



As of June 4 2019, the Nova Scotia College of Nursing (NSCN) was formed to regulate licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) on behalf of the public, replacing the former College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) and College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) (the “legacy Colleges”).

Although the information in this document reflects our most current information about this topic, you will notice the content refers to the previous relevant legislation and the legacy College that published this document prior to June 4, 2019.

We appreciate your patience while we work towards updating all of our documents to reflect our new name, legislation and brand.

If you have additional questions about this document, please contact a NSCN Practice Consultant at practice@nscn.ca.





LPN Continuing Competence Program

Instruction Booklet



College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia

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Introduction

- The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS, or the College) is the regulatory body for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) in Nova Scotia.
- The College's objective is to protect the public by promoting the provision of safe, competent, ethical, and compassionate nursing care by LPNs.
- The College meets its legislative mandate by:
 - Establishing and enforcing requirements for entry into the profession;
 - Maintaining an annual registration process, and;
 - Developing Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and a Continuing Competence Program for its members.
- Continuing competence is the career-long learning through *adapting and refining* the application of knowledge, skill, and judgment required to practice safely and ethically in a designated role and setting as a nurse increases their professional capacity moving from novice to expert.

Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics Related to Continuing Competence Program

- LPNs are accountable for their own practice and actions at all times and have a professional obligation to attain and maintain competence relevant to their practice area(s).
- Competence is acquired and maintained and through lifelong learning, the integration of learning into nursing practice and reflective practice.
- Completion of the competence program is a requirement of every LPN, in every practice context, every year.
- This obligation is inherent in both CLPNNS Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics:

Standards of Practice

Standard 1 – Professional Accountability and Responsibility

1.2 LPNs engage in ongoing self-assessment of their professional practice and competence, and seek opportunities for continuous learning.

Code of Ethics

Principle 1: Responsibility to the Public

1.1 LPNs maintain standards of practice, professional competence and conduct.

Principle 5: Responsibility to Self

5.6 LPNs engage in opportunities for career-long learning to continuously develop the competencies required to meet the ethical and regulatory requirements of the profession.

Purpose of this Document

- These guidelines can assist you to meet your obligation to participate in the CCP.
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About the Continuing Competence Program

- It is a quality assurance mechanism implemented to ensure LPNs are engaging in learning activities so they remain competent in their practice.
- The program contributes to the College's objective to protect the public.

- **CCP is a mandatory component of annual licensing.**
- **Every LPN who holds a practical nursing license, whether the individual is employed as an LPN or not, is expected to participate in, or be compliant with the program requirements every year.**
- **LPNs not compliant with the program may be ineligible for a license to practice practical nursing in Nova Scotia.**
- **Compliance is determined through a review of the annual learning plan to ensure all the essential elements are present (See: *How the CCP Audit Works* on Page 5).**

The Continuing Competence Program has four components:

1. Self-Assessment
2. Learning Plan
3. Reflective Practice
4. Audit

STEP 1: The Annual Self-Assessment of Individual Competence (August/September)

- **The point** of the self-assessment is to give you an opportunity each new licensing year to *assess* your practice in relation to the practice expectations outlined in the [Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics for LPNs in Canada](#).
- Your self-assessment is a reflection of your individual nursing practice, knowledge and competence.
- You may use the College's **Self-Assessment Tool** or an employer's self-assessment tool instead of the CLPNNS tool. There is no need to duplicate work.

Before you start your self-assessment

- Review your Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics.
- The [Self-Assessment Tool](#) is designed to be used every year for 5 years so you can track your progress. Click the link to access a fresh copy.

Starting your self-assessment

- Think about your practice as it relates to each indicator and rate yourself using the rating system.
- If possible, compare your current score against your previous score and note the reasons for the changes in your year-to-year score (i.e. your score has improved because you have gained additional knowledge or your score has lowered because you moved to a new practice context).
- Make comments on your strengths and opportunities for development as it relates to each group of standards.

When you finish your self-assessment

- Think about overall assessment. Note the areas where you excel and areas where you may need improvement.

STEP 2: Develop and Implement a Learning Plan (October-June)

- **The point** of the **learning plan** is to give you an opportunity to identify areas where you may want or need additional information so you may remain competent in your practice setting.
- The learning plan contains personalized strategies designed to help you set, meet and evaluate your professional development or learning goals.

- The learning plan has four (4) components; however the 4th and final component (reflective practice) will be discussed separately in the next section.
 - Learning Goal
 - Objectives
 - Timelines
 - Reflective Practice (impact on practice and client outcomes)

Starting Your Learning Plan

- The planning process can help you investigate methods of acquiring the skills, knowledge, and/or experience which is required for your role, or the role you aspire to have.
- Learning plans can be based on the completion of formal education programs or from informal ways such as:
 - staff meetings;
 - consultations with other care providers such as an NP, OT, PT, or pharmacist;
 - mentoring learners or new graduates/employees, or;
 - participating in a unit-based project, case preparation or a College committee or board of directors.

Developing Your Learning Plan

1. Identify learning goals (October)
 - Identify at least two (2) things you would like to learn over the upcoming licensing year. These are your learning goals.
 - Your goals should be realistic and be specific to your practice environment and practical nursing (See: Some Learning Goals Do Not Meet CCP Requirements on page 4).
2. Identify the rationale for your learning goals (October)
 - Explain why you want to meet this particular goal.
 - Connect the rationale to your practice.
3. Identify the objectives (October)
 - Objectives are the activities you will undertake to achieve this learning goal.
 - Throughout the year update your learning plan by listing specific learning interventions and activities as you complete them (October-June).
4. Indicate how your learning may improve your practice or positively impact client outcomes (October)
 - It is important for your learning to be for the purposes of improving client outcomes.
 - Knowing, or at least anticipating the overall impact of your learning will help you evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.

Helpful Hints

- Keeping a record of professional activities can help you keep track of what you have completed.
- It is also important that you keep a summary of key learning points from each activity as this will be helpful at the end of the year when you are reflecting on the overall impact of your learning.
- There is a tracking sheet in the back of the Self-Assessment Tool.

Some Learning Goals Do *Not* Meet CCP Requirements

- It is important to note employer mandated education and/or review of knowledge (i.e. CPR, WHMIS, lifts and transfers, etc.) are not considered acceptable learning goals because they are not specific to practical nursing because they also apply to a variety of non-nurse care providers.

STEP 3: Reflective Practice (July-August)

- The point** of reflective practice is to give you an opportunity to think about the overall impact of your learning.
- Reflective practice is a continual process where you analyze and evaluate your professional experiences as a means to promote professional growth and gain insight (Durgahee, 1997).
- It is the most *critical component of continuing competence* because this is where you connect the impact of your learning directly to improvements in your practice or client outcomes.

Reflective Practice Framework

- Reflective practice is documented in the evaluation of your annual learning plan.
- Although there are a number of ways to document reflective practice, however you can use the following framework to guide you:

I have increased my competence in *(whatever you identified as your learning goal)* **by** *(list the activities in your learning goal)*. **As a result,** *(identify how your practice has improved)*. **This means** *(outline how your clients are positively impacted by your learning)*.

Important to Know

- Reflective practice is the most important element of continuing competence because it is tied directly to improvements in your practice and client outcomes.
- You cannot reflect on, or explain how your practice has been improved using learning goals which have yet to be implemented or accomplished (SEE: *The Audit Process*, pages 4 and 5).
- Compliance with the annual competence program requirements **cannot** be achieved by simply submitting lists of learning activities that do not include a reflective evaluation.
- Click **HERE** to read some FAQ on reflective practice.

STEP 4: The Audit Process

- The point** of the audit is to ensure LPNs are compliant with program requirements.
- The audit is another way the College meets its mandate of public safety.
- The audit is required by the LPN Act (2006).
- Most self-regulated professionals have a competence program including an audit.

How the Audit Works

- Every year (usually January), a computer program randomly selects a list of LPNs who are required to submit their learning documents to the College for review.
- LPNs selected for the audit are notified by mail and provided with instructions regarding the process and the 2 documents they are required to submit.

- Submission of documents is time sensitive and there are consequences of missing a submission deadline.
- Once documents are received by the College, a committee of practicing practical nurses reviews each one to determine if there is sufficient evidence of compliance with the program requirements.
- Compliance is achieved when learning goals or activities:
 - have been completed within the specific dates;
 - apply to practical nursing practice, and;
 - have a sufficient reflective practice evaluation (SEE: *Reflective Practice*, page 4).

Outcomes of the Audit

- Typically, members are notified of the audit results within 7 days of the committee meeting.
- There are 3 possible outcomes:
 1. Compliance with CCP can be determined and no further action required;
 2. Compliance cannot be fully determined and more information or clarity is required. Depending on the nature of what is required this may be done by phone or via regular/electronic mail, or;
 3. There is no indication of compliance. A condition is added to your license indicating you have 90 days to submit new documents and complete additional learning. Your license will expire on day 91 if compliance cannot be achieved. Your employer is notified of this.

Audit Reminders

- The audit is about reviewing documents outlining learning activities which have been completed in the *previous licensing year*.
- Learning activities falling outside the audit date range **cannot** be included in consideration of compliance.

The College Can Help

- If you choose not to participate in CCP either at annual renewal or during the audit, you will receive a 1 time, time limited license. There's no restriction on your practice; however, the licence will expire either after the 3 month expiry date and you will no longer be eligible to practice nursing.
 - Reach out to a practice consultant at ccp@nscn.ca if you have questions.
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