



# CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR CYTOLOGISTS (CEC) GUIDELINES AND REGISTRATION

## INTRODUCTION

This continuing education scheme has been designed by the Australian Society of Cytology for use by non-medically qualified persons engaged in the practice of diagnostic cytology. Its introduction provides both encouragement and a means by which we can all keep up to date and achieve best practice within our chosen discipline. The scheme is a product of research into similar schemes in Australian and overseas and takes into account the diversity of educational background of the individual and laboratory size, location and complexity.

## Registrants Role

The process is essentially self driven (see Candidate Instructions). Upon registration you will be provided with either a paper diary or access to the CEC web page. Both options provide details of the various forms of continuing education which can lead to the gaining of credit points. At yearly intervals you will be required to forward the Yearly CEC Activity Data Record sheet to the CEC Registrar or submit data via the CEC web.

## In House Co-Ordinator

Laboratories will need to identify a person, usually a local experienced cytology person, who can act as facilitator to encourage participation. The In House Co-Ordinator will help provide access to continuing education and offer local encouragement. (See Guidelines for In House Co-Ordinators).

It is the responsibility of the participant to comply with the goals of the scheme and give the appropriate feedback to the Society. The facilitator has no responsibility to ensure compliance.

## Role of the ASC

As the sponsor of the Scheme the ASC will act as a registry. The Society will provide access to the CEC diary and act as a data base for collation of individual and group continuing education activities. Participants will receive a certificate of participation and authorisation to use the post nominal CECP following their name.

## Scheme Detail

The scheme is divided into groups of activities. Some can be initiated by yourself, eg journal reading, poster preparation, manuscript writing; and accessing Websites and other electronic teaching systems. Other activities include tutorial reviews, scientific meeting attendance etc. The scheme requires that you select a reasonable range of activities; activities should be selected from 4 out of 8 groupings.

## Recording of Activity

The diary is arranged to provide you with a variety of options to record your continuing education activities. We can supply a folder for filing your own records. A summary of credit points must be submitted at the end of the calendar year either by mailing or FAX (see Yearly CEC Activity Data Record Sheet) or by directly entering your total credits via the CEC web page.

## Registrar

The ASC will nominate from its membership a person to act as Registrar for the CEC scheme and this individual will be supported by a secretary. The Registrar will be the contact point as far as interpretation and implementation of the ASC scheme is concerned.

## Certificate of Participation

Persons who are registered with the scheme will receive a certificate of participation at the end of each year. This certificate will indicate the total credits gained by the participant in the 12 month period. The minimum credits required are 600.



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## GUIDELINES FOR IN-HOUSE CO-ORDINATORS

For the program to be successful, a local in-house experienced cytology person (medical or non-medical) should be available to act as a facilitator/mentor. The person selected may have an established role in quality control or staff education. The role of these persons is to direct candidates to sources of CEC both within and without the laboratory and make themselves available for general advice. There is no obligation on the in-house co-ordinator to police the system, be involved in submitting information to the CEC Scheme or evaluating the feedback provided to an individual registrant. However the CEC Registrar should be informed of any problems arising with the CEC program.

## CANDIDATE INSTRUCTIONS

Welcome to the Continuing Education for Cytotechnologists (CEC) Program of the Australian Society of Cytology. The following short notes are provided to help you get started and satisfy requirements for participation in the scheme.

### REGISTRATION

Complete the Registration Form, which is published in Cytoletter or downloaded from the CEC web page, and send it to the CEC Registrar. If you are not a member of the ASC you should join by paying the appropriate fee. The Registrar will then either forward your diary folder, which includes full details of the scheme and a means to file records, or provide access to the CEC web page.

### COMPLETION OF DIARY

The diary includes a laminated master copy of various templates for recording individual and group CEC activities. If you prefer to manually record your activities on paper, obtain photocopies of templates and proceed. File these sheets in the folder supplied. If you prefer to electronically enter details of your activities, download the Excel spreadsheet from the CEC web page. A table summarising the credit points allocated for both individual and group activities is provided. Credits must be acquired from a minimum of FOUR of the total number of categories in any one year.

### Recording Individual and Group CEC Activities

#### *Electronic version of Diary:*

Download the electronic template (Excel spreadsheet) from the CEC web page to a secure folder on your hard drive.

As with any spreadsheet the file contains multiple sheets with a tab at the base of each sheet. The first sheet contains a table summarising credit points allocated for both individual and group activities (entitled CEC Categories). Do not delete this sheet as key formulae are hidden behind this table. The second tab is the Master Template. Right click the tab and rename this copy with the year in question (right click Rename). You are now ready to enter details. Both individual and group activities can be entered on the one sheet. In the first column enter the date. Arrow to the second column and click the drop down menu at the far right of the column. Select the appropriate category, enter the code and credit points and click the "Update Credits" button at the top of the spreadsheet.

It is important not to edit or delete cells shaded in green. These areas contain information for proper functioning of the spreadsheet. When you are reaching the end of the spreadsheet and need to insert more rows, click on the second last row marker in the white area (eg row 41) to select the row, then select Insert from the menu to insert additional rows. By selecting the second last row, you will ensure that formulae are copied.



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Ensure that your files are backed-up and secure as you may be required to submit your file as part of audit requirements.

At the commencement of the new year you need to download another version of the Excel workbook.

## **Hard Copy (Paper) Templates:**

Hard copy templates are provided if you prefer to document your activities on paper. These templates are in your folder for you to copy or can be downloaded from the CEC web page. Separate templates are provided for individual and group activities. Choose the template you prefer. File the completed forms in your folder as you may be required to submit copies as part of audit requirements.

## **DATA SUBMISSION AND FEEDBACK**

At the end of the calendar year, either complete the “Yearly CEC Activity Data Record” sheet and forward to the CEC Registrar or alternatively directly submit your data via the CEC web page.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE CEC SCHEME**

### **Compliance**

*Question: How will you encourage people to enrol in the Scheme and what will motivate cytologists to use the scheme to help them keep up to date?*

Firstly, we have attempted to design a user friendly system; one that has good flexibility that will be accepted and practiced equally by all, whether they be working in small isolated laboratories or larger metropolitan-based cytology units. We reasoned that as continuing education for health professionals has now become an expectation of government, the professions and even the public, this expectation would in itself be a major encouragement to enrol. While some continuing education schemes charge significant enrolment fees, the Society has decided that our scheme would be free to its members. (Non-members can expect to pay an annual enrolment fee in excess of the ASC membership fee). So here is another attraction to participate. Furthermore, we recognise the effort by way of an annual participation certificate.

*Question: The NPAAC Requirements for Gynaecological (Cervical) Cytology clearly state that “the laboratory must maintain a record of individual staff members continuing education programmes”. Surely it is the responsibility of laboratory supervisors to document continuing education activities of their staff.*

Laboratory supervisors should document group activities which form part of an in-house education scheme in order to comply with this requirement and NATA accreditation. However it would not be their responsibility or would it be possible for them to document individual activities e.g. journal readings, or keep a diary of an individuals total activities (as the CEC diary does). Cytologists are professionals and therefore have a responsibility to maintain the skills necessary for undertaking diagnostic cytology.

### **Benefits of Participation**

*Question: What are the benefits to cytotechnologists participating in the scheme?*

There are a number of benefits associated with participation in the scheme. These include formal recognition of activities that in the past were pursued on a personal basis; encouragement for individuals to maintain continuing education and keep abreast with colleagues; assist in the attainment of new knowledge and skills and in performance self appraisal; increased job satisfaction and a worthy addition to your Curriculum Vitae. Participation is recognised by the issue of an annual certificate of participation. Members also can include the post nominal CECP following their names. All these benefits enhance professional status and assist you when seeking employment.



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*Question: What are the benefits to employers whose staff are registered in the scheme?*

Enhanced quality of service by ensuring an up-to-date competent workforce who possess a broadened spectrum of skills and knowledge; satisfy requirements of NPAAC, NATA and other regulatory bodies; facilitate retention of staff by recognising the professionalism of individuals working in cytology and provide an aid in the recruitment process.

*Question: What are the benefits to the patient?*

Major reviews of continuing education schemes in other disciplines have shown not only improved knowledge and performance of health professionals but also improved patient health status. It is envisaged that a similar scheme in cytology will result in improved quality of service as reflected in performance measures, cancer registry data and other indicators.

## **Out of Work**

*Question: How will people who are not working cope with this scheme, especially if participation in such schemes becomes an expectation of employers?*

People who are unemployed for a period, for whatever reason, are unlikely to find a barrier because they lack immediate past enrolment in such a scheme. In the event that participation in continuing education is required by management, this could easily be addressed by employers recognising that a commitment to re-enrol by the individual could be a condition of employment.

## **Prior Approval of Credits**

*Question: How do I know if a particular activity meets the credit guidelines?*

Any learning activity relating to cytology is acceptable. If in doubt you can ask your in-house co-ordinator for advice. It is a feature of our scheme that there is no provision for formal pre-assessment of activities by the ASC.

## **Diary**

*Question: Do I have to obtain evidence other than just recording in my diary my continuing education activity?*

Course participation certificates, if available, would help you develop a more complete diary of your continuing education activity. These certificates may be required during audits of the scheme.

*Question: Do I need to show my diary to my supervisor, employer or in-house co-ordinator?*

No, the diary is your record. However you may need to provide your diary to the ASC for audit purposes.

## **Part-time Employment**

*Question: I am only employed part-time. How will this affect my ability to take part in the Scheme?*

Firstly, we have agreed to allocate identical credit points for part-time or full-time employment (200 points pa). The flexibility of being able to choose any 4 out of 8 types of activity provides an opportunity to meet all varied work situations.

## **Feed-back**

*Question: How will I know if I am doing the right kind of continuing education? What kind of feed-back will the Scheme provide me with?*

This will take two forms: Firstly, the Registrar will collate the yearly CEC Activity data from all enrollees and



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provide a profile of your activities as compared to the peer group. Secondly, all registrants will be issued with a certificate of participation. This certificate will show the total credits gained by the participant and the minimum number of credits required.

## **Enrolment**

*Question: When can I enrol?*

Enrolment can take place at any time of the year by completing the proper enrolment form and forwarding it to the Registrar. The form is published on a regular basis in Cytoletter or can be downloaded from the CEC web page. Once registration is complete, you will be allocated a registration number to access the CEC web page.