



ENGINEERS &
GEOSCIENTISTS
BRITISH COLUMBIA

CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

MEMBER FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) PROGRAM

JULY 2019, VERSION 1

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the Code of Ethics of Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia (the “association”), all professional engineers and geoscientists registered with the association need to maintain high levels of professional competence and undertake continuing professional development (“CPD”) that is relevant to their practice. To support members in achieving this requirement, the association developed a guideline that outlines expectations regarding the types of activities and amount of professional development that practising members are expected to undertake.

The current guideline has been in effect since 2011, and was designed to provide flexibility to meet members’ unique professional requirements. A copy of the guideline is available from the association’s website [here](#).

Compliance with these guidelines is not mandatory; however, over the last decade, the association’s Council has sought to implement a mandatory CPD program for all members, in line with other professions. Bylaws to implement a mandatory CPD program were proposed in 2010 and 2015, and in both years, the proposed bylaws were defeated in a vote by the membership.

WHY ARE WE REVISITING THIS?

In response to the failure of the proposed bylaws, Council directed the association’s CPD Committee to continue exploring modifications and improvements to the current program. In examining the current model and potential alternatives, the CPD Committee focussed on issues that affect and relate to CPD, including legislative challenges, government expectations, self-assessment research, jurisdictional research, and findings from practice reviews and discipline cases.

Furthermore, in response to the passing of the *Professional Governance Act* (the “Act”) in November 2018, and its requirement for the association to “establish and maintain a continuing competency program to promote high standards among members,” the CPD Committee determined that the provincial government would likely require the implementation of a mandatory CPD program.

While the introduction of government regulations to enable this new requirement will take place over several years, the CPD Committee has been exploring possible revisions to the current model to not only better support members in meeting their current obligations, but to also assist the transition into the anticipated requirements of the *Act*.

2019 CONSULTATION

Prior to developing the Phase 1 consultation survey, the CPD committee developed five guiding principles to frame the development of a revised CPD program:

1. Help professionals maintain technical, ethical, and professional competency in their field.
2. Maximize simplicity and flexibility for members.
3. Ensure the program is verifiable, enforceable, and transparent.
4. Encourage professionals to give back to and advance the professions through volunteering and mentorship.
5. Minimize administrative cost to Engineers and Geoscientists BC.

In 2019, the CPD Committee commenced the first phase of the consultation process on the revised CPD program by seeking feedback from members on key program elements. Throughout April and May, members were surveyed on the high-level principles and potential revisions to the association's CPD program.

Over 2,900 members provided their input on a number of potential changes to the way professional development requirements are set out, including how to determine the number of hours required, the number and type of activity categories, acceptable CPD activities, and reporting requirements.

From the survey, members communicated the following common themes:

- **Managing Hours**
 - Approximately 45% of respondents favoured keeping the required hours the same for all professionals, as per the current guideline.
 - Approximately 41% of respondents favoured an approach that varies the CPD for each professional based on some aspect of their practice (e.g., practice risk, area of practice).
- **Activities**
 - A wide variety of activities (e.g., seminar presentations, webinar, mentoring) should be considered as CPD. It is important to ensure there are enough professional development opportunities for professionals of all discipline types and in all locations, including those offered at low or no cost.
 - The vast majority of those surveyed (77%) favoured keeping professional practice hours as part of a revised CPD program. The comments provided on this topic strongly indicated that professionals feel that on-the-job learning is valuable and should be accounted for in a CPD program.
 - With reference to keeping or revising the system of categories available in the CPD program, approximately 31% of those surveyed favoured keeping the current system, while approximately 56% favoured simplifying, modifying, or eliminating the categories.
 - Maintaining a diverse range of categories to count towards CPD credits was preferred and many respondents indicated that the association should trust professionals to undertake activities relevant to their practice, regardless of whether or not it is technically focussed or verifiable.
 - In regards to ethical training, approximately 38% responded positively and approximately 50% responded negatively. General comments around this topic demonstrated that members will be supportive of the concept, if it is accessible and the association provides low-to-minimal-cost training.
- **Flexibility and Compatibility**
 - There needs to be flexibility in the application of a mandatory program; one that reflects the diverse needs of professionals and considers members who may be exempt from meeting requirements.
 - Members registered in multiple jurisdictions made up approximately one-third of survey respondents. These members consistently emphasized their desire to have a program that aligns with the programs from other engineering and geoscience regulatory bodies.

- **Reporting Requirements**

- Members prefer to keep reporting requirements light (i.e., not submit detailed records) and to ensure that time required to spend reporting CPD activities is minimal.

A detailed summary of the survey results from each of the key themes communicated, including findings and future areas of focus, are outlined in the following pages.

NEXT STEPS

The association's CPD Committee is continuing to review the feedback collected from this consultation process, and will be considering this input as they finalize their proposed revision to the CPD model.

The model will be presented to the association's Council for approval in late 2019. Subject to the model being approved, it is expected changes will come into effect within one to two years. If the *Act* regulations are not in force by that time, the new model would replace the current guidelines as a voluntary program.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

ISSUE SUMMARY

Under the Code of Ethics of Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia (the “association”), all professional engineers and geoscientists registered with the association need to maintain high levels of professional competence and undertake continuing professional development (“CPD”) that is relevant to their practice. To support members in achieving this requirement, the association developed a guideline that outlines expectations regarding the types of activities and the amount of professional development that practising members should undertake.

Compliance with these guidelines is not mandatory; however, over the last decade, the association’s Council has sought to implement a mandatory CPD program for all members, in line with other professions. Bylaws to implement a mandatory CPD program were proposed in 2010 and 2015, and in both years, they were defeated in a vote by the membership.

Since 2017, the association’s CPD Committee, in response to a Council directive to explore modifications and improvements to the current model, has examined issues that affect and relate to CPD, including legislative challenges, government expectations, self-assessment research, jurisdictional research, and findings from practice reviews and discipline cases

In November 2018, the provincial government passed the *Professional Governance Act*, which outlined a requirement for the association to “establish and maintain a continuing competency program to promote high standards among members.”

In anticipation of new regulations for mandatory continuing education, the CPD Committee needed to ensure the current model better supported members in meeting their current obligations, as well as to assist with the transition to the anticipated mandatory requirements.

To ensure any revisions to the current model were responsive to the needs and requirements of members, in 2019, the CPD Committee sought feedback on new guiding principles and alternate options for each aspect of a revised CPD program. The following report provides a summary of the feedback garnered through the first phase of consultation.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

The consultation objectives established for the first phase of consultation were:

- to seek feedback on the guiding principles established by the CPD Committee for a new program;
- for members to identify any other guiding principles that need to be considered by the CPD Committee;
- to receive member feedback on different aspects of a CPD Program and how these could be improved in a revised model; and
- for members to identify any other factors that are yet to be considered by the CPD Committee during the development of a revised CPD program.

COMMUNICATION

During the first phase of consultation, members were provided with the following context as to why this issue was being reviewed:

- The CPD Committee is reviewing potential alternatives to the current program that would maintain the appropriate standards for public protection, while also being more flexible and achievable for members.
- The new *Professional Governance Act* will require Engineers and Geoscientists BC to maintain a continuing competency program for its members.

The following five guiding principles were also communicated to members to outline what any revisions to the current model will achieve:

1. Help professionals maintain technical, ethical, and professional competency in their field.
2. Maximize simplicity and flexibility for members.
3. Ensure the program is verifiable, enforceable, and transparent.
4. Encourage professionals to give back to and advance the professions through volunteering and mentorship.
5. Minimize administrative cost to Engineers and Geoscientists BC.

Information on the proposed changes to the CPD program and opportunities to participate in consultation was provided via the association's main communication channels, including eNews and a dedicated section under the "Initiatives and Consultations" area of the association's website.

CONSULTATION METHODS

The first phase of consultation was undertaken via an online survey that went live on April 12, 2019 and closed on May 10, 2019.

The CPD Committee anticipates further opportunities for consultation on future revisions will be undertaken via focus groups and/or follow-up surveys during the next phase of development.

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

PARTICIPATION

Between April and May 2019, over 2,900 members participated in the survey. One of the clearest trends related to respondent participation is that response rates increased with years of experience in current field of practice. Overall, we saw the highest level of participation from members with 21 years or more of experience in their current field of practice, and those who practiced solely within British Columbia.

While communications were not targeted to a specific member demographic, survey participation demonstrated a clear increase with years of experience in a field of practice. We anticipated a higher level of representation among this member demographic, due to their previous involvement with previous consultation on the topic over the last decade. Having previously provided feedback on the introduction of a mandatory CPD program, this demographic was likely to be more informed on the history of the issue and its application in practice.

In terms of other demographics of those survey respondents who

- 67% of respondents were registered solely in British Columbia;
- respondents who practiced in consulting engineering were better represented (41%) than those who practiced in other sectors such as geoscience (5%), high technology (5%), construction (7%), manufacturing (7%), primary/resource industry (7%), utilities (7%), and government and other (10%); and
- those with 21 years or more of experience in their field of practice made up nearly half of all respondents (49%) and those with 11 to 20 years of experience made up 26%; respondents with less than 10 years of experience in their field of practice accounted for 24% of respondents.

Please note that not all survey participants responded to questions on professional experience or demographic.

JURISDICTIONS

As with previous surveys on the issue of mandatory CPD programs, the theme of maintaining consistency with other professional regulators across the country has been constant. As noted above, approximately two-thirds of survey respondents were solely registered in British Columbia, while 21% were also registered in Alberta, and the remaining respondents were registered in one or more other jurisdictions.

Throughout the survey, the largest difference in support for various aspects of the CPD program was due to where respondents were registered, more so than for their years of experience, field of practice, or industry. To understand the context of the results and the varying levels of support for different aspects of the CPD program, results from multiple survey questions were reviewed in relation to the respondent's place of registration. These results are outlined within the detailed feedback for each theme communicated below.

DETAILED FEEDBACK

MANAGING HOURS

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

Q: “Of the following options, which model do you prefer for determining the number of professional development hours required?”

Survey respondents provided feedback on their preferred method of determining the number of professional development hours required. The member survey indicates the following levels of support for the following options:

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES
Keep the required hours the same for all professionals	45%
Vary the required CPD hours for each professional by practice risk	24%
Vary the CPD hours for each professional by area of practice	18%
No preference	13%

Note: 168 respondents skipped this question.

Co-relation to jurisdiction of registration:

CPD MODEL OPTION	ALL RESPONDENTS	REGISTERED ONLY IN BC	REGISTERED IN ALBERTA	ALL THOSE REGISTERED ELSEWHERE
Keep the required hours the same for all professionals	45%	37%	65%	59%
Vary the required CPD hours for each professional by practice risk	24%	21%	12%	13%
Vary the CPD hours for each professional by area of practice	18%	28%	13%	16%
No preference	13%	14%	11%	12%

KEY FINDINGS

The underlying concept of CPD is to ensure practising members meeting their current obligations and maintain high levels of professional competence. As outlined in the previous section, the survey represented members at various stages of their professional practice, so it was not surprising to see a mixed response to the question of hours and minimum/maximum requirements.

While more respondents preferred to keep the required hours the same for all professionals (45%), there was a similar amount of support (42%) towards a CPD program that offered variety dependent on area of practice or practice risk.

When compared against the demographics of the survey takers, the results demonstrated that the percentage of respondents who favoured each option varied most dramatically in relation to where respondents were registered. Respondents registered only in British Columbia favoured some sort of variable system (49%) over a “same for all” approach (37%). Respondents registered in at least one other jurisdiction favoured a “same for all” approach (59%) over a variable system (29%), with respondents registered in Alberta showing the most dramatic difference (65% and 24% respectively).

AREA OF FOCUS

The CPD Committee recognizes the diversity of the professional membership and understands the need to consider CPD requirements in relation to the varying levels of professional experience. It is important to note that a revised CPD model that varies the requirements based on practice risk or area of practice would be a significant departure from the CPD guidelines and other mandatory programs in other Canadian jurisdictions.

With respect to those members who are registered in one or more province, the CPD Committee understands the desire for harmonization with other jurisdictions. However, the Committee also needs to ensure that whatever model is adopted is the most effective for all members. Consequently, the Committee is reviewing a number of possible options for incorporating members registered in multiple jurisdictions, including offering exemptions for those who have completed the requirements of an equivalent program.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE HOURS

Q: “Do you think professional practice should continue to count towards CPD requirements?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

Under the current CPD guidelines, professional practice hours, which are those earned from active engineering or geoscience work, can contribute up to 50 of the required 80 average hours per year. Survey respondents were asked if they thought professional practice hours should continue to be included in a revised program.

The member survey indicates the following levels of support for the following options:

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES
Yes	77%
No	16%
I don't know	8%

Note: 168 respondents skipped this question.

KEY FINDINGS

Most members surveyed said they are constantly maintaining and improving their professional competency through on-the-job experience. As such, there was an overwhelming amount of support for keeping professional practice hours as part of any revised CPD requirements.

AREA OF FOCUS

Similar to the current guidelines, the CPD Committee acknowledges there is strong support for including professional practice hours as part of a revised CPD Program. In revising the current model, the Committee will consider if, similar to the current approach, there should be a maximum for claiming professional practice hours toward total CPD hours.

ACTIVITIES APPROACH

Q: “What approach to hours and categories would you like to see in a new CPD program?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

After reviewing the categories in use in the current guideline (Formal, Informal, Participation, Presentations, Contributions to Knowledge, and Professional Practice), we asked respondents to comment on their favoured approach to categories in a new program.

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES
Keep the current categories and maintain a limit on the maximum number of hours per category (as per the current guideline)	31%
Simplify and/or modify the categories, and maintain a limit on the maximum number of hours per category	13%
Simplify and/or modify the categories, and remove the limit on the maximum number of hours per category	28%
Eliminate categories (minimum overall hours would still be required)	14%
I don't know	7%
Other	7%

Note: 209 respondents skipped this question.

Co-relation to jurisdiction of registration:

CPD MODEL OPTION	ALL RESPONDENTS	REGISTERED ONLY IN BC	REGISTERED IN ALBERTA	ALL THOSE REGISTERED ELSEWHERE
Keep the current categories and maintain a limit on the maximum number of hours per category (as per the current guideline)	31%	26%	43%	39%
Simplify and/or modify the categories, and maintain a limit on the maximum number of hours per category	13%	14%	9%	12%
Simplify and/or modify the categories, and remove the limit on the maximum number of hours per category	28%	29%	26%	26%
Eliminate categories (minimum overall hours would still be required)	14%	15%	11%	11%
I don't know	7%	7%	4%	4%
Other	7%	7%	6%	7%

KEY FINDINGS

Of the individual options presented, respondents preferred to keep the system of categories used in the current guideline and maintain limits on the number of hours able to be claimed in each category. A close second (31% to 28%) was the preference to simplify and/or modify the categories and remove the limit on the maximum number of hours per category.

When looked at in aggregate, 42% of respondents favoured simplifying or modifying the categories in some way, and when the “eliminate categories” responses were added, we found that a majority of respondents (56%) favoured changing the current system of categories in some way that would simplify the program.

AREA OF FOCUS

In keeping with the CPD Committee’s principle of simplicity and flexibility, the Committee will consider options to improve the current category system in a way that responds to members’ preference for change.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Q: “Which of the following examples do you think should count towards meeting CPD?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

To understand what activities members considered as those maintaining professional competence, the survey presented 12 types of activities. Respondents provided feedback on what activity should count towards meeting CPD program requirements:

CPD ACTIVITY	RESPONSES
Giving a presentation at work or a conference	90%
Viewing a webinar about ethical issues	89%
Mentoring an EIT/GIT	85%
Reading a technical journal	84%
Attending a technical trade show	76%
Job shadowing a colleague to learn a new skill at work	71%
Attending a seminar on communications	69%
Attending a webinar on the use of seal	68%
Having a discussion with a colleague about a technical challenge	56%
Taking a course unrelated to your current or future responsibilities	36%
Attending a seminar about generating business contacts	26%
Volunteering for a non-technical community group	25%
I don't know	1%
None of the above	1%

Note: 193 respondents skipped this question.

KEY FINDINGS

The amount of support for the majority of the activities presented showed respondents were in favour of allowing a wide variety of activities to be accepted under the CPD program.

The activities that a majority of respondents **did not** think should be accepted were related to activities that are entirely non-technical (e.g., seminars on increasing business contacts, volunteering for a community group) or unrelated to a member's current or future responsibilities. An additional question showed members' strongly supported allowing other activities to be accepted as CPD, not only those focussed on technical or ethical learning (75%), as well as activities that may not be verifiable (79%), such as self-study.

Survey respondents were also asked to provide qualitative feedback on the types of activities that should or should not count towards CPD activities. Comments on this question indicated that the program should be flexible, and nearly half of those who provided feedback on this section suggested that almost any activity should count if the professional determines it is relevant to their field of practice. Results also demonstrated there was continued support for including the current activities under the voluntary CPD program in a new program.

AREA OF FOCUS

The current guideline requires members to decide for themselves whether a CPD activity is relevant to their practice and can be claimed for CPD credit. The responses above indicate that members are generally in favour of continuing with a system that trusts professionals to select CPD activities that are relevant for their practice.

ETHICAL TRAINING

Q: “Do you think members should be required to complete a set amount of yearly ethical training (e.g., 1 hour per year) as part of their overall CPD requirements?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

We asked survey takers if members should be required to complete a set amount of yearly ethical training (e.g., one hour per year) as part of their overall CPD requirements. This is similar to the requirement for members of the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan CPD program and the Professional Engineers Ontario PEAK program.

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES
Yes	38%
No	50%
I don't know	13%

Note: 215 respondents skipped this question.

KEY FINDINGS

The majority of members did not favour having a required amount of ethical training.

A follow-up question related to ethical training requirements was asked of respondents. Analysis of the comments by respondents who provided a “No” or “I don’t know” answer showed that a number of these respondents would be in favour of mandatory ethical training provided it was:

- easily accessible (i.e., offered for free and/or online);
- refreshed consistently to keep up with industry changes;
- possible to accept employer training in lieu of association-provided training; and/or
- required less frequently than what was proposed in the question.

If these factors were taken into account for the design of the revised program, this would indicate that an additional 211 Yes responses would be recorded, bringing the percentages to 45% (Yes), 45% (No), and 9% (I don’t know).

AREA OF FOCUS

The CPD Committee’s review of discipline cases from the past several years has revealed that a breach of ethics, as opposed to a technical failure, has been a consistent finding from these cases. The Committee will review the effect of including some component of ethical training as part of the overall CPD requirements as long as it is designed to be responsive to the diversity of professional members.

FLEXIBILITY AND COMPATIBILITY

Q: “In your opinion, should any of the following member categories be eligible for an exemption from the CPD program?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

Survey respondents were asked if certain types of members should be eligible for an exemption from a mandatory CPD program.

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES (RANKED BY THE LARGEST PREFERENCE FOR A FULL EXEMPTION)			
	FULL EXEMPTION	PARTIAL EXEMPTION	NO EXEMPTION	I DON'T KNOW
Non-practising or retired members who are not employed	76%	14%	6%	4%
Members on long-term medical leave	66%	25%	4%	4%
Non-practising or retired members who are employed	55%	31%	10%	4%
Professionals in non-technical roles	15%	47%	33%	5%
Members-in-training	12%	28%	57%	4%
Members working part-time	6%	58%	34%	3%

Note: 168 respondents skipped this question.

KEY FINDINGS

Recognizing the professional diversity of members, there was majority support towards a CPD program that reflected the varying levels of member activity. Key findings from the survey illustrated the following:

- A majority of respondents thought that members who are not practising engineering or geoscience for an extended period of time should be fully exempt from the CPD program.
- A majority of members favoured a partial exemption for members working part-time.
- A majority of members thought that members-in-training (EITs/GITs) should not have an exemption from the CPD program.

AREA OF FOCUS

Other jurisdictions across Canada offer exemptions for a variety of member types. The CPD Committee will consider these results and the standards in place across Canada when developing the revised program.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Q: “In your opinion, what documentation should members be required to submit to Engineers and Geoscientists BC of their CPD activities?”

FEEDBACK OVERVIEW

We asked survey respondents what type of documentation they should be required to submit to Engineers and Geoscientists BC for their CPD activities on a yearly basis, whether a fully detailed record, a simple declaration of compliance, or something in between.

CPD MODEL OPTION	RESPONSES
Detailed accounts of their CPD activities	12%
CPD hours only	46%
Report compliance only	33%
I don't know	3%
Other	6%

Note: 221 respondents skipped this question.

Co-relation to jurisdiction of registration:

CPD MODEL OPTION	ALL RESPONDENTS	REGISTERED ONLY IN BC	REGISTERED IN ALBERTA	ALL THOSE REGISTERED ELSEWHERE
Detailed accounts of their CPD activities	12%	14%	9%	9%
CPD hours only	46%	42%	64%	61%
Report compliance only	33%	36%	26%	29%
I don't know	3%	3%	1%	1%
Other	6%	6%	5%	5%

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents (79%) favoured a simple declaration (CPD hours or compliance only) over a more detailed accounting of activities
- For those registered outside of British Columbia, a strong majority favoured members recording their total CPD hours over the other two options presented
- Other answers that members provided for alternate reporting schemes included the following:
 - “Submit detailed accounts for verifiable activities, hours for non-verifiable or professional practice activities.”
 - “Members should be subjected to examinations every 5 years.”
 - “I like the current reporting method using the EGBC online reporting system.”
 - “Create a gap analysis/development plan and every member report according to their own needs and goals.”
 - “I don't like having to submit detailed accounts of CPD but I think it's probably necessary to maintain public and Governmental credibility of EGBC as the governing body of the profession.”
 - “A one sentence summary for each CPD activity would be a good compromise here.”

AREA OF FOCUS

Other regulators throughout Canada vary in the documentation they require; many require a detailed account of CPD activities that the regulator keeps on file. The CPD Committee will review this requirement to balance the effort of members with the regulatory requirement that the program be enforceable and transparent.

For members registered in other jurisdictions that already have to submit a detailed account of CPD activities, it is possible that a revised program would accept submission of this record as proof of CPD activities in British Columbia, cutting down on the duplication of effort.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

For our final question about CPD program requirements, we asked survey respondents to comment on other factors that the CPD Committee should consider in the creation of a new program. After analysis of 854 responses, the most common themes for other factors the committee should consider included the following:

SURVEY QUESTION	COMMENT THEMES	RESPONSES		
		% OF RESPONSES	# OF RESPONSES	% OF ALL SURVEY TAKERS
What other factors should the CPD Committee take into account in the development of a revised CPD program?	Cost and/or availability of training	27%	216	8%
	Keep the current program	27%	216	8%
	Flexibility of the program	15%	121	4%
	Simplify the program overall	12%	96	3%
	Increase employer responsibilities in helping employees meet CPD requirements	4%	30	1%

Note: 2,061 respondents skipped this question.

AREA OF FOCUS

The CPD Committee notes that members are very concerned about the cost and availability of training, particularly for disciplines that have fewer members practicing in them (e.g., geoscience, high technology, and manufacturing). The Committee will consider this factor when designing the new program, with the goal to create a flexible program that is attainable for all members.

Members have also raised the suggestion to keep the current program. The CPD Committee is considering this as one option, with the possibility that the program could be improved slightly to add simplicity and flexibility while keeping the same general framework.