



Self-Instruction Program Guidance

Self-Instruction programs are a valuable resource for busy professionals as they provide convenient, flexible access to continuous learning. However, when earning hours that can be applied to licensure requirements, it is imperative that CE providers work to make sure that participants are completing the entire programs. ***Awarding continuing education hours that misrepresent the number of hours a person really spent to complete a program could jeopardize a participant's dental license as well as a provider's PACE approval.***

Keep in mind that, if dental licensing boards were to determine that self-instruction program providers are not adequately ensuring that hours are only being awarded after completion of an entire program, they could change regulations and no longer allow dental professionals to apply self-instruction hours to their meet their re-licensure requirements.

New PACE Criterion

To clearly identify the expectation that approved providers must ensure that participants complete the entire program the recently approved the following to be added to PACE Standard VIII: Self Instruction and Electronically Mediated Events:

- **Criterion J.**: To protect the integrity and accuracy of electronically mediated self-instruction programs, providers must have processes in place to monitor participant activity to ensure participants can access only one course at a time, and ensure participants view the entire program before moving to the assessment stage.

The AGD recommends, but does not require, that providers have policies to limit the number of self-instruction hours they award individuals on a single day.

- **Recommendation E.**: For self-instructional programs, providers should establish policies and procedures to limit the number of CE hours awarded on a single day to discourage exploitation of electronic platforms.

To meet this criterion, AGD recommends that providers work with their learning management systems (LMS) or platform providers to:

- Develop safeguards that do not all users to “skip ahead” to assessments or over content that has not yet been viewed. AGD understands that there is value in letting users start and stop programs, as well as letting them go back to review information, but allowing this flexibility should not allow users to skip the entire presentation and then complete an assessment to receive credit.
- Develop safeguards so that users can access only one program at a time. In some cases, users have opened multiple tabs or multiple browsers and viewed multiple programs from the same provider at the same time. It is recommended that providers have single sign on requirements that make sure a user can only access one program at a time.

When designing self-instruction programs, providers should consider the following best practices to better ensure participant engagement throughout the program.

- Select technology platform after the goals of the program have been identified. Technology should always support educational goals; technology should not drive educational decisions.

- Make sure your LMS or learning platforms allow you to create monitoring reports. Things to consider might be, average length of time to complete a program, average length of time users spend in a single session, average number of times a user logs on in a single day. Providers should also check to see how many CE hours are awarded to a user on a single day and create alerts if the number of hours seems excessively high. Monitoring data could expose shortcomings in your process and opportunities to improve. Monitoring reports can also be used to document that the amount of CE being awarded is consistent with the time users are spending on each program.
- Consider monitoring the length of time users spend on assessments. Well-constructed assessments make it difficult to guess answers. Assessment questions should make sure participants have a clear understanding of the educational course objectives. If you find that most users are answering all questions without having to review material, you may want to consider revising your questions to make them more challenging. This can better ensure users have a thorough understanding of the content presented.
- If you find users are consistently trying to skip portions of a presentation, consider removing editing unnecessary or redundant information. Presentations should support the identified learning outcomes; any content unrelated to learner outcomes should be removed.
- Consider integrating assessment questions throughout your programs. This can help validate that users understand key concepts before moving forward and discourage users from starting a presentation and then walking away or doing something other than watching the presentation.

For complete information regarding offering self-instruction and/or electronically mediated programs, please review PACE Standard XIII in the [AGD PACE Guidelines](#).

Additional Resources

[U.S. Dental Licensure Dashboard – CE and Renewal Requirements](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

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