



# Ongoing Professional Development Further Information

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## Essential Obligations

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### What are my OPD requirements?

The [policy on ongoing professional development](#) (OPD), released August 2017, provides that all Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants, including religious marriage celebrants, must undertake **five hours** of OPD each calendar year (1 January to 31 December). The Marriage Regulations 2017 require that OPD take at least five hours to complete.

OPD can consist of compulsory and elective activities or, in years where there is no compulsory, five hours of elective activities. Completion of a compulsory activity (with an approved OPD provider) will only be required where there are significant changes to relevant legislation, guidelines or to the Marriage Celebrant Programme. Depending on the subject matter, the amount of time allocated to the compulsory activity will vary so that it may make up one or more out of the total five hours. There can be up to two compulsory activities in a calendar year.

In accordance with subsection 53(3) of the Marriage Regulations, the Registrar of Marriage Celebrants (the Registrar) is required to publish a list of approved professional development activities as soon as practicable after the start of each calendar year. The list is a legislative instrument, tabled in Parliament and published on the Federal Register of Legislation. The Marriage (Celebrant Professional Development) Statement 2019 (the Statement) is a published list of approved OPD activities for that calendar year.

**Note:** There will be no compulsory activity in 2019 and marriage celebrants will be required to undertake five hours of elective activities to meet their OPD obligations. At least one activity must be undertaken from Table 1 of the Statement. If celebrants require additional hours to make up their five hours, they can choose activities from Table 1 or 2.

### I am a religious marriage celebrant. Do I have to do OPD?

Yes. All marriage celebrants registered by the Commonwealth, including religious marriage celebrants, must undertake ongoing professional development activities involving a minimum of five hours each year, regardless of whether they solemnise religious or civil ceremonies.

### Who can provide OPD activities?

Training organisations that have been approved by the department can deliver training under the *Marriage Act 1961* and Marriage Regulations. These are:

1. Registered training organisations (RTOs) that have been approved by the Attorney-General's Department as OPD panel providers can provide the compulsory and elective OPD activities that allow marriage celebrants to meet their OPD requirements under the Marriage Regulations. The four current providers are listed on the [OPD webpage](#).
2. From 1 January 2018, celebrants will also be able to choose to complete any of the units from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy (CHC41015) (listed at [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)) so that it counts towards (in years where there is a compulsory activity) or as meeting their OPD requirements. The units can be undertaken with any RTO with the Certificate IV in Celebrancy in their registration scope. RTOs do not need to be on the panel approved by the Attorney-General's Department to deliver these units but do need to enter into an arrangement with the department for reporting purposes. A link to a list of these RTOs is also available from the [OPD webpage](#).

3. Association Conferences – association conferences approved by the department can also deliver activities that count towards (in years where there is a compulsory activity) or as meeting a celebrant’s OPD obligations. Associations may make arrangements with the approved OPD providers to deliver the compulsory activity at the conference. In years where there is no compulsory activity, the conference will count as meeting the celebrant’s full five hour OPD obligation for the calendar year.

## **Which registered training organisations (RTOs) are approved OPD providers?**

The four providers listed on the [OPD page](#) have been approved by the department to deliver both compulsory and elective activities from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020. Information about current OPD activities and a link to the current providers is also available from the OPD page.

## **What is the difference between an approved OPD provider and provider of units from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy?**

Four providers have been approved by the department to deliver both elective and compulsory activities to marriage celebrants. These providers can submit a broad range of elective activities to the department for approval that are relevant to marriage celebrants and their role.

From 1 January 2018, Registered Training Organisations with a Certificate IV in Celebrancy are able to deliver units from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy so that it counts towards (in years where there is a compulsory activity) or as fulfilling a celebrant’s OPD obligations. These providers can deliver any of the units from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy listed at [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au) where they enter into an agreement with the department. These units can only be counted towards or as meeting a celebrant’s elective activities in a calendar year. A compulsory activity must be done with one of the four providers approved to deliver the compulsory activity.

## **Does the department recognise prior learning (RPL) of a unit of competency or prior training as meeting an OPD obligation?**

No. Recognition of prior learning of a unit of competency is not recognised by the department as satisfying OPD requirements. OPD must be completed in the calendar year in which it is counted.

## **If I do more than five hours of OPD in one year, does that count towards my OPD requirements for the following year?**

No. If you complete more than five hours of OPD in a calendar year it will not carry over to the next year.

## **How will my OPD be recorded?**

The approved OPD providers, providers of Certificate IV in Celebrancy units and celebrant associations are required to notify the department about your completion of OPD at the end of the quarter in which it was undertaken. Your OPD activities will be available in your self-service portal once the department has received confirmation from your OPD provider.

## **What if I believe I completed an OPD activity but the Department advises me that I have not?**

If you believe the department has not received a report or has received incorrect information you should contact your OPD provider and request that a report be sent to the department or corrected.

## **What happens if I have not completed my OPD before the end of the calendar year?**

OPD undertaken in a year is counted toward that calendar year's OPD requirements. The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants monitors which celebrants have completed their required OPD each year. Unfortunately, there is no flexibility in the legislation to provide an extension to the completion of OPD requirements or to be considered for an exemption from the requirement once the year has ended.

If you have not completed your five hours of OPD, or not been granted an exemption (see below), the Registrar may take a disciplinary measure against you.

Disciplinary measures can include a caution or additional OPD, and in repeated cases of non-compliance with your requirement to complete OPD, may include suspension or de-registration as a marriage celebrant.

## **Can I be required to do other elective activities as a disciplinary measure?**

Yes. The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants may require you to complete additional OPD activities as a disciplinary measure. This could be as a result of a performance review, monitoring past compliance with OPD, or after considering a complaint. Otherwise, the choice of elective activities from the list available from the OPD page or from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy units (listed at [training.gov.au](http://training.gov.au)) is one for you.

## **Choosing activities**

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### **How do I choose activities?**

Information about the available compulsory (in years where there is one) and elective activities is on the [OPD webpage](#). You will need to contact the approved providers, providers of units from the Certificate IV in Celebrancy, or celebrant associations directly for details about how to enrol and / or further information about the individual activities.

### **Will there be activities relevant to me if I conduct religious marriage ceremonies for independent religious organisations?**

Yes. The department and the approved providers work together to ensure there are appropriate activities available for all Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants, both those who solemnise religious marriage ceremonies and those who solemnise civil marriage ceremonies.

## How much does OPD cost?

Information about the cost of activities is available from the providers. It is generally published on their websites, although you may wish to contact the OPD providers directly.

## What if I am unable to find an OPD activity in my area or attend a classroom?

OPD providers ensure there is choice in many of the activities they offer including distance education through post or online delivery.

## Will my association be able to organise a face-to-face OPD session for me and other association members?

If your celebrant association wishes to organise OPD for its members, they will need to contact the OPD providers, to discuss.

Your association can also apply to the department for its conference to count as OPD. In years where there is no compulsory, attendance at an approved celebrant association conference will count as meeting your five hour OPD obligation. Marriage celebrants must attend the **entire conference** for it to count towards meeting their OPD obligation for the calendar year.

In years where there is a compulsory activity, attendance at a conference will only count towards the elective component. However, associations that have their conferences approved as OPD may also make arrangements with the approved OPD providers to deliver the compulsory activity at the conference.

## Who can I contact to provide feedback about the OPD activities?

If you wish to provide feedback about OPD, you should contact the OPD provider directly in the first instance. You can also provide feedback about OPD to the department or to your celebrant association.

## Exemptions from OPD

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### What if I can't complete my OPD?

The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants has the capacity to grant an exemption from completing OPD if the Registrar is satisfied that 'exceptional circumstances' exist (see the [Guidelines for exemption from ongoing professional development requirements](#)).

To establish exceptional circumstances you will need to demonstrate that you are prevented from undertaking OPD for a significant period of the year – either face-to-face, by distance education or any other method. For example, physical incapacity or ill-health may be, or have been, the reason why you were prevented from meeting your OPD obligations.

A request for an exemption must be received in the calendar year in which the exemption is sought. If approved, the exemption applies for that year only.

## **What if this is my first year of registration?**

From 1 January 2019, a celebrant will be exempt from undertaking professional development activities for their first calendar year of registration, if they are registered from 1 January 2019 onwards and if they were awarded a Certificate IV in Celebrancy in the 12 month period before the date of their registration. It will not be necessary to apply to the Registrar to receive this exemption.

Other newly registered marriage celebrants who do not meet this criteria, are required to undertake five hours of OPD or seek an exemption from OPD on grounds of exceptional circumstances.

The Registrar may exempt newly registered marriage celebrants from the requirement to complete OPD for a calendar year if the Registrar is satisfied that complying with the OPD requirement would be onerous because of the date they became registered. The Registrar will notify you in your registration email if you are exempt from undertaking OPD for the relevant calendar year. It is not necessary to apply to the Registrar to receive this exemption.