

Professional Practice Standard Continuing Professional Development

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**The Association of Professional
Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta**

Please be advised this document is only a draft.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

DATE	VERSION	REVISION DESCRIPTION
April 2014	1.0	Released for membership 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
Month Day, Year	2.0	Substantive changes to the CPD Program

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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 guideline, and a practice bulletin 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 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.
- 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in force until a practice standard or guideline on the subject is developed, revised, or until the practice bulletin is repealed.

Practice standards, guidelines, and bulletins 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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Definitions

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

Authentication

Authenticating a *professional work product* means a *licensed professional* has completed, performed a *thorough review of*, or *directly supervised and controlled* the engineering or geoscience work and accepts professional responsibility for the engineering or geoscience involved. *Authentication* must be performed in accordance with the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products*.

Client

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

Consultant

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

Continuing Professional Development 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

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

A *licensed professional's* written plan describing how they will ensure their own 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

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

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

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 practices 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

Conduct by *permit holders, licensed professionals*, and members-in-training that is 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

Validating a *professional work product (PWP)* means a *permit holder's Responsible Member* has reviewed the *PWP* to ensure it meets the quality control and assurance measures described in the *permit holder's Professional Practice Management Plan*. *Validation* must be performed in accordance with the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products*.

1 Overview

This practice standard replaces version 1.4 of the *Continuing Professional Development* standard, published by APEGA on July 1, 2023. By focusing on key principles of professionalism and self-directed lifelong learning, the standard aligns continuing professional development requirements for APEGA *licensed professionals* with societal expectations.

In the interests of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public, *permit holders, licensed professionals*, and members-in-training must maintain high standards of professional practice and conduct, which necessitates ongoing learning. In most jurisdictions in Canada, engineering and geoscience regulatory organizations have introduced mandatory continuing professional development requirements.

In Alberta, the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*, Section 16(1) of the *General Regulation*, grants APEGA Council the authority to establish a compulsory continuing education program for all *licensed professionals*. This practice standard defines the minimum requirements a *licensed*

professional must meet to fulfil their continuing professional development (CPD) obligations under APEGA's CPD Program and the *EGP Act*.

The *EGP Act* grants the professions the privilege of self-governance. *Permit holders, licensed professionals*, and members-in-training must uphold high standards of professional competence to retain this privilege. *Licensed professionals* can achieve this by engaging in lifelong learning.

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.

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. Recognizing the diversity of roles and responsibilities of APEGA *licensed professionals*, this standard provides flexibility to undertake activities that provide the greatest benefit.

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

The following publications support this standard. Refer to the latest versions 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 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 (CPD) Program as it applies to that individual's practice of engineering or geoscience. Section 19 requires *licensed professionals* to:

- maintain a written record of activities undertaken in accordance with the CPD Program.

- produce the record under clause (a) on the request of the *Practice Review Board (PRB)*.

A *licensed professional* must satisfy the *PRB* that they are complying with the requirements of the CPD Program. 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*. *Licensed professionals* must advise APEGA of any entity or individual failing to meet the obligations of the *EGP Act*, the *General Regulation*, or any APEGA practice standard or bulletin if attempts to resolve issues directly with the *permit holders* and *licensed professionals* involved do not lead to the required compliance. This is consistent with self-regulation.

3 Requirements for Continuing Professional Development

The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program comprises two separate and distinct components that must both be completed annually:

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

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

- complete the learning modules by their *CPD due date* each year, as specified in section 3.1.
- create a *PACE plan* that meets the requirements outlined in section 3.2.
- in the platform and format specified by APEGA, annually declare they have reviewed their past year's *PACE plan* and created a record of their completed *CPD activities*, and have updated their *PACE plan* for the upcoming year, as outlined in Section 3.2.
- if requested, submit any supporting documentation related to their CPD Program (i.e., learning modules and *PACE plan*) by the deadline provided and in the method specified by APEGA, as outlined in sections 3.1.1 and 3.2.2.

3.1 Learning Modules

The CPD Program 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 five learning modules annually. The learning modules cover five knowledge areas:

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

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 CPD Program.

3.1.1 Verifying the Completion of Learning Modules

The *licensed professional* must retain a copy of the certificate they receive upon completion of each learning module. It is the responsibility of the *licensed professional* to 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*. When requested by the *Practice Review Board (PRB)*, the *licensed professional* must provide a copy of all relevant certificates as part of their record (reference *General Regulation* 19[b]). Learning modules must be completed no later than the *CPD due date*.

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 competency in their specific area or areas of practice. *Licensed professionals* must ensure their continuing competence by evaluating their needs and creating and following a plan for ongoing learning. It is the *licensed professional's* obligation to ensure the *PACE plan* is defensible. The *PACE plan* is a tool to help *licensed professionals* plan and track *CPD activities* that will enhance their skills.

The *PACE plan* must:

- be the *licensed professional's* individualized plan, covering their current practice area(s) and any future areas they are pursuing, if applicable.
- include technical activities appropriate for ensuring competency with technological advancements and changes to codes, industry standards, and techniques, as well as other activities related to their individual practice area(s).
- include at least one activity in one of the following categories:
 - regulatory;
 - ethical practice; or

- communications, management, and leadership.
- be sufficient to reasonably defend the *licensed professional's* competence to professional peers on the *PRB*, the Investigative Committee, the Discipline Committee, or any other APEGA entity concerned with competence.

In support of their *PACE plan*, a *licensed professional* must:

- maintain a record, including supporting documentation, of the *CPD activities* they completed to fulfil their annual *PACE plan*, with a written explanation of how the activities contributed to their continuing competence.
- with their annual declaration, affirm they created and followed their *PACE plan* for the past year and declare they have updated and will follow their *PACE plan* for the upcoming year.

Refer to the *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation* practice guideline for further details and for examples of appropriate *CPD activities*.

3.2.1 Revisions to and Retention of the PACE Plan

A *PACE plan* helps ensure the competency of *licensed professionals*. The *PACE plan* must be maintained and must be revised when significant changes occur. At a minimum, a *licensed professional* must update their *PACE plan* annually by their *CPD due date* to verify its continued suitability and effectiveness. When *licensed professionals* experience substantive changes to their role, responsibilities, or area of practice, they must review and update their *PACE plan* as soon as practicable.

The *EGP Act* does not specify retention requirements. *Licensed professionals* must use their own professional judgement to determine the period of retention for their *PACE plans*. If a *licensed professional's* competency is ever questioned for past work, they must be able to show how they met and maintained their competency at the time they completed the work. At a minimum, a *licensed professional* must retain their *PACE plan* for 10 years. See the practice standard *Authenticating Professional Work Products* for further information on retention.

3.2.2 Verifying Continuing Professional Development Activities for the PACE Plan

APEGA's *PRB* administers the *Continuing Professional Development* practice standard. As per sections 20 (2)(a) and (b) of the *General Regulation*, it may review a *licensed professional's PACE plan* in detail and therefore *licensed professionals* must retain supporting documents to verify all *CPD activities* performed under their *PACE plan*.

During a review, the *PRB* will assess the *PACE plan* 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 justify their competence to the *PRB* or other statutory board.

The *PACE plan* is only submitted to APEGA when requested by the *PRB* or APEGA staff designate. When it is requested, the *PACE plan* must be submitted by the provided deadline in the method required by APEGA.

4 Consequences of Non-Compliance

To be in *good standing* with APEGA, *licensed professionals* must comply with APEGA's continuing professional development (CPD) requirements as per APEGA's Good Standing Policy. Non-compliance with CPD requirements may result in a loss of *good-standing* status.

To comply with CPD requirements, a *licensed professional* must:

- complete the learning modules by their *CPD due date*.
- affirm as part of their annual declaration that they have created and are following a current *Personal Annual Competency Evaluation (PACE) plan*. False declarations are considered *unprofessional conduct* subject to disciplinary action.

Through the *Engineering and Geoscience Professions (EGP) Act*, APEGA is obligated to share information on the current standing of *licensed professionals* and *permit holders*. This means your standing is available to your employer, your *clients*, and members of the public.

If APEGA determines that you are not in *good standing*, you will enter a cautionary period during which APEGA will work with you to resolve any outstanding regulatory obligations as efficiently as possible. During this period, your practice rights are not disrupted, but this can affect some privileges, such as your ability to become a *Responsible Member* or to volunteer on statutory boards and committees. However, if you are unable to meet outlined regulatory obligations within the allotted time, additional consequences will be applied that will affect your practice rights.

There are three cases that could lead to the cancellation of a *licensed professional's* registration due to non-compliance with CPD requirements.

Case 1

Licensed professionals who cease to be in *good standing* because they did not complete all learning modules, and who have not addressed their non-compliance within the time frame specified in a duly served notice to comply, will be given a final notice by the *Practice Review Board (PRB)* to provide their written completion records for the learning modules, in accordance with the *General Regulation 19(b)*. If the *licensed professional* does not provide their records of completion by the date requested in the final notice, the *licensed professional's* registration may be cancelled per *General Regulation 19.1*.

Case 2

Independent of a *licensed professional's* *good-standing* status, APEGA may conduct reviews of a *licensed professional's PACE plan*. At any time, the *PRB* may request a *licensed professional's PACE plan* per *General Regulation 19(b)*. Failure to provide a complete written record of their *PACE plan*, including supporting documents demonstrating adherence to their *PACE plan*, may result in cancellation of

registration after the expiry of the time frame specified in the notice to comply, in accordance with the *General Regulation 19.1* under the *EGP Act*.

Case 3

Licensed professionals are responsible for satisfying the *PRB* that they are complying with the requirements of the CPD Program (reference *General Regulation 20[2]*). If, after receiving the written record of the *licensed professional's PACE plan*, detailed records of *CPD activities* completed to fulfil the *PACE plan*, and supporting documentation verifying such activities, the *PRB* is not satisfied that a *licensed professional* is complying with the requirements of the CPD Program, *General Regulation 20(2)* authorizes the *PRB* to conduct a review of the *licensed professional's* practice. If non-compliances are identified, the *PRB* may determine appropriate consequences, which may include referring the matter to the Investigative Committee.

5 Absence Periods

During an absence period, *licensed professionals* are expected to remain in compliance with this practice standard 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. It is not recommended that *licensed professionals* enter non-practising status for a planned leave of absence.