

HOSTING AN INSTITUTIONAL SITE VISIT

**A Guide for Institutions Undergoing a Visit by a
Campus Alberta Quality Council Evaluation Team**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) is responsible for assessing all degree program applications from all post-secondary institutions planning to offer degree programs in Alberta and making recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education with regard to program approval. It also is responsible for monitoring approved degree programs to ensure they continue to meet Council's conditions and standards of institutional and program quality. Consequently, Council may appoint external evaluation teams with respect to the initial approval process, the comprehensive evaluation (normally no sooner than in the sixth academic year after the institution begins offering its first approved degree program), and for special evaluations as determined by Council.

This document offers guidance to institutions to assist them in preparing for a site visit by a Council-appointed external evaluation team. Institutions are encouraged to contact the Secretariat should further clarification be required.

Types of evaluations

- (a) Review of new degree program proposals – All applications for new degree programs to be offered in Alberta are to the Minister of Advanced Education. The two-stage approval process is outlined in Appendix A of this document.

System Coordination Review – The first stage of the program approval process is a system coordination review by the Ministry to determine the need and impact of such a program on the post-secondary system in Alberta. Once that review is completed and a recommendation made to the Minister, the Minister may then refer the proposal to CAQC.

CAQC Review – CAQC's full review includes two phases, an *organizational evaluation* to determine the institution's readiness to implement and sustain the degree program and a *program evaluation* to look at the quality of the proposed program. Any institution proposing to offer a precedent-setting degree program, or one at a level that is new to it (e.g., first graduate program) will normally go through both stages of review. Not all applications are subjected to a full review. In certain cases, the institution may apply for a partially expedited review and move directly to the program evaluation stage. Council's review process culminates in a recommendation to the Minister.

- (b) Comprehensive Evaluation – Normally after six years of offering a first degree program, Council will conduct a comprehensive evaluation. This is a combined organizational and program evaluation to ensure that the institution and its approved degree program(s) continue to meet Council's conditions and standards of quality. A site visit by an evaluation team is part of the process.
- (c) Special Evaluation – Council reserves the right to conduct a special evaluation when it deems such a review is warranted. Such a review may involve an external evaluation team and site visit.

Peer evaluation is an essential component of Council's evaluation. The principal elements of the academic program review process are common to most quality assurance agencies throughout the world. Council acknowledges the need for flexibility in order to encourage innovation and to accommodate different types of baccalaureate degrees that will relate to 21st century learning

needs. It also recognizes that various modes of learning, including distance learning and the use of appropriate electronic technologies, are of increasing importance.

To assist in the assessment of an institution's application for a degree program or its ongoing adherence to Council's standards, CAQC appoints an external evaluation team to provide independent opinion. Team members bring to the review their knowledge and observation of academic excellence derived from the experience. The team's opinion is based on its review of the documentation prepared by the institution (self-study in the case of an organizational or comprehensive evaluation or program proposal for program evaluation) and its on-site appraisal.

Council also encourages peer review prior to the documentation coming to Council. For example, when developing a new program prior to sending it the Minister, an institution typically consults with subject experts from other institutions to assist in curriculum development, program design, and possibly plans for implementation and evaluation. If independent external academic experts are asked to review all aspects of the proposed program, Council asks that their reports be included with the program proposal. It is often helpful to ask one of the reviewers to visit the campus to provide an independent assessment of the library holdings and other resources of the proposed program. A brief resume of the reviewer(s) qualifications, their reports, and the institution's response to them (i.e., if and how the proposal changed as a result) should be included in Part B of the program proposal.

Self-study

An institutional self-study is required for two types of reviews by the Campus Alberta Quality Council – organizational evaluations and comprehensive evaluations. The institutional self-study serves three purposes:

- (a) For an institution, it provides a very useful analysis of its objectives, resources, students and achievements and of the relationships among them that is valuable for the institution's strategic planning.
- (b) For the Council and its evaluators, it provides the detailed information whereby they become familiar with the institution.
- (c) It reveals the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of an institution in relation to the achievement of its purposes and objectives. Thus, the self-study indicates to both the Council and the institution the areas that the institution must change and improve.

The guidelines with respect to self-studies are found in Council's *Handbook* (Chapters 3 and 5). The self-study is normally sent to members of the evaluation team at least four weeks prior to the site visit.

2. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM

Recruitment and appointment of the evaluation team

Council appoints the members of the evaluation team and designates one of them as the chair. Although the final decision regarding the composition of the evaluation team rests with Council, the institution, as well as Council members and the CAQC Secretariat, may suggest persons they would like to have included on the team provided there are no conflicts of interest. When doing so the institution should provide the rationale for the nomination (include rank/position, institution, areas of expertise/specialization, professional experience), how to contact the individual and

identification of any previous affiliation with the applicant institution. The institution should not contact possible reviewers to see if they are available prior to submitting their names. Institutions must not nominate anyone that may have a conflict of interest (see Code of Conduct in Appendix B). If in doubt, it is advisable to declare the potential conflict and let the CAQC Chair adjudicate. At the same time, Council also invites institutions to provide a brief statement outlining any uniqueness or special feature of the program or institution that should be considered by Council when determining membership of the evaluation team.

The complete list of nominees is sent to the institution and Council members for comment prior to recruitment. Council reserves the right to add other potential reviewers if recruitment to a particular date proves to be difficult. Once the team is recruited and its membership ratified by Council, the institution is informed.

Size and composition

Normally, the team will consist of between two and five external (peer) experts, depending on the nature of the review. The Manager of the CAQC Secretariat, or designate, may act as an advisory member of the team.

The composition of the team will vary depending on the type of review being conducted. For example, program review teams will consist of subject area experts as well as those with senior academic administration experience.

Roles

Chair

The chair bears overall responsibility for finalizing the site visit; will speak for the team; will assess the expertise and experience of team members and decides their assignments; will consult with team members to ensure they are comfortable with the assignments; will assume responsibility for the preparation and production of the final report to Council; and will present the team's findings (normally by telephone) at one of Council's meetings. With respect to the site visit schedule, the CAQC Secretariat Advisor will work with the institution to prepare a first draft of the site visit schedule and then will act as the liaison with the institution to make changes as instructed by the chair and team members.

Members

Team members will be responsible for specific functions, as determined by the chair. Receiving a specific assignment does not preclude the need for each member to review the entire documentation.

CAQC Secretariat Advisor

To facilitate the team's work, the CAQC Secretariat Advisor will coordinate the review and serve as an advisory member of the team during the site visit, will work with the institution to prepare a draft schedule for the site visit for consideration by the chair of the team, and will be the liaison with the institution with respect to logistics and information requests of the team prior to the site visit. During the site visit, this individual will liaise with the institutional contact should the team seek further information or clarification. This member will have access to all material relevant to the external evaluation and will take part in the team's orientation and discussions, but will not be involved in writing the report. After the site visit, the Advisor will receive the team's report and forward it to the institution for response.

Conduct

Evaluation team members are advised that they must respect the confidential nature of the information submitted by the institution and restrict the use of this information to their work in relation to Council. All material must be shredded or returned to the CAQC Secretariat when the activity for which it was required is completed. As well, team members are reminded that any records in the custody or under the control of Council are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. This includes the report of the external evaluation team to Council, as well as the institution's response to the report. During the recruitment process, Council relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to declare if there is any potential conflict of interest. At the orientation meeting with the CAQC Chair or designate, all team members will be asked to sign a copy of the Code of Conduct, which is found in Appendix B.

3. THE VISIT

Expectations of Council

Without intending to restrict the scope of the team's review, Council expects to have drawn to its attention what, in the opinion of the team, are the strengths and weaknesses of the institution or its proposed program(s). The team is expected to use the applicable framework tool and the applicable assessment standards to identify any opportunities for improving the organization or program, including suggestions for overcoming any perceived weaknesses or shortcomings.

Overall, Council expects constructive criticism where that is warranted, and a fair presentation of the positive side of the institution's proposal. It is important to stress that the team's report is to be made to the Council and not to the institution.

Date and length of the external evaluation team visit

The external evaluation team visit to the institution normally will take place when classes are in progress, at a time convenient to the institution and the team, and normally will take one and one half or two days. If not already determined at the time of appointment of the team, the date(s) for the visit will be determined by the Secretariat in consultation with the team chair and members and the institution vice-president academic or designate. A meeting of the team including an orientation meeting with Council's Chair will precede the time on campus. The meeting normally takes place at the hotel the evening before the start of the site visit.

Preparation for the visit

Normally, team members will receive a set of materials from the CAQC Secretariat, including the following:

- the institution's documentation which in the case of organizational and comprehensive evaluations includes a self-study, and in the case of a program evaluation, the full program proposal, and other supporting material (such as the *Faculty/Staff Handbook*),
- the institution's current calendar or a link to it on their website,
- a chronology of the application and any applicable correspondence between the Council and the institution,
- information about Campus Alberta and its six-sector model,
- applicable excerpts from the *CAQC Handbook*, and
- the applicable *Guide to Teams*, including Council's assessment standards and any framework tool.

Team members are encouraged to study the material and familiarize themselves with Council's assessment standards and framework tool in advance of the orientation meeting and identify any additional information needs. The Secretariat will notify the institution and will make arrangements with the institution to provide it to the team either prior to the site visit or at the beginning of the visit.

Establishing the site visit schedule

As noted earlier, prior to the visit, the CAQC Secretariat Advisor will work with the institution's vice-president academic or designate to establish a first draft of the site visit schedule for review by the chair and team members. They may identify other groups or specific individuals with whom they wish to meet. Specific areas for discussion or the assessment standards to be addressed will be identified for each interview session. These are intended only as a guide as often the responses to questions lead to other topics or issues.

Institutions should name a contact person with whom the CAQC Secretariat advisor can liaise during the team's visit to the campus should the team have any requests. It is helpful if the contact person's telephone number is provided as soon as the team arrives on campus.

During the visit, the team will wish to interview faculty, administrators, students and alumni. Depending on the type of review, they may also wish to meet with support/collaborating staff and examine facilities (library, computer labs, etc.) and other resources, analyze relevant institutional policies and practices, review student work or observe classes in session. The team's expectations need to be made clear prior to the site visit. Typically the team will operate as a single group, but, at the discretion of the team, they may split into subgroups to hold concurrent sessions with more interviewees within the time on campus.

The institution may be responsible for the selection of students, alumni and faculty to be interviewed in line with parameters established by the team. In other cases, the team may ask that some or all of the faculty or students self-select or be selected by their representative organizations. Some teams may wish to have open sessions designated on the schedule when faculty or other interested people can make an appointment (or drop-in) for brief interviews (e.g., 10 minutes) with the team. Such open sessions allow for specific input to be provided by individuals outside the groups and categories identified by the institution and team. These appointments are typically short (e.g., 10 minutes). If a team wishes to have an open session, the opportunity should be advertised by the institution in advance of the visit and a schedule established. Normally, the team asks that administration not attend interview sessions with students/alumni and faculty.

Conduct of the visit

(a) Site visit interviews

The institution is wise to approach the site visit as an opportunity to amplify and clarify the self-study or program proposal as well as an opportunity to make improvements. As the evaluation team, Council and the institution are all interested in ensuring that the best quality degree programs are provided to Albertans, interviewees should be open to the questions and advice of reviewers rather than taking a defensive stance. Interview sessions should be dialogues with peers rather than debates or interrogations.

Administration should prepare members of the institution, particularly those being interviewed, for the visit by ensuring that they are briefed on the scope, purpose and process of the review.

The administration of an institution may wish to hold a meeting of those individuals who will be interviewed by the evaluation team. This can be useful to familiarize interviewees with the process, so they can feel at ease and contribute more fully. Some institutions may choose to hold mock interview sessions. However, care should be taken to ensure that such preparation does not slip over from 'briefing' interviewees to 'training' them in what to say and/or how to behave. That type of 'coaching' is usually very evident to the review team and may reduce its confidence in the interviewee's responses.

Council's experience has been that the institution often asks each group of interviewees about their experience immediately after their interview with the review team. This 'de-briefing' may be appropriate if it allows interviewees to report on their experience with the panel. However, Council strongly discourages de-briefing meetings in which interviewees might feel obliged to divulge their specific responses to team questions. The institution must respect the process, and detailed obligatory de-briefing can undermine it. This is particularly true for such groups as students, faculty and Board of Governors representatives. In any event, institutions should be aware that interviewee's responses in any de-briefing situation may not accurately capture what was actually said in the interview nor provide the context in which it was said.

(b) Tour

A typical site visit involves a tour of relevant parts of the campus. If a tour of the facility is arranged, the institution should suggest the most efficient way to conduct the tour and should provide appropriate personnel to act as tour guides. The institution should give consideration to what aspects of the campus are most appropriate to the type of evaluation and how to arrange the tour in the most efficient manner. For example, the tour for a program evaluation might be more focused on the areas of the campus used by that program (classrooms, laboratories, etc.) along with the library. Because of time restrictions, the team may wish to suggest that the tour be limited by naming specific areas they wish to see.

(d) Team conferences

Throughout the day, time will be scheduled when the team can meet *in camera* to share findings and identify questions that may require a deeper investigation. These sessions also provide time for the team to remind itself of the focus of subsequent interviews.

Normally, the team will informally debrief over dinner on the first evening of the site visit.

At or near the end of the visit, the team will typically have a "wrap-up" conference *in camera* to reach consensus about the probable substance of the external evaluation report in preparation for the exit meeting.

(c) Exit meeting with senior officials

Before leaving the campus, the team will meet with senior officials (often the president and VPA, or their designates) to provide an opportunity for response to questions that may have arisen during the visit. As well, the exit meeting provides an opportunity for the team to advise the institution of the principal elements of the report without referring to the team's actual recommendation. It is Council's expectation that the report not contain any major surprises of which the institution was not informed by the team before it leaves campus.

(d) Contact with the institution

It is inappropriate for the chair or any member of the evaluation team to visit the campus prior to the site visit unless the institution and Secretariat have first been advised.

Team members have been advised that they should not independently give any member of the institution feedback or advice regarding the evaluation during or after the evaluation process. If an individual or individuals from the institution attempt(s) to contact a team member for advice or feedback regarding the evaluation, Council has advised team members that they should contact Council's Chair or Secretariat. As well, team members should not make contact with individuals at the institution to discuss the outcome of the evaluation. The CAQC Secretariat will handle any such discussions.

4. REPORT OF THE EVALUATION TEAM

Nature of the report

As previously noted, the team's report is to Council, not the institution. The team will determine the format of its report, although it is recommended that the report follow the template provided by the Secretariat, while taking into consideration the expectations of Council noted earlier. Typically the report provides a brief summary of the institution, the material reviewed, and when the site visit took place. This could be followed by a section providing an assessment of the program or institution based on each of Council's criteria. Within each section, affirmations, commendations and areas for improvement might be presented. The site visit schedule should always be attached as an addendum to the report: it can be affixed by the Secretariat once the report is submitted electronically.

The title page will contain the following statement:

Reports of CAQC's evaluation teams are prepared exclusively for the purpose of evaluating the quality of proposed post-secondary degree programs in Alberta and with consent of the respective institutions. All evaluation reports are based upon CAQC's policies, procedures and standards which are available to all participants of the review process. Reports of Council's evaluation teams are only one form of information considered during the program approval process in Alberta, and Council may not accept or endorse all recommendations or comments contained in these reports.

If there are any caveats or conditions on the recommendation, they should be clearly stated as such along with their rationale.

Recommendation – The report must contain a specific and clear recommendation which must be supported by substantive comments and documentation of the team's findings. If there are any caveats or conditions on the recommendation, they should be clearly stated as such along with their rationale. Further directions are provided in the applicable Team Guide.

Normally the report should not raise any issues that were not addressed during the site visit. However, if a new issue is presented in the report, it should be clearly identified as not having been discussed during the site visit. Normally a report is expected to be submitted to Council within three weeks of the site visit. The team chair is required to send an electronic version of the report to the Secretariat when it is finalized at which time the Secretariat will append the final site visit schedule.

Institutional response to and distribution of the report

Upon receipt of the report, the CAQC Secretariat will forward a copy to the applicant institution with a request that comments on the report be made in writing to Council, normally within two weeks. A copy of the institution's response will be forwarded to the evaluation team when it is received.

The institution's response is not simply a correction of fact as is the case with accreditation procedures in some other jurisdictions. Council expects the institution to respond to the major issues raised in the report in a clear and concise manner. Where the institution agrees to any caveats or conditions, the response should clearly indicate that acceptance. Where some suggestion or condition is rejected, a clear rationale should be provided.

Consideration of the report and response to it

Both the team's report and the institution's response to it will be discussed at Council's next meeting. The chair of the external evaluation team will be asked to speak to the report at that meeting (normally via telephone). Similarly, representative(s) of the institution may be asked to be on standby should Council need them to answer questions (normally via telephone) following the meeting with the chair.

Recommendation of the Council

The team's report is one aspect of Council's evaluation process. Therefore, the outcome of the full review may result in a recommendation to the Minister that is different from that of the evaluation team.

The outcome may result in one of the following recommendations:

- a) In the case of an organizational evaluation,
 - that the application for a new degree program be moved to the program evaluation stage, or
 - that the application be denied and a negative recommendation be sent to the Minister, or
 - that further information/clarification is needed before a decision can be made.
- b) In the case of a program evaluation,
 - that Council recommend to the Minister that the proposed degree program be approved, or
 - that Council recommend to the Minister that the proposed program not be approved (giving the reasons for the negative recommendation), or
 - that further information/clarification is needed before a decision can be made.
- c) In the case of a comprehensive evaluation,
 - that the Minister be informed that the institution continues to meet Council's conditions and standards with respect to quality, or
 - that the Minister be informed that the institution no longer meets Council's conditions and standards and that approval be cancelled.

In any of the above situations, conditions or expectations may be set by Council. For example, certain conditions might have to be met before the recommendation to approve a new program is sent to the Minister, or before the program is implemented. In the case of a comprehensive evaluation, Council may expect the institution to report periodically its progress in correcting some identified deficiency or it may indicate that another comprehensive evaluation is required.

After the report and the institution's response to it have been considered by Council and the outcome determined, the Secretariat will ask each evaluator to respond to a questionnaire designed to assist Council in improving the evaluation process and, specifically, to identify any 'best practices' that can be used as an 'exemplar' to be shared with other applicants. The institution is also asked to complete a similar questionnaire.

5. ARRANGEMENTS

Logistics

The institution should provide a sufficient number of campus maps for the use of team members, and should provide information about parking arrangements prior to the visit.

The institution must arrange a suitable meeting room on campus for the exclusive use of the external evaluation team where they can review materials, meet in camera and interview institutional representatives. A full set of the documentation provided to the team should be available in the meeting room. Power cords for team laptops should be available, along with the internet access, if possible, and the telephone number of a technology support person. The room is to be locked when team members are elsewhere. When planning the site visit schedule, it will be most efficient for those being interviewed to come to the team's meeting room, rather than have the team move to a different room for each new interview session. Although the majority of the interview sessions will involve the full team, should the team decide to split up during the schedule, other meeting rooms may be needed.

On last afternoon of site visit the team will need a projector and computer so that members can begin work on report following exit interview with senior administration.

The Secretariat will prepare place cards with the names of each team member to be used in the interview sessions. Institutions should prepare them for the each individual being interviewed (large print please).

Institutions are encouraged to arrange for a "green room" close to the team's meeting room where the interviewees gather prior to the meeting with the team. Someone from the institution should be assigned to be in the room to give the interviewees their place cards and work with the Secretariat Advisor on when it is appropriate to bring them into the meeting room.

The Secretariat Advisor will contact team members about their travel arrangements. Unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, reservations will be made for all out-of-town members to stay in the same hotel. The Secretariat Advisor may ask the institution contact for suggestions of appropriate hotels nearby and may ask the institution to make reservations. Direct billing to the institution may be arranged if this is most cost-effective.

Team members are responsible for making their own transportation arrangements to the orientation meeting venue, which is normally at the hotel. If the reservations for the team at the hotel was made by the institution, they will also be asked to reserve a meeting room for the orientation meeting as well as beverages. The institution may also be asked to provide transportation between the hotel and the campus.

The institution is responsible for any refreshments and meals of the team while on campus. The team chair will determine whether or not the meals will be with institutional members or students, or on their own. If team members have any dietary restrictions, the Secretariat Advisor will provide this information in advance of the site visit.

Hospitality

Although not encouraged or expected, institutions may wish to make arrangements for hospitality. If such is the case, it should only happen after consultation with the team chair and the CAQC Secretariat.

Expenses

Team members' honoraria and reasonable travel expenses (i.e. economy air fare) including transportation, meals (except for those while on campus) and lodging, will be paid by CAQC. At the culmination of the review, all direct costs of the review, including costs incurred by the Secretariat with respect to the orientation meeting and travel expenses of the CAQC Advisor, will be combined and billed to the institution. The costs will vary by size of the review team, location of the institution and of the reviewers, and length of the site visit. Payment is to the Minister of Finance and should be sent to the CAQC Secretariat office.

Feedback

After the report and the institution's response to it have been considered by Council and the outcome determined, the Secretariat will ask each evaluator to respond to a questionnaire designed to assist Council in improving the evaluation process and, specifically, to identify any 'best practices' that can be used as an 'exemplar' to be shared with other applicants. The institution is also asked to complete a similar questionnaire.

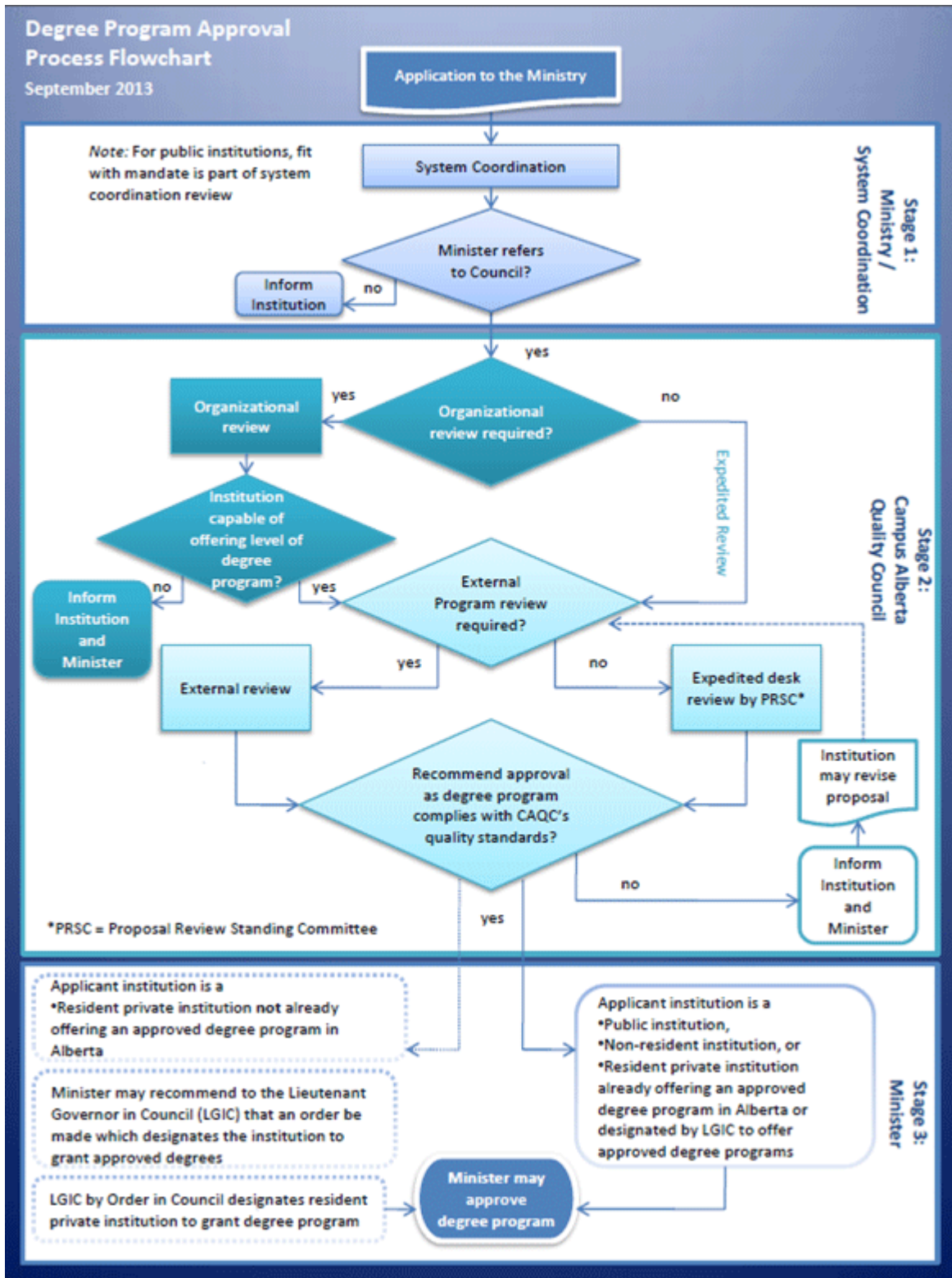
Additional information

Requests for additional information and/or questions of clarification may be directed at any time to the Manager of the CAQC Secretariat:

Allison Peters, Manager, Campus Alberta Quality Council Secretariat
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APPENDIX A

APPROVAL PROCESS FOR NEW DEGREE PROGRAMS



Campus Alberta Quality Council Expedited Review Process

Reviews:

Reviews by Council may proceed in one of three ways:

- a. Full Review – for applicants proposing to offer a first degree or a first degree at a new level. Council will conduct both an organizational review and a program review using external evaluators for both organizational and program reviews.
- b. Partially Expedited Review – when Council determines that it can omit the organizational review but will conduct a program review using external evaluators. In certain cases, Council reserves the right to include elements of an organizational review within the program review.
- c. Fully Expedited Review – when Council determines that neither an organizational review nor program review using Council-appointed external evaluators is needed. The Proposal Review Standing Committee (PRSC) and the Secretariat will do a desk review.

Eligibility for an Expedited Review

An applicant institution may formally request a partially or fully expedited review and is expected to make its case based on Council's criteria for such a review. PRSC normally acts on Council's behalf to review requests for expedited reviews and to conduct desk reviews of proposals accorded fully expedited reviews.

If the case presented is not accepted, the application will be subject to a full review (or partially expedited review) where the Council will appoint external evaluators. Applicants considering seeking partially or fully expedited reviews are encouraged to consult the CAQC Secretariat prior to making the request.

A. Partially Expedited Review

A request for a partially expedited review will be considered if one of the following criteria is met:

1. a successful organizational review has been conducted recently, or
2. the applicant is an Alberta university.

B. Fully Expedited Review

A request for a fully expedited review will be considered on its own merits: an institution should not assume that Council's willingness to conduct a fully expedited review in the same discipline at one level (e.g., a concentration in a 3-year B.A.) entitles it to a fully expedited review at another (e.g., a major in a 4-year B.A.). An institution will not normally be eligible for a fully expedited review if the degree is considered precedent-setting either for that institution or for the system.

The following are the criteria to be met:

1. The proposal is for
 - a new major/specialization/concentration (e.g., History) in an already approved degree program (e.g., BA) that has been offered across a range of disciplines within

- that degree in the institution, thus demonstrating that the institution has a successful track record in implementing similar new programs within that degree, or
- a new degree program that builds on an existing major/specialization currently offered under another program and is at the same level (e.g., Bachelor of International Studies where a BA with a major in International Relations exists), or
 - a new degree program that is at the same level and/or in a related discipline to degrees already being offered by the institution, but is not considered precedent setting either for that institution or for the system (e.g., an institution is proposing a doctorate in chemistry and already offers several other science doctorates).
2. An appropriate number of continuing, qualified academic staff are in place in the department/discipline.
 3. The proposal clearly identifies an appropriate set of program learning outcomes for students, and describes the policies and procedures that are in place or under development for assessing them and for applying this assessment for the purposes of curriculum review and program improvement.
 4. Degree nomenclature of the proposed program accurately and clearly conveys to stakeholders (e.g., students, prospective employers, academic institutions) the content of the proposed program.
 5. Program scale is well within the capacity and the resources of the institution to implement and sustain the program.
 6. Evidence of risk assessment both with respect to risks to existing programs and to the program under review (e.g., unexpected enrolment issues, inability to procure staff) is presented and no financial concerns are apparent.
 7. Internal vetting and quality assurance practices, including those for post implementation review, are well established and clearly documented. The use of independent academic experts by the institution to review the full proposal (Parts A and B) prior to submission to Council benefits program development and provides the judgment of experts whose specialized knowledge may not be found among the members of PRSC. For these reasons, an external review is expected. The full external assessment report(s) and the institution's response must accompany the proposal and request, and should describe the materials made available to reviewers and the basis for its decision as to whether or not a site visit was carried out. If an institution chooses not to engage external reviewer(s), it must justify its decision. In engaging external experts, institutions should be guided by Council's guideline on Independent Academic Experts (Appendix H).

APPENDIX B

CAMPUS ALBERTA QUALITY COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR REVIEWERS

Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to establish rules of conduct to govern the professional and ethical responsibilities of reviewers engaged by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) as it carries out its stated responsibilities for organizational, program and comprehensive reviews.

The Code is based on the principles of integrity, honesty, openness and concern for the public interest. It is designed to maintain the effectiveness of CAQC as a whole and to ensure the fairness of all CAQC procedures and decision making. It addresses common situations that reviewers may experience as they carry out their responsibilities, while recognizing that not all situations can be anticipated. All reviewers have a responsibility to consider appropriate standards of behavior and to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. The Code assumes that it is not only the actual situation but also the perception others may have of it that may lead to a perception of bias or conflict of interest.

To Whom Does the Code Apply?

The Code applies to all reviewers appointed by CAQC to enable it to make informed recommendations and decisions about approval and monitoring of degree programs.

When is This Code Applicable?

The Code governs the conduct of reviewers from the date of appointment. It also includes the continuing responsibilities of reviewers after the completion of their terms with respect to decisions made by CAQC while the person was a reviewer.

General Rules of Conduct

All reviewers shall complete a statement attesting that they have read and agreed to the statements included in the Code of Conduct.

Sample Statement

I, _____, have been appointed as a member of an external evaluation team reporting to the Campus Alberta Quality Council. I have read and understand the CAQC Code of Conduct for Reviewers.

I agree to comply fully and to the best of my ability with the provisions of the Code.

Dated at _____ this _____ day of _____ .

Reviewers should be committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in post-secondary education. When considering the program proposal, or other matters referred to them, reviewers shall make their recommendations on the merits of the information available, and shall consider the information provided in good faith and to the best of their ability, not being

concerned with the prospect of disapproval from any person, institution, or community. Reviewers shall be sensitive to issues of gender, race, language, culture and religion that may affect the conduct of a review, the recommendations considered by Council, or a decision.

a. Confidentiality

A reviewer shall agree that all information related to a review, including information provided by an applicant institution, is confidential and shall treat such information in strict confidence and with the care and security required to ensure that the information is not disclosed without CAQC's prior written consent. A reviewer will not use the information provided for any purpose outside that of undertaking work for CAQC.

A reviewer must respect the confidential nature of third-party information submitted by the applicant and restrict the use of this information to CAQC work. Reviewers shall return (or attest that they have shredded) all material used in assessing applications when the activity for which it was required is completed. All electronic copies of confidential material should be disposed of within a term specified by agreement between the reviewer and the Ministry.

"Information" means all information, data, material and documents obtained by a reviewer before, during, or after the review and includes program proposals, institutional self-studies, information obtained during a site visit and all other information furnished or disclosed to him/her by CAQC, the Secretariat or an institution whether directly or indirectly, in written, oral, magnetic, electronic or other forms.

The confidentiality requirement set out in this Code does not apply to any part of the information which is in the public domain at the date of disclosure to the reviewer or which after that date enters the public domain, other than by any act or failure to act on the part of the reviewer.

A reviewer shall, at all times, adhere to the intent and requirements of Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* which applies to all information, material and records relating to, or obtained, created, maintained, submitted or collected during the course of a review.

b. Conflict of Interest

A reviewer must avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest that might impair, influence or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of CAQC. Conflict of interest is any interest, relationship, association or activity that is incompatible with a reviewer's responsibilities as an impartial assessor. Reviewers shall ensure that they:

- (i) conduct their duties with impartiality and disqualify themselves from dealing with anyone with whom a prior relationship could bring their impartiality into question;
- (ii) refrain from furthering their private interests
- (iii) avoid accepting any commission, discount, allowance, payment, gift (other than a small token gift) or other benefit that is connected, directly or indirectly, with the performance of their duties related to the review, that causes, or would appear to cause, a conflict of interest

- (iv) have no financial interest in the business of a third party that causes, or would appear to cause, a conflict of interest in connection with the performance of their duties related to the review; if such financial interest is acquired during the term as identified in the agreement between a reviewer and CAQC, the reviewer shall promptly declare it to CAQC;
- (v) decline to participate in a review for CAQC that involves a party or representative with whom they were formerly in a significant professional relationship until a period of 12 months has elapsed since the termination of that relationship. A significant professional relationship includes, but is not limited to, employment or consulting, collaboration on a project, supervision of students in the program, and providing expert advice during development of a proposal; and
- (vi) do not participate in any advisory council or implementation committee for programs or institutions they have reviewed for CAQC for six months from the time of the Minister's decision.

The Chair shall ask all potential reviewers to indicate, prior to appointment, whether they have any reason to be in a conflict of interest if they were to review a given program or institution. A reviewer with a conflict of interest in regards to an application must decline to serve as a reviewer. If unsure whether a conflict of interest exists, the reviewer shall inform the Chair about his/her circumstances. The Chair will determine whether a conflict of interest exists and will inform a reviewer of his/her decision.

c. Public Statements

A reviewer shall not make public statements, orally or in writing, on any issues with respect to the institution or program he/she was involved in reviewing. In cases where it is not clear what a reviewer may say publicly about an issue, discretion should be used, and the reviewer should consult with the CAQC Chair or the Secretariat.

A reviewer shall refrain from communicating with the media regarding the deliberations or decisions of CAQC. All inquiries from the media or other parties shall be referred to the CAQC Chair or the Secretariat.

Reviewers should review carefully CAQC's *Policy on Release of Information*, especially section B, which outlines the responsibilities of reviewers. The policy is available on CAQC's website.