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STRiVE 101 by Ian Kamm '97

Somewhat obviously, quality assurance is the assurance of quality. In this case, the CMTO wants to assure the public and our clients about the quality of our practice of massage therapy.

By law (specifically the Regulated Health Professions Act – RHPA), every regulated health profession in Ontario must have a Quality Assurance Program (QAP) that includes these components:

Self Assessment: The health professional considers the current state of their performance

Continuing Education Program: Health professionals engage in activities to stay current in their profession

Peer Assessment: A practice assessment is performed by a colleague

In September 2019 the CMTO announced the details of its revamped QAP, effective immediately, and has branded the self-directed portions (Self Assessment and Continuing Education Program) as “STRiVE” *[No one knows why the caps lock failed in the middle of the program name.]*

Overview

1. RMTs start each Quality Assurance (QA) cycle by watching an **E-Learning Module** and answering questions
2. Next, an RMT completes a **Self Assessment** by rating themselves based on 15 competencies
3. Finally the RMT creates a **Learning Plan** with goals and activities to satisfy the continuing education portion

Timing

The program operates on a two-year cycle (down from three for the old CEU program). Some aspects are due annually (the E-Learning Module and the interim status update for the Learning Plan), but some aspects occur only every two years (the Self Assessment and finishing the Learning Plan) and completion of a cycle happens after two years.

Obligations for RMTs will always come due between an unspecified date in September *[I suspect the first business day in September each year]* and November 30th, but RMTs can fulfil their learning activity components year-round.

Despite the online nature of the reporting of STRiVE, reporting of activities appears to be limited to the September-November window each year. There is conflicting information from the CMTO on

this point. In a couple of places on the STRiVE platform it clearly says we can access and update our learning activities at any time, but for the moment RMTs are being locked out of making changes to their plan once it has been submitted. *[I can't yet tell if we will regain access after the November 30th deadline, or if we won't have access to our plans again until the interim reporting period starting September 2020.]* This might mean it is necessary to do your own separate record keeping, because you will only be able to update STRiVE each fall.

Note to Recent Grads: I asked the CMTO if grads who become registered for the first time in 2020 will join the 2019-2021 cycle, if they will they start a new cycle for 2020-2022, or if they will wait for the second cycle to start 2021-2023? The only reply I have so far is that the CMTO will tell new registrants when the time comes.

1. The E-Learning Module

RMTs watch a video presentation about a new topic every year. This is done once a year, between September and November 30th. The CMTO picks a topic it wants to emphasize to make sure that RMTs are staying current. For 2019 that topic is the STRiVE program itself, the new QA Plan. *[Think of this as being like a replacement for the mandatory CEU articles we were subjected to under the old program.]*

Following the video presentation, you answer a series of questions (this year a combination of 15 multiple choice and true/false questions). You can repeat the questions endlessly without penalty, but you must ultimately get all the questions right.

You're told which ones you've gotten wrong, so you can review them and select different answers. But take note that the questions and their answers are randomized on subsequent attempts so you cannot just work your way through each answer in sequence. This becomes a little bizarre with one question which has "all of the above" as one of the answers because sometimes that shows up as option a). *[A little humour from the CMTO perhaps? No, I didn't think so either.]*

The CMTO says it will not review our individual performance in the E-Learning Module. It is only interested in receiving the notification (sent automatically) when we have finally answered the test with 100% of the answers correct.

2. Self Assessment

Following the E-Learning Module, RMTs go through 15 sections of a self examination based on "Career-Span Competencies" or CPCs. This is done once every two years, between September and November 30th.

Again, the CMTO does NOT review the contents of your self assessment. It just gets automatically notified when the self assessment has been completed. The deadline for the first Self Assessment is November 30th 2019. The assumption at the moment is that the next Self Assessment will be due by November 30th 2021.

This is also where RMTs will notice the biggest shift from the old CEU program. The self assessment of the past focused heavily on typical skills and knowledge to become an RMT. Things like anatomy

and physiology, or techniques. But STRiVE is based on a whole new set of definitions of performance as an RMT.

One of the things to keep in mind with this self assessment is that these have been described as “career-span” competencies. What the CMTO is saying is RMTs at different stages of their career might have different skill levels for each competency, depending on length of practice, and the nature of our experience in practice.

Here are the 15 Career-Span Competencies:

The image is a screenshot of a webpage titled "CMTO STRiVE Quality Assurance Program" with a "Resources" link in the top right. The main heading is "15 Career-Span Competencies" next to the STRiVE logo. Below the heading is a list of 15 competencies, each with a checkbox and a colored background. The competencies are:

- Act with professional integrity
- Communicate effectively
- Comply with legal requirements
- Function in a client-centred manner
- Apply the principles of sensitive practice
- Work within areas of personal knowledge and skills
- Maintain a safe work environment
- Maintain comprehensive records
- Maintain personal wellness consistent with the needs of practice
- Manage time and resources effectively
- Treat others respectfully
- Practice in a manner consistent with current developments in the profession
- Use an evidence-informed approach in your work
- Interact effectively with other professionals
- Practice in a self-reflective manner

The competencies each have descriptions to explain them. For example, the first competency “Act with professional integrity” has this description:

#1. Act with professional integrity

By this we mean that RMTs are honest and trustworthy in all professional dealings, and share information openly (within the bounds of others' rights to privacy and confidentiality); RMTs respond to situations consistently and in accordance with ethical principles; RMTs maintain appropriate professional boundaries with clients and colleagues; RMTs avoid behaviours which may damage the reputation of the profession.

The self-examination exercise requires RMTs to rate our performance level for each competency using on an online survey grid. The competencies are each broken out into a set of statements with a rating scale. Selecting ratings for each statement/competency produces a self-assessed profile of strengths as well as areas that could be worked on.

Here is an example showing what the rating system looks like for the first three statements of the “Act with professional integrity” competency:

1. Act with professional integrity Hover here for details											
1.1 I act with honesty in all of my professional interactions.	I don't know what this means (-1)	This does not apply to me (0)	I rarely perform this way (1)	(2)	I sometimes perform this way (3)	(4)	I perform this way in commonly-encountered situations (5)	(6)	I perform this way in all but the most challenging situations (7)	(8)	I perform in this way, without fail, in all situations (9)
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	➔ Your personal notes and comments (if any) may be written here: (Optional)										
1.2 I respond to situations thoughtfully, and in accordance with principles of professional ethics	I don't know what this means (-1)	This does not apply to me (0)	I rarely perform this way (1)	(2)	I sometimes perform this way (3)	(4)	I perform this way in commonly-encountered situations (5)	(6)	I perform this way in all but the most challenging situations (7)	(8)	I perform in this way, without fail, in all situations (9)
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	➔ Your personal notes and comments (if any) may be written here: (Optional)										
1.3 I maintain a professional presentation appropriate to my workplace	I don't know what this means (-1)	This does not apply to me (0)	I rarely perform this way (1)	(2)	I sometimes perform this way (3)	(4)	I perform this way in commonly-encountered situations (5)	(6)	I perform this way in all but the most challenging situations (7)	(8)	I perform in this way, without fail, in all situations (9)
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
	➔ Your personal notes and comments (if any) may be written here: (Optional)										

3. Learning Plan and Learning Activities

Following completion of the Self Assessment, RMTs are prompted to create a “Learning Plan.” The CMTO suggests that you take the results profile from your self assessment and use what you have identified as “needs work” to create your learning plan.

A Learning Plan must have two Learning Goals; each goal must relate to one of the 15 competencies. Each Learning Goal must have a minimum of two Learning Activities.

Steps to create a Learning Plan

- **Start** by identifying a competency in which you would like to develop more skills.
- **Next**, create a goal based on that competency.
- **Finally** identify at least two activities that you will pursue to meet that goal.

Now **repeat** these three steps to create your second goal and second pair of activities.

Competencies versus Goals versus Activities: If your head is spinning a little at this point trying to figure out this new terminology, consider the following descriptions:

1. Think of competencies as broad concepts that apply to all RMTs.

2. Goals are created by you, and are individual to you. They represent something about a competency that you want to work on for your own growth.
3. Activities are the actual things you will do to achieve each of your goals.

For example, you might pick Competency #3: Comply with legal requirements. The fuller description of this competency talks about laws, rules and regulations that govern the profession.

You need to come up with a goal that relates to this competency, perhaps drawn from the way you responded to the subheadings in the self assessment. Your goal might be to check to make sure that you are in compliance with all relevant rules.

Based on a goal like this, you will need to come up with activities that will address it. You could, for example, participate in a discussion group with other RMTs about fulfilling our legal requirements. Or perhaps you will commit to re-reading the regulations of the Massage Therapy Act and adjusting any aspects of your practice that are not compliant. You may find a related continuing education seminar you can take.

Remember you need two goals, each relating to one competency, and two activities per goal. The following chart lays out the structure:



For each Learning Goal you specify which competency the goal is related to.

For each Learning Activity you specify what you will actually do for the activity, when you intend to complete it, and what type of activity it will be. Your options are: self study, professional activity, continuing education, interaction with peers and “other.” These activity sub-categories are not defined, so we can only speculate what “professional activity” is, for example.

Unlike the e-learning module and the self assessment, where the results remain private to us, the CMTO reserves the right to inspect our learning plans at any time. It has been suggested that approximately 20% of Learning Plans might be audited in a given year.

Timing for the Learning Plan

Your Learning Plan must be created between September and November 30th of the first year of a QA cycle. You have two years to complete the goals. An interim status update must be submitted in the fall of the middle year of the cycle, between September and November 30th, to inform the CMTO of your progress.

The CMTO is so far being somewhat vague about how much change we can make to our learning goals and activities after they have been submitted. Some changes will likely be possible at the interim report in the middle year. It is not clear whether changes will be possible with the final report at the end of the two-year cycle.

Some General Thoughts

In addition to documenting your goals and activities on the STRiVE platform, I would suggest it makes good sense to keep records of anything you do that could support your activities in the case of an audit.

We have not been given examples of learning activities that will satisfy the CMTO. Honestly, I am quite nervous about this. The College says that it is sufficient merely to partake in the program, but they are also intending to review some of our activities. *[Perhaps I am paranoid, but I suspect there will be some degree of rejection of goals and activities submitted by RMTs.]*

For this reason I also recommend having more goals and activities than the minimum numbers required. That way, if the CMTO decides to change its mind on “cooperation is compliance” you will have back-ups if some of your goals or activities get rejected.

Traditionally, the CMTO has been more inclined to question continuing education plans that were completely related to a single topic or activity. So another suggestion is to have as much variety as possible in your activities, in the ways of completing the activities, in the competencies you are referencing, and your goals. Show as much diversity as you can.

Green Check Marks

As you complete each phase of STRiVE online, look to make sure a green check mark appears beside the task. It will only appear when the task is complete. You definitely need to make sure you get the green check marks in place before November 30th each year for any components that are due that year. This is not always intuitive. Completing or saving a task is not enough. To make the green check marks appear in the left-hand panel, you also must “submit” each task.

Before November 30th this year you will need to see **three** green check marks in the left-hand panel of your STRiVE portal. They must appear beside: **Learning Module Year 1, Self Assessment,** and **Learning Plan: Development.**

Other tasks will require their own green check marks in future years.

Important Note for Everyone: Some people have been experiencing trouble with the third check mark beside **Step 3.1 Learning Plan: Development.** To get this check mark, submitting must be done in a specific order. Remember to submit two learning activities first, then the goal they relate to. Next submit two more learning activities for your second goal, and then submit that goal. The final step is to submit the entire plan. This convoluted submission process is far from intuitive and has been causing lots of animated discussion in online chat groups.

This is how your screen should look by November 30th this year.

Start Date: September 1, 2019
Status: IN PROGRESS
End Date: November 30, 2021

Required

- ✓ Step 1.1 Learning Module: Year 1 (2019)
- Step 1.2 Learning Module: Year 2 (2020)
- ✓ Step 2. Self-Assessment
- ✓ Step 3.1 Learning Plan: Development
- Step 3.2 Learning Plan: Interim Progress
- Step 3.3 Learning Plan: Completion

By November 30th next year you'll also need check marks beside steps 1.2 and 3.2.

Mac iOS

At its launch, the STRiVE online platform was not compatible with iOS, so it may not be possible to complete these tasks with an iPhone or iPad. Mac laptops, however, are compatible.

Inactive?

At the moment, RMTs who hold an Inactive Certificate are not obliged to participate in STRiVE. They are allowed to if they want, and are encouraged to consider doing so. A pending regulation change may require inactive RMTs to participate in STRiVE in the future. But in the meantime for sure, RMTs will need to complete their obligations under STRiVE if returning from inactive status to a General Certificate.

What if I Fail to Strive?

Failure to complete the components of STRiVE in the September to November time frame each year will result in some form of intervention by the CMTO. Initially, it will probably be a request for an explanation of why you have not met the deadline. It seems most likely that repeated failure will result in disciplinary action.

From the CMTO website: "While cooperation is considered compliance, blatant refusal(s) to comply will be considered professional misconduct and appropriate actions will be taken to address the matter."

So there you have it. A guide to STRiVE that hopefully fleshes out what you need to know before November 30th this year. Don't leave it until the last minute – I think we can safely predict that the STRiVE and CMTO websites will crash multiple times on the last day leading up to midnight.

[And if you're looking for ideas for Learning Activities to match some Learning Goals then I just happen to know about some fabulous classes in Las Vegas in January, and in Puerto Vallarta in March, that magically match some of the STRiVE competencies. What are the odds of that?]