



GUIDELINES FOR MARRIAGE CELEBRANTS SEEKING EXEMPTION FROM ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Celebrants are required to undertake five hours of ongoing professional development (OPD) activities each **calendar year**. OPD can only be completed through approved OPD training providers or by attending an approved celebrant association conference (for further information on your obligations see *Ongoing professional development further information* on the '[For marriage celebrants](#)' page of the department's website).

Under section 57 of the Marriage Regulations 2017 (the Regulations) Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants can apply for an exemption from their annual OPD requirements.

Exemption for exceptional circumstances

Exemptions from OPD, under section 57 of the Regulations, are only available by applying to the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants. You must be able to satisfy the Registrar that due to exceptional circumstances you will be unable to comply with your requirement to complete OPD in that calendar year. Applications must be made in the calendar year for which the exemption is requested (ie before 31 December).

If you have been granted an exemption from the annual registration charge, this does not exempt you from completing your OPD. You will need to apply separately for exemption from your OPD requirement.

OPD activities are available to be completed by classroom attendance, distance, or online. To establish exceptional circumstances you will need to demonstrate that you are prevented from undertaking OPD, by any of the means available, for a significant period of the calendar year in which you are applying. Each application is considered on its merits.

An example of a circumstance that may be considered exceptional is if you have a serious illness or ongoing health problems throughout the calendar year that prevent you from completing your obligations. You will need to provide objective evidence of your circumstance, such as a certificate from a doctor or employer.

Another example may be carer responsibilities. Carer responsibilities may include caring for a child, partner or parent who has a significant health problem that will affect your ability to undertake OPD activities for the calendar year. You will need to provide objective supporting evidence.

In general, remoteness, financial hardship, short term or temporary illness, being inactive from your celebrant duties or long term absence from Australia are not considered grounds for granting an exemption from OPD.

Marriage celebrants are advised to complete OPD early in the calendar year as unforeseen short-term issues experienced late in the year may not qualify you for an exemption from OPD.

Process for applying for an exemption

Applications for an exemption should be made via the online self-service portal. If you cannot access the portal, please call **1800 550 343** (10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm Monday to Friday).

If you wish to lodge an application for exemption from OPD you should:

- Login to your self-service portal – marriage.ag.gov.au/mcportal. Call **1800 550 343** if you are having difficulties.
- Select 'OPD exemption'.
- Follow the prompts within the exemption application screen to apply for an exemption from your OPD requirement.
- Ensure that you upload evidence to support your application. This must be a PDF document. If you are unable to provide the evidence in PDF format you should email your documents to marriagecelebrantssection@ag.gov.au
- Submit the application, including payment of the \$30 non-refundable exemption application processing fee.

Please note the exemption application is not complete and will not be considered until payment is received by the department. This means you must have submitted the application, including payment of the exemption application fee, before 31 December of the year in which you seek to be exempt from OPD. Applications received after 31 December will not be considered. Applications should be made as soon as possible in the calendar year, so if an exemption is not granted there is still time to complete your OPD.

Outcome of an exemption decision

You will be notified of the outcome of your exemption application in writing and your status will be updated in your self-service portal. If you believe that you have been granted an exemption and this is not shown in your portal, please contact the department.

If you are found eligible for an exemption

If you are granted an exemption, you will not be required to complete your OPD requirement for that calendar year. The exemption applies for one year only.

If you believe you are eligible for an exemption from OPD in any subsequent year, you will need to re-apply for an exemption each year, including payment of the exemption application processing fee.

If you are not found eligible for an exemption

If you are not found eligible for the exemption, you will be notified in writing as soon as practicable and advised to complete OPD as per your usual requirement. You will be given reasons for the refusal of the exemption decision.

Where a celebrant has been identified as not meeting their requirement to complete five hours of OPD, including any compulsory activity, the Registrar may impose disciplinary measures, in accordance with the *Marriage Act 1961*, which could include a caution, additional OPD, suspension or deregistration.