

## FOCUS ON: Needs Assessment and Practice Relevance

*In order to prepare providers for the changes in accreditation/certification requirements related to Mainpro+ we will be providing a series of communication pieces to help familiarize providers with the Quality Criteria requirements. The third in this series will be **Quality Criterion 1, Needs Assessment and Practice Relevance**. Our aim will be to address common questions and concerns we have heard regarding the criterion and to provide context for its inclusion in the certification requirements.*

### What is a Needs Assessment?

Needs assessment is the process of gathering information to identify the learning needs of the target audience. The needs assessment must identify the current state of the target group's knowledge/competence/performance areas and identify gaps in those knowledge/competence/performance areas. The most useful needs assessments are those where multiple methods are utilized to identify educational needs linked to improvement in patient care.

### Needs Assessment & CPD

The goal of continuing medical education is to improve patient outcomes by changing the practice behaviours of physicians. Evidence has demonstrated that CPD programs that are based on well-conceived and conducted needs assessments are more effective in changing physician behaviour<sup>1</sup>.



### Different Types of Learning Needs

There are different types of learning needs. They can be:

1. **Self-recognized or perceived needs:** *I know what I want and need to know.*
2. **Unknown to the learner or unperceived needs:** *I don't know what I don't know.*
3. **Miscalculated or misperceived needs:** *I think I know something I don't.*
4. **Emergent needs:** *Now I have some new information, I realize I want or need to learn something else instead of or in addition to what I am learning now<sup>2</sup>.*

The more you are able to learn about your target audience and what their everyday problems in practice are in relation to the topic you wish to deliver, the more effective your program will be and the more likely a change in practice behaviour will occur.

## Determining Needs<sup>3</sup>

Different methods are used to determine the different types of learning needs. Here are some possible strategies for defining learning needs:

Perceived Needs	Unperceived Needs
Survey	Knowledge test
Interview	Chart audit
Focus group interview	Critical incident reports
Key informant	Duplicate prescription /health care diary
Representative planning committee	Expert advisory group
Meetings with colleagues (formal or informal)	Patient feedback
Evaluation of previous CPD activity	Direct observation of practice performance

## Practice Relevance



To be eligible for Mainpro+ certification, all programs must be **relevant** to the overall practice of family medicine. Relevance is determined by assessing whether the program:

- Fosters improved patient care by family physicians;
- Addresses at least one of the [four principles of family medicine](#);
- Is within the scope of practice for family physicians; and
- Content and concepts are evidence-based and/or generally accepted by the Canadian medical community.

## Quality Criterion 1: Needs Assessment and Practice Relevance

Programs seeking Mainpro+ certification must meet the following requirements in regards to needs assessment and practice relevance in program design and delivery.

Credits per Hour	Certification Requirements for Criterion
1 credit per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indirect assessment of target audience needs used to guide program development and obtain generalized information on prior knowledge and practice experience. Examples include generalized sources, national survey, small sample survey, published study results.</li> <li>• Physician learning objectives are tied to needs assessment results.</li> <li>• Needs assessment addresses physician competency through CanMEDS-FM role (s).</li> </ul>
2 credits per hour	<p>Must meet 1 credit per hour requirements and include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs assessment sample must be representative of intended target audience (e.g. rural physicians), enhancing applicability of program content.</li> <li>• Needs assessment identifies gaps in physician competence in at least one CanMEDS-FM competency area</li> </ul>
3 credits per hour	<p>Must meet 1 and 2 credit per hour requirements and include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs assessment is performed on actual program participants.</li> <li>• Information is collected from actual program participants about prior knowledge and practice experience.</li> <li>• Needs assessment identifies gaps in knowledge (e.g. pre- and post-tests) competence (skills), or performance based on data from practice.</li> <li>• Identifies gaps in physician competence in multiple CanMEDS-FM competency areas.</li> </ul>

## References & Further Reading

<sup>1</sup>Fox RD, Bennet NL. Learning and change: implications for continuing medical education. *BMJ* 1998;316:466–469

<sup>2</sup>Grant J. Learning needs assessment: assessing the need. *BMJ* 2002;324(7330):156–159.

<sup>3</sup>Moore DE Jr, Green JS, Gallis, HA. Achieving desired results and improved outcomes: Integrating planning and assessment throughout learning activities. *J Contin Educ Health Prof* 2009;29(1):1-15.