

## Scientific Planning Committee (SPC) – Guideline Summary

### Reference: National Standard for Support of Accredited CPD Activities

#### [National Standard Link](#)

The Scientific Planning Committee (SPC) is a fundamental component in the development of accredited continuing professional development (CPD) activities. In accordance with the standards established by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the SPC is responsible for ensuring that all educational programming is needs-based, evidence-informed, and developed independently of commercial influence.

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#### 1. Purpose and Role of the SPC

Every accredited CPD activity must have a scientific planning committee (SPC) that includes representatives of the intended target audience. The SPC is the group responsible for all decisions noted throughout the Standard. The SPC is responsible for the overall planning, development, and evaluation of the educational activity. This includes identifying learning needs, establishing learning objectives, selecting relevant topics, and determining appropriate speakers and formats. The committee must ensure that all content is scientifically rigorous, balanced, and aligned with the needs of the intended audience.

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#### 2. Alignment with National Standards

All SPC activities must adhere to the National Standard for Support of Accredited CPD Activities as defined by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. These standards emphasize independence, transparency, and accountability in the development of CPD programming.

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#### 3. Committee Composition

The composition of the SPC must be appropriate to the scope and audience of the program:

- The committee must include a minimum of two (2) members, with no defined maximum size.
- Membership should reflect the target audience of the educational activity.
- For example, if the target audience is ophthalmologists, the SPC must include ophthalmologists in a meaningful role.
- A committee composed entirely of individuals outside the target audience (e.g., only nurses for an ophthalmology-focused program) would not meet requirements.

- However, an interprofessional committee (e.g., ophthalmologists and nurses) is appropriate and often encouraged, provided the primary audience remains adequately represented.
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#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

SPC members are collectively responsible for:

- Conducting or reviewing a needs assessment
- Developing learning objectives
- Selecting topics, speakers, and formats
- Ensuring scientific validity and educational quality
- Overseeing program evaluation and outcomes

Each responsibility must be carried out with the goal of delivering relevant, high-quality education.

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#### 5. Conflict of Interest (COI) Management

Maintaining transparency and minimizing bias is essential:

- All SPC members must disclose financial and non-financial relationships from the two (2) years prior to joining the committee.
- Disclosures must be updated continuously throughout the planning process.
- The SPC is responsible for reviewing all disclosures and implementing strategies to identify, manage, and mitigate potential bias.

Managing commercial promotion

- Affiliation and promotion of product-specific advertising, materials or branding must comply with standards to ensure unbiased provision of CPD activities.
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#### 6. Independence and Ethical Standards

The SPC must operate with full independence:

- All decisions regarding program content, speaker selection, and educational design must be made solely by the SPC.
- The process must remain free from commercial or industry influence.
- Individuals representing industry or holding direct commercial interests cannot serve as SPC members.

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## 7. Documentation and Accountability

The SPC must have a process to collect from participants their assessment of the degree to which the accredited CPD activity:

- met the stated learning objectives,
- achieved appropriate balance,
- was perceived to be biased.

Accurate documentation is required to support transparency and accreditation:

- Maintain records of SPC membership and roles
- Track COI disclosures and updates
- Document key decisions and planning discussions

These records may be required for accreditation review or audit purposes.

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## 8. Ongoing Engagement

The SPC's role extends beyond initial planning:

- Members should remain engaged throughout program development, delivery, and evaluation
  - Continuous oversight ensures the activity remains compliant and educationally relevant
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### Key Principle

At its core, the SPC must reflect a balance of appropriate representation, scientific rigor, and ethical integrity, ensuring that all CPD activities are credible, unbiased, and designed to meet the needs of the intended professional audience.