

[Continuing Education via eLearning \[1\]](#)

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Context

Continuing education (CE), also referred to as continuing professional education (CPE) or continuing professional development (CPD) or continuing competency, is an essential component of life-long learning that enables oral health professionals to maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills so that they can comply with the most current professional standards and the changing needs and demands of the public. Traditional CE methods include reading professional journals, attending courses and conferences and participating in study groups. With recent and continuous advances in information and communication technology (ICT) and learning management systems (LMS), it has become convenient to access educational materials via the internet. As the quality of these materials varies greatly, it is necessary to establish reference norms and general principles and guidelines to ascertain the quality of remotely-accessed CE materials.

Scope

This policy statement will offer basic guidance and recommendations to oral health professionals as it relates to accessing and conducting CE via various modalities of ICT and LMS.

Definition

eLearning¹: learning conducted via electronic media, typically on the internet

Principles

CE is a basic professional duty for oral health professionals. The best available resources should be used to update foundational knowledge, techniques and skills based on current best available evidence in response to the changing needs of the public. Criteria and principles that support the use of technology and educational design to foster active learning and provide opportunities for self-assessment should also be observed². Good sources of reference are available³.

Policy

With the advances in ICT and LMS, the internet can be a convenient source of CE resources and other useful information. However, in a similar manner to any traditional CE material, eLearning must also adhere to the following principles and norms:

- Any educational materials should be scientifically sound and evidence-based without any bias.
 - Users must be aware that some educational materials may be opinion-based, especially where they relate to choices of clinical care and the use of specific techniques and materials. The presenter may share his/her subjective preference when performing a procedure.
 - CE providers and presenters must declare to all participants their conflicts of interest. When this information is not obviously available, CE participants should request a conflict of interest statement from the presenter and/or provider.
 - The name(s) of the individual(s) conducting the course should be disclosed with contact details to enable viewers to comment and ask questions.
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- Any information presented, regardless of its source, must not be claimed to be, or accepted as, the definitive authority even if it is based on current scientific principles and evidence since different studies sometimes yield different results.
- Where disputes arise from CE materials, expert advice should be sought.
- Regulatory bodies may choose to accept CE credits only from sources that have been accredited by them.
- Users must be aware that learning online cannot substitute for certain in-class courses such as hands-on courses and case studies that require active interactions from participants.
- There should be a mechanism to assure the quality of eLearning material through feedback from participants.

Disclaimer

The information in this Policy Statement was based on the best scientific evidence available at the time. It may be interpreted to reflect prevailing cultural sensitivities and socio-economic constraints.

References

1. Oxford Living Dictionary.
2. American Dental Association, 2016. Technical Report No. 1090 For Adoption and Augmentation of the Quality Matters Design Standards for Online and Blended Courses, General Standards 5 & 6. Available at: <https://ebusiness.ada.org/productcatalog/32614/Informatics/ADA-Technical...> [2](useSsl.
3. Kavadelle A, *et. al*, 2013. European Journal of Dental Education : 17 :1, 45–54

[Education Committee](#) [3] **Classification:** [Education](#) [4]

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