontario (e.g. Landscape Analysis Workshop, Emulating Natural Forest Landscape Disturbances Symposium)
- Changing economic and social pressures affecting forest management in Ontario
- New and revised forestry legislation and policy on a global level
- Professional standards and accountability

The criteria for inclusion within this broad subject area include but are not limited to the following:

- The objective of the course/training must be to provide a general level of awareness. A detailed analysis of the subject matter is not a criterion.
- The scope of the course/training should be wide in scope, providing a broad overview of the subject matter as opposed to a detailed in depth review. The course may include linkages to other subject areas and/or discuss impacts or influences on other aspects of professional forestry.

Credits for this subject area are:

- Each hour of actual learning time earns 3 credits to a maximum of 18 credits in one day. Field trips associated with workshops, meetings, courses and seminars earn 3 credits per hour to a maximum of 18 credits in one day.

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTLINE cont'd

ii. Specific Forestry

This subject area focuses on the practice of professional forestry in relation to the development, management, conservation and sustainability of forests and urban forests. The focus is on the specific competency or competencies of the member.

The specific subjects that qualify for credits include but are not limited to:

- Detailed review of forestry related legislation and policy (e.g. clause by clause review)
- Biodiversity, Silviculture,
- Designing, specifying or approving of silvicultural prescriptions and treatments, including timber harvesting
- The appraisal, evaluation and certification of forests and urban forests
- The classification, inventory and mapping of forests and urban forests
- The auditing of forest management practices
- The assessment of impacts from planned activities on forests and urban forests
- The planning and locating of forest transportation systems, including forest roads
- Field trips relative to specific subject areas

The criteria for inclusion within this subject area include but are not limited to the following:

- The objective of the course/training must be to provide a specific level of awareness. A general overview of the subject matter is not a criterion.
- The scope of the course/training should be specific, providing a detailed study of the subject matter as opposed to a general overview. The learning should relate to the competency of the member. The course/training may include linkages to other subject areas and/or discuss impacts or influences on other aspects of professional forestry.

Credits for this subject area are:

- Each hour of actual learning time earns 3 credits to a maximum of 18 credits in one day. Field trips associated with workshops, meetings, courses, conferences and seminars earn 3 credits per hour to a maximum of 18 credits in one day.

E. Learning Methodologies

Group Learning

Group Learning involves learning in a group, often within a classroom setting. Credits can be obtained by participating in workshops, seminars, training courses and some technical sessions. This learning may be of higher value to the member because the member may benefit from the organized structure and interaction of other participants.

Individual Learning

Individual learning activities are achieved through personal research, reading (The Forestry Chronicle, the Professional Forester, Monographs [scientific papers], books, magazines, videos, Internet, operations related material), developing courses, workshops, and educational material that require new learning, or through networking, discussions, and human interaction. (If there is no new learning acquired by the developer of a course or seminar then there will be no credits allotted to the developer of the course or seminar.)

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTLINE cont'd

F. Flexibility

- Members have the flexibility to achieve credits in any combination of subject areas or learning methodologies that best suit the member.
- Members are encouraged to acquire some credits through Continuing Education activities in the General Forestry Awareness subject area.

G. Record Keeping and Reporting

- Members are expected to maintain records, on an ongoing basis, in order that claimed credits may be verified during audit or under other circumstances requiring verification of competency maintenance.
- Members are required to keep these records for a minimum of seven years.
- Members will report annually to the Registrar on Continuing Education activities as required (see p.8 – Annual Reporting Protocol). A form will be attached to the Annual Fee Renewal Form, which must be completed and returned with the fees payment to the Registrar by December 1st of each year.
- Failure to maintain appropriate records under this component may be considered an act of professional misconduct.

H. Accountability

Members

- Members must maintain appropriate competency according to the Continuing Education Program administered by the OPFA,
- Members are accountable for maintaining competency in the area of activity for which they wish to practice.
- Members must report credits to the OPFA on a yearly basis,
- Members are accountable for the maintenance of their personal Continuing Education records.
- The maintenance of competency is a voluntary activity for those in other than the Full, Non-Resident or Associate membership classes.

Registrar

- The Registrar will ensure the information on the Continuing Education program is made available to all members of the Association in a timely and regular fashion. (e.g. on the Web site and in the Professional Forester newsletter),
- The Registrar will ensure that members are aware of their standing regarding the accumulation of credits over any three-year period (e.g. the credit standing will be printed on the Annual Fee Renewal Form,
- The Registrar will determine and maintain corporate records as required,
- The Registrar will provide examples on the types of records to be maintained. (see Appendix 1)

II. CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTLINE cont'd

4. Credit Assessment

Credit Assessment can be done by Members or by the Registrar (where course providers in advance of delivering courses request credit assessment).

Member Assessment

The procedure for assessing learning activities for Continuing Education credits provided below will be used by individual members who attend Continuing Education activities such as events, workshops and seminars that have not had prior assessment by the Continuing Education Committee. If questions or doubts arise on the CE assessment the member is encouraged to contact a Continuing Education Committee member.

The procedure for assessment is as follows:

- Obtain copy of program outline or agenda,
- Determine which portions of the program meet one or more of the subject areas and criteria
- Determine the number of hours spent in active learning time (i.e. excluding breaks, meals, and non-qualifying activities),
- Multiply the number of hours x 3 credits/hour to a maximum of 18 per day.

Assessment by the Registrar

Sponsoring/organizing agencies are encouraged to submit their programs, by e-mail if possible, to the Registrar for Continuing Education credit assessment prior to the event. The OPFA Continuing Education Committee will assess events that have been submitted. Course/workshop providers do not have the authority to unilaterally assign Continuing Education credits to their events and should apply to the OPFA for prior assessment.

The procedure for assessment is as follows:

- Requests for assessment are to be submitted to the Registrar at least 30 days prior to the event.
- Requests must include a copy of the program/agenda with dates and times,
- The Registrar will forward the request to the appropriate member of the CE Committee for assessment (Lead Continuing Education Credit Assessor)
- The Lead Assessor will assess the program and determine the Continuing Education credits that the program qualifies for and forward results to the Registrar who will notify the requestor. The Lead Assessor will consult with other Continuing Education Committee members as appropriate in determining Continuing Education credits,
- The time from receipt of the program/agenda to the notification of Credits should not exceed 2 weeks.

III. ANNUAL REPORTING PROTOCOL

- Members are required to report their Continuing Education credits on an annual basis for a rolling 3-year period on a Continuing Education Credit Reporting Form to be developed by the Registrar.
- Members are not required to provide a list of activities that they have participated in.
- It is in the best interests of the members to keep detailed documentation of all Continuing Education activities, as this documentation may be required in such instances as peer reviews or complaint investigations.
- The Continuing Education Credit Reporting Form developed by the Registrar will accompany the Annual Fee Renewal Form and will be provided to members in October of each year.
- The form will be personalized for each member.
- The form will indicate the number of credits that a member has accumulated over the previous 3-year period and provide the opportunity for a member to indicate the number of credits that a member is claiming for the immediately preceding 12 month period (December to November).
- The form will require members to identify the number of credits that they are claiming over the preceding 12-month period. The completion and maintenance of these records is the responsibility of the members.
- Members must complete the form and return it to the Registrar by December 1st of each year beginning December 1st, 2002.

IV. NON COMPLIANCE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

1. Purpose

To describe the process to be followed that will result in the suspension of any Full, Associate or Non-Resident member who has failed to meet the continuing education requirements.

2. Process for Suspending the Certificate of Registration

The process for suspending the certificate of registration of a member who has failed to meet the continuing education requirements is as follows;

- The Registrar shall mail or otherwise deliver to the member written notice that the member does not appear to have met the continuing education requirements and that the member will be expected to complete and report the required continuing education credits within 60 days following the end of the three year reporting period or following the date of the letter, whichever is later.
- Should the member's continuing education credits remain incomplete or unreported to the satisfaction of the Registrar after the 60 day period, the Registrar will deliver a second letter to the member directing the member to contact the Registrar within ten (10) days of receipt of the second notice to explain the failure to meet the continuing education requirements and to propose specific actions to be taken to meet the continuing education requirements within a time period to be determined by the Registrar.
- After the expiration of the time period, the Registrar shall review any response of the member and if not satisfied that the member has met the continuing education requirements, the Registrar may notify the member:
 - that the member's certificate of registration will be suspended 30 days after the date of the final notice and,
 - that the Registrar will send a letter to the member's employer advising that the member has been suspended, and
 - that notice of the suspension will be posted on the OPFA website and in the Professional Forester, or
 - that the Registrar has set terms, conditions and limitations which, if not met, will result in the automatic commencement of the suspension of the member's certificate of registration. The terms, conditions and limitations may include but are not limited to:
 - that the member must satisfy the Registrar that the member has successfully completed certain continuing education activities by a specified date, or
 - that the member must restrict their professional activities in the manner specified by the Registrar until the member has satisfied the Registrar that the member has successfully completed certain continuing education activities.

3. The Criteria for Reinstatement

The member may be reinstated if the Registrar is satisfied that the continuing education requirements have been met and that there are no outstanding fees or other unmet obligations to the Association.

IV. NON COMPLIANCE PROCESS AND OUTCOMES cont'd

4. The Process for a Member to Appeal the Registrar's Decision

- The member may seek a review of the Registrar's decision before the Executive Committee by delivering a written request for a review to the Registrar setting out the grounds for the review and any documentary information to support the request. The suspension shall not start or, if has already started shall be halted, upon receipt of the request until a decision is made by the Executive Committee.
- The Executive Committee shall evaluate the request for a review and any supporting information from the member as well as any documentary information provided by the Registrar shall:
 - confirm the suspension, set aside the suspension, or set terms, conditions and limitations (that may be different from any set by the Registrar) which, if not met, will result in the automatic commencement of suspension.

5. Criteria for Suspension of the Certificate of Registration

The criteria for suspending the Certificate of Registration of a member who has failed to meet the continuing education requirements are as follows:

- the member has failed to provide sufficient information on the reporting form to reasonably satisfy the Registrar that the member has fulfilled the continuing education requirements;
- the member has failed to provide sufficient information in response to specific inquiries from the Association to reasonably satisfy the Registrar that the member has fulfilled the continuing education requirements or;
- the member has provided false information to the Registrar about the member's fulfillment of the continuing education requirements.