

Continuing education program and application terms

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Preamble

This Continuing education program and application terms (the “Program”) replaces the Program and application terms adopted by the Board of directors on August 16, 2012, in effect until August 31, 2018.

The Program is adopted in accordance with the *Règlement sur la formation continue obligatoire des comptables professionnels agréés du Québec* (the “Basic Regulation”) and the *Regulation respecting compulsory continuing education for Québec chartered professional accountants who hold a public accountancy permit* (the “Public Accountancy Regulation”) (the “Regulations”).

Continuing education program and application terms

Purpose

The Regulations enable the Ordre des CPA du Québec to ensure that its members acquire and improve the skills required to practise their professional activities. Accordingly, all members are responsible for taking part in training activities in order to achieve their objectives within the framework of the Program.

A distinction should be made between information and education. An information activity provides an opportunity to acquire knowledge without the outcome of such activity being applied, observed or measured in practice. The objective of an educational activity is to provide learning experiences, the results of which are transferable, observable and measurable in professional practice. Conscientious professionals must stay informed of developments in their areas of expertise. However, this is not sufficient to maintain the minimum competency requirements.

Application

Subject to the possible exemptions provided for under the Regulations, the Program is intended for all members.

Application terms

The Regulations are meant to be flexible yet structured. CPAs are therefore responsible for identifying their own educational needs and updating their competencies as required. Under the Regulations, CPAs must complete a minimum number of continuing education hours and report these hours to the Order.

Number of hours required and period covered

Unless exempt, all **CPAs** are required to devote **at least 120 hours per three-year rolling reference period** to continuing education activities, including:

- > a **minimum of 25 hours per reference year**; and
- > a **minimum of 4 hours** of structured training in areas related to professional ethics **per three-year rolling reference period**.

These requirements are part of the Basic Regulation.

Unless exempt, all **CPAs who hold a public accountancy permit** must devote **at least 60 hours per three-year rolling reference period** to structured training, including a **minimum of 15 hours per reference year** in areas related to audit engagements, review engagements and other activities related to public accountancy, as defined in the third paragraph of section 4 of the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act*. These requirements are part of the Public Accountancy Regulation.

Any person entered on the roll of the Order more than one month after the start of a reference year must complete the continuing education hours prorated to the months remaining until the end of the reference period.

The reference period is three years. The period start and end dates are not fixed in time. The first rolling reference period begins on September 1, 2018.

Professional ethics

The professional ethics requirement focuses on the Quebec CPA Order's rules of professional conduct as well as ethics-related topics, in particular ethical decision making.

The Order must ensure that members' competencies are up to date in this area and may impose a training activity in this regard.

The Order is the only organization that offers qualifying educational activities on rules of professional conduct, except for Rule 204 on independence. Training activities on the *Code of ethics* that are not offered by the Order (except for Rule 204 on independence) do not qualify. The Order will publish information on educational activities on the rules of professional conduct in 2019.

Members may complete professional ethics training activities offered by organizations outside the Order. However, these activities must meet the following qualifying criteria:

- > Exclusively cover one or more of the following topics:
 - identification of ethical dilemmas
 - ethical decision-making, particularly in situations involving conflicts of interest, fraud or corruption
 - ethical leadership
 - creation of an ethical corporate culture
 - whistleblowers
 - Rule 204 on independence (*Code of ethics*)
- > Address professional ethics issues in general.
- > Include specific examples and complex situations, and lead participants to reflect on professional ethics.

- > Allow members to update, improve or enhance their skills and knowledge.
- > Be relevant, and have measurable and verifiable results.

Training activities on a company's code of ethics do not qualify.

Professional ethics training activities qualify under the Public Accountancy Regulation.

Types of qualifying continuing education activities

All continuing education activities selected by CPAs must:

- i. relate to their areas of practice;
- ii. allow them to maintain, update, improve or enhance their skills and knowledge;
- iii. are relevant, measurable and verifiable.

The continuing education activities program recognizes two categories of activities: structured activities and self-study activities.

Qualifying continuing education activities include:

Participating in, or acting as a lecturer, instructor or preparer for:

- > continuing education courses organized or offered by the Order, other professional orders or similar organizations;
- > courses offered by educational or specialized institutions that have access to appropriate professional, technical and educational resources;
- > symposiums, conferences or seminars with a prevalence of technical and educational content;
- > structured training or courses offered in the workplace;
- > various structured training sessions, such as case studies as part of technical study groups;
- > e-learning activities;
- > discussion groups and technical committees.

Taking part in:

- > the authorship of published articles or other publications related to the CPA profession;
- > studies or research projects in areas that are likely to expand the CPA's professional knowledge or skills and result in presentations, reports or similar documents;
- > self-study activities, such as reading articles, studies leading to the successful completion of a course or examination included in the list of continuing education activities (a maximum of 15 hours per reference year).

It is important to note that **self-study hours** are not recognized under the professional ethics requirement or the Public Accountancy Regulation.

Criteria for calculating the duration of a continuing education activity

For the vast majority of activities, the **number of hours recognized** is the actual duration of the activity, except in the following situations:

- > **Acting as a speaker, instructor or lecturer at the college or university level** – The actual duration of the activity is recognized when the member presents the lecture or provides training. However, the same lecture or training can be recognized only once, no matter how many times it is given, unless the training activity undergoes a major revision. When a member gives a lecture or provides training for the first time, the hours spent on preparation are recognized.
- > **Authorship of published articles or other works, or participation in research projects related to the profession** – The member's total hours spent on the authorship of a published article or work are recognized, provided the article, work or research results are published during the reference period.
- > **Technical study groups, technical committees or discussion groups** – A maximum of 25 continuing education hours may be recognized per reference year.
- > **First or second language courses** – A maximum of 14 continuing education hours may be recognized per reference year.
- > **Office Suite courses: Word processing and presentation software** – A maximum of 14 continuing education hours may be recognized per reference year.
- > **Symposiums, conferences or seminars** – To be recognized, the content of these continuing education activities must be related to the member's professional activities and correspond to the actual hours devoted to technical or educational activities.

Qualifying hours for e-learning activities (correspondence or online courses) are the lower of: an estimate of the hours needed to complete the activity and related assessment (as determined by the instructor), and the actual duration of the activity (e.g. webinars). Qualifying hours exclude training preparation time and studies leading to the successful completion of a course or examination. Members must be able to prove that they have completed e-learning activities. If an activity includes a knowledge assessment, a minimum grade of 60% is required for the hours to qualify.

Language courses and Office Suite courses are not qualifying hours under the Public Accountancy Regulation.

Specific continuing education requirements for certain members

Specific continuing education requirements are set out under the Basic Regulation, which requires members to devote a minimum of 120 hours per three-year rolling reference period to continuing education activities, with a minimum of 25 hours in each reference year.

CPAs authorized to use the financial planner designation

Members who are also financial planners must complete 40 hours of structured continuing education activities in the field of financial planning over a 2-year period, including 15 hours of integrated financial planning activities.

CPAs authorized to use the CA•IFA or CA•EJC designation

Members who use the CPA, CA, CA•IFA or CPA, CA, CA•EJC designation must complete a minimum of 60 hours of continuing education activities related to the investigative and forensic accounting body of knowledge over a three-year rolling period, including a maximum of 10 hours of self-study activities.

CPAs authorized to use the CA•IT or CA•TI designation

Members who use the CPA, CA, CA•IT or CPA, CA, CA•TI designation must complete a minimum of 25 hours of structured continuing education activities in the field of information technology per reference year.

Special provisions

Specific exemptions in overwhelming circumstances

Members are exempt, in whole or in part, from taking part in continuing education activities for a given reference year if they can demonstrate that they are unable to take part in a continuing education activity due to overwhelming circumstances such as:

Health reasons

The exemption covers all required hours of continuing education, including self-study activities. The hours are prorated to the full or partial months of the period of disability.

Parental leave of one year following the birth or adoption of a child

The exemption covers all required hours of continuing education, including self-study activities. The hours are prorated to the full or partial months during the one-year period.

Member is considered to be an informal caregiver

The exemption covers all required hours of continuing education, including self-study activities. The hours are prorated to the full or partial months during the period determined by the medical certificate provided by the person with the illness or, as the case may be, the record of employment or attestation from the informal caregiver's employer.

Member lives far away and cannot access continuing education activities

The exemption cannot exceed 25 hours of continuing education activities and is prorated to the full or partial months during the one-year period.

OVERWHELMING CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT INCLUDE:

- > taking a sabbatical;
- > seeking employment;
- > extending parental leave beyond the first year following the birth or adoption of a child;

To be granted an exemption, a member must submit an application and meet the requirements set out in the Regulations and the other conditions that may be imposed by the Order.

Members may obtain an exemption pursuant to section 14 of the Basic Regulation and section 12 of the Public Accountancy Regulation if they submit an application to the Order using the [form](#) in their file on the Order's website. They must indicate the reason for the exemption and **provide a doctor's note or any other evidence attesting to the overwhelming circumstances.**

Exemptions may only be granted for a maximum period of 12 months at a time. They can be renewed, except for the exemption respecting parental leave for the same child. If the renewal is allowed, the member follows the same application procedure used to make the initial request.

Once the overwhelming circumstances have been resolved, the member must notify the Order in writing without delay, as well as meet the requirements set out in the Regulations and the other conditions that may be imposed by the Order.

The fact that the Disciplinary council, the Professions Tribunal or the Board of directors has imposed a striking off the roll, suspended or imposed limitations on a member's right to engage in professional activities does not constitute overwhelming circumstances. In such cases, the continuing education requirement remains in effect even for the duration of this special status. In other words, this type of situation would not cancel the previously applicable continuation education requirement.

Requirements for retired members

For annual dues purposes, retired members are members who:

- > are entered on the roll of the Order under this member category;
- > are at least 55 years of age on March 31 of the current year;
- > have no income or whose income from employment, the practice of the profession or the operation of an enterprise¹ is less than \$25,000 per year;
- > were entered on the roll of the Order for at least 10 years.

Members who obtain retired member status for annual dues purposes are subject to the following terms:

Retired members who do not hold a public accountancy permit and who:

- > **have no income** from employment, the practice of the profession or the operation of an enterprise are exempt from having to take part in continuing education activities;
- > **do not provide services to third parties** and whose income related to employment, the practice of the profession or the operation of an enterprise is less than \$25,000 per year are exempt from having to take part in continuing education activities;
- > **provide services to third parties** and whose income related to their practice, employment or the operation of an enterprise is less than \$25,000 per year must complete at least 20 hours of structured continuing education activities per three-year rolling reference period (including 4 hours in professional ethics), with a minimum of 5 hours per reference year.

Retired members who hold a public accountancy permit:

- > must devote at least 60 hours per three-year rolling reference period to structured continuing education activities in specific areas, namely audit engagements, review engagements and other activities related to public accountancy, as defined in the third paragraph of section 4 of the *Chartered Professional Accountants Act* (including 4 hours in professional ethics), with a minimum of 15 hours per reference year.

¹ These members may earn retirement income and practise the profession on a volunteer basis.

Monitoring of continuing education activities

Members are responsible for managing their continuing education and calculating the number of hours they have accumulated. All members must complete a continuing education activity report prescribed by the Order by September 30 of each year indicating the type of activities, the related area and sector, the function, start and end date, the title or description, the number of hours accumulated or, if applicable, whether they have been exempted.

To determine whether a member has met the requirements of the Regulations, the Order may require, in addition to the continuing education activity report, relevant and reliable supporting documents describing the activities engaged in, their duration and content, the organization and/or person offering the activity and, if applicable, a certificate of participation or an attestation of results obtained.

Members must keep the documents in support of their reported hours for 12 months following the end of the three-year rolling reference period.

Failure to submit the continuing education activity report or other documents required, or failure to take part in continuing education activities or to accumulate the required hours

In addition to the penalties provided for in the Regulations, any member who fails to comply with the Regulations and related terms and conditions may be required by the Order to:

- > submit a remedial plan;
- > submit a self-evaluation on the professional knowledge and skills associated with the objectives of sections 1 and 2 of the Basic Regulation and section 1 of the Public Accountancy Regulation.

The Order sends a notice to those members who fail to comply with their continuing education requirement. The notice sets out the unfulfilled obligations, a 30 day timeframe for remedial action and the possible penalties.

The Order sends a final notice to members who fail to take remedial action within the prescribed timeframe, specifying that they have been granted an additional 15 days from the date of receipt of the final notice to comply.

The Order may suspend or limit the right to engage in professional activities or strike off the roll those members who have not taken remedial action, in accordance with the Basic Regulation.

The Order may suspend or revoke the public accountancy permit of those members who have not taken remedial action, in accordance with the Public Accountancy Regulation.

Members will be notified in writing. In addition, the penalty will not be lifted until the member provides evidence to the Order that the requirements listed in the default notice have been met and the penalty has been lifted by the Order.