

NFTHD #12: Maintaining Ethical Standards through ongoing education

This Notes from the Help Desk explores requirements for the Continuing Education Program (CEP) and how this upholds the industry's reputation. Specifically, who needs to do which modules?

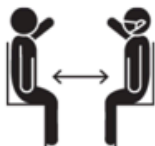
Principle 4 of the Code notes that Company employees, and anyone acting on behalf of a Company, will be trained on the Code of Conduct and maintain a high standard of ethical conduct and professionalism in the discharge of their duties. In practice, this is achieved through completion of the Medicines Australia CEP, an online six module program delivered by the University of Tasmania. The Code identifies specific requirements for roles within companies, along with timeframes for completion, as summarised below.



All sales representatives entering the industry for the first time are to complete all core modules. Students must enrol within the first six months of employment, and complete the full program within two years of enrolment.



Any person directly involved in the development, review, and approval of promotional materials directed to healthcare professionals, or educational materials for the general public are to complete the Code of Conduct module of the CEP within the first twelve months of commencement of employment.



Any person who has direct interaction with a healthcare professional for the purpose of promoting a prescription product, or providing medical or clinical education must complete the Code of Conduct module of the CEP within the first twelve months of commencement of employment.

This requirement does not include managing directors, clinical research associates, medical information, or corporate affairs personnel unless these personnel are also responsible for the development, review, and approval of promotional material and patient education material.

The CEP contains core programs that are designed to guide medical representatives through the information, knowledge, and skills required in the performance of their professional duties. The core programs cover the Code of Conduct, the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare industry, human anatomy and physiology, an introduction to pharmacology, as well as understanding clinical evidence and the product information.

At the introduction of a new Code of Conduct, Medicines Australia makes available an update or refresher program. This module is not compulsory, but is strongly encouraged. Companies should ensure that staff are aware of amendments to each edition of the Code of Conduct by completing the endorsed bridging course, or by providing internal company training. The Code Resource Toolkit contains “Guidance on Company Representative Training” as well as a “Good Practice Guide – Quality inclusions for staff education policies”.