

South Carolina Board of Registration for Geologist Continuing Education Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of continuing education (CE) in any profession is to provide a means for the practitioner to maintain professional skills and to stay abreast of the latest advances and rules that govern work in that field. These *Continuing Education Guidelines for South Carolina Registered Professional Geologists* (PGs) allow a wide range in choices of CE activities.

The South Carolina General Assembly approved amendments to the Geologists' Registration Act in June 1989, and to the Board Rules in March 1990. One of those amendments to the Act authorized the Board to require continuing education as a condition for renewal of registration. The Board has determined that the continuing education requirement for each biennium will be 32 contact hours as outlined in this document.

The Board wants all of its PGs to benefit from continuing education. Continuing education is an important part of professional development. The Board has defined CE broadly enough that a wide range of activities will be acceptable, and that costs should be minimized. An important element of CE activity should be interaction with one's peers as well as academic and practical self-improvement.

Continuing education activities that have been approved by the Board include, but are not limited to: accredited activities, annual meetings and/or associated field trips held by Board-recognized geoscience organizations, and certain in-house activities as described below. The Board has added allowance for professional development (PD). This is a way for registrants to obtain CE credits that are relevant to career development, but not necessary training in geology. Examples are provided below.

Accredited Activities. The Board will recognize and approve CE activities that have been accredited by any national geological organization previously approved by this Board or the National Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG), for accreditation purposes. An organization which is a member of the American Geologic Institute (AGI) will be recognized for CE accreditation. (See attached list of AGI members.)

Annual Meetings and Field Trips. There are a number of geoscience societies which hold annual meetings.

The annual meetings of the Carolina Geological Society and member organizations of the American Geological Institute (AGI) are recognized by the South Carolina Board as sources of continuing education credit and they carry automatic pre-approval. State and regional geological societies and associations can be additional CE sources.

"In-house Seminars." In-house seminars may include intramural, company or institution-sponsored, geologically related seminars or courses for employees. In order to qualify, the content of the in-house seminar should be submitted to the Board for its approval. There is a limit of 12 contact hours per biennium that may be accrued from in-house educational seminars.

"Internet Seminars." Registrants may participate in seminars offered through the internet for up to 24 contact hours of continuing education credit. Internet seminars are eligible provided 1) participants can interact (before, during and after seminar) with the sponsor/trainer by telephone or e-mail and 2) organizations or individuals who sponsor internet training are able to document completion in conformance with verification of Continuing Education Activity as provided in these Guidelines if requested by the Board.

"Professional Development Seminars." Training in this category includes regulatory, professional practice management, safety related training, and training in new technology, which may be useful to the registrants' practice of geology. The Board recognized the need for registrants to develop professionally in matters not specifically related to geology. Consequently, registrants may use such course work or seminars toward **"professional development"** and receive credit for continuing education. However, CE credits for Professional Development are limited to a total of 12 credits per biennium.

EXAMPLES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The following is a list of acceptable CE credits:

1. Participation in annual meetings and associated field trips of geoscience organizations that belong to the American Geological Institute (AGI).
2. Attendance at geologic conferences, workshops and seminars.
3. Classroom or correspondence courses that are geoscience-related and Board approved. Only one college or university course may be applied for credit per biennium. Credit will not be given for full-time students working toward an advanced degree.
4. Field trips sponsored by a recognized geoscience organization.
5. Presentations of a geological nature to civic, professional, academic, or governmental organizations that are not specifically job related. This includes registrants teaching geology as an adjunct professor or part time instructor (not regular employment) at a technical school, college or other institution of higher learning. However, registrant can only claim CE credit for one biennium.

Additional examples of sources for CE credits are as follows:

- (a) Attendance at non-accredited technical workshops, short courses and conferences, either as a part of any of the aforementioned meetings, or as separate entities, may be accepted, subsequent to screening by and approval of the Board. The CE credits will be awarded on an hour-for-hour basis. In certain cases, where the number of CE's is printed in the announcement and the Board accepts the course, credit will be awarded on the basis of actual contact hours (converted into CE credits).
- (b) Other Board-approved courses, workshops, seminars or field trips from which direct geoscience principles can be applied.
- (c) The following list provides a basis by which the Board reviews CE credits for given sources:

- Geologic Professional Society (AGI member) -- Always approved for CE credit
- Geologic Field Trip -- When led by geologist, always approved for CE credit
- College Geology Course\Seminar -- Always approved for CE credit
- Technical Society Meeting (not AGI member or on approved list) – Usually approved
- Federal or State Government -- Needs Board review and approval
- Computer courses -- Must be specific to geology (e.g., groundwater and geochemical modeling, mapping software, geoscience database software) -- Usually approved
- Intramural (In-house) -- Needs Board review and approval
- Business Course/Seminar that support the independent or consulting practice of a professional geologist, including topics such as risk management, contracts, professional liability insurance, litigation and litigation support – Needs Board review and approval
- General Office/Business Courses -- Not consistent with CE Guidelines and will not be approved for CE credit

- (d) Examples of 12-hour PD subject to 12 CE limitation are:
 - 40-hour OSHA training
 - Hazardous waste compliance training
 - First-aid training and certification
 - Radiation safety training
 - Risk assessment seminars
 - Regulatory seminar on drinking water
 - Drill rig safety and operations training

- (e) Credit WILL NOT be given for:

belonging to professional societies;
 reading professional publications
 regular employment;
 self-study;
 personal self improvement;
 service club meetings or activities not related to practice of geology;
 operating trade show displays;
 repetitive (refresher) attendance or teaching of the same course
 (OSHA refresher); or,
 attending committee meetings or general business meetings of any
 organization.

GEOSCIENCE COURSES OR LECTURES

PG's who teach a course (not a job-related activity; i.e., full-time professors etc.) or lead a CE event may be considered for additional credit. The total CE credit for a trip or course leader may equal several times the total net hours for that particular event.

Examples	Contact Hours
1. College or university geoscience course (resident)-- Total semester credit hours (TCH) multiplied by nine (9);or quarter hours are multiplied by six (6); limit one course per biennium.	TCH x 9 or 6
2. College or Non-college correspondence geoscience courses -- Total semester credit hours (limit 12 contact hours per biennium)	TCH (defined below)
3. "In-house" or institution-sponsored seminar -- Prior Board approval encouraged, limit of 12 contact hours per biennium.	TNH (defined below)
4. Lecture for any approved CE event (Limited to one presentation of the same material per biennium.) -- Actual total net hours (TNH), for lecturer or leader, multiplied by 3.	TNH x 3
5. Lecture/instruction for college or university course -- Total semester credit hours (TCH) multiplied by nine (9);or quarter hours are multiplied by six (6) plus 5; limit one course per biennium.	(TCH x 9 or 6)+5
6. Chairman of event or session -- Actual total net hours (TNH) of event or session time multiplied by 2.	TNH x 2

TCH - Total Contact Hours – number of hours specified by college or university
TNH - Total Net Hours – number of hours in lecture, session or event

ATTENDANCE AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

Any annual meeting of a Board recognized geoscience organization, or other Board approved meeting.

Examples	Contact Hours
1. Conference or Seminar	TNH
2. Author of oral paper or poster -- Actual net hours plus 10.	TNH + 10
3. Host chairman, committee chairman -- Actual total net hours (TNH) of event or session time multiplied by 2.	TNH x 2
4. Field conferences/field trips	TNH
5. Field trip leader -- Actual total net hours (TNH) of field trip multiplied by 2.	TNH x 2

TNH – number of hours in lecture, session, event or trip

VERIFICATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITY

Registrants are responsible for maintaining all CE activity records for the Board. The Board will randomly select a number of registrants at the end of each biennium for an audit. Additional details regarding the audit are provided below. When requested, documentation shall be submitted on Board Forms and will indicate the following:

- 1) dates of attendance;
- 2) number of actual contact hours certified by the registrant;
- 3) copies of event registrations receipts;
- 4) sponsor signature for brief seminars (e.g. 1 - 2 hours in length); and/or
- 5) appropriate proof of course completion.

For additional credit as course instructor or trip leader, written proof that the event was actually conducted as described must be provided to the Board. Each CE event must have separate documentation. You may also make photocopies of the form for submissions throughout the renewal year as each CE activity is completed.

Exemptions A professional geologist may be exempted from the CE requirements for one of the following reasons:

1. A registrant serving on temporary active duty in the armed forces of the United States for a period of time exceeding one hundred twenty (120) consecutive days in a year shall have his/her CE requirement reduced from 32 hours to 16 hours.
2. A registrant experiencing illness, physical disability or other extenuating circumstances as reviewed and approved by the Board may be exempt or CE hours prorated for the biennium. Supporting documentation must be furnished to the Board.

CONTACT HOURS AS CREDIT

Carryover of Credit

At the end of a biennium, a registrant with surplus contact hours, may bring forward to the next biennium a maximum of 8 contact hours as credit toward the next biennial requirement.

Prorated Contact Hours

Newly registered PGs during the biennium will be allowed to accumulate fewer than 32 contact hours. The number of contact hours will be prorated based on the quarter of the biennium that their written notice informing them of their PG registration is approved. The prorated continuing education hours will follow Table 1.

Table 1. Prorated continuing education contact hours required of a newly registered professional geologist within a given biennium.

Registration Date	Quarter of Biennium							
	Prorated Contact Hours							
Date of Notice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
First Year								
Jul - Sep	32							
Oct - Dec		28						
Jan - Mar			24					
Apr - Jun				20				
Second Year								
Jul - Sep					16			
Oct - Dec						12		
Jan - Mar							8	
Apr - Jun								0

BOARD REVIEW OF CE SUBMITTALS

The Board will select a number of registrants at the end of each biennium for audit. A detailed documentation will be sent to the Board when requested in writing. When requested, the registrant will submit the Continuing Education Submission Form listing the CE events attended and showing that he/she has obtained the required 32 CE credits.

Information Regarding Auditing Registrants' Records

All registrants applying for renewal at the end of the biennium must be prepared to submit the Continuing Education Submission Form listing relevant geologic educational events (i.e., professional meetings, field trips, seminars, college courses, etc.) attended for continuing educational credit, along with attendance documentation, if requested by the Board. Registrants must retain possession of attendance documentation for four (4) years. The following describes the process which continuing education is audited.

1. Records for a statistically significant percent of the registered geologists will undergo audit to check for compliance with CE requirements. Selection of registrants for audit will be random with no regard given to residency, employment affiliation, and length of professional registration in South Carolina. However, registrants who submit their application to renew their professional registration late (post marked after June 30) will automatically be selected for audit. Registrants who fail to respond to the CE audit (i.e., Continuing Education Submission Form, attendance documentation) within the time allowed will have their license suspended.
2. Registrants selected for the audit will be notified in writing. The notification letter will contain information necessary for the registrant to assist the Board in completing the audit of his/her records.
3. Registrants will self-certify their Continuing Education Submission Forms with their signature and seal signifying that: 1) CE events stated on their form were properly attended; and 2) to the best of their knowledge, the CE events attended meet the requirements as outlined in the Continuing Education Guidelines. Registrants need to provide appropriate proof of attendance of each event listed on the Continuing Education Submission Form.
4. A registrant will be denied CE credit for a submitted CE event(s) with insufficient proof of attendance. Courses or events not meeting the CE Guidelines as an accredited CE course will be denied CE credit toward the 32 CE credits for the biennium.
5. Upon Board audit of a registrant's CE records, the Board will make one of the following findings:

- a. The registrant attended the proper CE events for a minimum 32 credits and properly submitted the Continuing Education Submission form and attendance documentation on time. The Board will inform the registrant in writing of the favorable audit and no further information needs to be submitted. Registration remains active.
- b. The Board may request more information described as follows.
The registrant submits insufficient proof of attendance to CE events. Registrant will be advised in writing that he/she has 30 days to submit additional documentation acceptable to the Board. Failure to submit the additional documentation within the 30 days will result in the registrant's license being suspended.

The registrant submits insufficient CE credits or finds that the CE events attended do not meet the CE requirements; the registrant is informed in writing that he/she has 90 days to meet the CE requirements. Failure to submit CE requirements within 90 days will result in the registrant's license being suspended.

The registrant who submits adequate CE credits that are untimely (taken before or after the renewal period) for the current renewal period may be subjected to an investigation, disciplinary action and fines. The Board may require a Consent Agreement and fine for submitting a false statement on the renewal form.

- c. The Board will suspend a registrant's license who has failed to submit the required CE information within the proper time when requested.
- d. The registrant failed to comply with the CE requirement at the time of renewal and still has not obtained the required CE. The license is automatically suspended and a Cease and Desist Order is issued. If the licensee seeks reinstatement he/she must execute the pre-approved Consent Agreement and certify he/she did not practice after receipt of the Cease and Desist Order.

6. Willful falsification of records will result in the suspension or revocation of a geologist's professional registration.

Continuing Education Submissions

The Continuing Education Submission form is available on the Board's website (<http://www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/Geologists/forms/CE%20Submission%20Form.pdf>). The purpose of this form is to list events attended. When submitted to the Board, it certifies that a registrant has completed the required 32 credits for CE credit. The submission form must be signed and sealed by the registrant.

Pre-Approval of CE Events

The Pre-approval Form and Instructions (<http://www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/Geologists/forms/GEOFORM1.PDF>) are designed

for requesting CE course pre-approval in South Carolina. It should be used by sponsors of educational events that have potential for CE credit for geologists. Additionally, it may be used by a registrant planning to attend a CE event and is requesting from the Board a determination on the suitability of CE credit.

The purpose of the form is to ensure that the sponsor of the course, the registrants taking the course and the Board are properly coordinated in determining eligibility of the course for CE credit. It tracks that determination so the registrants are fully informed and properly receive CE credit.

Geologic Professional Society Meetings (automatic pre-approval for CE)

American Geological Institute (AGI)
American Association of Petroleum Geologist (AAPG)
American Association of Stratigraphic Palynologist (AASP)
American Geophysical Union (AGU)
American Institute of Hydrology (AIH)
American Institute of Professional Geologist (AIPG)
Association of Women Geoscientists (AWG)
Association of American State Geologist (AASG)
Association of Earth Science Editors (AESE)
Association of Engineering Geologist (AEG)
Clay Minerals Society (CMS)
Council for Undergraduate Research-Geology Div. (CUR)
Geologic Society of America (GSA)
Geoscience Information Society (GIS)
International Association of Hydrogeologists/US National Committee (IAH)
Mineralogical Society of America (MSA)
National Association of Black Geologists and Geophysicists (NABGG)
National Association of Geoscience Teachers (NAGT)
National Association of State Boards of Geology (ASBOG)
National Earth Science Teachers Association (NESTA)
National Speleological Society (NSS)
Paleontological Research Institution (PRI)
Paleontological Society (PS)
Seismological Society of America (SSA)
SEPM (Society for Sedimentary Geology)
Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, Inc. (SME)
The Society for Organic Petrology (TSOP)
Society of Economic Geologists (SEG)
Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG)
Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists (SIPES)
Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP)
Soil Science Society of America (SSSA)
National Ground Water Association (NGWA)