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Continuing Professional Development



The Association of Professional
Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta

Document History

Date	Version	Revision Description
April 2014	1.0	Released for use.
July 2021	1.2	Administrative changes to support myAPEGA; minor clarifications.
December 2021	1.3	Administrative changes to Section 3.4 due to CPD submission window requirements in myAPEGA.
July 1, 2023	1.4	Administrative changes to sections 3.0 and 3.3 to provide clarity on reporting requirements.
November 1, 2024	1.4.22	Final draft is provided for reference only and is not in effect. Version 1.4 remains enforceable.
November 1, 2025	2.0	Substantive changes to introduce learning modules and <i>PACE plan</i> .

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Preface

An APEGA professional practice standard describes the level of performance required of *licensed professionals*. Part 8 of the *General Regulation* under Section 59 allows APEGA to publish standards that define the expectations and professional obligations of APEGA *permit holders* and *licensed professionals*.

The differences between a professional practice standard, a practice bulletin, and a practice guideline are as follows.

- An APEGA professional practice standard sets the minimum standard of practice *permit holders* and *licensed professionals* must meet. It is the standard against which a *permit holder's* or *licensed professional's* practice and conduct will be assessed by APEGA's statutory boards.
- An APEGA professional practice bulletin provides clarity on a specific subject related to professional practice. Bulletins remain in force until a practice standard or guideline on the subject is developed or revised, or until the practice bulletin is repealed.
- An APEGA professional practice guideline provides professional practice advice and best practice recommendations to help *permit holders* and *licensed professionals* meet their professional obligations. APEGA statutory boards may assess a *permit holder's* or *licensed professional's* practice and conduct against practice guidelines.

Practice standards, bulletins, and guidelines should be read in conjunction with the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act*, the *General Regulation*, APEGA's bylaws, and any other applicable legislation, codes, or standards.

Contributors

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The continuing professional development and education programs of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS) and Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia (EGBC) informed the development of this practice guideline. Thank you to APEGS and EGBC.

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Visit apega.ca/practice-standards for more information.

Definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the terms and definitions listed below apply. These terms are italicized throughout the text.

Authentication

The act of applying the required *authentication* components to a *professional work product (PWP)*. *Authentication* must be performed in accordance with the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products*. When a *licensed professional* authenticates a *PWP*, this means they have completed, performed a *thorough* review of, or directly supervised and controlled the engineering or geoscience work and accept professional responsibility for the engineering or geoscience involved.

Client

The *person*, owner, or agent of the owner who requires the services of a *consultant*.

Competence

The combined knowledge, skills, proficiency, and judgement required by a *licensed professional* to provide *professional services*. *Competence*, in this usage, does not refer just to the competencies that applicants must demonstrate through APEGA's competency-based assessment, but to a *licensed professional's* overall state of being competent to perform the work they undertake.

Consultant

A *permit holder* or *licensed professional* in Alberta who provides *professional services* directly to a *client*.

Continuing Professional Development Activity (CPD Activity)

Any activity by the *licensed professional* that enhances their technical, regulatory, ethical practice, or communication, management, and leadership skills and knowledge.

Continuing Professional Development Due Date (CPD Due Date)

Date when the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard must be met (same as the annual expiry date).

Direct Supervision and Control

The high degree of guidance a *licensed professional* provides to one or more individuals. The *licensed professional* accepts professional responsibility for engineering or geoscience tasks performed under their guidance. *Direct supervision and control* includes directing, monitoring, and controlling the engineering and geoscience work performed, including making all decisions related to the practices of engineering and geoscience.

Direct supervision and control requirements are detailed in the practice standard *Relying on the Work of Others and Outsourcing*.

Good Standing

Permit holders, *licensed professionals*, and members-in-training are considered in *good standing* with APEGA if they meet the criteria set out in the Good Standing Policy.

Licensed Professional

A professional engineer, professional geoscientist, professional licensee (engineering), professional licensee (geoscience), licensee (engineering), or licensee (geoscience) entitled by the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act* to practise engineering or geoscience in Alberta.

Output

See *Professional Services Output*.

Permit Holder

A partnership or other association of persons, or corporation that holds a *Permit to Practice* under the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*. The Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) permit holders, as defined in Section 86(4) of the EGP Act, are not included.

Permit to Practice

An APEGA certificate given to *permit holders* to practise engineering or geoscience in Alberta.

Personal Annual Competency Evaluation Plan (PACE Plan)

A *licensed professional's* written plan describing how they will contribute to their continuing competence in their specific area or areas of practice. This plan is a requirement of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard.

Practice Review Board (PRB)

A statutory board established under Section 15 of the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*. Through its powers established in Section 16 of the EGP Act, the *Practice Review Board* provides regulatory oversight to professional practice by developing and maintaining practice standards relating to the competent practice of the professions, conducting practice reviews of *licensed professionals* and *permit holders*, and administering the Continuing Professional Development Program (*General Regulation* Section 16[2]).

Professional Practice Management Plan (PPMP)

A *permit holder's* written corporate policies, procedures, and systems describing the quality control and assurance measures in place to ensure appropriate standards of professional practice are maintained as described in Section 48(1)(d) of the *General Regulation*.

Professional Services

Services that involve the practice of engineering as defined in Section 1(q) of the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act* or the practice of geoscience as defined in Section 1(r) of the EGP Act. The products of *professional services* are called *outputs*.

Professional Services Output (or Output)

Any product—physical, electronic, or digital—resulting from a *professional service*. Not all *outputs* require *authentication* and *validation*.

Professional Work Product (PWP)

A *professional services output* that requires *authentication* and *validation* as described in the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products*. Defined in the *General Regulation* as "...plans, specifications, reports,

or documents of a professional nature,” a *professional work product (PWP)* is any *professional services output* with *technical information* that is complete and final for its intended purpose, and which is relied upon by others, internally or externally. A *PWP* can be physical (e.g., paper, plastic film), electronic (e.g., electronic document, image), or digital (e.g., code, software, modelling, simulation, or any other computer application that cannot be reproduced in a physical or electronic format). See the *authentication* test in the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products* when assessing whether an *output* is a *PWP*.

Responsible Member

A *licensed professional* who is responsible for providing oversight of the practice of engineering or geoscience by the *permit holder* and meets the specification in Part 7, Section 48(1)(c) of the *General Regulation*. A *Responsible Member* must be qualified by education and experience in the profession of engineering or geoscience in which the partnership, corporation, or other entity intends to engage; designated in writing by the *permit holder*; and registered with APEGA as a *Responsible Member*.

The *Responsible Member* must have a sufficiently close relationship with the *permit holder* to undertake the roles and responsibilities associated with acting as a *Responsible Member*. The role of *Responsible Member* may not be delegated to other *licensed professionals* who are not *Responsible Members*.

A *Responsible Member* can be:

- a full-time, permanent employee of the *permit holder*
- a member of the *permit holder*
- a *sole practitioner*
- an individual providing *professional services* to the *permit holder* through a contractual arrangement or as a part-time employee

The *permit holder's Responsible Members* direct, supervise, and control all or part of a *permit holder's* professional practice in accordance with the *permit holder's Professional Practice Management Plan* and all relevant legislation, regulations, and codes.

Sole Practitioner

Within Alberta, an individual who practises engineering or geoscience as an incorporated entity. A *sole practitioner* must hold a *Permit to Practice*.

Technical Information

A term for content or data derived from the practice of engineering or geoscience as defined by the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act*, including advice, analyses, assessments, calculations, designs, evaluations, inputs (e.g., to planning or to modelling and simulation), interpretations, notes, opinions, recommendations, and process descriptions.

Thorough Review

An evaluation of the *outputs* of *professional services* prepared by others to verify their reliability, validity, and technical accuracy. *Thorough review* requirements are detailed in the practice standard *Relying on the Work of Others and Outsourcing*.

Unprofessional Conduct or Unskilled Practice

Actions or behaviours of *permit holders, licensed professionals, and members-in-training* that are found to be *unprofessional conduct* or *unskilled practice* under Section 44 of the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*, in accordance with the discipline processes set out in Part 5 of the EGP Act.

Validation

The act of applying the required *validation* components to a *professional work product (PWP)*. *Validation* must be performed in accordance with the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products*. When a *permit holder's Responsible Member* validates a PWP, this means they have reviewed the PWP to ensure it meets the quality control and assurance measures described in the *permit holder's Professional Practice Management Plan*.

1.0 Overview

The *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*, Section 16(1) of the *General Regulation*, authorizes APEGA Council to establish a compulsory continuing education program for all *licensed professionals*. APEGA's *Practice Review Board (PRB)* administers the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard, which defines the minimum requirements *licensed professionals* must meet to fulfil their continuing professional development (CPD) obligations. This version replaces version 1.4 of the *Continuing Professional Development* standard, published by APEGA on July 1, 2023.

The EGP Act grants the professions the privilege of self-governance. In the interests of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public, as well as retaining the privilege of self-regulation, *permit holders, licensed professionals, and members-in-training* must maintain high standards of professional practice and conduct.

The practices of engineering and geoscience are constantly evolving, and the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard establishes the requirements for ongoing learning that will enable *licensed professionals* to maintain the high standard of practice they are obligated to uphold. In addition to keeping up with changes in the practice of the professions, ongoing learning is important for reinforcing knowledge in key technical, ethical, and regulatory areas that support the protection of the public and the environment.

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Protecting the public interest is paramount for *licensed professionals*. At a minimum, this requires *licensed professionals* to understand and meet their obligations under the EGP Act, *General Regulation*, bylaws, and APEGA practice standards, bulletins, and guidelines and take responsibility for their own technical and professional development as covered in the Code of Ethics. Recognizing the diversity of roles and responsibilities of APEGA *licensed professionals*, this standard provides the minimum requirements for ongoing learning, allowing *licensed professionals* the flexibility to undertake activities that provide the greatest benefit.

Rule 2 of the Code of Ethics' Rules of Conduct states that professional engineers and geoscientists shall undertake only work that they are competent to perform by virtue of their training and experience. *Licensed professionals* have an ethical and professional responsibility to develop and maintain their competence throughout their careers by engaging in ongoing learning. When this does not happen, the *licensed professional's* ability to meet their obligation to protect the public may be affected. If there are findings of *unprofessional conduct* or *unskilled practice*, this could result in restrictions to a *licensed professional's* practice.

Ongoing learning contributes to the maintenance of *competence* and helps *licensed professionals* perform in their present or future roles more effectively. CPD can take many forms, such as courses and seminars, participation on technical committees, attending conferences and workshops, self-directed study, and mentorships with other professionals. If *licensed professionals* do not take the time to reflect on their *competence* needs and identify how they can address gaps in their *competence*, this can lead to *licensed professionals* performing work outside their *competence*.

This standard applies to all *licensed professionals*. It does not apply to students, examination candidates, or members-in-training. However, as members-in-training must abide by the Code of Ethics, they are encouraged to familiarize themselves with this standard in preparation for becoming *licensed professionals*. For newly registered *licensed professionals*, the requirement to engage in professional development activities begins on the date of registration.

1.2 REFERENCES

This standard references the following publications. The latest versions are available at apega.ca/practice-standards.

- *Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, General Regulation*, and APEGA's bylaws
- *Authenticating Professional Work Products* practice standard
- *Ethical Practice* practice guideline
- *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation* practice guideline
- Good Standing Policy

2.0 Professional and Ethical Obligations

2.1 PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS

Part 2 of the *General Regulation* requires *licensed professionals* to comply with the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard as it applies to that individual's practice of engineering or geoscience. Section 19 requires *licensed professionals* to:

- a) maintain a written record of activities undertaken in accordance with the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard; and
- b) produce the record under clause (a) on the request of the *Practice Review Board (PRB)*.

A *licensed professional* must be able to satisfy the *PRB* that they are complying with the requirements of the practice standard. The *PRB* may:

- conduct a review of the *licensed professional's* practice in accordance with the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act* and the *General Regulation*
- recommend to the Investigative Committee at any time during a review that the review be conducted by the Investigative Committee under Part 5 of the *EGP Act*

2.2 ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

Licensed professionals must comply with the Code of Ethics and its five Rules of Conduct as defined in the *General Regulation*, and they must maintain a level of *competence* necessary to perform their job function. If a *licensed professional* is aware that another *licensed professional* is failing to meet the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard, they should attempt to resolve the issue with that *licensed professional*, if possible. If attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful, the *licensed professional* must report the failing to APEGA.

3.0 Requirements for Continuing Professional Development

The *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard comprises two separate and distinct components that must both be completed annually:

1. learning modules
2. *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation (PACE) plan*

The learning modules present the core information all *licensed professionals* should know and understand, including obligations under legislation, requirements of APEGA practice standards and bulletins, and principles of professionalism and ethical practice.

The *PACE plan* allows the *licensed professional* to tailor their continuing *competence* needs to their own specific role, responsibilities, and circumstances.

To meet the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard, *licensed professionals* must:

- complete the learning modules, as specified in Section 3.1, by their *continuing professional development (CPD) due date* each year
- create a *PACE plan* each year that meets the requirements outlined in Section 3.2
- in the method specified by APEGA, declare by their *CPD due date* each year that they:
 - created and followed a *PACE plan* meeting the requirements of Section 3.2
 - created a record of their completed *CPD activities*, as outlined in Section 3.2
- if requested, in the method specified by APEGA, submit documentation by the deadline provided, as outlined in sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.1

3.1 LEARNING MODULES

The learning modules are online tools designed to help *licensed professionals* understand their obligations under the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*. *Licensed professionals* access the learning modules through the APEGA online learning management system (LMS). When a *licensed professional* completes a learning module, the LMS provides a certificate to the *licensed professional* indicating completion.

Licensed professionals must complete the learning modules assigned and provided by APEGA annually. The learning modules, which are specific to APEGA, cover five knowledge areas:

- Authenticating Professional Work Products
- Duty to Report
- Ethical Practice
- Regulatory
- Relying on the Work of Others and Outsourcing

Learning modules must be completed no later than the *licensed professional's* CPD due date. Note that *Responsible Members* have an additional obligation to complete a *Permit to Practice* seminar every five years, as per *General Regulation* 48.1. This obligation is not part of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard requirements.

3.1.1 APEGA Review of Completed Learning Modules

The *licensed professional* must retain a copy of each certificate provided by the LMS as part of the written record of activities the *licensed professional* is required to maintain under Section 19(a) of the *General Regulation*.

The learning module certificates are only submitted to APEGA when requested by the *Practice Review Board (PRB)* or APEGA staff designate (reference *General Regulation* 19[b]). When requested, the learning module certificates must be submitted by the provided deadline in the method specified by APEGA.

3.2 PERSONAL ANNUAL COMPETENCY EVALUATION PLAN

In accordance with Rule 2 of the Rules of Conduct, *licensed professionals* must ensure they are competent to perform any work or role they undertake. Being competent means the *licensed professional* has the ability to effectively perform a service in a skilled, knowledgeable, and ethical manner consistent with their position and responsibilities.

It is the *licensed professional's* responsibility to determine what is required to maintain competence in their specific area or areas of practice. *Licensed professionals* must contribute to their continuing competence by evaluating their needs and creating and following plans for ongoing learning. The *PACE plan* is a tool to help *licensed professionals* plan how they will meet their continuing competence needs and record completed CPD activities.

The *PACE plan* must:

- cover their current practice area(s) and any future areas they are pursuing in the upcoming year
- identify the skills and knowledge required to maintain or enhance the *licensed professional's* continuing competence
- reasonably demonstrate to any professional peers who review the *PACE plan* that it contributes to the *licensed professional's* continuing competence

- include a record of the completed *CPD activities* with a written explanation of how each activity contributed to their continuing competence, and must include:
 - at least one completed technical activity appropriate for contributing to continuing competence with technological advancements and changes to codes, industry standards, and techniques, as well as other activities related to their individual practice area(s)
 - at least one completed activity in any of the following categories:
 - regulatory
 - ethical practice
 - communications, management, and leadership
 - supporting documentation as evidence of completed *CPD activities*

At a minimum, *licensed professionals* must complete two *CPD activities* annually. However, it is up to *licensed professionals* to determine if their continuing competence needs can reasonably be met if they complete only two *CPD activities*. Learning modules are a distinct and separate component from the *PACE plan* and cannot be used to meet the *CPD activity* requirements. Refer to the *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation* practice guideline for further details and for examples of appropriate *CPD activities*.

By their *CPD due date*, *licensed professionals* must declare they created and followed their *PACE plan* for the past year.

3.2.1 APEGA Review of the PACE Plan

The *PACE plan* is an annual requirement, and a new *PACE plan* must be created each year. Within that year, the *PACE plan* must be maintained and must be revised as soon as the *licensed professional* experiences a change in role, responsibilities, or area of practice such that the existing *PACE plan* is no longer suitable. Refer to the relevant provincial legislation for retention requirements.

As per sections 20(2)(a) and (b) of the *General Regulation*, the *PRB* may review a *licensed professional's PACE plans* in detail, and therefore *licensed professionals* must retain supporting documents to verify all *CPD activities* performed under their *PACE plans*. The *PRB* could request *PACE plans* for the current year and multiple historic years.

During a review, the *PRB* will assess the *PACE plans* against the recommended best practices outlined in the *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation* practice guideline. *Licensed professionals* will be notified of the outcome of the review and whether their activities reasonably demonstrate continuing competence to the *PRB* or other statutory boards.

PACE plans only need to be submitted to APEGA when requested by the *PRB* or APEGA staff designate. When they are requested, the *PACE plans* must be submitted by the provided deadline in the method specified by APEGA.

4.0 Consequences of Non-Compliance

Failing to comply with the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard will result in a loss of *good standing* for the *licensed professional*. After a loss of *good standing*, a *Practice Review Board (PRB)* review may be initiated. Failing to provide adequate documentation during a *PRB* review will result in the cancellation of the *licensed professional's* registration.

5.0 Temporary Withdrawal from Practice

The *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard allows *licensed professionals* who may not be practising full time to remain in compliance by completing the learning modules and tailoring their *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation plans* according to their specific life circumstances and abilities.

However, if individual circumstances still do not permit compliance with this practice standard, it is the *licensed professional's* responsibility to contact APEGA.

For a temporary withdrawal from practice, APEGA does not recommend that *licensed professionals* enter non-practising status for not meeting the requirements of the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard. *Licensed professionals* must request permission from the *Practice Review Board* to return to practice from non-practising status, and they may be subject to practice conditions upon returning to practice.