

CONTINUING COMPETENCE PROGRAM RULES



**Alberta Institute
of Agrologists**

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PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The competent practice of agrology is complex, involving lifelong study. To protect and serve the public interest, the *Agrology Profession Act* provides that the Alberta Institute of Agrologists must establish, maintain, and enforce standards of practice and continuing competence for the provision of professional services within the practice of agrology: *Agrology Profession Act*, section 3.

“*Competence*” means the combined knowledge, skills, abilities, and judgment required to provide professional services: *Agrology Profession Act*, section 1(1)(d).

“*Professional service*” means a service provided by a regulated member of the Institute that comes within the practice of agrology: *Agrology Profession Act*, section 1(1)(x).

“*Practice of agrology*” is defined in section 1(1)(v) of the *Agrology Profession Act* as “the development, acquisition or application of or advising on scientific principles and practices relating to the cultivation, production, utilization and improvement of plants and animals and the management of associated resources.” It includes “the certification of compliance with Acts, regulations, directives, standards and guidelines related to agrology; the conducting of economic, statistical, financial, sociological and other studies related to agrology; the production, processing, marketing and protection of agricultural and related products and supplies; the analysis, classification and evaluation of land and water systems; the undertaking of agricultural design and advising on the use of buildings, structures, machinery and equipment; the conservation, decommissioning, reclamation, remediation and improvement of soils, land and water systems; and the development, management and use of waste treatment and ecological systems.”

Practically speaking, the Act’s definition of “practice of agrology” divides into 19 areas in which professional services may be provided.

With respect to standards of practice, the AIA council has developed detailed Practice Standards and Core Knowledge Tables for each practice area. Each standard and table identifies the knowledge, skill, experience, and judgment required to provide professional services competently in the relevant practice area.

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With respect to standards of continuing competence, the *Agrology Profession Act*, section 43, directs the AIA council to establish a Continuing Competence Program (CCP) that provides a way for regulated members to maintain competence and enhance the provision of professional services in the areas in which they practice agrology.

To lend structure to the CCP, sections 17 and 18 of the *Agrology Profession Regulation* authorize the AIA council to enact CCP Rules that include

- the number of CCP credits that must be obtained in a membership year;
- the CCP credits that may be earned for each continuing competence activity;
- the type and category of CCP activities that a regulated member must undertake in a membership year;
- the number of CCP activities within a specific category for which a member may earn credits;
- additional CCP activities for which credits may be earned;
- other rules, as required, governing the CCP: *Agrology Profession Regulation*, section 18.

In addition, the *Agrology Profession Act* directs the Institute to submit to the Minister and Legislature information about the Institute's CCP each year.

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PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

EACH PAG AND RT(AG) MUST PARTICIPATE

If you are registered with the AIA as a professional agrologist (PAg), registered technologist in agrology (RT[Ag]), or provisional PAg or RT(Ag), you must complete the CCP requirements each year, starting January 1 of the year after the date of registration.

REQUIREMENTS ARE A MINIMUM STANDARD

You must obtain sufficient education to maintain competence, even if you exceed CCP requirements. Note that the definition of unprofessional conduct in section 1(1)(ff) of the *Agrology Profession Act* includes “displaying a lack of knowledge, skill, or judgment in the provision of professional services.” Providing professional services if you are not fully competent constitutes unprofessional conduct.

THE AIA REVIEWS COMPLIANCE

The AIA will review your compliance with the CCP requirements at three points:

1. Annually, when you apply to renew your practice permit through the AIA automated online system. If you haven't completed the CCP requirements, the AIA may refuse to renew your practice permit, impose conditions on it, or suspend it until you have completed the requirements: *Agrology Profession Act*, s 34; *Agrology Profession Regulation*, s 14. Note that the definition of “unprofessional conduct” includes the failure or refusal to comply with CCP requirements: *Agrology Profession Act*, s 1(1)(ff)(vi).
2. During a compliance audit, undertaken at the AIA's discretion from time to time.
3. During a practice review, undertaken at the AIA's discretion from time to time.

Furthermore, the Registration Committee must make a referral to the Complaints Director if, on the basis of information obtained from the CCP, the Committee is of the opinion that the regulated member has intentionally provided false or misleading information respecting participation in the CCP, displays a lack of competence in the provision of professional services that has not been remedied by participating in the CCP, or displays unprofessional conduct that cannot be readily remedied by means of the CCP: *Agrology Profession Act*, section 44.

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CREDIT HOURS PER YEAR

“Activities” means the categories and types of undertakings listed in the Activity Chart below.

One credit hour is the equivalent of one hour of Activities. The chart below sets out the required credit hours per practice area per year.

Credit Hours Chart		
Number of practice areas	Total credit hours required	Credit hours required per practice area
1	15	15
2	30	15
3	45	15

CREDIT HOURS PER ACTIVITY

If you perform one hour of Activities, claim it as one credit.

If an Activity applies to more than one practice area, you may split the credit hours among them. However, you may not count the same credit hours toward more than one practice area. For example, if you obtain 10 credit hours in one activity, you can claim 5 credit hours for each of two practice areas. You may not claim 10 credit hours for both practice areas.

DON'T COUNT DAILY WORK

Although work experience can provide valuable learning opportunities, daily work does not count toward CCP requirements. Daily work is precisely what the CCP is specifically intended to enrich, to safeguard public trust. However, CCP activities that take place during working hours can be counted.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL COMPETENCY MODULE REQUIRED EVERY 3 YEARS

Simply having a code of ethics, standards of practice, and a continuing competence program isn't sufficient to satisfy the *Agrology Profession Act* and maintain the privilege of self-regulation. It's equally important for regulated members to have a strong background

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in the nuances of a self-regulated profession. This is known as “professional ethical competency”.

Section 17(c) of the *Agrology Profession Regulation* provides that CCP credits may be earned through AIA-produced sessions concerning “functions of the Institute such as professional development, code of ethics or standards of practice”. Section 18(1)(c) provides that the council may make rules governing the type and category of CCP activities that a regulated member must undertake in a membership year.

Consequently, the CCP Rules include a requirement for a short, no-cost, online professional ethical competency module every 3 years.

Activity Chart			
Activity Category (<i>Agrology Profession Regulation</i> , s 17)	Activity Type	Maximum credit hours per Activity	Reporting required
Attendance at sessions sponsored or approved by the council concerning functions of the Institute such as professional development, code of ethics, or standards of practice.	MANDATORY EVERY 3 YEARS: One module of the AIA’s CCP course in Professional Ethical Competency. No cost.	5 credit hours per module. Allocate to any practice area.	Record of completion.
	AIA-produced webinars	No maximum	Record of registration or attendance.
	AIA-produced professional development online courses	No maximum	Record of completion.
Attendance at courses or seminars related to agrology designed to enhance the professional development of regulated members.	Company technical courses	No maximum	Record of attendance or completion.
	Certificate courses	No maximum	Record of completion.
	Technical webinars	No maximum	Record of registration or attendance.
	Technical presentations	No maximum	Record of registration or attendance.

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Presentation of a continuing competence activity, research paper, or abstract to any audience (professional or public).	Technical presentations within your practice area to any audience	No maximum	Documentation of presentation.
Participation as a member of the council or the Registration Committee.	Council member	Maximum 15 per year. Allocate to any practice area.	Sitting on the council is a learning activity. Councillors must expressly demonstrate knowledge gained through council training received and administrative activities conducted.
	Registration Committee member	Maximum 15 per year. Allocate to any practice area.	Committee work is a learning activity. Members must expressly demonstrate knowledge gained through training received and administrative activities conducted.
Publication of a research paper in a peer-refereed journal.	Publication of a research paper in a peer-refereed journal	No maximum	Documentation of publication.
Self-directed study approved by the council.	Study of: Scientific Journals Text Books Research Papers Legislation, regulations, standards, policies, directives Thesis documents Guides to new technology	No maximum	Description of learning: 100 words per 5 credit hours.
Other activities approved by the council.	Membership on a provincial or national scientific committee related to practice area	5	Records required.

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PLANNING AND REPORTING

Program planning and reporting are mandatory requirements. The AIA's online system helps you easily plan and report on your CCP through the following steps:

1. **Declare the practice areas in which you work.** The agrology profession divides into 19 practice areas, the majority of which are supported by detailed Practice Standards. The remainder are supported by Core Knowledge Tables. These documents define the knowledge, skill, experience, and judgment required for competent practice within the associated practice area. Declaring a practice area means you are currently active in that practice area and compliant with the applicable Practice Standard or Core Knowledge Table.
2. **Upload an up-to-date resume showing your work within the declared practice areas.**
3. **Complete the self-assessment for each declared practice area.** Using the AIA's self-assessment guide and the applicable Practice Standard or Core Knowledge Table, identify areas for improvement in your professional practice in each declared practice area.
4. **Create a CCP plan in the member portal.** The point of making a plan based on your self-assessment is to focus on maintaining competence and enhancing the provision of professional services. It is reasonable for the plan to change with the availability of activities.
5. **Include an AIA Professional Ethical Competency module every 3 years.** Note that daily work is not an allowable activity, but CCP activities can occur during working hours. See the sample plan below.
6. **Using the AIA's online reporting system, submit proof that you have completed the annual CCP requirements.** All activities for the year must be submitted by the end of the day December 31.

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Sample CCP Plan			
Number of Practice Areas Declared: 2		Total Credit Hours Required: 30	
Practice Area Name	Areas for Improvement	Activities	Credit hours per Activity
Crop Production	Soils	Study of Scientific Journals	5
		Certificate Course	5
		Membership on Technical Committee	5
Total Credits for the Practice Area			15
Wetlands and Riparian Areas	Wetland vegetation ecology	Technical presentation to professionals	10
		Mandatory Professional Ethical Competency Module (every 3 years)	5
Total Credits for the Practice Area			15
Total Credits for the Year			30

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APPENDIX A – PRACTICE REVIEW PROCEDURES

The purpose of practice reviews

The AIA conducts practice reviews from time to time. Practice reviews are intended to provide guidance and direction to regulated members to enhance professional practice and ensure that the profession is being regulated in a manner that protects and serves the public interest.

Practice reviews examine a regulated member's compliance with CCP requirements and assess whether the member is practicing within the appropriate scope of practice with the requisite knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and judgment in relation to the member's practice areas.

Who conducts practice reviews

Practice reviews may be undertaken by Registration Committee members or a Practice Review Committee appointed by the Registrar in consultation with the Registration Committee Chair, which makes recommendations to the Registration Committee.

Practice reviewers have experience in the specific practice area under review. They are also free of conflict of interest with respect to the regulated member under review.

Who is selected for a practice review

The Institute may review the practice of a regulated members who requests a review, who has transferred to Alberta from outside the province, or who has been chosen through a stratified random selection process based on the relative proportions of PAgS to RTAgS and relative proportions of regulated members in the profession's practice areas.

How a practice review is conducted

Each regulated member chosen for a practice review will be given 45 days to provide the following information on the member's online portal about each practice area in which the member provides professional services, with a 15-day extension for extenuating circumstances:

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- All post-secondary transcripts.
- A current resume using the AIA's online template.
- A complete self-assessment against any practice area in which the regulated member provides professional services.
- CCP activities completed in relation to the practice area.

All information submitted by the member is strictly confidential.

The practice reviewers may ask the member for further information in writing, by phone, or in an interview online or in person.

The review will canvass the following:

- The regulated member's compliance with the *Agrology Profession Act* and Regulation and Code of Ethics.
- The regulated member's compliance with CCP requirements.
- Whether the regulated member is practicing where the member has knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and professional judgment.
- Whether the regulated member is practicing with supervision where the member does not have knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and professional judgment.
- Whether the regulated member is practicing without supervision where the member does not have knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and professional judgment.
- Ways in which the regulated member could enhance knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and professional judgment in the practice areas in which the member provides professional services.

Practice Review Report

The practice reviewers will produce a Practice Review Report within 30 days after the review concludes.

The Report may make recommendations, including practice improvements, training, or examinations, to facilitate the regulated member's compliance with the *Agrology Profession Act* and Regulation, Code of Ethics, CCP, and Practice Standards and Core

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Knowledge Tables and to ensure that the regulated member is practicing where the member has knowledge, work experience, skill sets, and professional judgment.

The Report may include time frames for compliance with the recommendations. Recommendations may result in conditions on the regulated member's practice permit at the point of the next annual review of the member's application for practice permit renewal.

The practice reviewers will convene a meeting with the regulated member to discuss the Report.

The Institute will keep a copy of the Practice Review Report in the regulated member's file.