

AOLS Mandatory Professional Development Program

By Paul Church, O.L.S., O.L.I.P.

It's alive!

After almost twelve years of work the AOLS Professional Development Program is in place.

On November 1, 2012, Regulation 327/12 was filed; this regulation makes a number of changes to Regulation 1026 under the Surveyors Act. Effective December 1, 2012, amendments to Regulation 1026 will implement a mandatory professional development program for AOLS members.

The program is defined by the Professional Development Program approved by the AOLS Council and Regulation 1026. The program requires that each member:

- accumulate 36 hours of Formal Activities in a three-year period;
- accumulate 66 hours of Professional Activities in a three year period;
- submit an annual report of his/her activities;
- maintain records of his/her activities for five years; and
- may be audited for compliance by the Registrar.
- The regulation authorizes the Registrar to allow exemptions from the program for members in certain situations.

The three-year period may be different for each member, depending on the date when membership was issued. The three-year period always starts on January 1 and ends December 31.

The program requires that any member who is not “actively engaged” in the practice of professional surveying complete, in the three-year period, an additional 30 hours of Formal or Professional Activities or a combination of both types of activities. To be “actively engaged” a member must spend 100 or more days per year in the practice of professional surveying.

Formal Activities include courses or seminars that relate to professional surveying, including the business aspects of professional surveying. Professional Activities include attending meetings, participating on committees, making presentations, preparing publications, and self-study.

In addition to the above requirements, Regulation 1026 s.26.1(1) states that the Registrar may suspend a member's licence or certificate of registration for failure to provide a professional development report or failure to comply with the requirements of the professional development program.

It all started...

... with a motion at the 2001 Annual General Meeting

which was moved by Bill Snell, seconded by Barry Clarke and passed by the membership in attendance: “Whereas continuing education is a vital component of maintaining professional competency, be it resolved that Council consider and examine the implementation of a mandatory continuing education programme.”

Council created a task force consisting of Cindy Kliaman and Paul Church to research other organizations and their professional development programs and prepare a report for Council. As part of their research, the task force reviewed a report prepared by the 1998 AOLS Continuing Education Task Force.

The 1998 Task Force was not mandated to review the mandatory component of continuing education, but the following excerpts from its report are still relevant:

In today's competitive and changing environment, it is increasingly important for AOLS members to engage in lifelong learning. The rate of technological change continues to accelerate, directly affecting the practice of Geomatics. In most practice areas, individuals who do not continuously improve their skills are soon out of date. It is no longer enough to establish competence at the beginning of a career. As reflected in government policies on the governance of professions, the public expects professionals and their support staff to continue demonstrating their competence.

Professional development consists of more than geomatics specific education and that nearly all education and training is of value. To maintain a level of professional competence, it is however, necessary to focus the continuing education program on the Members' core areas of activity.

The 1998 Task Force went so far as to create a schedule of activities and credits that form the basis of the program developed by the Professional Development Committee.

First there was the committee...

At the recommendation of the 2001 Task Force, Council created a Professional Development Committee (PDC) to develop a program and a regulation for presentation to the membership.

The PDC hired a professional educator, John Clipsham, PhD, to help the committee refine the program requirements. The program was built around a system of “categories and credits” with caps on the number of credits

that could be accumulated in each category. This system required that each member earn credits in three different categories in order to accumulate a specified minimum number of credits.

The philosophy of the PDC was that the program would require more than attending courses. Professional development included many other activities such as attending meetings with fellow professionals; participating in committee work; preparing presentations and publications related to the profession; and self-study and independent learning including reading magazines, books and on-line materials related to professional surveying and the business of surveying. This is not a new idea, the 1998 Task Force, and many other professional bodies recognized this philosophy.

The PDC recommended to Council at its meeting on July 10, 2004 that Mandatory Professional Development be phased in with the first three year period requiring mandatory reporting only and the final program requiring mandatory compliance with a specified number of credits. The PDC further recommended that the first phase be implemented by a by-law. During the phase-in period, a regulation would be developed and submitted to the Minister of Natural Resources to implement a mandatory program.

Then there was a by-law...

The PDC developed a by-law that required all members to report their activities and credits. The by-law was approved by the membership and became By-Law 2005-1. It required that the first report for 2005 be submitted by January 31, 2006 with a target of 85 credits per year.

By 2007, the PDC had reviewed the results of the reports and further tweaked the program. The committee also developed wording for a change to Regulation 1026 that would implement a mandatory professional development program. The original goal was to have wording in the regulation that would give “teeth” to the program, but would not specify many details about the program. It was hoped that the details of the program could be implemented by a by-law, making it possible to further adjust the program as needed.

But then a regulation...

By 2009 the PDC had developed a regulation and accompanying by-law for implementing the program. These documents were submitted to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) for review in late 2010.

The end was in sight, therefore Council renamed the PDC as the Professional Development Task Force.

In early 2011, a response was received from legislative counsel. They requested significant changes. The Program had to be implemented by a regulation and could not be supplemented by a by-law. They also required that activities be measured by hours instead of credits.

This was a major challenge to the Task Force as it strove to maintain the philosophy used in developing the “cate-

gories and credits” system but without the multipliers and caps. There was a lot of discussion and re-development of the program during 2011 to incorporate this philosophy into a regulation. There was much dialogue between the Task Force, the Surveyor General (Susan MacGregor) and MNR’s Legislative Counsel. Finally, a regulation was crafted that satisfied both the Task Force and Legislative Counsel.

The regulation was approved by the membership in July 2012, and implemented by Regulation 327/12.

And now a program...

Regulation 1026 requires that Council establish a professional development program. This was done at the Council meeting on October 3, 2012. The details of the program are listed at the beginning of this article. The approved program includes the requirements in Regulation 1026 ss.41-43 as well as:

- requiring additional hours for members who are not “actively engaged”;
- approving for credit any course or activity that relates to or supports the practice of professional surveying;
- capping the number of hours that can be acquired from independent learning and self-study; and
- providing a “Definition of Activities” chart that further defines each activity and provides examples of activities that qualify.

Thanks to the many...

There were many people involved with the creation of the Professional Development Program. During the almost twelve years since the motion was passed at the 2001 AGM, the following people contributed many hours of effort to this cause:

Cindy Kliaman
Jaime Gelbloom
Peter Moreton
John Clipsham, PhD, consultant
Kent Campbell
Dave Horwood

The current Professional Development Task Force is composed of:

Paul Wyman
Dan Vollebekk
Duncan Ashworth
Paul Church
Russ Hogan, Council Liaison
Julia Savitch, AOLS Program Manager.



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