

CoCA Senate Submission Appendix No 11

COCA Recommendations with respect to Ongoing Professional Development (OPD). Submission February 2012

Recommendations for these OPD recommendations would not change the existing arrangements for cost recovery of OPD that is borne by the marriage celebrants themselves.

These recommendations are made in the context of an approved training and appointment system. Celebrants would be supported by associations and/or BDM's, and an Expert Advisory Team. Celebrant Only Fact sheets and other information would be available inside the Marriage Law and Celebrant Section website.

The aim of this group of recommendations is to strengthen the Ongoing Professional Development (OPD) process.

There is no change to the minimum number of hours recommended for OPD, it remains at 5 hours. This is considered appropriate, given the part-time nature of marriage work.

7.1 Flexible OPD phased-in over six years.

The purpose for this recommendation is to provide for flexibility in OPD in the next OPD period.

It is recommended that:

A minimum of six OPD providers to be appointed for the compulsory and non- compulsory OPD for the 2013-6 period, with an extension of three years, subject to satisfactory performance.

- A minimum of six OPD providers to be appointed for the compulsory and non-compulsory OPD for the 2013-6 period, with an extension of three years, subject to satisfactory performance.
- That all trainers of OPD compulsory or legal topics are approved trainers as outlined in section 5.4
- By 2019 a new system of approval for OPD activities will have been phased in providing a a more transparent and flexible process be developed for the approval and review of compulsory and non-compulsory OPD topics from approved OPD providers (and post 2016 other training/education providers).
- CoCA's comments to be sought on all applications for OPD Topics or activities
- All approved topics and activities to be published in the Celebrant Only section of the website.
- One day attendance at a Celebrant Association Conference to be approved as three hours of OPD in 2013-2019, unless changed to 5 hours prior to the end of that period by the MLCS.
- Review and general evaluation to be conducted by survey via the Celebrants Only Section of the website.

Under this new arrangement it is envisaged that:

- The contracted OPD providers would provide OPD as an exclusive right between 2013-2016, but this would not be an exclusive right post 2016.
- New approved activities could be added in from other educational organizations from 2016 so that by 2019 a full and flexible program of OPD approved topics of a mix of previous compulsory and non-compulsory topics would be available.
- Any component of the Certificate IV in Celebrancy or any unit related to Celebrancy, whether ceremony, business, IT, computer related units/activities would be appropriate topics for submission for OPD approval.
- By 2019 the Marriage Regulations should be changed to stipulate five hours of approved OPD Topics or one day (minimum 5 hours) of Celebrant Association Workshops or Conferences from the list of OPD approved topics. This would remove the compulsory/ non-compulsory categories.

The benefits to celebrants and MLCS can be stated thus:

- Adult Learning Principles will be employed to give more choice and flexibility.
- Educationalists will determine how celebrants will be trained, with the MLCS to approve topics in principle, given the MLCS primary role is legal and administrative and is limited in relevant ceremonial and educative expertise.
- An approved topic would have stated objectives, time frame, suggested activities and approved trainers, but not include information of an in-house commercial in confidence nature.
- A wide range of education and training opportunities will become available, especially as it relates to the skills needed to operate a viable celebrancy practice offering wedding services.
- Celebrant association membership will be strengthened.
- Celebrants will be able to access existing education and training opportunities from existing education and other services in the community, especially to make local learning courses and programs more accessible, thus reducing travel and other costs.

7.2 Approaches to Compulsory Legal OPD

The aim of this recommendation is to improve the knowledge and skills of celebrants within the context of compliance with the compulsory legal aspects of their statutory obligations.

There are many topics of a legal nature that celebrants may need or wish to do as a refresher. Limiting topics of a legal nature to one topic only for the Compulsory does not address these needs.

It is recommended as follows:

- That all trainers of OPD compulsory or legal topics are approved trainers as outlined in section 2.4.3 Skill Levels for Trainers of Certificate IV in Celebrancy.
- That there be 2 hours minimum for compulsory legal topics to enable maximum cover of material and interactive learning.
- In conjunction with this there should be flexibility for a celebrant or celebrant association to choose the legal topic they wish to pursue. This will allow celebrants/associations to pursue the area of the legal studies where they assess the most need.
- Previous approved compulsory/ legal topics to be available as part of the compulsory and non-compulsory OPD mix.
- Compulsory OPD topic definition to be expanded to include subjects and activities related to the role of a marriage celebrant of a non-legal nature, eg How to access the AGD's website portal for celebrants.
- That units provide self-assessment and interactive learning opportunities – both face to face and online
- Celebrants to complete new units when available and not to repeat a unit under 5 years.
- All available legal topics to be published in the Celebrant Only section of the website.

Measures recommended are to:

- ensure Adult Learning Principles are adhered to and provide more choice
- ensure all Marriage Celebrant legal knowledge and skills are extensive in range and of a high order
- allows Marriage Celebrants to self-assess areas where they need more training

7.3 Approaches to Non Legal OPD

The aim of this recommendation is to improve the knowledge and skills of celebrants within the context of compliance with the non legal aspects of their statutory obligations.

It is recommended that:

- All trainers of OPD non legal topics are approved trainers as outlined in section X Skill Levels for Trainers of Certificate IV in Celebrancy.
- Non legal OPD be developed over time to provide an extensive list of approved topics and learning activities.
- Any unit component of the Certificate IV in Celebrancy, core, mandatory or elective, are to be considered appropriate topics for Non legal OPD.
- A full day attendance at a Celebrant Association Conference to be accepted as 3 hours of non legal OPD.

These recommendations will ensure and provide:

- Adherence to Adult Learning Principles
- More choice and flexibility for long-term and non-aligned religious celebrants
- A wide range of education and training availability, especially as it relates to the SKILLS needed to operate a celebrancy practice providing weddings.
- The opportunity to have local learning courses and programs accessible to reduce travel and other costs.
- Encouragement to marriage celebrants to up-skill to the current qualification
- Utilization of existing education and training opportunities from education and other services in the community
- Strengthen celebrant association membership

7.4 Meeting the new requirements for appointment.

The aim of these recommendations is to encourage celebrants to meet the new requirements for appointment through the use of the Pre-appointment assessment and the Certificate IV in Celebrancy.

It is recommended that:

- in the OPD period 2013-2019, celebrants complete the Pre-appointment assessment of both Knowledge and Skills,
- the completion of units of study within the Certificate IV in Celebrancy to be approved as OPD.

The Knowledge and Skills assessment in both time and money is commensurate with the time and cost of 5 hours of OPD. Thus we believe that completion of this assessment will qualify as the persons 5 hour OPD in the year of completion.

We believe this will also enable all marriage celebrants to be informed about their current level of knowledge and skills as they are matched with those being required of current appointees. This may enable celebrants to plan to retire or complete further training if their knowledge and skills are assessed as not adequate.

It is firmly believed that the encouragement of celebrants to upgrade to the Certificate IV in Celebrancy qualification will be a significant means by which they can improve their knowledge and skill over time.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- Completion of one unit of study by face-to-face or distance education be equal to 5 hours OPD.
- Completion of two units of study by Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) be equivalent to 5 hours of OPD.

Implementation of this measure will ensure that all marriage celebrants have the current qualifications if intending to stay as a MC for more than 5 years. Most professions require existing professionals to upgrade their qualification when entry qualifications are changed.