

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
FOR SPONSORS OF
CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

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This edition supersedes previous edition.

In-House Policy revised in September, 1999

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INTRODUCTION

The American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc., (ABC) has long recognized the need for effective continuing professional education. Continuing education, which is the norm in the health care profession, is meant to maintain and improve the healthcare system and delivery of services. Practitioners must seek education to meet two continual demands: 1) to maintain performance at the basic level of professional competence; and, 2) to advance training and specialized skills beyond the basic level.

In 1988, ABC adopted a policy which required all practitioners who were certified after 1987 to obtain seventy-five (75) continuing education credits in each five (5) year period in order to retain their certification.

In 1992, ABC adopted a policy extending this requirement to all certificants, effective December 1, 1994. The policy was adopted because:

the ABC wanted to declare to patients and to the general public that the organized field of O&P believes continuing professional education is a necessary adjunct to quality patient care.

continuing education serves patients' interests.

continuing education is an integral part of many allied health certification programs.

DEFINITION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

The content of the continuing education programs are within that body of knowledge and skills generally recognized and accepted by the profession as encompassing the basic sciences, the discipline of clinical orthotics and prosthetics, and the provision of health care to the public. This does not rule out leading edge scientific information that is at the forefront of research in the O&P profession.

This definition and the rules applied by the continuing education program are sufficiently broad to permit orthotists and prosthetists to undertake continuing education activities relevant to their professional responsibilities. All applications for continuing education should comply with this definition.

Professional Continuing Education (PCE) Credit

In the field of continuing education, the definition of a Continuing Education Unit (CEU) is that one CEU equals ten contact hours of participation. ABC's definition has always been that one contact hour equals

one credit and a credit was also referred to as a CEU. However, the ABC Continuing Education Committee recommended to the Board of Directors that the CEU designation be changed to "Professional Continuing Education" (PCE) credit. **Except as noted elsewhere for specific types of programs or activities, the PCE is defined as one hour equals a maximum of one credit.**

CLASSIFICATION AND DEFINITION OF PCE CATEGORIES

ABC grants certification to practitioners of orthotics and prosthetics, therefore, only educational and business programs that relate specifically to the practice of those disciplines will be granted PCEs.

In identifying various continuing education opportunities, the Continuing Education Committee (Committee) created two categories, "Category I" and "Category II" that would distinguish those learning activities which are largely sponsor-based programs from those which are independent and/or unsupervised.

Patient related business programs and O&P specific related business programs may qualify for Category I PCE credits.

Credits awarded for courses are either scientific (combined orthotic & prosthetic) or business.

Category I PCEs

Category I continuing education opportunities are generally sponsor-based programs (seminars/conferences) and are evaluated by the Committee for course/program content relevant to the profession; qualified presenters/instructors and clear and concise learning outcomes. **PCE credits for this category can only be applied for by the sponsor.**

Category I continuing education can take the form of lectures, seminars, self-study materials, self-assessment programs, and use of audio-visual or computer based materials.

ABC approved continuing education activities, sponsored by or affiliated with the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists, Inc., (Academy), the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association, Inc., (AOPA), including national assemblies, regional meetings, local chapter meetings, CECs, Institutes, Societies, etc., shall qualify for Category I PCE credit.

PCEs Awarded for Category I

Academy/AOPA Sponsored or Affiliated Programs

One hour of demonstration of didactic (lecture) presentation shall qualify for one PCE. Two hours hands-on or laboratory sessions shall qualify for one PCE.

Commercial/Business Programs

The following programs may qualify for Category I credits:

- a) Academy/AOPA Sponsored Programs

These are outlined above.

- b) Academy Sponsored Independent Activities

Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics (JPO) Articles/Quizzes will be awarded 2 PCEs; Academy Videos/Monographs will be awarded 6 PCEs.

- c) Allied Health or Medical Presentations

PCEs will be awarded as outlined in the criteria for Category I credits for allied health or medical seminars (i.e., American Council for Rehabilitative Medicine; American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons; etc.)

- d) In-House Programs

If a company hosts a seminar for which the speaker is not an employee of the company and is brought in to lecture, both the speaker and the host company must comply with the same guidelines applicable to all programs seeking Category I credit. For example, if a well-known manufacturer is invited to lecture at Company X, Company X applies for Category I credits but must submit information given to them by the manufacturer.

In this case, if the program is open to the public, it will receive one (1) PCE per contact hour. If the program is not identical to the sponsor's (in this case the manufacturer's) regular program and the information is not available at other venues, the lecture will receive no credit. At ABC's discretion, an outside monitor may attend to validate the program.

If employees and/or non-employees are lecturing and the program is open to the public, it may qualify for one (1) PCE per hour of lecture.

If employees and/or non-employees are lecturing and the seminar is closed to the public, the lecture will receive no credit.

In-House Policy revised in September, 1999

Category II PCEs

Category II credit is intended to provide opportunities for O&P practitioners to be more self-directed in their continuing education. Practitioners can develop a personal educational program, determine individualized educational objectives and select the learning activities most effective to reach those objectives. Category II continuing education opportunities are generally independent, unsupervised activities. **PCE credits for this category must be applied for independently by the practitioner.**

SPONSORING CATEGORY I CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Program Requirements

1. ***Needs Identification*** - The program or activity must be planned in response to the identified needs of a target audience. This can be done by submitting a statement as to **why an audience would benefit from the program**. What makes the program new, different or of any value to the profession.

Guidelines: The purpose of identifying learning needs is to ensure that the planned activity is relevant to the learner's continuing education and/or job requirements. Needs may be identified in several ways, for example, input from learners, their supervisors, their organizations, and/or professions. The key to effective needs assessment is the identification of the gap between what the learner knows and what the learner needs to know. The documentation produced by needs assessment becomes the basis for developing learning outcomes.

2. ***Learning Outcomes*** - The continuing education provider has a clear and concise written statement of intended learning outcomes (i.e., behavioral or performance objectives) for each continuing education program/activity. This is the specific knowledge and/or information that the program sponsor expects the audience to retain.

Guidelines: Intended learning outcomes are synonymous with behavioral and performance objectives. Their purpose is to specify the determined skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes that the learner should be able to demonstrate following the continuing education experience. The learners should be aware of these intended learning outcomes prior to and during the activity. Such outcomes form the basis for measurement of progress, periodic feedback, and final assessment.

3. ***Speaker Qualifications*** - Qualified instructional personnel are directly involved in determining the program purpose, developing intended

learning outcomes, and planning and conducting each learning experience. **Speakers must be qualified to speak on the subject matter.**

Guidelines: A systematic and sequential process that fulfills the specified purposes and intended learning outcomes of the continuing education experience requires program leaders or instructional staff who have the following qualifications:

- a) Expertise in the subject matter and appropriate credentials;
- b) Qualifications include, but are not limited to registration or certification earned, licensure or credentials in the subject matter, educational degree, medical degree, special training or education, extensive experience in the subject matter;
- c) Understanding the purpose and intended learning outcomes of the continuing education or training experience;
- d) Knowledge and skills in the instructional methodologies and learning processes to be used;
- e) Ability to communicate the educational content to the participants at an appropriate level.
- f) Exceptions to speakers' qualifications will be considered as the information presented relates uniquely to the speaker's background and experience. Qualifications that relate specifically to the content of the presentation will be favorably considered.
- g) If deemed necessary by the Committee, program sponsors may be asked to provide additional information which establishes the speaker's qualifications to present the subject matter.

4. *Methodology* - Instructional methodologies selected are consistent with stated learning outcomes, sequenced to facilitate learning, and permit opportunities for the learner to participate and to receive feedback.

Guidelines: The learner and the instructor have a clear understanding of the method through which the educational methods are presented. For example, learning outcomes can be achieved through lectures, demonstrations or through "hands-on" or laboratory sessions.

Content should be sequenced in a logical manner and should proceed from basic to advanced levels. Instructional methodologies should permit the learner to participate interactively and to receive feedback that strengthens and reinforces learning and measures progress.

5. *Requirements for Satisfactory Completion* - Requirements for satisfactory completion are established for each planned learning experience. These requirements are based on the purpose and intended learning outcomes. Participants should be informed of the requirements for satisfactory completion prior to their participation (i.e. program advertisement, continuing education announcement, registration confirmation). Sponsors should not rely solely on attendance as a requirement of satisfactory completion. It is suggested that sponsors give serious consideration to a pretest and post-test for satisfactory completion.

Guidelines: The requirements for satisfactory completion are established prior to the offering of the program or activity through the mutual agreement of the course coordinator, course director, or other persons responsible for the overall PCE program. Requirements may be based on the ability of participants to demonstrate what they have learned, or some predetermined level of attendance at sessions, or a combination of performance and attendance.

Programs that require achievement of certain performance levels (such as independent study or video home study) should be based on the intended learning outcomes that have been clearly stated at the beginning of the program. Requirements that focus on attendance only should be high (i.e., 90 percent and above) and documented by such means as attendance rosters or sign-in sheets. Regardless of which form is used, sponsors need to answer the question, "What was the most useful/valuable information gained from this program/seminar?"

A. *Sign-in Sheets* - PCE credits are granted for a.m. and p.m. sessions. Practitioners will receive credit for all-day attendance only if their signatures appear on both the a.m. and p.m. sign-in sheets. If their signatures appear on only one session, they will receive one half credit for that day. If practitioners fail to sign-in twice per day, they may subsequently secure written proof of attendance from the sponsor.

B. *Assessment of Learning Outcomes* - Procedures established during program planning are used, when applicable, to measure the achievement of intended learning outcomes specified for the program or activity as they relate to changes in learners' knowledge, skills or attitudes.

Guidelines - Assessment refers to the measurement of individual performance in relation to intended learning outcomes. Assessment may be made during and/or at the conclusion of the learning activity. Assessment made during the activity may help to reinforce learning and provide a point of reference for the progress of the learners. (For example a Q&A session during the seminar to assess if needs are being met.)

The assessment procedure, its timing, and its application are established as part of the planning process. Because the assessment procedures depend on the intended learning outcomes, they must be measurable or observable, clearly stated, and focused on the level of performance expected of the learner. When a formal assessment of learning outcomes is to be a part of a program or activity, the purpose and nature of the assessment procedure must be made known to the learner prior to the beginning of the program.

Assessment may take diverse forms, such as performance demonstrations under real or simulated conditions, written or oral examinations, written reports, completion of a project, self-assessment, or locally or externally developed standardized examinations. Moreover, assessments may be made during or at the conclusion of the program or activity, or after some elapsed time following the learning experience. Assessment will be made based upon the type of learning experience. For a lecture/ seminar the best form of assessment may come from the evaluation forms.

6. *Sponsor Program Evaluation* - During the course of planning, a process is established to evaluate major aspects of the continuing education experience, (i.e., organizational input; the design, content, content level, and operation; and the extent to which intended learning outcomes were achieved.)

Guidelines: The distinction between assessment and evaluation is: "assessment" refers to the measurement of individual learning outcomes; "evaluation" refers to measures of the quality of the administration and operation and of the continuing education experience as a whole. Using only participant reaction surveys will not yield the data needed for an adequate assessment of a continuing education experience. However, substantial and useful participant reaction surveys can be designed: (1) to measure what the participants consider to be the benefits of the learning experience; (2) to determine participant satisfaction with the physical arrangements; or, (3) for comparisons between different offerings or between the same offerings on different occasions. The evaluation process itself is one measure of the quality of a continuing education program or activity.

The importance of evaluating the continuing education experience(s) for the individual learner, user groups and the sponsor or provider cannot be overemphasized. Evaluation is a coordinated process carried on by the total system and its individual subsystems (the provider's organization and all facets of that organization that are involved in continuing education offerings.) It consists of making judgments about programs and activities based on established criteria and observable evidence. Evaluation takes into account the process followed in the program planning effort and is intended to develop information aimed at answering the following questions:

Did the learning experience and the instructional methods used satisfy the intended learning outcomes?

Were the intended learning outcomes appropriate for the stated purpose of the learning experience and for the learners involved?

Were the intended learning outcomes stated in measurable or observable terms?

Were the program inputs (decision making during the planning process; fiscal, physical, and instructional inputs of the provider) associated with the learning outcomes?

Was there a clear relationship between the educational needs of the learners and the stated purposes of the learning experience?

Were the provider's philosophy, mission, structure, functions, and processes effective and efficient in producing the learning outcomes intended for the learning experience?

Quality improvement, development and control of continuing education programs are enhanced through long-range, systematic evaluation of what intended goals are in a program, in relation to what actually occurs. The differences found between what is intended and what actually occurs, can be used as the base for whatever change is needed to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are attained. Sponsors and providers of continuing education may find evaluations are a useful tool when accounting for the results of their programming efforts.

Awarding Credits

A) Assessment of PCEs

PCEs are earned for educational contact of **one quarter (1/4) hour** or more. Continuing education presentations of less than one quarter (1/4) hour are not eligible for PCEs. **All PCEs shall accumulate in segments of one quarter (1/4) hour or more.** The committee encourages the grouping of subject categories under which shorter presentations can be given. Subjects that defy categorization must be 1/4 hour in length.

B) Speaker Presentations

In the case where two or more lecturers can speak on the same subject matter or theme/topic, PCEs can be maximized by grouping the lecturers together. For example, if a program with four speakers who are all speaking on the topic of "organized sports for the disabled," and two speak for two consecutive presentations of 8 minutes each, one speaks for an 1/2 hour and one for an hour, the sponsor could receive the maximum credits of 1.75 PCEs for that portion of the program only if 1) the topics are organized under one subject matter; and 2) the lectures are presented consecutively. Credit

will be awarded based on total accumulated credit for total minutes of content, providing the presentations are all topic related.

C) Panel/Group Discussions

Sponsors of O&P programs are encouraged to include guided discussion sessions during each speaker presentation or group of presentations. All panel or group discussions will be included in the PCE time awarded. The Committee encourages and emphasizes the importance of audience and presenter interaction in the learning process.

D) Sponsors may earn additional credits for those courses that have a post-test.

A sponsor may receive double credit for having post-test and a discussion period. Separate sign-in sheets must be submitted for the course and for the post-test. A copy of the test and an estimation of the time required to take the test should be submitted with the application.

Application Procedures

A) Submission

Formal applications are available from the ABC upon request. Applications must be typewritten and include the course/program or other outline and include the information as requested above (see "Program Requirements").

Applications must be submitted to ABC for evaluation by the Continuing Education Committee at least 60 days prior to the program date for assurance of receiving notice of PCEs prior to the program being held.

Programs submitted in less than 60 days, but greater than 30 days cannot be offered assurance that PCEs will be awarded prior to the program date.

Programs submitted less than 30 days prior to the date of the program will not be evaluated for Category I PCE credit. Consequently, practitioners must submit applications for Category II PCE credit for program attendance.

Programs that are offered repeatedly throughout the course of the year must be submitted for PCE credit within a minimum of 30 days prior to the first program presentation. Sponsors need not resubmit a program that remains the same throughout the year. Sponsors must, however, notify ABC in writing of subsequent dates added to the initial program application. Further, the sponsor must attest that the program is exactly the same with no changes in either content or presenters. Any substantive changes to the content of programs offered repeatedly will require that the program be re-submitted for evaluation. A program that is given each year must apply for credit each year, regardless of whether the program content changes.

B) Processing Fee

A processing fee of \$50.00 must accompany the submission of every program/course for Category I PCE credit. The application will not be processed without the application fee.

C) Notification

Upon receipt of the completed application, sponsors will be notified in writing of approval of PCE credits in approximately six (6) weeks.

D) Transmittal of "Sign-in Sheets"

All sign-in sheets should be transmitted to ABC, via certified mail, immediately upon conclusion of the program. To avoid a delay in posting credits, sign-in sheets should be transmitted to ABC within 30 days following completion of the program. Sponsor cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

E) Submission of Sponsor Program Evaluation

The program evaluation form completed by the sponsor must accompany the sign-in sheets in order for the participants to receive PCE credits for attendance.

The policies governing PCE Category I Credit Approval are subject to change by the ABC Board of Directors.

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