



Campus Alberta Quality Council

2016-2019 Action Plan



Campus Alberta
Quality Council

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Message from the Co-Chairs



On behalf of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), we are pleased to provide you with our 2016-19 Action Plan. This Action Plan, Council's fifth, has been developed in accordance with best-practices guidelines identified by the *Public Agencies Governance Framework*.

Council's mandate includes two primary responsibilities: first, to review all new degree program proposals referred from the Ministry and to make recommendations to the Minister on the quality of those program proposals; and secondly, to monitor the quality of degree programs in Alberta post-secondary institutions.



The 2016-19 Action Plan identifies three goals based on Council's mandate:

- 1) CAQC will carry out quality reviews of new programs that are well-developed, efficient, and evidence-based;
- 2) Council will ensure that degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions; and
- 3) Council will work proactively with institutions, government and other stakeholders to support delivery of quality degree programs to serve the best interests of adult learners.

The priority initiatives identified within each of the goals draw heavily on Council's core and operating principles such as the recognition that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with degree granting institutions themselves (Principle 3). Recognizing the importance of institutional self-governance, CAQC is also committed to working closely with each institution offering degree programs in Alberta in a collaborative relationship that exhibits and promotes appreciation of institutional diversity and respect for institutional autonomy (Principle 7). In all situations, the best interests of learners are at the core of Council's activities as it assesses and monitors the quality of existing degree programs (Principle 1).

Council will review the feedback from the May 2016 Alberta Forum on Post-Secondary Learning Outcomes to determine how Council can best work with institutions and the Ministry to determine the most effective approaches for using student learning outcomes in reviewing new program proposals and monitoring the quality of approved programs. Council will continue to work closely with institutions to refine and clarify Council's expectations with respect to the role of faculty scholarship, and research and teaching excellence in contributing to high quality degree programs. Council will also continue to support collaboration within Campus Alberta by ensuring that new collaborative delivery of degree arrangements, developed on the basis of the programs approved on Council's recommendation, meet CAQC's quality standards and conditions. To insure that Alberta standards are recognized nationally and internationally, Council will continue to engage in discussion with other Canadian and international agencies with similar mandates.

We look forward to working with our Minister, the Ministry, and the stakeholders in the post-secondary system to meet the best interests of learners and ensure high quality degree programs will continue to be available. Council also looks forward to providing an update on our 2016-19 Action Plan in our 2016-17 Annual Report.

Peter Mahaffy
Co-Chair

Art Quinney
Co-Chair

Mandate

Established under section 108 of the *Post-secondary Learning Act (Act)*, the Campus Alberta Quality Council is an arms-length quality assurance agency that has been established to advance the quality of the post-secondary system in Alberta and is accountable to the Minister of Advanced Education (Minister). The Council is an advisory body whose primary responsibility is to provide advice and recommendations to the Minister on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta under the terms of the *Act* and the Programs of Study Regulation (91/2009). The Council also has a responsibility to review and monitor degree programs to ensure that they meet its expectations of quality.

Principles

CORE PRINCIPLES

Principle 1 – The **best interests of learners** are at the core of Council’s activities as it assesses proposed degree programs and monitors the quality of existing degree programs.

Principle 2 – Council’s **standards** are appropriate to the nature and degree level of programs and are comparable to national and international standards. Council encourages innovation and creativity in degree programming when there is a demonstrated benefit to learners.

Principle 3 – Council recognizes that the **primary responsibility** for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with degree granting institutions themselves.

Principle 4 – Council respects the foundational role of **academic freedom** in the provision of high quality degree programs.

Principle 5 – **Peer evaluation** is an essential component of Council’s evaluation of degree programs.

Principle 6 – **Consultation with stakeholders** is an integral part of degree program development, appraisal, and monitoring.

Principle 7 – Council exhibits and promotes appreciation of **institutional diversity** and respect for **institutional autonomy**.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Principle 8 – Council exhibits and promotes **equity, openness, transparency, and efficiency** in all its practices and policies.

Principle 9 – Where appropriate, Council applies **iterative processes** in discussions with institutions to clarify and improve degree programs.

Principle 10 – Members and peer reviewers act in ways that build **trust** in Council’s processes and decisions.

Principle 11 – Members and peer reviewers act **autonomously** and in accordance with **ethical standards**, and abide by Council’s code of conduct, which includes provisions on conflict of interest.

Principle 12 – Council is committed to the **quality assurance review** of its own activities and to sharing effective practices in degree program quality assessment.

Goals and Priority Initiatives

Respecting its mandate, the Campus Alberta Quality Council has two main responsibilities:

- Provide advice and recommendations to the Minister with respect to new degree program proposals.
- Monitor approved degree programs after their implementation.

In carrying out its two main responsibilities, Council gives priority to working proactively with degree-granting institutions to support their own efforts to build and maintain effective quality assurance processes and practices.

Council's goals and priority initiatives are aligned with Advanced Education's (AE) Business Plan 2016-19, in particular with its Outcome One:

High quality adult learning ensures Albertans have the education necessary to participate in their communities and a diversified 21st century economy.

Outcome One includes the following Key Strategies related to Council's activities:

- 1.1 Establish a common vision, outcomes and principles for adult learning in Alberta.
- 1.2 Examine the roles and mandates of adult learning providers and the government.
- 1.3 Review Advanced Education's agencies, boards and commissions to ensure that they are relevant, efficient and effective.

Council has outlined three goals, along with priority initiatives and strategies for achieving these goals.

Goal 1 CAQC will carry out quality reviews of new programs that are well-developed, efficient, and evidence-based.

Priority Initiatives:

- 1.1 Continue to explore additional ways to work with institutions to emphasize a culture of effective program-level teaching and learning effectiveness as they develop new programs.
- 1.2 Conduct a systematic review of Council's quality assessment processes and guidelines and experience with respect to program proposals from non-resident institutions.
- 1.3 Revise Council's Organizational Evaluation Framework for undergraduate programs.
- 1.4 Work with the Ministry to develop a mechanism to assure that collaborative delivery arrangements involving Council-recommended degree programs meet Council's quality standards and conditions.
- 1.5 Work with institutions to incorporate more fully the use of student learning outcomes and their assessment in new program development.

Goal 2 Council will ensure that degree programs approved on recommendation of CAQC continue to meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

Priority Initiatives:

- 2.1 Work with institutions to more fully use student learning outcomes and their assessment in their quality assurance of degree programs.
- 2.2 Work with institutions to develop indicators of program level teaching and learning effectiveness for the purpose of quality improvement.
- 2.3 Continue to work with sectors to further refine expectations for scholarly activity to support high quality programs using, as appropriate, adaptations of frameworks such as Boyer's models of scholarship.
- 2.4 Assist in the development of quality assurance processes within Campus Alberta through collaborative interactions with institutions, such as developing and/or hosting future workshops, webinars and similar learning opportunities.
- 2.5 Initiate processes for the second round of audits with the CARIs and consider extension of the audit process for the monitoring of degree granting institutions beyond the CARI sector.

Goal 3 Council will work proactively with institutions, government and other stakeholders to support delivery of quality degree programs to serve the best interests of adult learners.

Priority Initiatives:

- 3.1 Continue Council's proactive interaction and dialogue with institutions and sectors to support quality assurance processes and new program proposal development.
- 3.2 Explore the potential of developing increased recognition of the quality of Alberta degrees nationally and internationally.
- 3.3 Explore with stakeholders the potential for using modes such as social media, blogs, and webinars to increase Council's visibility and enhance dialogue on quality assurance initiatives.
- 3.4 Consider the feedback from the *Alberta Forum on Post-secondary Student Learning Outcomes* co-hosted with the Ministry and ACAT and determine how to disseminate the results and implications for Council's work.
- 3.5 Work with the Ministry as it implements its review of agencies, boards, and commissions (AE's Business Plan 2016-19, Strategy 1.3), and consider the outcomes of the review.
- 3.6 Work with the Ministry on initiatives and policies that are relevant to Council's mandate, especially any review of adult learning.
- 3.7 Through Council's Co-Chairs, commit to continued regular communication with the Minister and senior Ministry officials.
- 3.8 Through Council's Co-Chairs and Secretariat, continue to enhance consultation and share effective practices with post-secondary quality assurance agencies in Canada.
- 3.9 Initiate discussions with Alberta post-secondary students about quality assurance of degree programs.
- 3.10 Initiate discussions with Alberta post-secondary faculty about their role in quality assurance of degree programs.
- 3.11 Explore how CAQC's mandate relates to the role of indigenization in Alberta degree programs.