

MIDWIVES, REGISTERED NURSES, AND REGISTERED PSYCHIATRIC
NURSES

Certified Practice Course Review Policies

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Introduction

The *Health Professions and Occupations Act* (HPOA) is the provincial law that guides the work of the British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives (BCCNM). It is the responsibility of BCCNM and everyone who exercises regulatory authority on its behalf to act in accordance with the guiding principles described in section 14 of the HPOA. This includes protecting the public from harm and discrimination; supporting and promoting awareness of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the need to address Indigenous-specific racism in British Columbia's health care system; and acting in a fair manner that demonstrates respect for the principles of procedural fairness.

Under section 7 of the *Regulated Health Practitioners Regulation* (RHPR), it is the responsibility of BCCNM's Board to make bylaws establishing certification programs to provide a mechanism for registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and midwives to become certified to perform those restricted activities that require certification under sections 21, 23, 51, 53 or 70 of the *Nurses and Midwives Regulation* (NMR). This includes bylaws respecting the education, training, experience and other qualifications that applicants for certification are expected to meet. Those bylaws are established in Part 7 of the *BCCNM General Bylaws* (BGB), and include provisions in sections 7-4 and 7-5 respecting the recognition of nursing and midwifery certified practice courses offered by specific course providers, and the process for recognizing and ceasing to recognise those courses.¹ Those processes are further governed by these Certified Practice Course Review Policies made by the Education Program Review Committee (EPRC) under section 7-6 of the BGB.

BCCNM's processes for recognizing and withdrawing recognition of courses also reflect our commitment to eradicating Indigenous-specific racism within our health system and providing culturally safe care for Indigenous people.

The purpose of these Certified Practice Course Review Policies is to provide for guidance, consistency and transparency in the processes for review of nursing and midwifery certified practice courses for recognition with BCCNM. The policies are intended for use in course review by the EPRC and BCCNM staff, both for established courses that are currently recognized by BCCNM and seeking renewal of recognition, and for new courses seeking to obtain initial recognition from BCCNM. In addition to these policies, actions of BCCNM staff and the EPRC are guided by Internal Operational Policies that are approved by the EPRC and Standard Operating Procedures that developed by staff.

Decisions about course recognition are made by the EPRC, or by BCCNM staff exercising the EPRC's delegated authority under section 7-7 of the BGB. RNs, RPNs and midwives who successfully complete a BCCNM-recognized nursing and midwifery certified practice course are deemed to meet BCCNM's education requirement for certification in the corresponding certification program when they apply for certification with BCCNM within the time required by the BGB (one year).

¹ Certified practice courses are referred to in this policy as "courses".

1 Confidentiality and Disclosure of Certified Practice Course Information

- 1.1 Section 5-6 of the BGB requires a person acting on BCCNM's behalf to preserve confidentiality with respect to all knowledge gained and all information and records obtained while exercising a power or performing a duty under the HPOA, unless disclosure is:
 - a. necessary to exercise the power or perform the duty;
 - b. authorized or required under the HPOA, its regulations or the bylaws;
 - c. required under another enactment; or
 - d. otherwise authorized by the Board (or the Registrar/Chief Executive Officer or a Deputy Registrar exercising the Board's delegated authority) as being in the public interest.
- 1.2 Section 490 of the HPOA also prevents a person from being compelled to give evidence about such knowledge and prevents BCCNM from being compelled to produce such records, in court proceedings or other quasi-judicial proceedings that are not under the HPOA or a federal enactment, unless authorized by the Board as being in the public interest.
- 1.3 Under section 21 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, BCCNM must also withhold certain third-party commercial, financial, labour relations, scientific or technical information from responses to Freedom of Information requests, where the information was shared with BCCNM on a confidential basis and its disclosure could reasonably be expected to harm the third party's business interests, unless the third party consents to disclosure.
- 1.4 Under these provisions, BCCNM generally keeps information about course reviews confidential and does not disclose it to third parties; however:
 - a. Under section 5-11 of the BGB, the Registrar/Chief Executive Officer may disclose information obtained about certified practice courses through course review-related activities to the provincial government.
 - b. Information collected from or about course providers and courses may be disclosed by BCCNM to its site visitors, subject matter experts and other contractors who are legally bound to meet confidentiality requirements, for the purposes of the course review process.
 - c. Under section 7-4(13) of the BGB, a list of recognized courses is published on the BCCNM website along with the expiration date of the current period of recognition for each course, and any terms or conditions the EPRC directs to be published.
 - d. Information may be disclosed as otherwise required or authorized under the HPOA, its regulations, and BCCNM's bylaws, or as otherwise required by law, including without limitation, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, or a court order that is not barred by HPOA section 490.

2 Certified Practice Competencies

- 2.1 Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of British Columbia approve competencies for all certification programs for registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses.
- 2.2 The EPRC approves competencies for all certification programs for midwives.

3 Established Certified Practice Course²

- 3.1 The Deputy Registrar may modify or vary the review process for renewing recognition for an Established Course as authorized by the Standard Operating Procedure for Modifying or Varying the Review Process.
- 3.2 To renew the EPRC's recognition of an Established Course, the course provider offering the course must provide evidence in the Certified Practice Course Review Report to address Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators³ set out in Schedule C of the BGB excerpted in Appendix A.
- 3.3 BCCNM staff⁴ and/or subject matter experts contracted by BCCNM assess the evidence submitted by a course provider regarding an Established Course.
- 3.4 If a course provider does not provide sufficient evidence to complete an assessment of whether an Established Course meets the Standards and Indicators, the course provider may be provided the opportunity to submit additional information in the form of supplementary evidence and/or a site visit.
- 3.5 An Established Course's recognition will be renewed for a specified period of time, subject to any terms or conditions specified by the EPRC, if the course meets the course recognition criteria in section 7-4(5)(a), (b) and (c) of the BGB.

4 New Certified Practice Course

- 4.1 The Deputy Registrar may modify or vary the review process for granting recognition for a New Course as authorized by the Standard Operating Procedure for Modifying or Varying the Review Process.
- 4.2 A course provider proposing to offer a New Course must not admit students to the course until the course has been recognized by the EPRC.

² Certified practice courses that are currently recognized by BCCNM at the time of implementing of these policies (including courses previously recognized as midwifery specialized practice courses) will be considered Established Courses.

³ Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators are referred to in this policy as "Standards and Indicators".

⁴ BCCNM/EPR staff are referred to in this policy as "staff".

- 4.3 If a course provider admits students to a New Course before it is recognized by the EPRC, the course provider cannot assume that those students will be eligible for certification with BCCNM upon graduation, even if the course is subsequently recognized by the EPRC.
- 4.4 A course provider proposing to offer a New Course must communicate its intention in writing to BCCNM using the form provided by staff.
- 4.5 The course provider proposing to offer a New Course must provide evidence in a Certified Practice Course Review Report (Proposed New Course) to address the Standards and Indicators as set out in Schedule C of the BGB excerpted in Appendix A.
- 4.6 Staff and/or subject matter experts contracted by BCCNM assess the evidence submitted by an course provider regarding a proposed New Course.
- 4.7 If a course provider does not provide sufficient evidence to complete an assessment of whether a proposed New Course will meet Standards and Indicators, the course provider may be provided the opportunity to submit additional information in the form of supplementary evidence and/or a site visit.
- 4.8 A New Course will be granted recognition for a specified period of time, subject to any terms or conditions specified by the EPRC, if the course meets the course recognition criteria in section 7-4(5)(a), (b) and (c) of the BGB.

5 Supplementary Evidence and Site Visit

- 5.1 Supplementary evidence may include a request for specific evidence, clarification of evidence, and/or a revised Certified Practice Course Review Report for Established Courses or revised Certified Practice Course Review Report (Proposed New Course) for New Courses.
- 5.2 An on-site or virtual site visit may be made to collect evidence to augment the Course Review Report for an Established or New Course and/or verify evidence based on the Standards and Indicators.
- 5.3 The need for a site visit may be determined based on:
 - a. the previous review and stipulation in the last decision about recognition of the course and the next scheduled review, and/or
 - b. the assessment of the Course Review Report submitted during the current course review.

6 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Staff will conduct a Risk Assessment under section 7-4(8) of the BGB when a BCCNM recognized Established or New Course does meet the applicable course recognition criteria.
- 6.2 Without limiting section 7-4(8) of the BGB, a Risk Assessment may consider the following factors:

- a. The nature and extent of the deficiencies in evidence to address the Standards and Indicators;
 - b. Specific, realistic plans presented by the course provider to correct the deficiencies;
 - c. The strengths of the course provider and course that mitigate any risks to the public;
 - d. Evidence that the course provider is acting in a transparent and accountable manner regarding the deficiencies and planning for satisfactory improvements;
 - e. Evidence of any pattern over time that deficiencies identified during previous reviews are not being addressed satisfactorily; and
 - f. The nature, severity and probability of any harm to the public that may result from these deficiencies.
- 6.3 The EPRC may use the results of a Risk Assessment when making a decision about granting or renewing course recognition, about recognition length, or about any terms or conditions that the EPRC may consider necessary or appropriate to protect the public.

7 Decisions by EPRC

- 7.01 The maximum recognition length for a certified practice course is three years.
- 7.02 Subject to section 7-4(5), (6), and (8) of the BGB and these Certified Practice Course Review Policies:
- a. The EPRC will make a decision regarding granting or renewing of course recognition, and if applicable, about course recognition length, and about any terms or conditions that may be imposed by the EPRC, following the review of an Established Course; and
 - b. The EPRC will make a decision regarding granting of course recognition, and, if applicable, about course recognition length, and about any terms or conditions that may be imposed by the EPRC, following the review of a proposed New Course.
- 7.03 If the EPRC denies recognition of a New Course, the course provider is not permitted to submit another application for a New Course for at least one year from the date of the decision.
- 7.04 At the request of a course provider, and in consideration of extenuating circumstances, the Deputy Registrar may extend existing recognition of an established course on a provisional basis under section 7-4(7) of the BGB for a period of up to one year, subject to any terms or conditions that the Deputy Registrar may consider necessary or appropriate to protect the public.
- 7.05 The EPRC may delegate the exercise of any of its powers or performance of any of its duties related to Established and New Courses to the Registrar or Deputy Registrar or other BCCNM staff designated by the Registrar or Deputy Registrar.

7.1 Recognition Lengths

- 7.1.1 The period of recognition granted to an Established or New Course must not exceed three years.
- 7.1.2 Without limiting section 7-4(6) or (8)(b)(i) of the BGB, the EPRC may consider the following factors when determining the period of recognition to be granted to an Established or New Course:
- a. Evidence of the course's ability to prepare its graduates for safe practice, including evidence of any gaps in curriculum-related knowledge, skills or theory to support safe, ethical and competent care to clients;
 - b. Evidence of the course's ability to deliver learning experiences related to the applicable certification program;
 - c. The presence of sufficient process within the course provider to support quality assurance or ongoing course evaluation;
 - d. The existence of sufficient resources to support course delivery, including faculty, spaces and/or supplies;
 - e. Any other evidence relevant to the EPRC's assessment of the course provider's ability to reasonably ensure that the course will continue to meet applicable course recognition criteria for the duration of the period of recognition to be granted.

7.2 Terms or Condition

- 7.2.1 Without limiting the discretion of the EPRC to establish terms or conditions for any New or Established Course under section 7-4(5) of the BGB, the EPRC has the discretion to consider renewing the recognition of an Established Course that does not meet the course recognition criteria set out in 3.5 as provided in section 7-4(8) of the BGB, subject to any terms or conditions the EPRC considers necessary to protect the public, after considering the risk assessment conducted by staff under Part 5 of these Certified Practice Course Review Policies.
- 7.2.2 The EPRC will consider the staff assessment of any evidence required as part of the terms or conditions for a course and may decide the following:
- a. To remove any terms or conditions that the EPRC no longer considers necessary or appropriate; or
 - b. To add any additional terms or conditions that the EPRC considers necessary or appropriate; or
 - c. To issue a Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition under section 7-5 of the BGB.

8 Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition

- 8.1 In addition to imposing any terms or conditions on a course provider that the EPRC considers necessary or appropriate, the EPRC may issue a warning of withdrawal of course recognition if the EPRC considers that the course's continued recognition poses a risk to the public for any of the reasons set out in section 7-5(1) of the BGB.
- 8.2 Issuance of a Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition by the EPRC initiates a warning period to provide the course provider with a reasonable opportunity to:
- a. Provide information or submissions in response to any concerns identified in the warning for consideration by the EPRC; and
 - b. Demonstrate satisfactory resolution of any deficiencies identified in the warning.
- 8.3 The EPRC determines the length of a warning period having regard to the facts and circumstances or context of the particular course, including consideration of the following factors:
- a. Fairness to students enrolled in the course in terms of the impact that recognition withdrawal would have on their ability to complete the course and proceed with BCCNM certification; and
 - b. A reasonable amount of time and opportunity for the course to demonstrate satisfactory resolution of the deficiencies identified by the EPRC without undue risk to the public.
- 8.4 If the EPRC issues a warning of withdrawal of course recognition to a course provider, the EPRC may direct BCCNM staff on public posting of any terms or condition to the BCCNM website.

9 Removal of Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition

- 9.1 The EPRC will consider the staff assessment of any evidence required as part of the terms or conditions of the Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition, and may decide the following:
- a. To continue the existing recognition without modification; or
 - b. To remove any terms or conditions that the EPRC no longer considers necessary or appropriate; or
 - c. To modify any existing terms or conditions or add additional terms or conditions that the EPRC considers necessary or appropriate, including maintaining the warning for an extended warning period; or
 - d. To reduce the existing period of recognition with or without any changes to the terms or conditions; or

- e. To remove the Warning of Withdrawal of Course Recognition; or
- f. To withdraw course recognition on an effective date specified by the EPRC.

10 Withdrawal of Course Recognition

- 10.1 Before the EPRC considers a recommendation by staff to withdraw course recognition, the course provider shall be provided with:
- a. A copy of the staff report that is to be presented to the EPRC recommending withdrawal of course recognition; and
 - b. A reasonable opportunity to deliver a written response for the EPRC's consideration before the EPRC decides whether to withdraw course recognition.
- 10.2 If requested by the course provider, representatives of the course provider must be given a reasonable opportunity to make a supplementary oral presentation at an EPRC meeting before the EPRC decides whether to withdraw course recognition.
- 10.3 When determining whether to withdraw course recognition, the EPRC considers:
- a. The assessed risks to the public;
 - b. The course's progress in addressing the conditions of recognition set by the EPRC at the time of the previous program review;
 - c. The period for which the warning of withdrawal was attached to the course's recognition; and
 - d. Any written or oral submissions made by the course provider in response to the recognition report/risk assessment.

11 Substantial Changes to a Course

- 11.1 A course provider proposing to make a substantial change to an Established Course is responsible for notifying BCCNM in writing of the proposed substantial change. Implementation of a substantial change prior to its review by BCCNM may result in the graduates of the course not being eligible for certification with BCCNM.
- 11.2 Staff will determine if additional evidence is required to assess if the substantial change impacts the applicable recognition criteria for Established Courses. If a change is expected to have an impact on applicable recognition criteria, the EPRC may accept or reject the change based on evidence submitted by the course provider with or without a change to the current period of course recognition and/or with or without any changes to the existing terms or conditions or the addition of any new terms or conditions that the EPRC may consider necessary or appropriate.

Appendix A: Education Standards and Indicators for Certified Practice Courses (excerpt from Schedule C of BGB)

Standard 1: Curriculum Standard

The curriculum builds upon the BCCNM Standards of Practice to provide the learning experiences necessary for students to achieve the certified practice competencies and BCCNM Standards of Practice for certification.

Indicators of the Curriculum Standard

- a) The course is clearly described, and its foundations are congruent with the achievement of the certified practice competencies and BCCNM Standards of Practice.
- b) The course requires students to apply the certified practice competencies and BCCNM Standards of Practice while learning to provide care directly with clients and engaging with interprofessional education and care.

Standard 2: Students Standard

Students demonstrate progress toward the achievement of the certified practice competencies and application of BCCNM Standards of Practice for certification.

Indicators of the Students Standard

- a) Students receive well-timed formative and summative feedback to achieve the certified practice competencies and BCCNM Standards of Practice.
- b) Students have access to sufficient learning resources to support their achievement of the certified practice competencies and BCCNM Standards of Practice.
- c) Program policies and resources support faculty to fail students or remove them from the practice setting for reasons of unprofessional/unethical behaviour or unsafe practice.
- d) Students who are successful at course completion have achieved the certified practice competencies and are able to apply the BCCNM Standards of Practice to provide safe, competent, and ethical care.

Standard 3: Course Evaluation Standard

Certified practice course evaluations demonstrate student preparedness for practice upon course completion.

Indicator of the Course Evaluation Standard

- a) A plan for implementation of formative and summative course evaluation is clearly presented.

Appendix B: Glossary

BCCNM Standards of Practice means the practice standards and ethical standards established by BCCNM for the practice of a designated health profession by licensees, in accordance with the HPOA.

BGB means the *BCCNM General Bylaws* established by the Board under the HPOA.

Certified Practice Course or **Course** means a course offered by a course provider as qualifying its graduates for certification in a certification program established under section 7-2 of the BGB.

Certified Practice Course Review Report means a report of the evidence and findings of a course provider's comprehensive assessment of its course against the BCCNM Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators. The Certified Practice Course Review Report is submitted following initiation of the course review process and presents evidence demonstrating achievement of the BCCNM Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators.

Certified Practice Course Review Report (Proposed New Course) means a report of the evidence and findings of a course provider's comprehensive assessment of its proposed new course against the BCCNM Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators. The Certified Practice Course Review Report (Proposed New Course) is submitted following initiation of the course review process and presents evidence demonstrating achievement of the BCCNM Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators.

Curriculum means the foundational values, beliefs and concepts of an education program or course; program or course outcomes/goals/objectives; and overall structure, including how learning is sequenced and built upon progressively to provide the learning experiences necessary for students to achieve the competencies and the BCCNM Standards of Practice for the applicable designation or for certification.

Deputy Registrar as designated by the Board is the staff member holding responsibility for certified practice course review.

Education Program Review Committee or **EPRC** or **committee** means the committee established by BGB that is responsible for the conduct of reviews of new and established education programs and certified practice courses. The EPRC makes decisions about course recognition, in accordance with its powers and duties under the BGB and these EPR Policies.

Established Course means a course that has previously undergone a review by BCCNM addressing all the Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators and is currently recognized by BCCNM.

New Course means a course that is new to the course provider offering the course and is not currently recognized by BCCNM.

Recognition means the recognition granted by the EPRC to a course under section 7-4 of the BGB for the purpose of its graduates satisfying BCCNM's education requirements for certification in a certification program established under section 7-2 of the BGB.

Site Visitor means BCCNM staff or subject matter experts contracted by BCCNM to conduct a virtual or in person visit to any location at which the course provider is offering the course under review.

Substantial change means the revision of a recognized course which includes a change in one or more of the following:

- a. how the curriculum addresses student achievement of the applicable certified practice competencies, including changes in the nature and extent of learning activities in the curriculum;
- b. learning resources to support student achievement of the applicable certified practice competencies, including laboratory experiences or learning experiences with clients;
- c. expectations about overall student performance, including evaluation of student practice and policies about safe student performance;
- d. any other significant change that may impact the course provider's ability to prepare students to achieve the applicable certified practice competencies

Supplementary evidence means the additional evidence courses may be required to submit if the evidence submitted is not sufficient to complete an assessment of whether the course meets the Certified Practice Course Standards and Indicators. This evidence may be in the form of written documentation, an interview, or another form of evidence as determined by the BCCNM staff, subject matter experts contracted by BCCNM, or the EPRC.

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900 – 200 Granville St

Vancouver, BC V6C 1S4

Canada

www.bccnm.ca

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