Campus Alberta Quality Council

2025

Standards and Evaluations Handbook 2

DEGREE PROGRAMS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PREFACE

The Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) was established in 2004 under the new Post-secondary Learning Act. Faced with growing demand for post secondary education, the Alberta government decided to increase access by allowing new types of institutions to offer degree-level programs. Government balanced this openness with a mechanism to ensure that the capacities of institutions to deliver high-quality degree programs were rigorously evaluated to assure their quality.

Council is legislatively mandated to evaluate all proposed degree programs and all institutions wishing to offer degree-level programming (whether public or private, resident or non resident), and to make recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education. The exception is that Council does not evaluate proposals for degrees in divinity. CAQC also monitors existing degree programs and degree-granting institutions to ensure they continue to meet quality standards.

Council also provides post-secondary education quality assurance to the Yukon and Northwest Territories. While this Handbook does not specifically refer to the Yukon or the Northwest Territories, the standards, procedures, and interpretations set out within this Handbook also apply to the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

1.1 HOW TO USE THE CAQC HANDBOOKS

Designed to provide guidance to post-secondary institutions, this *CAQC Standards and Evaluations Handbook 1: Organizations (Organizations Handbook)*, the accompanying *CAQC Standards and Evaluations Handbook 2: Degrees (Degrees Handbook)*, and all Forms, Templates, Guides, and Appendices present information about the role of CAQC in assessing and assuring the quality of new and ongoing degree-level programs in Alberta. This *Organizations Handbook* includes:

- General information about Council's work;
- Standards for organizations seeking to offer degrees in Alberta;
- Information on Organizational Evaluation processes; and
- Standards and processes for Council's organizational monitoring activities.

Council expects that this *Organizations Handbook* will help institutions navigate the Organizational Evaluation processes, with the accompanying *Degrees Handbook* providing guidance on the subsequent Program Proposal and Evaluation processes. CAQC acknowledges with great appreciation the suggestions for improvements to its *Handbook* offered in 2023 and 2025 by Alberta post-secondary institutions. Development of these *Handbooks* also greatly benefited from reviewing the documentation produced by other provincial quality assurance agencies.

For Organizations contemplating offering their first degree-level program, these *Handbooks* provide guidance in careful evaluation of the readiness of their governance, policies and resources to meet CAQC's rigorous standards. Council encourages organizations that do not meet these standards to carefully consider whether they have the resources to implement changes that will enable them to do so in the future. Before institutions commit to developing a proposal to offer a new degree, they are advised to consult with the CAQC Secretariat.

For Organizations currently approved to offer undergraduate and/or graduate degrees in Alberta, the *Handbooks* provide guidance in proposing new degrees that meet CAQC's rigorous standards, meeting national and international criteria for quality degrees while providing guidance to on-going monitoring that encourages critical reflection for organizations on their ability to sustain the provision of high-quality degrees in Alberta.

Additional information about Council and its activities can be found in the accompanying *Degrees Handbook* and its Appendices, as well as on Council's website: https://caqc.alberta.ca/. The electronic version of this *CAQC Handbook* is the official version of record to enable timely updates and revisions to the text. If, after consulting this *Handbook*, users have questions concerning Council's principles, procedures, and forms, they are encouraged to contact the Council for guidance. In the interest of improving the quality of this handbook, users are invited to provide Council with comments and criticisms.

1.2 DUPLICATION IN HANDBOOKS

Sections 1-3 are duplicated and identical in *the Organizations* and *Degrees Handbooks*. As some organizations may primarily refer to one *Handbook* more than the other (e.g., Institutions granted Delegated Review Status, DRS, may normally focus their attention on the *Degrees Handbook*), information that applies at both the Organizational and Degree Proposal level is presented in both Handbooks to ensure access by all.

This information includes:

- CAQC's structure, responsibilities, and principles;
- Evaluation Types (Organizational and Degree)
- CAQC's Policy on the Release of Information as it applies to both Organizational and Program Evaluations (for Council, External Evaluators, and PSIs)
- Degree Proposal Process including System Coordination Review

1.3 THE ORGANIZATIONS HANDBOOK

The *Organizations Handbook* presents the Organizational Standards used to evaluate an organizations initial and ongoing degree-granting readiness. This *Handbook* presents the information needed for an Organization considering/proposing a new program that would necessitate a Organizational Evaluation with Site Visit (e.g., a first degree or a first degree at a new level), preparing for a Comprehensive Organizational Evaluation, or applying for Delegated Review Status (DRS).

The *Organizations Handbook* should be read in full prior to proposing a new program to ensure that the Organization exhibits the standards and characteristics expected of a degree-granting institution in Alberta.

1.4 THE DEGREES HANDBOOK

Focused on the program-level, the *Degrees Handbook* includes the Standards for Degrees at the undergraduate/baccalaureate and graduate levels.

Applicants proposing a first degree or a first degree at a new level are advised to read the *Organizations Handbook* first as their degree proposal will prompt an Organizational Evaluation.

The *Degrees Handbook* will provide additional guidance on the Degree Proposal process and Standards.

Applicants that have undergone an Organizational Evaluation and are proposing additional degrees should read the *Degrees Handbook* for the Standards and different types of evaluations that may apply to their specific proposal.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

Throughout this handbook, some terms, organizations, documents, and legislation will be frequently referenced. For convenience, commonly encountered acronyms are provided here, and a comprehensive glossary can be found in Appendix A.

ACF: Alberta Credential Framework, which describes the characteristics and criteria of the credential as well as the knowledge and skills expected to be acquired by students through the process of earning the credential. The ACF is intended to foster post-secondary system coherence by naming and defining Alberta credentials in a comprehensive structure. The ACF can be found in Appendix D.

CAQC: Campus Alberta Quality Council, an arms-length quality assurance agency that reviews and recommends Alberta degree programs to the Minister of Advanced Education for approval. CAQC also monitors degree programs to ensure they continue to meet its standards.

CDQF: Canadian Degree Qualification Framework, which was developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and endorsed by all Canadian provinces and territories. The CDQF provides a general description of qualifications expected of graduates at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels and clarifies the purposes, aims, and relationships among these different degree levels. The CDQF can be found in Appendix C.

DRS: Delegated Review Status is granted to institutions that meet the eligibility requirements to conduct Delegated Program Evaluations on their own proposals.

FTE: Full-Time Equivalent, a staff member carrying a normal full-time teaching load for at least eight months of a reporting period has a full-time equivalence of 1.00. The definition of "full-time" load varies among institutions and among disciplines within institutions.

MSC: Monitoring Standing Committee, a CAQC standing committee which reviews monitoring reports submitted by institutions to ensure that the degree programs and the institutions continue to meet Council's conditions and standards of organizational and program quality.

PAPRS: Provider and Program Registry System, used by post-secondary institutions to submit proposals for new programs or modifications to existing programs.

Part A (PAPRS Template): The commonly used terms for the *Credit (Undergraduate) New Program and Specializations Proposal* template, used by institutions to begin the first stage of Alberta's degree program proposal and review process, called System Coordination Review. (may also be referred to as the PAPRS Template). Proposals must always use the current and approved Part A, which is always available in the PAPRS System or by emailing Advanced Education/CAQC Secretariat. Part A should be completed with Part B to ensure alignment throughout the degree proposal

PART B: The commonly used term for the CAQC *Proposal Template: New Degree Programs and Specializations (Part B: Campus Alberta Quality Council Review)*. Part B should be completed with Part A to ensure alignment throughout the degree proposal. Part B requires applicants to demonstrate specific and detailed aspects of the program's design and quality in alignment with the *CAQC Handbooks*.

PRSC: Proposal Review Standing Committee, a CAQC standing committee that reviews requests from institutions for partially or Expedited Program Evaluations and conducts desk reviews of such proposals.

PSLA: *Post-Secondary Learning Act*, together with regulations, governs the Alberta post-secondary system. Relevant excerpts can be found in Appendix B.

PSR: Programs of Study Regulation, made under the PSLA, deals with the approvals required for a public post-secondary institution, private post-secondary institution, or non-resident institution (public or private) to offer a degree program, including quality assurance review by the CAQC. Relevant excerpts from the PSR can be found in Appendix B.

SVT: Site Visit Teams, composed of External Evaluators assembled by CAQC in conjunction with institutions, visit institutions under a CAQC Evaluation to learn about the institution and/or its programs, meet with key stakeholders, and prepare a report for consideration by CAQC during its evaluation.

QAPA: Quality Assurance Process Audits. Organizations granted Delegated Review Status (DRS) are cyclically audited by CAQC for their quality assurance processes to ensure ongoing quality of degrees in Alberta.

2.2 HANDBOOK SCOPE AND PURPOSE

As noted in the Preface on *How to Use the CAQC Handbooks*, this *Organizations* Handbook is intended to provide a comprehensive description of the standards for organizations seeking to offer degrees in Alberta, the processes for Organizational Evaluations, and Council's monitoring role over institutions offering approved degrees.

The *Organizations Handbook* is accompanied by the *Degrees Handbook* that lays out the standards for degree programs offered in Alberta, the processes involved in Degree Proposal Evaluations, and Council's monitoring role over approved degree programs.

As an Organization must undergo an evaluation prior to offering its first degree, upon referral to Council, Organizations should review both *Handbooks* fully before submitting Degree Proposals to the Ministry of Advanced Education. Both *Handbooks* are intended to assist post-secondary institutions in planning and preparing for their quality evaluations by indicating CAQC's expectations and the kinds of data that may be helpful for the institution to assemble in the period before the evaluation is scheduled.

Council regularly reviews its policies, standards, and practices to be anticipatory and proactive in developing policies and practices suited to evolving needs and

changing circumstances. Changes made to Council's policies, standards and practices will be reflected in this Handbook, the accompanying Degree Handbook, and Council's website: https://caqc.alberta.ca/. Changes will normally be made annually at the Spring Meeting of Council and communicated to post-secondary institutions in Alberta. It is the applicant's responsibility to use current procedures, criteria, templates, and forms when submitting proposals. In progress proposals should be moved into new forms prior to submission.

2.3 THE CAMPUS ALBERTA QUALITY COUNCIL

CAQC is an arms-length quality assurance agency that works to ensure that degree programs offered in Alberta are of a high quality and makes recommendations on degree programs to the Minister of Advanced Education.

2.3.1 CAQC STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Council consists of 15 members appointed by the Minister of Advanced Education, including a chair or two co-chairs. All references in this *Handbook* to "the chair" should be understood as applying to a co-chair, as appropriate. The members possess significant expertise and administrative experience in the post-secondary system. Council's membership spans a diverse set of academic disciplines. The normal term of office for members is three years and members may be reappointed.

Council is charged with the quality review of all degree programs proposed by:

- Resident publicly funded institution including universities, polytechnics, colleges, and independent academic institutions;
- Resident private institutions, both for-profit and non-profit;
- Non-resident – out-of-province – public institutions; and
- Non-resident – out-of-province – private institutions, both for-profit and non-profit.

Council must review all degrees referred by the Minister (PSR 5.1) to determine if the applicant institution and the proposed degree program meet the standards and conditions established. Council does not review Degrees in Divinity. Organizations offering degrees that are not subject to Council's review must clearly indicate this on their website and in all information presented to students or the public.

In fulfillment of its mandate, the Council:

- Undertakes Organizational Evaluations of institutions seeking to offer degrees for the first time in Alberta;
- Evaluates applications for new academic undergraduate and graduate degree programs referred to it by the Minister;
- Makes recommendations to the Minister based on an Organizational Evaluation of the institution and/or a Program Evaluation of the quality of a proposed degree program to ensure quality.
- Monitors approved degree programs, including those delivered off-site; and

- Conducts Comprehensive Evaluations, Cyclical Evaluations, Quality Assurance Audits, and other forms of quality assurance of degree granting institutions and their degree programs.

Council's mandate does not include:

- Any authority regarding non-degree programming such as diplomas, certificates, post-baccalaureate diplomas, graduate certificates and diplomas, or apprenticeship credentials listed in the Alberta Credentials Framework;
- Evaluating proposed new diplomas or certificate programs (whether undergraduate or graduate);
- Making recommendations to the Minister concerning the approval of proposed programs of these types, and does not monitor the quality of the delivery of these programs.

When a degree involves the incorporation of another credential, Council's quality review includes review of the credential to ensure degree-quality standards are met. See Section 4.2.3 of the *Degrees Handbook* for Council's role in Degrees that incorporate other credentials.

2.3.2 CAQC PRINCIPLES

To guide its decisions, Council has adopted key principles which are considered in all of Council's work.

CORE PRINCIPLES
1. The quality of the Student Experience is at the core of Council's activities as it assesses proposed degree programs and monitors the quality of existing degree programs. 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. 3. Council recognizes that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with degree granting institutions themselves. 4. Council respects the foundational role of academic freedom in the provision of high-quality degree programs. 5. Council regards scholarly activity as foundational in the provision of high-quality degree programs, recognizing that the nature of scholarship and disciplines may differ amongst different institutions and within individual institutions. 6. Peer review is an essential component of all of Council's evaluation processes. 7. Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of degree program development, appraisal, and monitoring. 8. Council exhibits and promotes appreciation of institutional diversity and respect for institutional autonomy. 9. Council encourages institutional initiatives relating to Indigenization, diversity, accessibility, and citizenship to enrich the quality of degree programs and the student experience.
OPERATING PRINCIPLES
10. Council exhibits and promotes collegiality, openness, transparency, and efficiency in all its practices and policies.

11. As fully as possible, Council applies iterative processes involving clarification, education, guidance, persuasion, and negotiation in discussions with institutions in order to promote mutual understanding and high-quality degree programs.
12. Members and peer reviewers act in ways that build trust in Council's processes and decisions.
13. Members and peer reviewers act respectfully, autonomously, in accordance with ethical standards, and abide by Council's code of conduct – which includes provisions on conflicts of interest.
14. Council is committed to the quality assurance review of its own activities and to sharing effective practices in degree program quality assessment.

2.3.3 COUNCIL'S PROPOSAL REVIEW STANDING COMMITTEE (PRSC)

In keeping with its commitment to evaluating proposals for new programs expeditiously, PRSC acts on behalf of the full Council. In accordance with the following terms of reference, PRSC:

1. Reviews requests for Expedited Program Evaluation in accordance with Council's policies and criteria;
2. Conducts a desk review of all proposals granted Expedited Program Evaluation;
3. Advises Council concerning recommendations for Expedited Program Evaluation;
4. Reviews Standard Program Evaluations and prepares summary reports with potential avenues for further investigation to Council;
5. Reviews any other issue that Council, or Council's chair and Secretariat, decide to refer to it for advice;
6. May make a positive recommendation to the Minister on behalf of the full Council - negative recommendations to the Minister can only be made by the full Council; and
7. Reports in writing to the full Council at each meeting following any evaluation work it does or any recommendations it has made.

2.3.4 COUNCIL'S MONITORING STANDING COMMITTEE (MSC)

Section 8 of the PSR gives CAQC the responsibility to ensure compliance with Council's standards and conditions after a degree program has been approved. This responsibility complements Council's role in assessing the quality of all new degree program applications referred to it by the Minister.

In performing its monitoring role, CAQC subscribes to the principles that it may adopt to inform its oversight of degree programs offered in Alberta. Monitoring is undertaken to ensure that degree programs, and the providers of those degree programs, continue to meet Council's conditions and standards of organizational and program quality. Council has delegated to this committee the following specific tasks:

1. To consider the adequacy of institutional responses to conditions and expectations set by Council regarding any institution or degree program that is seeking approval or has been approved;
2. On behalf of Council, to provide feedback to institutions on their monitoring reports;

3. On behalf of Council, to decide on the adequacy of information provided by institutions about changes to their approved programs - such as regards to curriculum, faculty or delivery);
4. To report in writing to Council at each meeting following any evaluative work it does or any decision or recommendation it has made in its discharge of its monitoring role;
5. To recommend to Council that it make a negative ruling about a matter it has considered in the course of discharging its delegated responsibility; and
6. On behalf of Council, to decide when a program has satisfied its quality reporting requirements and is no longer required to provide monitoring reports and results of cyclical reviews.

2.3.5 CAQC SECRETARIAT

The CAQC Secretariat assists the Chair and Council in their activities by providing advice on matters of policy and procedure, organizing meetings, helping to set meeting agendas, and preparing publications. It also provides information and advice in response to inquiries from various agencies, current and prospective applicants, and members of the public about matters related to quality assurance of institutions and new degree programs. As well, it coordinates all activities of Council's Site Visit Teams; the Secretariat's Director or designate serves as an advisory member on these teams.

2.3.6 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF COUNCIL

Council is committed to ensuring the national and international recognition of Alberta's degrees and works closely with other provinces in pan-Canadian quality assurance initiatives and the sharing of best practices.

Council's processes and assessment standards are consistent with those contained in the 2007 *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The *Statement* includes the CDQF as well as standards and processes for assessing new degree programs and new degree providers. Council has adopted the CDQF as a guide when assessing the level of a proposed degree program.

2.4 CAQC EVALUATION TYPES

CAQC has three primary functions:

1. To assess the capacity of post-secondary institutions to support high-quality degree programs.
2. To evaluate and make recommendations to the Minister on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta.
3. To conduct cyclical and ongoing evaluations of approved degree programs and organizations offering approved degrees.

As outlined in the two *CAQC Handbooks*, CAQC fulfills these functions through various types of evaluation processes. Overviews of each are presented below.

2.4.1 ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS

Organizational Evaluations evaluate an institution's initial capacity for degree-granting. The PSLA requires that CAQC, in making its recommendation to the Minister, consider the ability and

readiness of institutions to deliver and sustain high quality degree programs. CAQC does this through Organizational Evaluations. Typically, a Site Visit Team of External Evaluators commissioned by Council assists it in determining whether an institution has the capacity to offer the program, or programs, proposed.

For institutions wishing to offer their first degree program, or a first degree at a new level, a satisfactory outcome from an Organizational Evaluation must be achieved before a program review can be conducted.

There are two types of Organizational Evaluation:

1. Organizational Evaluation with Site Visit - conducted for Organizations seeking to offer their first degree in Alberta or their first degree at a new level.
2. Special and Other Evaluations (ad hoc).

Sections 4 and 5 of the *Organizations Handbook* address Organizational Evaluations in full detail.

2.4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL MONITORING

Council's Organizational Monitoring processes evaluate an institution's ongoing capacity for degree-granting. There are four types of Monitoring processes that relate to organizational capacities:

1. Comprehensive Organizational Evaluations with Site Visits
2. Monitoring Reports
3. Delegated Program Evaluations proposed by Institutions with Delegated Review Status
4. Special and Other Evaluations (ad hoc)

Section 6 *Organizations Handbook* addresses Organizational Monitoring in full detail

2.4.3 PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Council reviews all proposals for new degree programs referred by the Minister to ensure they are of high quality before they are approved. The time it takes for Council to make a recommendation is affected by various factors such as the completeness of the institution's final proposal, whether or not an Organizational Evaluation is required before the Program Evaluation, the time it takes to recruit external reviewers and establish a site visit date mutually agreeable to all reviewers and the institution, and if the institution is asked to further refine the proposal.

A program evaluation focuses on a review of the specific curriculum and the intellectual and physical resources needed to deliver the program proposed. All degree programs recommended by the Council must offer an education of sufficient breadth, depth, and rigour to meet national and international standards of programs at recognized post-secondary institutions.

The time it takes for Council to make a recommendation is affected by various factors such as the completeness of the institution's final proposal, whether or not an Organizational Evaluation is required before the Program Evaluation, the time it takes to recruit external reviewers and establish a site visit date mutually

agreeable to all reviewers and the institution, and whether or not the institution is asked to further refine the proposal.

There are three types of Program Evaluation:

1. Standard Program Evaluations with Site Visits
2. Expedited Program Evaluations conducted by the Proposal Review Standing Committee
3. Delegated Program Evaluations proposed by Institutions with Delegated Review Status

Sections 4 and 5 below address Program Evaluations in full detail.

2.4.4 PROGRAM MONITORING

Council's Program Monitoring processes evaluate the quality of individual degree programs on a regular and ongoing basis. There are three types of Monitoring processes that relate to organizational capacities:

1. Degree Monitoring Reports
2. Cyclical Program Reviews
3. Special and Other Evaluations (ad hoc)

Section 6 below addresses Program Evaluations in full detail.

2.5 POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION

As a public body, CAQC is subject to the Access to Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act in the Province of Alberta as well as to the PSLA and the PSR.

In evaluating program proposals, Council is committed to the principle of openness and transparency. While an evaluation by Council is underway, or while the Minister is deliberating on a recommendation from Council, it is imperative that evaluation reports and institutional responses to these reports be regarded as components of a larger process. It is therefore necessary that Council distinguish between the release of material while an evaluation is in process and the release of material after the Minister's decision.

To ensure that institutions and those to whom they are accountable are clear on Council's aims and objectives with respect both to release of information and to protection of privacy, the following proviso will be included on all Site Visit Team reports when forwarded to institutions:

> *"Reports of CAQC's Site Visit 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 and procedures which are available to all participants of the review process. Reports of Council's evaluation Site Visit 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."*

2.5.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL

Public Announcements
Council may make public announcements of any decisions, actions, or recommendations it has taken once the Minister has acted on its recommendation. These announcements pertain chiefly to the outcomes of Organizational Evaluations and Program Evaluations.

Announcement of Degree Referrals
In general, following the official referral of a degree from the Ministry to Council, Council will post the referral and its status to the CAQC website.

Announcement of Recommendations & Ministry Approvals
In general, following the official notice from the Ministry to the organization, Council will post the recommendation (to Approve or to Not Approve) result to the CAQC website and send an Outcomes letter to the organization detailing requirements for the program if approved.

Evaluation Reports
All evaluation reports, including those arising from any periodic review process and including associated correspondence, which result from the evaluation of an institution or its programs pursuant to Council's policies and procedures are under the custody and control of Council until a final decision has been made by Council or the Minister, as appropriate.

Thereafter, the responsibility for distributing or providing access to these documents rests with the institution, which may supply copies of evaluation reports, with the proviso referenced above, and any ensuing correspondence, to any party. In the first instance, Council will endeavour to work cooperatively with the institution to ensure communications about Council's policies, processes, recommendations, and decisions are accurate.

To ensure accurate representation, Council reserves the right to release the full report if it finds that an institution has misrepresented the contents or context of the report, misquoted excerpts from it, used those excerpts out of context, or relied on the report to create a misleading impression about the institution, its degree programs, or the processes administered by Council.

Council may provide copies of any evaluation reports, and any ensuing correspondence, to any person engaged by Council to evaluate an institution or its programs, to assist it in the development of policy, to advise it in the conduct of its statutory duties, or to aid it in the correction of the public record, should that intervention be necessary.

2.5.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTITUTIONS

Public Announcements
During its early contacts with an institution that is applying to have one or more of its degree programs recommended for approval, Council will secure the institution's written commitment to abide by the following advice regarding public statements:

1. The evaluation process may be lengthy and will proceed by stages. At each stage Council may, for good reason, delay the application, refer it back to the institution for further consideration, or recommend that it not be approved. The institution, therefore, shall avoid any public statement in calendars, on websites, or in any other form of communication which, for whatever reason, may be construed as an attempt to influence, pre-empt, or circumvent the process, or which may later embarrass or create pressure upon the institution, Council, or the Ministry of Advanced Education.
2. Any public statement made by the institution about Council's work shall be confined to facts that are appropriate to the status of the institution's proposals with Council at the time of the statement. Any uncertainty about the nature of the facts that can be publicized will be resolved by the Chair of Council in consultation with the Secretariat.
3. Public statements referring to proposed programs should specify particular degree programs, bearing in mind that Council recommends specific program approval, not approval or accreditation of an institution.
4. No public statements shall be made that state or imply that the institution seeks, or has been given, "full" or "institutional" approval or "accreditation", notwithstanding Council's mandate to conduct evaluations.
5. In public statements about proposals for new programs, it is preferable for an institution to report that the proposal is under consideration and the outcome is not guaranteed. An institution must avoid expressing:
    i. That it anticipates receiving program approval from Council, or
    ii. That approval from Council or the Minister is imminent or anticipated, or
    iii. That potential students may seek admission to the program on the basis of anticipated approval.
6. Institutions may wish to use the following language in referring to in-process proposals or approved programs:
    i. Program X has been submitted to the Ministry of Advanced Education and is currently under review. We await the conclusion of this process and cannot comment on the outcome at this stage.
    ii. Program X has been submitted to the Ministry of Advanced Education and referred to the Campus Alberta Quality Council. It is currently under review with Council and we await the conclusion of this process.
    iii. Program X has been referred to CAQC and Organization Name is currently undergoing an Organizational Evaluation as this is Organization Name's first degree proposal (or first at a new level). Should the Organizational Evaluation meet Council's standards for degree-granting readiness, Program X will be evaluated by Council. We await the outcomes/conclusion of the Organizational Evaluation.
    iv. Program X is a Ministry-approved degree. Program X has been approved by the Minister of Advanced Education following a positive recommendation by the Campus Alberta Quality Council.
7. Institutions that offer non-Ministry Approved Degrees (such as divinity degrees) must clearly label degrees to ensure clarity of approval. Institutions should make this clear on all digital and print communication and marketing materials using such language as:
    i. Program X is a divinity degree and was not approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education.

Site Visit Team Reports

Reports of Council's evaluation Site Visit Teams (SVTs) are only one component considered during the program approval process. Council may not accept or endorse all recommendations or comments contained in these reports. Consequently, it is incumbent on the institution to provide this context if and when, at the conclusion of the evaluation process and after the Minister has made a decision on a recommendation from Council, it distributes a report of an SVT. The same is true of excerpts from SVT reports - appropriate context must be provided and the institution must offer to make the full report available on request.

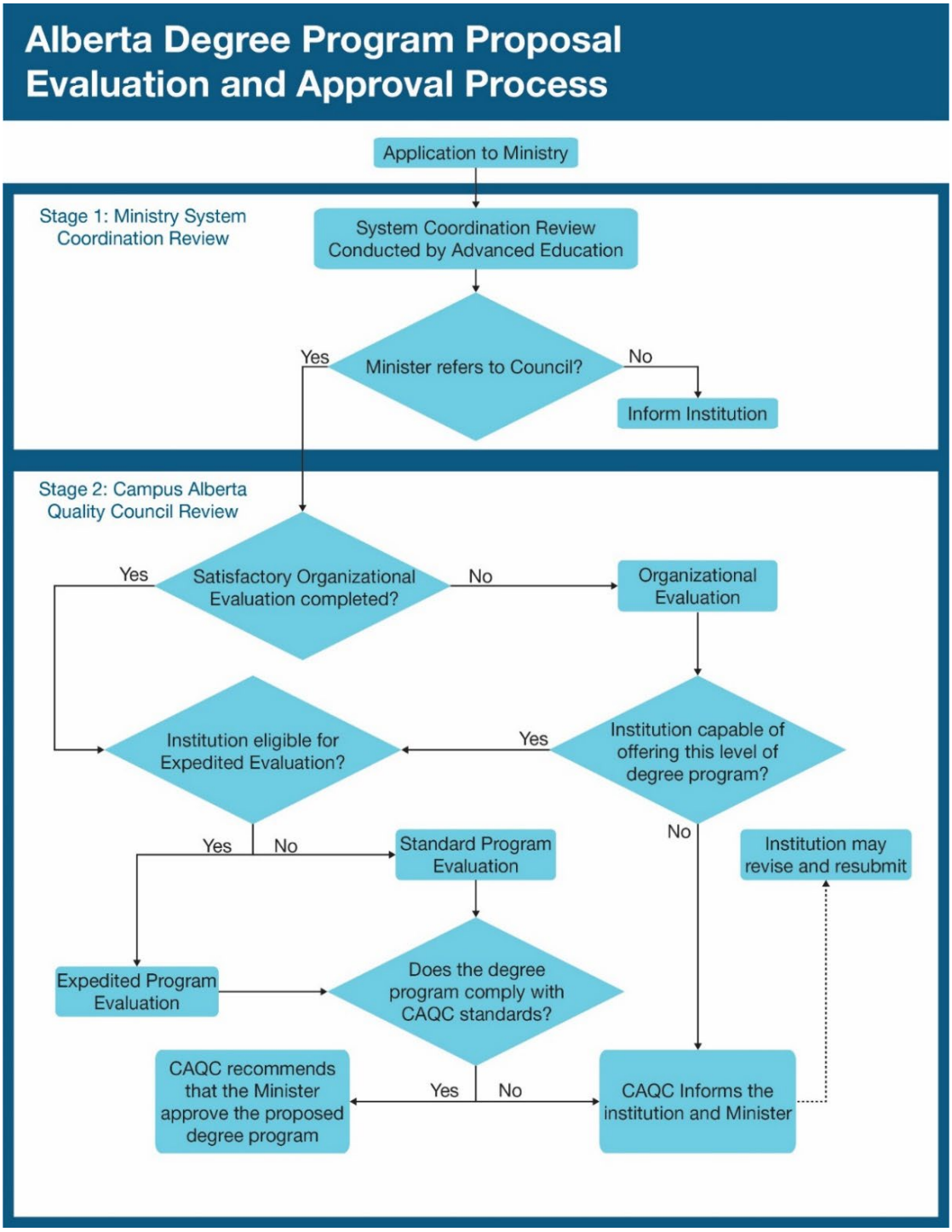
2.5.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

External Evaluators engaged by Council are entrusted with information about the operations and policies of institutions and the programs they deliver or propose to deliver. It is imperative that members of evaluation teams and others engaged by Council hold this information, particularly information about academic staff, internal financial affairs, or other proprietary information, in absolute confidence. Evaluators must not communicate publicly about the materials provided to them or the impressions they have formed either before or after a site visit and must return to the Secretariat all written materials to which they are given access during the evaluation.

To encourage candour, the Chair of an SVT shall speak in confidence to Council at a duly constituted Council meeting about the report produced and the institution's response. Council expects the Chair not to disclose, either at that time or later, the nature of that discussion.

3. ALBERTA'S DEGREE PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

The PSLA requires that CAQC, in making its recommendation to the Minister, consider the ability and readiness of institutions to deliver and sustain high quality degree programs. Any institution which has not previously been authorized by the Minister of Advanced Education to offer degree programming in Alberta must successfully complete an Organizational Evaluation before any proposal to deliver a degree program will be considered by Council.



3.1 APPLICATION, EVALUATION, AND APPROVAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

Proposed degree programs must undergo a multi-stage evaluation process before being offered in Alberta in accordance with the PSLA and PSR.
For Organizations that currently offer degrees in Alberta, this is a two-stage process consisting of:

1. System Coordination Review (2-3 Months); and
2. CAQC Quality Review (6-18 Months).

For Organizations that have never offered a degree in Alberta, this is a three-stage process consisting of:

1. System Coordination of Degree Proposal and Referral to Council (2-3 Months);
2. Organizational Evaluation (6-18 Months); and
3. Program Evaluation (6-18 Months).

During the Organizational Evaluation, Council does not review the proposed degree program. Only if the Organizational Evaluation produces a positive result, will Council then move the proposal to the Program Evaluation stage.

Institutions already offering degrees in Alberta are encouraged to submit proposals 12 to 18 months prior to the planned start-up date of the program to allow sufficient time for System Co-ordination Review, CAQC evaluation, and for the institution to market and recruit for the program should the Minister grant approval.

Institutions that have never offered a degree in Alberta should anticipate an additional 12 to 18 months for their review process, which will include an Organizational Evaluation.

3.1.1 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCESS

1. Institutions review the *Organizations* and *Degrees Handbooks* prior to submitting a proposal and ensure access to appropriate templates.
2. Organizations proposing their first degree in Alberta contact Advanced Education and CAQC via the CAQC inbox (CAQC@gov.ab.ca) in advance to discuss the process and requirements.
3. Submission of Program Proposal Template (Part A) to the Ministry of Advanced Education:
    a. Resident institutions submit Part A of proposals to offer a new degree or new specialization in an existing degree program through PAPRS, using the proposal template available in the PAPRS system.
    b. Non-resident institutions submit their proposal directly to the CAQC Secretariat by emailing caqc@gov.ab.ca.
4. The Ministry conducts a System Coordination Review to determine the need for and sustainability of the program in the context of Alberta's post-secondary system; SCR Reviewers may seek additional information or clarification from the applicant during this process.
    a. For programs leading to a profession which is regulated by a professional, accrediting, or regulatory body or organization (e.g., nurses, social workers, teachers, engineers), applicants must confirm that proposed programs meet regulatory requirements.

    b. Resident and Non-Resident Private Institutions may be required to provide additional financial information during System Coordination Review (this does not apply to institutions designated as Independent Academic Institutions under the PSLA).
5. Alberta institutions delivering ministerially approved degrees are invited to make comments on proposed degree programs during the system coordination review phase. The Applicant Organization is required to respond to feedback received from PSIs during this process and the SCR Reviewer uses this feedback and the response as part of their Review.
6. Following a successful system coordination review, the Minister may choose to formally refer the proposal to CAQC and request that it conduct its quality evaluation.
7. Upon receiving a referral, Council reviews the submission to determine if the applicant requires an Organizational Evaluation (see Section 4.1, below) or is eligible to proceed to Program Evaluation; Council then notifies the institution accordingly.
8. After receiving a complete Program Proposal (Part A, Part B, and supporting documentation), Council determines the appropriate type of Program Evaluation (see Section 4) and notifies the institution of next steps in the process.
9. Once the appropriate Program Evaluation process has been completed, Council determines its final recommendation and communicates this to the Minister. Council may make a positive recommendation for approval or a negative recommendation to deny approval.
10. Upon receiving a Recommendation from Council, the Minister determines the final outcome and notifies the institution of their decision.
11. Once the Minister has acted on Council's recommendation, Council sends the institution an outcomes letter.
    a. If a program has been approved, the letter will outline any expectations with respect to program implementation, organizational conditions, and required Monitoring Reports.
    b. If the program has not been approved, the letter may outline conditions that would permit resubmission and review by Council (which may or may not require resubmission to Advanced Education).

3.1.2 SYSTEM COORDINATION REVIEW – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

During the System Coordination Review, Advanced Education assesses all aspects of the program as presented on the Program Proposal template, including:

System Alignment

1. The proposed program's alignment with the institution's mandate, academic/strategic plan, governance policies and priorities, Advanced Education's priorities, and the ACF.
2. The relationship between the proposed program and existing programs at the institution.
3. Similarities or relationships to other programs in the region, across the province, and Canada-wide (System Duplication).
4. Evidence of consultation with other institutions in Alberta offering similar programs.

Industry or Market Need

1. Evidence of student demand, labour market demand, and support from industry, employers, professional organizations, and other institutions.
2. Fit with applicable regulatory requirements or standards set by professional organizations or industry partners.

Program Development

1. The program's structure and course descriptions including Program of Study and Program Learning Outcomes.
2. The curriculum loads, in terms of credits and hours, and term lengths.
3. The projected enrolment plan for the program.
4. Evidence of fiscal sustainability of the program including an identification of potential financial risk and how such risks will be mitigated.

Program Outcomes

1. Evidence of the transferability and portability of credits earned in the program, typically through transfer agreements with other institutions.
2. Employment outcomes for graduates of similar programs.
3. An evaluation plan for the program, including performance measures and targets.

See PAPRS Proposal Template for additional fields required during System Coordination Review.

Please consult with the Ministry of Advanced Education and refer to the PAPRS Guidelines for more information on System Coordination Review.

For further information with respect to the criteria that will be used by the Ministry in conducting the system coordination review for degrees, please contact the CAQC Secretariat by e-mailing caqc@gov.ab.ca.

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4. DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

4.1 DEGREE PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA

A degree is a structured program of study that fosters deep understanding within a discipline while developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent scholarly skills. Degree-level learning expands global perspective and cultural awareness and improves effective communication skills.

All undergraduate and graduate degrees must be designed to align with the requirements of Alberta's Post-Secondary Learning act and its regulations, and to meet the criteria set out by the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF) and the Alberta Credentials Framework (ACF).

The Alberta guidelines reiterate the standards observed nation-wide in the CDQF. These are the established benchmarks for quality degrees recognized in Canada and abroad. CAQC expects all degrees to adhere to CDQF and ACF standards for:

1. Depth and breadth of knowledge;
2. Knowledge of methodologies and research;
3. Application of knowledge;
4. Communication skills;
5. Awareness of limits of knowledge; and
6. Professional capacity and autonomy.

In its review of degree programs, CAQC is guided by the principle that, while instructional methods may differ, expectations of high quality remain the same. The key considerations in assuring the quality of any program are that they are learning-driven and that they are informed by excellent research and scholarship not only in the discipline or disciplines addressed in the program but also in teaching, learning and assessment.

Regardless of delivery mode (in-person, online, blended, or other), all programs must meet the same academic and quality standards. Institutions must demonstrate that learning activities, student supports, and assessments are designed to ensure equivalent learning outcomes across all modalities.

4.1.1 DEGREES VS. DIPLOMAS / CERTIFICATES

A degree is distinct from a diploma or certificate in purpose, scope, and outcomes. Diplomas and certificates focus on providing foundational knowledge and practical skills, aligned with specific workplace or further study requirements within the Alberta Credentials Framework. Certificates emphasize introductory preparation and essential skills, while diplomas offer broader knowledge and may serve as pathways into bachelor's degrees.

In contrast, degrees are designed to cultivate the creation and application of new knowledge. Degree programs emphasize critical inquiry, enabling students to frame meaningful questions,

develop rigorous methodologies, and interpret data to draw supported conclusions. In the fine arts, this translates to applying the same intellectual rigour to creative expression.

Degrees prepare students to understand the broader context of their field, address interdisciplinary challenges, and connect their knowledge to societal issues. This approach fosters adaptability, lifelong learning, and personal growth.

For a full comparison of Degrees to other credentials, please refer to the *Alberta Credential Framework* (Appendix D). This summary table highlights a few key differences.

CRITERIA	DIPLOMAS/ CERTIFICATES	DEGREES
Focus	Introductory preparation; essential workplace skills.	In-depth knowledge and scholarly practice.
Outcomes	Application of existing knowledge.	Creation and interpretation of new knowledge.
Instruction	Focused on practical skills and industry relevance and/or readiness for further education.	Taught by scholars; opportunities for research.

Key features of degree programs include:

- Opportunities to engage with disciplinary scholars and participate in supervised research or creative activities.
- Emphasis on scholarly practice and independent intellectual work, increasing in depth and complexity from undergraduate to graduate levels.
- A majority of courses taught by practicing scholars, ensuring students acquire and apply the skills and methods of scholarship.

4.2 UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Undergraduate degrees are intended to acquaint learners with the basic conceptual approaches and methodologies of an academic discipline or profession, and to provide graduates with knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work in that discipline or profession. This should normally include the capability for independent and ethical intellectual or creative work and, where relevant, the exercise of professional responsibility in a related field of practice.

The expectations for the design of undergraduate degrees including their learning outcomes, program lengths, admission requirements, preparation for employment, pathways to further study, and standards align with the expectations laid out in the CDQF and ACF. Applicants will provide evidence that they meet all criteria through the submission of the Program Proposal Template (Part A) and the CAQC Part B Degree Proposal Template.

In Alberta, undergraduate degrees may be designed to provide a broad education, preparation for further study of a discipline at the graduate level, a combination of disciplinary study and preparation for professional practice, or a mixture of all three. Graduates of Alberta undergraduate degrees will normally possess the following attributes:

1. An understanding of the key principles, methodologies, and applications of their field of study, and the skills to deploy that understanding through the field's accepted professional practices.
2. The ability to gather, analyze, and critically assess information within and beyond their field of study.
3. The ability to effectively communicate their knowledge in the traditional methods of their field of study.
4. Awareness of the limits of their knowledge.

CAQC may also look at other characteristics of undergraduate degree proposals, including but not limited to:

1. Breadth and depth of learning opportunities for students;
2. Opportunities for students to interact and work closely with scholars who are active in the discipline, as well as professionals active in any associated fields of practice; and
3. Opportunities for students to engage in research in a supervised context.

4.3 UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE STANDARDS

To offer degrees in Alberta, organizations must provide evidence of the following (detailed descriptions are below). Applicants will demonstrate that they meet the Degree Standards through submission of the Proposal Template (Part A) and the CAQC Degree Proposal Template (Part B). Council may request additional evidence on any point.

1. Degree design meeting Alberta requirements.
A. Focus and Nomenclature B. Admission Standards C. Credit/semesters Architecture D. Breadth and Depth E. Program Learning Outcomes F. Degree Oversight and Recognition
2. Qualified faculty teaching in and participating in the ongoing development of program quality.
A. Number of Faculty/Continuing Faculty B. Terminal degree or equivalent
3. Commitment to research, scholarship, and creative work.
A. Student exposure to/participation in scholarly activity/research B. Opportunities for/evidence of ongoing research, scholarship, and creative work
4. Sufficient resource capacity.
A. Faculty B. Curriculum Development C. Facilities and Infrastructure D. Library Resources E. Student Supports
5. Engaging and effective teaching and learning methodologies.

A. Curriculum Design and Maps
B. Teaching Strategies
C. Institutional Support
D. Assessment of Learning
E. Assessment of Teaching
F. Program Review

4.3.1 STANDARD 1: DEGREE DESIGN MEETING ALBERTA REQUIREMENTS

Each new program proposal must include the following categories of information. These elements are among the required criteria of the Proposal Template (Part A) or the Part B: Campus Alberta Quality Council Review Proposal Template. Additional elements are detailed in the submission templates (available in PAPRS).

The Alberta Credentials Framework recognizes both three-year (90 credit) and four-year (120 credit) baccalaureate degrees. Three-year degrees provide a more generalized learning experience in a particular field of study, resulting in a lower level of specialization through Concentrations with lower credit requirements compared to four-year degrees with higher-credit majors (See Glossary). Graduates of four-year degrees are expected to achieve greater depth and complexity of outcomes than graduates of three-year degrees. Applicants should note, however, the requirement for all students to gain an acceptable level of critical inquiry (independent research, analysis, problem solving) in both three and four-year degree programs in alignment with the CDQF.

Focus and Nomenclature
Applicants provide rationale for nomenclature, alignment with Canadian CIP codes, and accrediting standards, where appropriate, in Part A.

The name of each degree must accurately reflect the program of study and its emphasis (and have long-term meaning/relevancy) and, where appropriate, meet the standards of related accrediting, regulatory or professional bodies. The principal reason for proposing a distinct degree is to indicate an academic area of specialization. Where appropriate the subject of specialization could be included as part of the degree name as, in Alberta, the area of specialization (Major) in a degree appears on both the parchment and transcript (while Concentrations and Minors appear on the transcripts only). To warrant a separate degree name, the number of courses required in the field of specialization should exceed that required for a major. There should also be some demonstrated link with a particular profession or occupation.

The following is excerpted from the CDQF for Bachelor's Degrees. Please refer to the CDQF in Appendix C for comparable statements on graduate degrees.

Some bachelor's degree programs are intended to provide a wide exposure to several disciplines, others to provide an in-depth education in one or more disciplines (often as preparation for graduate study), and still others to provide a blend of theory and practice that equips students for entry into an occupation or profession. Despite that diversity, each bachelor's degree program must meet a substantial and common set of competency outcomes as outlined in the CDQF to justify use of the bachelor's degree label. The range of bachelor's degree programs includes:

FOCUS and NOMENCLATURE – CDQF GUIDELINES

Programs Designed to Provide a Broad Education

Focus

- Provide graduates with a broad education ***as an end in itself***.
- May prepare graduates for employment in a variety of fields and/or for admission to second-entry professional programs.

Nomenclature

- May include 3-year Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees or general/broad 4-year degrees (e.g. BHum, Humanities, BA, General, or General BSc Degrees)

Programs Designed to Provide In-Depth Study in Academic Disciplines

Focus

- In addition to in-depth study in academic disciplines, these programs normally prepare students for graduate study in the discipline(s) and for employment in a variety of fields.

Nomenclature

- A Bachelor of Arts degree is normally the credential awarded in programs of study in which most courses required for the major fall into the Humanities or Social Sciences, broadly defined (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, History; Bachelor of Arts in Criminology)
- A Bachelor of Science degree is normally the credential awarded in programs of study in which most courses taken for the major fall into the Sciences, broadly defined (e.g. Bachelor of Science, Biology, or Bachelor of Science, Kinesiology).
- Interdisciplinary or thematic degrees often reflect the area of focus in the title of the program, for example a Bachelor of Environmental Conservation or Bachelor of Canadian Studies.
- The word "studies" is used in instances where there is a well-defined academic program but where the course offerings are provided by more than one academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school). In interdisciplinary programs, there is often a tension between choosing a more generic degree (e.g., B.A., Canadian Studies) versus a Bachelor of Canadian Studies. The former is the more widely recognized and recommended approach.

Programs With an Applied Focus

Focus

- Normally blend theory and practice, with content selected to ensure mastery of the field of practice rather than to deepen knowledge in the discipline/disciplines for their own sake or as preparation for further study in the discipline.
- May prepare students for further study depending upon the field and length and depth of the program; graduates may or may not require preparatory studies before entering graduate programs.
- While professional associations or accrediting bodies may set entry-to-practice standards for such programs, those standards are not normally obligatory for the institution offering the program.

Nomenclature

- Normally programs with a narrower focus of study in which application of study is emphasized. A baccalaureate program with an applied focus will carry the name of the area of focus in its title, for example, a Bachelor in Agricultural Technology or a Bachelor of Policing Studies.
- Nomenclature may also be used for degrees that respond to industry needs and place a greater emphasis on practical application or preparation for employment within that field (e.g. Bachelor of Business Administration or Bachelor of Technology, Software Development).

Programs With a Professional Focus

Focus

- Normally designed to prepare graduates to meet admission requirements and to be competent practitioners in the profession.
- Normally require periods of practical experience (apprenticeship, internship, articling, clinical, etc.). The capacity for independent professional work is demonstrated by academic and practical exercises, under supervision, followed by admission tests to the profession. May also require some prior degree-level study or another degree)
- Though considered to be bachelor's programs in academic standing, some professional programs yield degrees with other nomenclature. Examples: DDS (Dental Surgery), MD (Medicine), LLB, or JD (Juris Doctor)

Nomenclature

- Normally programs designed to credential work in a profession. Depending on the regulatory body, the program and/or the graduate may require accreditation/recognition.
- A baccalaureate program with a professional focus will carry in its title the area of focus, as well as some indication of the sector and related standards and regulation/accreditation the degree is designed to (e.g. Bachelor of Social Work).
- These degrees may also indicate a level of specialization (e.g. Bachelor of Education, Elementary, or Bachelor of Education, Secondary).
- Depending on the focus and breadth, these degrees may use nomenclature from the Arts and Sciences but should still be viewed as degrees with a professional focus (e.g. Bachelor of Nursing vs Bachelor of Science in Nursing which, though it should contain a greater focus on science courses, must still meet professional standards as a nursing degree in Canada).

The institution must provide the rationale for the nomenclature and demonstrate that the curriculum is consistent with the degree name. Nomenclature should align with the Classification of Instructional Programs Codes and existing programs in Alberta and/or Canada (comparable programs should lead to equivalent credentials). New and emerging fields may not fit traditional nomenclature or CIP Codes and institutions should carefully consider the implications and longevity of innovating naming and include a rationale demonstrating that the credential aligns with established academic, professional, regulatory, or industry standards. Comparable programs should result in equivalent credentials for students. Flexibility is evidenced within the Alberta system (e.g. Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Business Administration are both degrees with a professional focus on business and are viewed as equivalent credentials).

During System Coordination Review, Advanced Education will provide feedback on program nomenclature. See the *PAPRS Guideline on Nomenclature*. During Council's Evaluation, nomenclature of a proposed degree may change to better reflect the program of study.

The Alberta system recognises an infinite combination and variation of degree possibilities. It might be helpful for institutions who hope to develop their first Ministry-approved degree to think in terms of principal types of degree programs that align with the four types described in the CDQF.

Admission Standards
Applicants detail the admission, progression, and graduation requirements in Part A.

At a minimum, admission normally requires a secondary school or CEGEP diploma, and/or university preparatory courses (specific 30-level high school courses or equivalent), a minimum grade-point average, and other program-specific requirements, set by the institution.

Sometimes a degree will stipulate additional admission criteria that supplement the institutional requirements noted above. These additional criteria must be spelled out clearly and should align with standards for admission in comparable degrees in Alberta and/or Canada.

Credits/Semesters Architecture
Applicants detail the credits and semester structure in Part A and, with more detail, in Part B.

The credit load and duration of a degree should align with the Alberta Credentials Framework, comparable degrees in Alberta and/or Canada, and, where appropriate, the standards of related accrediting, regulatory or professional bodies.

The proposal must specify the number of credits required for the program. Three-year baccalaureate degrees are normally 90 credits, while four-year degrees are 120 credits. Typically, degrees involve six to eight semesters or equivalent of full-time study.

The following structure would normally apply to the majority of baccalaureate degrees. Rationale for deviations may be presented by the applicant; professional, regulatory, or accrediting bodies may provide additional guidance that requires deviation.

3 Year Degree – General Structure	4 Year Degree – General Structure
• 90 Credits Total Minimum Credits • 36 Credits in the Concentration: At least 40% of total courses should align with the degree's primary field (major). Normally 24-30 credits in the concentration will be at the senior level. • 18 Credits Breadth: At least 20% of total course offerings must address breadth across several disciplines. • 6 Credits: At least 2 Elective courses outside the core discipline:	• 120 Credits Total Minimum Credits • 48 Credits in the Major: At least 40% of total courses should align with the degree's primary field (major). Normally at least 30 credits in the major will be at the senior level. • 24 Credits Breadth: At least 20% of total course offerings must address breadth across several disciplines. • 6 Credits: At least 2 Elective courses outside the core discipline:

• 45 Credits at the Senior Level: At least 50% of Courses should be Senior • 42 Credits (Maximum): a maximum of 42 credits (14 x 3 credit courses) may be in 1 discipline	• 72 Credits at the Senior Level: At least 60% of Courses should be Senior • 72 Credits (Maximum): a maximum of 72 credits (24 x 3 credit courses) may be in 1 discipline

For specific details on the above credit requirements, see below under Depth and Breadth.

See Glossary for definitions and credits associated with Specializations, Majors, Concentrations, and Minors and additional information for Honours Degrees. Only Majors in 4 Year Degrees and Concentrations in 3 Year Degrees (as synonymous with Major) appear on the parchment (with notation of Honours if applicable). Minors in 3 and 4 Year Degrees and Concentrations in 4 Year Degrees (as synonymous with Minor) do **not** appear on the parchment and may only appear on the transcript. Teaching Majors in Education Degrees, and Concentrations in 4-Year Business Degrees are second-level specializations (see Glossary under Majors).

Depth and Breadth Requirements

Applicants demonstrate depth and breadth in Part B through detailed curriculum mapping and alignment with the CDQF. It is incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate how the program achieves both depth and breadth and provide a rationale for program structures that demonstrate depth and/or breadth in different ways.

Depth ensures graduates develop a comprehensive understanding of their chosen field, progressing to advanced levels of knowledge and application. Programs demonstrate depth through the following criteria:

1. Focused Coursework: Normally, at least 40% of total courses should align with the degree's primary field. For a 120-credit program, this equals a minimum of 48 credits (16 courses).
2. Advanced Understanding: Courses must cultivate intellectual autonomy, conceptual sophistication, and specialized expertise.
3. Preparation for Future Endeavours: Programs should include advanced topics and methodologies to prepare students for further academic pursuits or professional practice. This involves developing strong analytical skills, critical thinking, and rigorous inquiry.

Breadth refers to the range of knowledge and perspectives provided across disciplines, ensuring students can connect their primary area of study to broader societal and interdisciplinary contexts and apply learning from one or more areas outside their core discipline. Programs demonstrate breadth through the following criteria:

1. Course Distribution: Normally, at least 20% of total course offerings must address breadth. For a 120-credit program, this equals a minimum of 24 credits (8 courses).
2. Electives Outside the Discipline: Students must complete at least 6 elective credits (2 courses) outside their primary field of study.
3. Diversity of Subjects: Courses must go beyond the primary discipline and its cognates. Degrees typically include courses across at least three areas for breadth: Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences, with no fewer than three disciplines in each area and at least ten disciplines overall to provide sufficient breadth.
    i. Humanities: Classics, English, Fine, Performing, Visual Arts, History, Languages/Linguistics, Philosophy, Religious Studies.

ii. Sciences (e.g., Applied, Life, Natural Sciences): Agriculture, Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Sciences, Earth Sciences, Engineering, Health Sciences, Kinesiology, Mathematics, Physics, Psychology, Technological subjects.
iii. Social Sciences: Anthropology, Business Studies, Communication Studies, Economics, Environmental Studies, Gender Studies, History, Human Geography, International Studies, Kinesiology, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology.

4. The list above categorizes disciplines within the three areas but is not exhaustive of disciplines at institutions. When a course or subject is not listed or crosses areas (e.g., History, Kinesiology, Psychology), institutions should clearly specify under which area the courses are categorized for meeting degree requirements. It is incumbent upon applicants to demonstrate how disciplines may fit within a breadth requirement within or beyond the categorization provided.
5. Degrees with a Professional or Applied Focus: Breadth is required outside the primary field of study and normally consists of courses from the areas specified above. Degrees with a Professional or Applied focus may partially fulfill breadth requirements with interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary courses and must meet, as required, the standards of the professional, accrediting, regulatory, or industry advisory body. Degrees such as those in Business, Education, Nursing, or technology fields normally fulfil their breadth requirements from Arts and Sciences disciplines listed above or cross-disciplinary courses that fall outside the primary focus of the degree.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
Applicants provide a list of Program Learning Outcomes in Part A and a detailed curriculum map showing alignment and assessment of Program Learning Outcomes in Part B.

All degree proposals must include a comprehensive list of Program Learning Outcomes, listed and mapped as required by the Part B template. PLOs must be shown to align with institutional and disciplinary standards, as well as the requirements of the CDQF. Programs with a large number of PLOs should consider organizing them in thematic bundles for coherence.

All Ministry-approved credentials in Alberta must include clearly defined Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) as outlined in the PAPRS Guideline: Program Learning Outcomes. PLOs are a critical component of the quality review process for degree proposals.

Program Learning Outcomes articulate the knowledge, skills, and competencies graduates are expected to demonstrate upon program completion. They serve as benchmarks for assessing graduate preparedness for further study or employment, and where appropriate, the standards of related regulatory, accrediting, industry, or professional bodies.

For Programs that are designed using Competency models (e.g. accredited programs that focus on graduate competencies or entry to practice competencies), the Institution may also wish to map courses based on competencies to Program Learning Outcomes.

PLOs must align directly with teaching methods and assessment strategies. This alignment ensures that students are actively prepared to achieve the stated outcomes, and that their progress can be effectively measured. Institutions should:

1. Use curriculum mapping to connect PLOs to specific courses and assessments.
2. Incorporate a variety of teaching and assessment methods to address different levels of learning (introductory, developing, and mastery).

3. Ensure assessments provide measurable evidence of student achievement aligned with PLOs.

Institutions should develop PLOs that adhere to recognized best practices in outcome design and assessment.

Evidence-Based PLO Practice	Recommended Approach
Ensure outcomes are clear, measurable, and student-focused	Define outcomes using action-oriented, measurable criteria that reflect the knowledge, skills, and values students are expected to demonstrate immediately upon graduation.
Map PLOs to courses and assessments at introductory, developing, and mastery levels	Use curriculum maps to connect PLOs with specific courses and assessments, ensuring progressive skill development throughout the program.
Review outcomes regularly to maintain alignment with academic, professional, industry, or societal expectations	Conduct periodic reviews to evaluate relevance and alignment with institutional and external standards.

Institutions are encouraged to reference the following resources for guidance on PLO development and implementation:

1. Curriculum Review: Program-Level Learning Outcomes – Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary.
2. Curriculum Review: Curriculum Mapping – Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary.
3. ECTS User Guide – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.
4. Outcomes Primer – Ruth Stiehl, © 2017, The Learning Organization.

Programs must include curriculum mapping connecting Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for both breadth and depth to specific courses. The map should detail how courses support outcomes at introductory, developing, and mastery levels, ensuring comprehensive skill development. They should also include evidence of assessment to assure Council that students are assessed for achievement of Program Learning Outcomes. Templates for mapping Curriculum and Assessments are provided in the Part B Template available in PAPRS or from the CAQC Secretariat (email: CAQC@gov.ab.ca).

Where a diploma ladders into a degree (see Section 4.4.3 below), at either the undergraduate or graduate level, the degree program must include one set of Program Learning Outcomes that clearly demonstrate how the degree-level expectations are accomplished over the course of the entire degree. This ensures that learning outcomes are met consistently across different pathways, which is essential for maintaining the quality and integrity of the degree.

Degree Oversight and Recognition

Program curricula, assessment and general oversight are the responsibility of academically qualified persons. Detailed aspects of program curricula for baccalaureate degrees are normally overseen by the academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school) responsible for

the degree. The designated complement of continuing faculty within the academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school) are primarily responsible for the delivery and continuity of the degree program within the boundaries of disciplinary norms and expectations and the context of institutional governance structures. See *Organizations Handbook, 4.4. Academic Staff*.

Degrees with a single disciplinary focus are normally overseen by the academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school) offering the degree (e.g., Bachelor of Kinesiology overseen by Department of Kinesiology; Bachelor of Technology, Cyber Security, overseen by a School for Advanced Digital Technology). They may also involve external consultation with stakeholders through a Program or Advisory Board or Committee.

Degrees with oversight by more than one area, such as interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, or thematic degrees, should clearly explain the complexities and sustainability of the collaboration (e.g. a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Health Informatics jointly offered by the departments/faculties/schools of medicine, mathematics, and computer sciences or a Bachelor of Science, Construction, jointly offered by a School of Science and a School of Trades). Such degrees normally involve an internal program advisory board or steering committee, and any such administrative mechanisms should be clearly explained (see Part B, Program Implementation and Part A, Institutional Capacity).

Degrees with an applied or professional focus are normally overseen internally by qualified academics but with greater external oversight by all or some of the following:

1. a program advisory board comprised of members from the post-secondary institution and relevant industry or community representatives, and/or
2. external bodies, including government and professional associations, regulatory bodies, or accrediting bodies.
    i. In some instances, regulatory, accrediting, or professional bodies do not recognize or accredit programs but require individuals to meet the certification requirements (e.g., certification exams, registration with a professional/licensing body) requiring that programs prepare graduates to meet those standards individually. In such cases, the role of the regulatory, licensing, or credentialing body and the steps taken to ensure graduates will be eligible to meet the education requirements of the regulatory, licensing, or credentialing body must be comprehensively addressed in the proposal.

For Collaborative Degrees or Diploma Laddering, the oversight and quality assurance processes must be clearly delineated for the program. See also Section 4.4.

For Degrees which require approval beyond CAQC (e.g., accreditation or regulation by a professional body such as Bachelor of Education Degrees or Nursing Degrees), applicants must demonstrate or provide (in Part A and Part B) that the degree meets all requirements of CAQC and the accrediting body including:

1. The nomenclature and structure of the degree are/will be recognized by the relevant licensing and accrediting bodies as a basis for entry to practice into a given profession.
2. Program Learning Outcomes and other requirements for graduation in programs leading to professions are designed to prepare students to meet the requirements of the relevant regulatory, accrediting, quality assurance, industry, or professional body.
3. The program meets or will meet the standards for accreditation/approval by the regulatory body.

i. Accreditation processes vary and Council is aware that some programs may be accredited or conditionally accredited before Ministry approval, subject to Ministry approval, or following the graduation of students from the program. It is incumbent upon the applicant to clearly explain the accreditation process and approval queue (i.e., accreditation prior to, concurrent with, or after Council's evaluation of the program).

4. Curricular design that meets accreditation or regulatory program standards, particularly in cases that may deviate from Council's normal standards, must be included.

Council may, at any time, directly communicate with the appropriate accrediting or regulatory body to seek input and advice on program proposals.

4.3.2 STANDARD 2: QUALIFIED FACULTY TEACHING IN AND PARTICIPATING IN THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM QUALITY

When designing a degree program, an institution should consider the following to ensure that the program has a sufficient number of appropriately qualified faculty.

Faculty teaching in a degree should have the qualifications and backgrounds to teach and model scholarly, creative, or professional practice effectively. The majority of faculty in the proposed degree should be permanent/continuing employees of the post-secondary institution which supports long-term scholarship programs and safeguards the academic integrity of scholarship. Scholarly practice, creative activity, or professional practice is modelled by faculty who hold terminal degrees or relevant experience in their areas of expertise (see Part C below).

Number of Faculty/Continuing Faculty
Applicants demonstrate the number and qualifications of their Faculty in Part B through the staffing plan and submission of Faculty CVs using the CAQC Narrative CV Template (available on the CAQC website).

Normally, at least 3 full-time equivalent faculty are the minimum academic staff required to anchor each specialization (major) within a degree (2 full-time equivalent faculty for concentrations within a 3-year degree) with at least one being fully assigned to the degree.

Each interdisciplinary and thematic program shall be anchored by at least one appropriately-qualified full-time continuing faculty member whose responsibilities include coordination of the program. Council shall be informed if this faculty member is to be seconded from another program and, because of its interest in sustainability, Council needs to be informed as well about the duration of the secondment and the procedure for replacement, if any, of the person seconded.

Degrees that ladder from Diplomas or Certificates must have at least 2 full-time equivalent faculty who are academically qualified to provide senior level courses and model scholarly, creative, or professional activities.

Faculty Qualifications
Council recognizes that faculty may be academically or experientially qualified (see below); in most degrees, the majority of faculty will be Academically Qualified (in addition to holding experiential

qualifications). In a high-quality program, normally all faculty teaching in degree programs have achieved a terminal degree in their area of study.

Council provides the following guidance on faculty in degrees:

1. The **minimum** qualification for each academic staff member - continuing, part-time, or contract - offering instruction in an approved program is normally an acceptable Master's degree, or equivalent, in the discipline in which the staff member is assigned to teach [See: Experientially and Academically Qualified Faculty, below].
2. The **desirable** qualification of an academic staff member offering instruction is an acceptable doctoral degree in the discipline in which the staff member is assigned to teach or in a cognate discipline. In disciplines where a doctoral degree is not the normal terminal degree, appropriate alternatives may be acceptable.
3. For institutions and programs with a professional, technical, or applied emphasis, the desirable qualification of an academic staff member offering instruction is at least a Master's degree, or equivalent, with the understanding that a background of personal experience in relevant employment is an alternative to the desirable qualification specified above.
4. For professional programs, academic staff members teaching professional courses must be eligible for professional certification as appropriate to the field of instruction.
5. Learning facilitators, graduate students, or others who provide support for instructional programs must hold qualifications commensurate with their roles and must be appropriately supervised by members of academic staff who are primarily responsible for the quality and the sustainability of the program. Provided that their employment is consistent with commitment to high-quality undergraduate education and with other criteria articulated in this standard, graduate students may be appointed as "instructors of record," as permitted by institutional policies and if appropriately supervised by regular members of academic staff.

Academically Qualified Faculty hold a credential in the discipline such as:

1. a doctorate in the field of study for the proposed degree (e.g., a PhD in Education for a proposed B.Ed.), **OR**
2. an alternate terminal degree in the area (e.g., a master's degree in certain fields), **OR**
3. an out-of-field doctorate with:
    i. demonstrated content knowledge of the field, such as a professional certificate in the field, and
    ii. demonstrated teaching effectiveness, and
    iii. demonstrated scholarly evidence considered as expert work or significant professional practice experience.

Experientially Qualified Faculty have experience, knowledge, or skills but have not attained the terminal credential normally recognized in the field of study. These may include those who:

1. are Doctoral Candidates with a specialization in the field in which they are teaching (with or without a granted master's degree, having completed all coursework toward a doctorate and passed all qualifying and comprehensive exams to attain candidacy status; they have completed all program requirements other than the dissertation; may be referred to as "PhD, ABD" – All But Dissertation); **OR**
2. hold a master's degree in a related field with a specialization in the field in which they are teaching or a professional certification in the field in which they are teaching; **OR**

3. hold a master's degree in the field in which they are teaching, and:
    i. has extensive and documented successful teaching experience in the area they are teaching in and demonstrated involvement in meaningful research; or
    ii. has five or more years of current professional and management experience in the field in which they are teaching; or
    iii. is recognized by professional peers as exemplary in the profession.
4. have documented experience of at least 10 years or more in the field teaching and is recognized by peers as exemplary in the field (e.g., an outstanding fine arts practitioner teaching in a fine arts program without a graduate degree); or
5. are recognized by their community for the wisdom, spiritual and cultural knowledge, and skills that they hold (e.g., Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers).

4.3.3 STANDARD 3: COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVE WORK

Applicants demonstrate their commitment to research, scholarship, and creative work in Part B and through the inclusion of Faculty CVs using the CAQC Narrative CV Template (which follows the Tri-Council's adoption of narrative CVs).

A Core Principle of CAQC is that Council regards scholarly activity as foundational in the provision of high-quality degree programs, recognizing that the nature of scholarship and disciplines may differ amongst different institutions and within individual institutions.

The CDQF states that "all bachelor's programs are designed to provide graduates with knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work." CDFQ/ACF requirements for student outcomes concerning scholarship and creative performance are conveyed throughout both credential frameworks. Applicants should refer to the full CDQF and ACF for full details (Appendices C and D).

Following the CDQF, students' independent intellectual capacity "may be demonstrated by the preparation, under faculty supervision, of one or more essays, a terminal research paper, thesis, project, exhibition, or other research-based or performance-based exercise that demonstrates methodological competence and capacity for independent and ethical intellectual/creative work and, where relevant, the exercise of professional responsibility in a field of practice."

When designing a degree, institutions should consider the following to ensure students receive appropriate exposure and experience in scholarly and/or creative activities appropriate to their program to meet the expectations of Council and the CDQF.

Student exposure to/participation in research, scholarship, and creative work
Applicants may demonstrate that students will have adequate exposure to research, scholarship, or creative work as part of their program in numerous ways including:

- Research active /Creatively performing scholars are teaching the majority of degree-level courses and integrating their practice within the curriculum (i.e., modelling for students);
- Courses offer students the opportunity to engage in independent research or creative activity under faculty supervision;
- Courses (or workshops/supports offered on campus) provide students with skills to engage in research or creative activity;
- Opportunities within the program exist for undergraduate participation in faculty research projects;
- Opportunities within the institution exist for student participation in applied or community-based research projects;

- Opportunities within the institution exist for student participation in work-integrated learning with a research focus;
- Where opportunities for undergraduate participation in faculty scholarship are not available, students are offered a capstone course where independent research is supervised by a faculty member.

Opportunities for/evidence of ongoing research, scholarship, and creative work

CAQC expects that the majority of academic staff teaching in any degree program will normally engage in a diversity of types of scholarly and/or creative activity involving diverse methodologies and dissemination as appropriate to the activity and discipline.

CAQC accepts that, for a variety of legitimate reasons, some instructors in degree programs will not be engaged in scholarship. What it requires is that there be a sufficient level of scholarly activity among the instructors of all programs in order that these programs provide students a rich understanding and experience of methodologies and of research and scholarly/creative activity.

At the Organizational-level, Council will have already evaluated the organization's commitment to research and/or scholarly/creative activity (e.g., through policies, workload models, supports). Please refer to the *Organizations Handbook, Section 4.5 Scholarly Activity*, for additional guidance and information. Applicants are also advised to refer to any pre-existing Organizational Evaluation responses to Council.

Applicants may demonstrate, specified to the proposed program, faculty capacity for ongoing research, scholarship, and creative work in numerous ways:

- The majority of faculty teaching in a degree program must demonstrate active scholarship or creative activity outputs within a five-year period (see *Organizations Handbook* 4.5 for Scholarly Activity).
- Faculty are reviewed within a system for the regular evaluation and rewarding of scholarly or creative activity.
- Faculty in a degree have a workload commensurate with expectations for scholarly activity.
    - Normally, this would be demonstrated through faculty teaching not more than 4 courses per major term or semester. However, institutions may demonstrate capacity in different ways to show that time and space for scholarship are clearly and adequately provisioned in the faculty workload model used by the institution for the proposed program in alignment with any relevant collective bargaining agreements (e.g., in respect to number of courses, unique sections, course size, pedagogical considerations, delivery model, workload averaging).
- At the program level, the academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school), supports faculty research in addition to supports offered institutional (reviewed during Organizational or Comprehensive Evaluations – see *Organizations Handbook*).
- For degrees with an applied or professional focus, faculty also maintain continuing academic and professional competence and accreditation in their discipline or field appropriate to the specific degree program.

4.3.4 STANDARD 4: SUFFICIENT RESOURCE CAPACITY

Applicants demonstrate sufficient resources in Part A (Institutional Capacity) and Part B.

The Program has sufficient resources to implement and sustain the program and recognizes elements that may be phased in during implementation. Specific areas of inquiry related to Resource Capacity addressed in the Part B Proposal Template are:

Faculty
Sufficient qualified faculty to develop, implement, and sustain the program as evidenced by the Staffing Plan, Implementation Plan, and Faculty CVs (see above 3.3.2 and 3.3.3).

Curriculum Development
Resources to develop curriculum fully prior to implementation or in a phased approach. This may include hiring qualified faculty prior to program approval as evidenced in the Implementation Plan and Staffing Plan in Part B.

Facilities and Infrastructure
Appropriate classroom, laboratory, research, and other spaces specific to the program.

Library Resources
Student and faculty access to sufficient library resources (quality, quantity, and currency) to support research at the student and faculty level.

Student Supports
Student supports appropriate to the specific needs of the program, if any are required beyond those evidenced in the Organizational Evaluation.

4.3.5 STANDARD 5: ENGAGING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

Applicants demonstrate effective teaching and learning in Part B.

Engaging and effective teaching and learning methodologies, whether in-person or online, that will be used to achieve the desired learning outcomes at an acceptable level of quality for the level of the degree (i.e., undergraduate or graduate). The institution must demonstrate that it has the expertise and resources to support the proposed methods of delivery and ensure their effectiveness. The institution should also demonstrate the ways in which it understands and attends to the learning needs of students in the program and supports their engaged and active learning. Regardless of delivery mode (in-person, online, blended, or other), all programs must meet the same academic and quality standards. Institutions must demonstrate that learning activities, student supports, teaching approaches, and assessments are designed to ensure equivalent learning outcomes across all modalities.

Curriculum Design and Maps
Well-designed and developed curriculum plans, including clearly articulated course and program learning outcomes, are foundational to supporting teaching effectiveness. A curriculum map connecting Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for both breadth and depth to specific courses and demonstrating student achievement of learning outcomes will support proposals (and is required in the Part B Template).

Teaching Strategies
The instructional methods, modes of delivery, and assessments of learning and feedback used should be aligned with articulated learning outcomes for the course or program, regardless of delivery mode (in-person, online, blended, or other). The pedagogical and/or andragogical strategies used in the program, including rationale and resource implications where possible, support teaching effectiveness and student achievement of Program Learning Outcomes within the context of the delivery modality. Engaged, active, experiential learning and, where appropriate, work-integrated learning, are effectively incorporated into the program design and aligned with delivery modality.

Institutional Support
All those involved in course design and delivery are adequately trained and assisted in the pedagogy/andragogy and technology of effective teaching across various modalities and regardless of delivery mode (e.g. face-to-face versus online). Faculty are assisted and supported in transitioning from classroom to online teaching, or vice versa, and are assessed and mentored as they progress in their teaching. Academic staff are provided with an orientation to, and sufficient ongoing training/technical support for teaching effectiveness (including pedagogical approaches and assessment), any hardware and software resources required in the program.

Assessment of Learning
The assessment methods used by faculty in the Program align with Course and Program Learning Outcomes and clearly demonstrate how students will be assessed for achievement of Course and Program Learning Outcomes.

Assessment of Teaching
Faculty are mentored and supported to teach effectively in different modalities (e.g., face-to-face versus blended versus online). Processes and structures are in place in the academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school) to develop, support, assess (using multiple sources of evidence), and recognize/reward teaching effectiveness.

Program Review
Program curricula, assessment and oversight are the responsibility of academically qualified persons. The presentation, management, and evaluation of the program are the responsibility of staff with appropriate academic qualifications. See also the *Degrees Handbook*, Section 6, for Cyclical Program Review.

4.4 ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR AFTER DEGREES, COLLABORATIVE DEGREES, OR DIPLOMA LADDERING DEGREES

4.4.1 AFTER-DEGREES

Two-year post-baccalaureate degrees, also known as “after” or “second-entry” degrees, normally require prior completion of a bachelor’s degree (three- or four-year degree) or equivalent in another discipline. An After Degree (also referred to as a Second Degree) is normally an accelerated pathway of study for students and are often associated with professional programs.

After Degrees may be stand-alone credentials. This is normally the case with professional degrees such as Bachelor of Education After Degrees and Bachelor of Nursing (or Bachelor of Science in Nursing) After Degrees but may apply to any After Degree. In the cases of After Degrees as stand-alone credentials, applicants follow the regular proposal pathway (submission to Advanced Education followed by referral to CAQC).

Institutions proposing an After Degree in Nursing will normally already offer a 4-Year Nursing Degree. Institutions proposing an After Degree in Education must offer at least one other Ministry-approved degree.

Some After Degrees may not be separate programs of study; institutions may confer a Second Degree or After Degree credential to a student based on recognition of prior learning or transfer credit using internal processes (e.g. an After Degree in Business or History or Biology may be internal to the institution).

Institutions should consult with Advanced Education to ensure that any After Degree or Second Degree meets requirements of the Ministry for approvals, student funding, etc. and should consult with Council for additional guidance on Program Evaluation processes.

After Degrees are normally:

- a minimum of 60 Credits
- two-years in length (or 4-6 terms/semesters) of full-time study
- primarily focused on the core area of the degree with a majority of courses/credits in the area of specialization at the senior level.

In cases of degrees or degrees with an external regulatory, accreditation, or approval body, institutions must confirm program structure requirements prior to submission of the proposal.

4.4.2 COLLABORATIVE DEGREES

Higher education increasingly involves collaborative arrangements to provide learning opportunities. Collaborative partnerships can take many forms and have positive impacts which include enhancing learner pathways, facilitating effective delivery of high-quality programming in regions where need and demand have been demonstrated, fostering efficiencies and system capacity, and preventing unnecessary program duplication. Collaborative programs are meant to be mutually beneficial, and institutions should develop shared goals and understandings as well as clarifying the roles each institution will play, how responsibilities will be shared, which institution will be contributing which resources, and how the collaboration will be managed going forward.

Collaborative Degrees involve two (or more) institutions to offer an existing degree or to propose a new program. In many examples, there are two institutions normally referred to as:

1. The Credentialing Institution which currently approved by the Ministry to offer the degree; all graduates of a Collaborative Degree are graduates of the Credentialing Institution; and
2. The Host Institution which does not offer the degree and will be the site of the Collaborative Degree.

In a Collaborative partnership, the Host Institution will offer the Credentialing Institution's program and may have a varying level of responsibility for the degree depending on the exact agreement between the two partners. The Credentialing Institution is responsible for ensuring that the host has the capacity to deliver the program to an equivalent level as the Credentialing Institution and at the level that meets the expectations of Council.

Collaborative partnerships apply to any degree including undergraduate degrees, professional programs that require undergraduate education (such as medical, dental, or similar programs), and graduate level degrees (such as Physiotherapy or Master of Education).

Collaborative partnerships allow institutions to offer innovative and responsive programming which they may not have the resources to offer independently. Collaborative programs can expand student access to high-demand programs of study, particularly in regions of Alberta where such a program is not currently or widely available. Collaborative programs can be an economical way for institutions to expand their program offerings for students within their existing resources. These partnerships can also enable an institution with minimal or no experience offering degree-level programming the opportunity to work with an experienced degree-granting partner institution to offer innovative programming that meets the demand of their learners without having to expend the substantial time and resources required to develop a similar program from scratch. This also allows the host institution to build capacity and experience in degree-level programming.

For more on Collaborative Programs, see the PAPRS Guideline on Collaborative Programs (2019) which offers advice to assist institutions exploring collaboration. Collaborative Agreements are separate from Brokering Arrangements (see the PAPRS Guideline on Brokering Programs for more information).

An example of a collaborative program, the credentialing institution, which offers a Bachelor of Education program, partners with the host institution, an institution located in another region of Alberta which does not typically offer degree-level programming or does not offer the Bachelor of Education program. In this example students enrolled in the program at the host institution follow the curriculum, academic standards, admission requirements, and graduation requirements for the program at the credentialing institution but would take their courses at the host institution.

In many undergraduate collaborative arrangements, students are considered students at the host institution for the first year, first two years, or first three years of study and then considered students of the credentialing institution for the final year(s) of the program.

The specific arrangements between credentialing and host institutions for the governance of the collaborative program may vary, for instance which institution is responsible for determining student policies in areas such as non-academic misconduct, admission and progression procedures, dispute resolution, or student services, and should be outlined through a

memorandum of understanding or collaborative agreement between the partner institutions. Institutions submit draft MOUs to Advanced Education and to CAQC for review and feedback. Institutions should consult about draft MOUs with regulatory bodies and other quality assurance entities when applicable and make revisions as needed.

Institutions considering entering into collaborative degree arrangements should refer to the ministry's Collaborative Programs guideline document and consult with the CAQC Secretariat.

Proposals for collaborative delivery

Before CAQC considers a collaborative arrangement for an existing program, the credentialing institution must submit a notification of proposed change. Please see the *Collaborative Degree Proposal Template* for additional guidance. Institutions with Delegated Review Status are not required to submit a full proposal to Council.

Readiness for Collaboration (New Degrees)

Normally, a first cohort of students will have graduated from the credentialing institution before the institution can enter into a collaborative agreement with another institution. This is to assure Council that a credentialing institution has gained experience and learned from the delivery of the program as approved.

For example:

- A four-year degree launched in Fall 2020 with admission of first-year students would not be eligible for collaborative delivery before Fall 2024 following the first graduating class in Spring 2024.
- A "2+2" degree for which a credentialing institution admitted students into a third year in Fall 2020 would not normally be eligible for delivery in a collaborative format before fall 2022 following the first cohort graduating in Spring 2022.

Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement

The credentialing institution should initiate communication with CAQC after reaching a satisfactory draft agreement or memorandum of understanding with the host institution. While Council is receptive to innovative approaches to collaboration, the onus is on the credentialing institution to satisfy Council that quality standards will be maintained in the collaborative delivery of the program.

Form of Collaboration

Collaborative partnerships may take many forms with each partner contributing to the whole. The Credentialing Institution is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the program delivered collaboratively at the Host Institution continues to meet the expectations of Council for approved degrees in Alberta as well as any conditions or monitoring expectations placed on the degree when approved. Thus, the Credentialing Institution is responsible for collecting data from the host institution and conducting program reviews that include the collaborative program and, if required, submitting these to Council cyclically or as part of quality assurance process audits.

Monitoring
Any conditions, recommendations, or expectations conveyed to the credentialing institution in Council's letter announcing its recommendation or in Council's response to Monitoring Reports, or any undertakings given by the credentialing institution in its proposal or in response to the CAQC Site Visit Team's report, or during Monitoring/Review, apply to a program that is subsequently delivered collaboratively. Changes to those conditions, recommendations, expectations, or undertakings would be considered by Council to ensure that the new collaborative arrangement does not compromise the quality of the original program.

Council's monitoring role for the program originally approved on the recommendation of CAQC will be extended to a new collaborative arrangement thus the credentialing institution will be required to include the collaborative program in any cyclical monitoring, cyclical review, or quality assurance audits as required or requested by Council.

4.4.3 DIPLOMA TO DEGREE LADDERING

At both the undergraduate and graduate level, degree programs may be designed in such a way that the first two years of study comprise a complete diploma credential (or one year comprises a certificate), after which students may continue their studies in the same program to earn a degree. This process is referred to as "laddering," and programs designed in this way may be referred to as "2+2" arrangements as the typical duration of such a program is two years to earn a diploma, followed by two years of degree-level study. In some 2+2 programs a student has the option of exiting the degree-level program after completing two years of study and receiving a diploma credential. For some programs a student may complete both laddering steps at the same institution, but it is also common for students to complete the first portion of their studies at one institution before transferring to another institution to complete the second portion.

"2+2" programs have been the most common form of degree laddering at the undergraduate level. Some programs may comprise a 1+3 (Certificate + 3 Years of Degree) or 3+1 (3 Years of University Transfer + 1 in the Degree) or other configurations. Degree laddering also occurs at the graduate level with Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas laddering into Master and Doctoral Degrees. Students in some programs may also exit with the appropriate Certificate or Diploma rather than complete the Degree (undergraduate or graduate). Variations on the standard "2+2" model may lead to additional complexities and should be discussed with the CAQC secretariat before a proposal is submitted.

Since CAQC's mandate pertains only to consideration of new degree proposals referred to it by the Minister, it usually has no role to play in the examination or the approval of undergraduate or graduate level certificate or diploma programs or apprenticeship programs nor considering, as the Alberta Council of Admission and Transfer does, transfer arrangements per se.

CAQC's responsibility does pertain to non-degree credentials which are incorporated into the design of new degree program proposals. CAQC considers the degree of affinity between the laddering credential and the proposed degree, and how incorporating the credential into the proposed degree may impact the quality of the degree program and achievement of CAQC's Program Standards.

CAQC expects all degrees which incorporate diplomas to adhere to CDQF and ACF standards (see Standards, above). The standards for these areas as found in the ACF and CDQF are distinct for each type of credential, and the standards for a degree program distinguish it from a diploma program in a similar field.

There is a wide spectrum of arrangements among post-secondary institutions which offer degrees incorporating diplomas in Alberta, and CAQC will consider proposals containing innovative methods of achieving its standards. The onus is on the institution submitting a degree proposal to show how CAQC standards will be met over the entire four years of the degree program. For the diploma part of the program, therefore, a proposal must outline an acceptable process by which the degree-granting institution will ensure the ongoing quality of the diploma program (whether internal to the degree-granting institution or external).

When a degree proposal is designed so that the only path for entry into the program is into the second, third, or fourth year of the degree, CAQC Site Visit Teams will evaluate all four years of the program including the contributions made to it by the diploma program.

Please refer to the following when preparing information for CAQC regarding Degree Proposals with Diploma Laddering:

Admission Requirements

Admission to degree programs which incorporate a diploma typically requires successful completion of the prerequisite diploma program and the diploma program should be designed to enable students to be successful in the senior level courses that follow. Institutions are responsible for assessing the advanced standing of diploma program graduates entering its degree program. As part of its quality assurance process, CAQC will assess institutional policies on advanced standing and processes for awarding advanced credit.

Depending on the degree of affinity between the diploma program and the degree program, there may be specific admission or bridging requirements set by the institution offering the degree. Degree-granting institutions have an obligation to ensure that students entering a diploma designed to ladder into a degree program are aware of both the structure of the full degree program as well as any bridging requirements before enrolling in the diploma.

In some cases, students may enter the degree program directly in year one or after successfully completing the diploma. Where both entry options are available an institution must ensure that, to the extent possible, all students entering the third year of the degree program have similar knowledge, skills, and learning outcomes.

Program Learning Outcomes

Where a diploma ladders into a degree, the degree program must include one set of Program Learning Outcomes that clearly demonstrate how the degree-level expectations are accomplished over the course of the entire degree. This ensures that learning outcomes are met consistently across different pathways, which is essential for maintaining the quality and integrity of the degree.

Curriculum Integration

An institution proposing a degree which incorporates a diploma should specify which parts of the curriculum, as offered over both parts of the program, contribute to the program meeting each of the standards for an undergraduate degree as described in the CDQF and ACF.

An institution may, at its discretion, determine that not all courses taken in a diploma will receive credit, or that certain kinds of educational content are missing and will need to be made up, or that the diploma presented for credit within a degree program is no longer current or appropriate for the purpose.

Academic Staffing

In Diploma to Degree configurations, it is important that faculty engage in scholarly activity and provide a student experience commensurate with the expectations of the CDQF and ACF. As undergraduate Certificate and Diploma programs may be staffed by faculty with baccalaureate degrees, the focus of Council will normally be on the number and qualifications of faculty teaching Years 3 and 4 of the Degree. Normally Council expects a minimum of 2 qualified faculty to anchor a degree that ladders from a diploma (or as determined at the time of approval). If faculty teach across all four years (in both the diploma and Years 3 and 4 of the degree), Council may require evidence of all faculty qualifications and experience. It is incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate that the faculty teaching in the Diploma are preparing students for Year 3 and 4 of degree-level study across all areas of the CDQF and ACF and that faculty teaching in the degree (if separate) meet expectations.

Council recognizes that the strength of Alberta's post-secondary system rests, in part, on its flexibility, diversity and innovation. Therefore, Council will consider variations to the norm as it recognizes that degrees that incorporate diplomas can take different forms.

4.5 GRADUATE DEGREES

After the Minister has determined that an institution's mandate makes it eligible to offer a graduate degree, the Minister may refer a graduate degree proposal to CAQC. If that proposal is the institution's first graduate-level degree, or first at a new level (e.g., PhD) the institution must also undergo an Organizational Evaluation.

Council's expectation is that normally institutions will be able to offer a high-quality graduate program only after they have established a satisfactory track record of offering approved undergraduate degree programs in the same academic domain and have satisfied Council that those programs are achieving the desired outcomes. The following outlines CAQC's standards and design guidelines for graduate degree programs.

Please refer to the *Organizations Handbook* as an institution proposing to offer its first graduate degree program will normally be required to undergo an Organizational Evaluation, unless Council has already determined that the institution meets its organizational standards and can satisfactorily support the proposed graduate programs. In addition to its regular organizational assessment standards, Council has additional organizational assessment standards that assist it in evaluating the institution's capacity to put in place the resources, personnel, and organizational support to deliver and sustain graduate programs, as described in the accompanying *Organizations Handbook*.

Institutions that have not previously offered graduate programs normally start with a proposal for a master's level program in the same academic domain as their undergraduate programs. Applications for the approval of doctoral programs will be considered only from institutions that

have demonstrated the successful delivery of one or more master's programs in the same area - normally for a period of at least five years.

4.5.1 GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS

The expectations for the design of graduate degrees including their nomenclature, learning outcomes, program lengths, admission requirements, preparation for employment, pathways to further study, and standards align with the expectations laid out in the ACF and the CDQF. In addition to the Degree Program Standards (Section 4.3), the following standards, specific to Graduate Level Programming, will be applied to proposals for graduate degrees, whether thesis-based or course-based graduate degrees. Evidence for all standards must be provided by the applicant using the Part A and Part B Proposal Templates.

1. Graduate program design and credential recognition that meets provincial, national, and international standards.
A. The nomenclature, design, and all elements of the graduate program align with the Alberta Credentials Framework and the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework and is appropriate to the level of the graduate degree program and the field of study. B. Curriculum is current and reflects current states of knowledge in the field(s). i. If the proposed program is a professional or clinical practice program, it has sufficient empirical and theoretical foundations so that study can be integrated with and informed by original research in the unit. C. Program Learning Outcomes are consistent with the CDQF for graduate programs in the discipline. D. Research or professional knowledge are appropriate to the level and type of graduate program, as clearly demonstrated through curriculum maps.
2. Faculty and staff capable of providing high-quality graduate-level curricula, teaching, and supervision.
A. The program, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary in nature, is anchored by suitably and highly qualified academic faculty, normally with terminal degrees in their field of study, and instructional staff who are primarily responsible for the development, delivery, and continuity of the graduate degree program and the supervision of graduate students. B. The creation of graduate degrees must not compromise the quality of existing undergraduate degree programs in the field and the faculty complement must be sufficient to support the quality of both undergraduate and graduate levels of programming. C. Faculty will be active scholars in their field and have an appropriate level of scholarly output and research or creative activity for the graduate program involved with current scholarship that supports supervision of graduate students. D. The proposed program specifies graduate supervisory loads for faculty, advising and monitoring practices for graduate students, and procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of students that will provide adequate feedback to the program administrators and to the student. E. Faculty have robust procedures to assess students in the graduate program. F. Faculty are mentored specifically in how to supervise graduate students.
3. A robust and active culture of research and scholarship linked to graduate programming and student development.
A. A robust research culture supports individual scholarly performance of faculty and students in graduate programs.

B. The institution is clearly committed to research which promotes the depth and breadth of knowledge, both within the field or discipline, and in a cognate field or discipline when necessary.

4. Policy-based processes for recruitment, admissions, support, and participation in governance appropriate for superior students undertaking graduate studies.

A. The proposed program will have a systematic and effective process for recruiting high-quality graduate students to balance between different types of students in the program area as a whole (e.g., part time/full time, levels of students within the discipline such as the breakdown of master's/PhD/undergraduate, etc.), and the critical mass of graduate students necessary to provide students with an excellent program and to maintain program viability.

B. The extent and nature of financial support available to students and the financial resources dedicated to support the proposed size, scope, and nature of the program and a critical mass of students will be described.

C. Normally graduate students are involved in the academic governance of the institution such as through program advisory boards or as representatives on the Graduate School/Faculty Council or equivalent.

5. Resource capacity ensuring the viability and sustainability of quality within graduate programming.

A. The program is supported by the physical and financial resources, both start-up and continuing, needed to assure its quality and maintain the quality of existing programs in the same discipline.

B. Physical Resources include, where applicable, space for graduate students, specialized equipment, additional library and learning resources (physical and electronic), laboratories, computing facilities, shops, specialized equipment, and sufficient (in terms of number and quality) work placements such as clinical or practicum placements.

C. There is an institutional commitment to maintaining and supplementing resources and equipment as needed to meet standards applicable to the field.

D. Resource Capacity also includes appropriate academic staffing resources so that
   - existing programs are not compromised by the introduction of graduate level programming, and
   - graduate students receive an education from academic staff who have the time and resources to maintain the required scholarly activity and supervisory duties required for graduate degrees.

5. DEGREE PROPOSAL EVALUATION

To assure the quality of degree programming, all degree programs offered in Alberta, other than degrees in divinity, must be approved by the Minister of Advanced Education. This section outlines the various procedures that must be followed by resident and non-resident institutions undergoing program evaluations.

Prospective applicants seeking to offer a new degree program are encouraged to discuss their plans with the CAQC Secretariat prior to submitting a proposal. Please contact the CAQC Secretariat by phone at 780-427-8921 or by e-mail at caqc@gov.ab.ca.

The onus is on the institution to satisfy Council that the level of learning to be achieved is consistent with that which is expected at the applicable degree level, and that the program is comparable in quality to similar programs, if any, offered in Alberta and elsewhere. Council has adopted the CDQF and ACF for use when assessing proposed degree programs.

Proposed programs must meet all relevant Degree Standards outlined in Section 4 of this *Handbook*. Institutions that are proposing their first degree-level program must also undergo an Organizational Evaluation and meet all Organizational Standards set out in the *Organizations Handbook*.

CAQC is charged with reviewing all non-resident degree proposals referred to it by the Minister, including:

1. Degree programs from both public and private – for-profit and not-for-profit – non-resident institutions;
2. Degree programs offered through distance learning by non-resident institutions in instances where these programs are being specifically marketed to Alberta students and are approved by the Minister of Advanced Education in Alberta; and
3. Degree programs offered by non-resident institutions at an Alberta institution that is acting as an agent or broker for the non-resident institution.

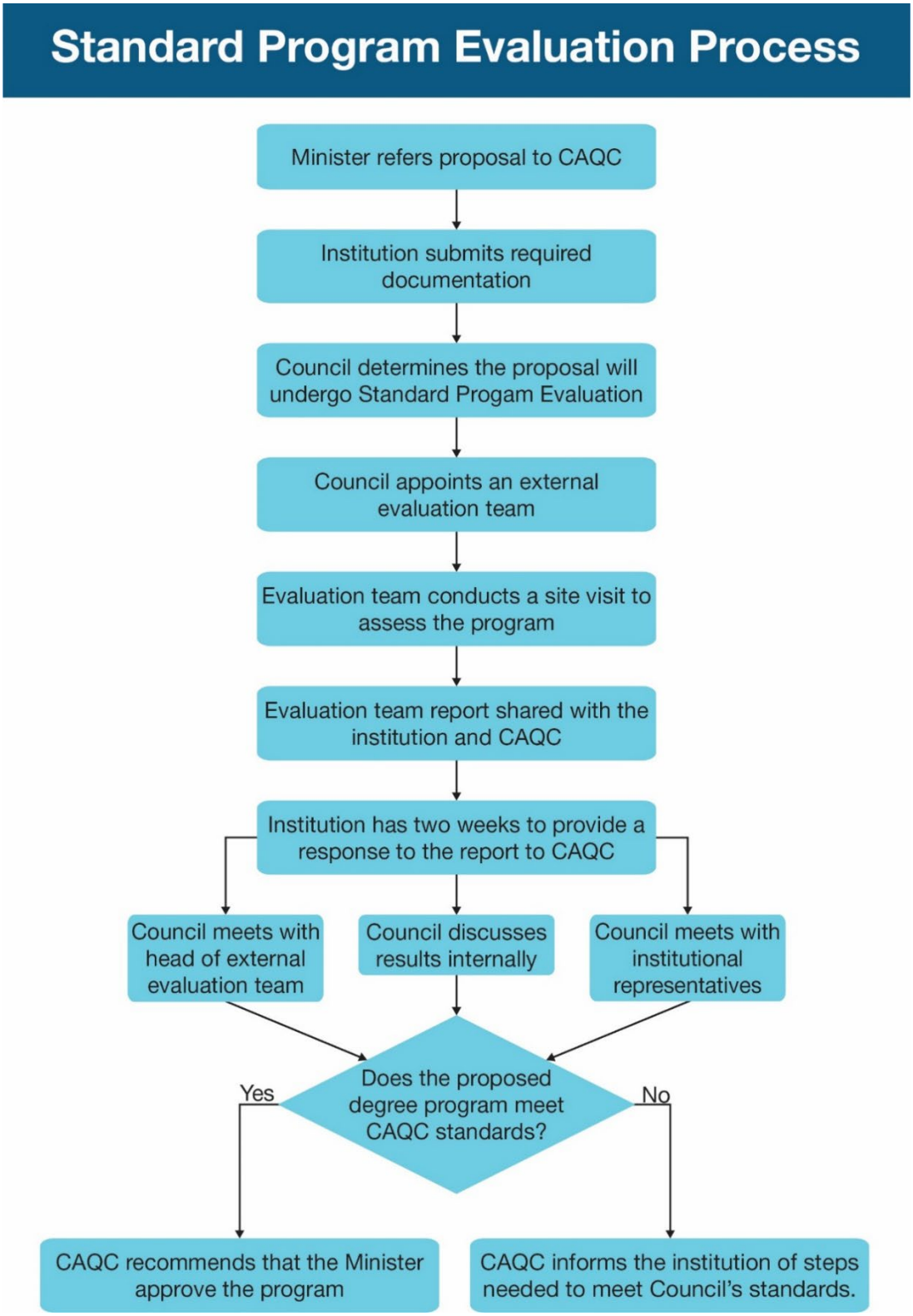
After receiving a request from the Minister to review a proposed degree, Council determines which of three possible Program Evaluation processes to apply:

1. Standard Program Evaluation: Council conducts a Program Evaluation using external evaluators;
2. Expedited Program Evaluation: Council determines that PRSC can performs a desk review and make a recommendation regarding the proposed program directly to the Minister, without involving external evaluators; and
3. Delegated Program Evaluation: Only for the six institutions which hold Delegated Review Status as described in the accompanying *Organizations Handbook*.

5.1 STANDARD PROGRAM EVALUATION

In Standard Program Evaluations, a Site Visit Team of External Evaluators is gathered to visit the applicant institution and discuss the proposed program with key stakeholders from across the institution. Their written report and the applicant's written response form the basis for a virtual

discussion between Council and institutional representatives during a Council meeting, after which Council submits its recommendations to the Minister.



5.1.1 QUALIFYING FOR STANDARD PROGRAM EVALUATION

Resident and non-resident post-secondary institutions are eligible for Standard Program Evaluation when they:

1. Meet all relevant Organizational Standards described in the *Organizations Handbook*;
2. Already offer degrees at an equivalent level; and
3. Have conducted an applicable Organizational Evaluation that has been found satisfactory by Council (or, for non-resident institutions, a successful Organizational Evaluation conducted by an accrediting body, quality assurance agency, or appropriate public authority acceptable to Council).

Non-resident institutions must also provide evidence of the following:

4. That the institution has been appropriately recognized, either at the program or institutional level, by an accrediting body or quality assurance agency acceptable to the Council, where such a body or agency exists, or by the appropriate public authority for at least five years;
5. That the institution has been approved to offer the degree program in its own name in its home jurisdiction for at least five years; and
6. That the institution has been successfully enrolling students in approved programming at the appropriate degree level in its home jurisdiction for at least five years.

5.1.2 STANDARD PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESSES

Following a successful System Coordination Review, the Minister will formally refer the proposal to CAQC and request that it conduct its quality review (Stage 2). Council will then inform the applicant institution and request that it send the necessary documentation via e-mail, preferably in Word or editable PDF format, to caqc@gov.ab.ca:

1. ***For Private Institutions Only (Resident and Non-Resident):*** Payment of the $5,000 application fee, for private institutions only (resident and non-resident). The application fee, payable to the Government of Alberta, should be submitted to the CAQC Secretariat in Canadian funds and is due at the time the program has been referred to Council. Further information and the Fee Schedule are available on Council's website.
2. ***For All Applicants:*** The additional direct costs for all evaluation activities for applications from both public and private institutions will be charged to the applicant institution. Evaluation activities include, but are not limited to, Organizational Evaluations and Program Evaluations. These costs will normally include the honoraria, travel, and accommodation costs of 3-5 Site Visit Team members (flights, car rentals, hotels, meals) and Council or Secretariat Members for 3-5 days. Final costs for the Site Visit may vary greatly depending on the location of the PSI, the timing of the Site Visit, and the location of the Site Visit Team members. Applicants should budget for these costs in advance of program proposals and anticipate costs in an average range of $10,000 to $15,000.
3. A copy of the program proposal, Parts A and B. Part A must reflect any changes resulting from discussions with the Ministry during the system coordination review. Part B is the additional information Council needs. To ensure all necessary information is included in the final program proposal, refer to appropriate templates (Proposal Template Part A and CAQC Part B Template).

Program Proposals must include the CVs of Faculty affiliated with the Proposed Program as well as the CVs for the 2 Independent Academic Experts engaged by the Institution who reviewed the Proposal (in Degree Proposal Template Part B). When submitting these CVs as part of the Program Proposal ensure that approval is received from the individual, For Faculty in the Degree, ensure that the CV is submitted using the ***CAQC Narrative CV Template*** *(available on the CAQC website).*

4. A list of possible program reviewers – including their rank or position, institution, areas of expertise or specialization, professional experience, and how they can be reached - identification of any previous affiliation with the applicant institution, and the reason for recommending each. Do not contact the individuals to see if they are available prior to submitting their names. As reviewers will be asked to sign a conflict-of-interest statement, do not suggest names of individuals who have been involved in any way with the proposed program.
5. Council determines that the proposal will undergo Standard Program Evaluation and notifies the institution of next steps.
6. Council, in consultation with the applicant institution, appoints a team of External Evaluators in a Site Visit Team (SVT) to assess the quality of the proposed degree program using Council's Program Assessment Standards, detailed in Section 4. Through a 2-day site visit, the team reviews the program proposal and interviews appropriate members of the institution's community.
7. The SVT provides its report to Council, which it shares with the applicant institution. The institution has two weeks to submit a formal written response to Council.
8. Council holds a meeting to discuss the report, which includes separate conversations with the Chair of the SVT and representatives of the applicant institution. The decision on whether or not to recommend the program be approved is sent to the Minister.
9. The process culminates with the Minister notifying the institution of their decision. Once the Minister has acted on Council's recommendation, Council sends an outcomes letter. If a program has been approved, the letter will outline any expectations with respect to program implementation and Ongoing Evaluation and Monitoring.

5.1.3 SITE VISIT TEAMS

To assist in the assessment of an institution's application, Council appoints a team of External Evaluators in a Site Visit Team (SVT) to provide independent opinion about an institution's capacity to offer a proposed degree program or the potential academic merits of the proposed program and to advise Council as to whether, in its opinion, the proposed program should be recommended for approval by Council.

Consistent with its core principle that peer review is an essential component of all of CAQC evaluation processes, Council appoints to these teams experts in the subject matter of proposed degrees or, in the case of Organizational Evaluations, individuals who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in institutional governance and quality assurance.

As Council wants to ensure that all degree programs it recommends to the Minister are of sufficient breadth and rigour to meet national and international standards, it asks its teams to assess whether or not the level of learning to be achieved is consistent with that which is expected at the proposed degree level, and whether it is comparable in quality to similar programs (if any) offered in Alberta and elsewhere. It also asks teams to identify conditions, which are changes to the proposed program that the review team advises Council adopt as requirements that must be met either before the program can be offered or within a specified period of time after the commencement of the program. Finally, Council asks review teams to make recommendations and suggestions, which are of lower priority, for improving aspects of the proposed program. The review team advises Council to communicate these ideas to the applicant institution on the understanding that the commencement of the proposed program, after the Minister's approval, is not conditional on the applicant institution carrying out the recommendations or suggestions.

The team's on-site appraisal and report are expected to aid Council's understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the institution's proposal. In addition, the team's visit and report are intended to facilitate program refinement by the institution. In carrying out these tasks, team members are expected to provide the information that Council needs to reach a well-founded decision. Team members are objective evaluators whose report is directed to Council. They are not consultants, with a responsibility to work with proponent institutions to improve program proposals. Assistance to institutions should be provided in the form of the teams' reports to Council and, in particular, the conditions, recommendations, and suggestions that form part of these reports.

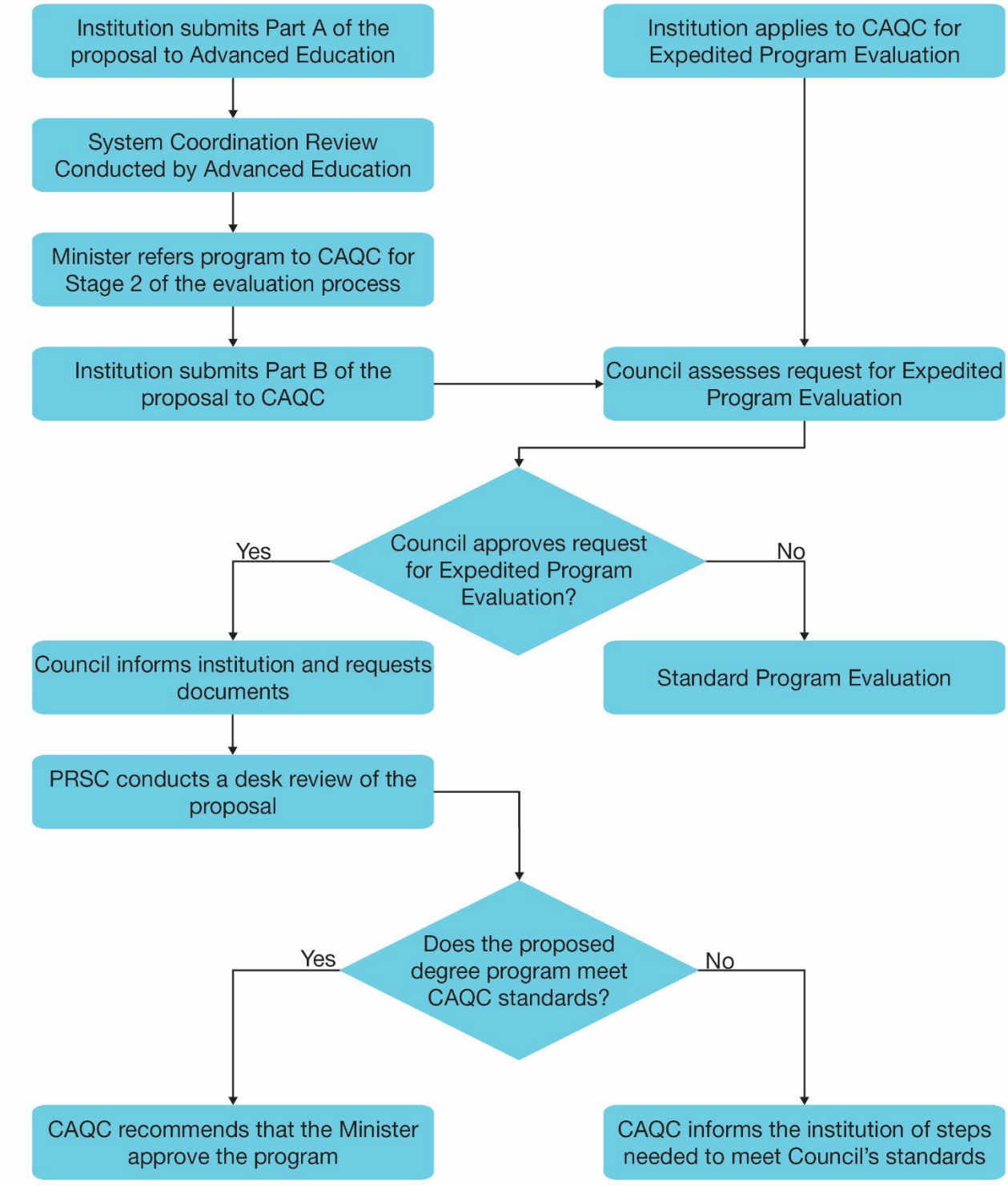
The primary purpose of the SVT is to provide Council with information about the academic merits of the proposed program(s) as well as the institution's capacity to support them. This information will help Council decide on its recommendation to the Minister.

5.2 EXPEDITED PROGRAM EVALUATION

Expedited Program Evaluations reduce the length of time it takes for Council to carry out its assessment of a proposed program by replacing the site visit by external evaluators with a desk review of the proposal by PRSC. If that desk review identifies issues that PRSC cannot resolve without a site visit a Standard Program Evaluation with a Site Visit Team will be commissioned by Council.

A request for Expedited Program Evaluation will be considered by Council on its own merits only if the proposal meets the requirements for a Standard Program Evaluation. Requests for Expedited Program Evaluations are submitted to Council using the ***Expedited Program Evaluation Request Template*** *(available on the CAQC website).*

CAQC Expedited Program Evaluation Process



An institution will not normally be eligible for Expedited Program Evaluation if the degree is considered precedent setting either for that institution or for the system, such as a proposal for a degree at a higher level than the institution currently offers or involving a subject area that the institution does not offer at the proposed level.

Council's willingness to grant Expedited Program Evaluation in the same discipline at one level, such as a concentration in a 3-year Bachelor of Arts, does not constitute a precedent for Expedited Program Evaluation at another, such as a major in a 4-year Bachelor of Arts.

The request for an Expedited Program Evaluation may be submitted to Council at any time using the provided template. However, Council may only review programs referred to Council by the Minister and must have the full Program Proposal to evaluate a request for an Expedited Program Evaluation. Requests for Expedited Program Evaluations received before program referral or submission of full documentation will not be considered until all documentation is received.

5.2.1 RESIDENT INSTITUTIONS

Eligibility Criteria

In addition to meeting all criteria for Standard Program Evaluation, programs must also meet the following additional criteria to qualify for Expedited Program Evaluation:

1. The proposal is for
   i. A new major, specialization, or concentration such as History, in an already approved degree program, in this case a Bachelor of Arts, 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
   ii. A new degree program that builds on an existing major or specialization currently offered under another program and is at the same level, such as Bachelor of International Studies where a Bachelor of Arts with a major in International Relations exists, or
   iii. A new degree program that is at the same level or in a related discipline to degrees already being offered by the institution and is not considered precedent setting either for that institution or for the system, such as an institution proposing a doctorate in chemistry when it already offers several other science doctorates.
2. The proposal identifies an appropriate set of program learning outcomes (PLOs) for students, and PLO mapping clearly demonstrates how students will move through the curriculum and achieve the PLOs. The teaching, learning, and assessment strategies are supportive of student attainment of PLOs.
3. Degree nomenclature of the proposed program accurately and clearly conveys the content of the proposed program to stakeholders, including students, prospective employers, and academic institutions.
4. The program has an appropriate number of continuing, qualified academic staff in place in the discipline and academic unit (e.g., a program area, department, faculty, school). Qualified faculty have the requisite scholarly training and experience to teach at the required level, as well as the time and incentive to engage in their own scholarship/ creative activity and to mentor students in theirs and at a level appropriate to the degree.

5. The proposal identifies policies and procedures are in place or under development for regular curriculum assessment and program improvement.

Application Process

1. At the same time as the institution's Part A application is sent to the Ministry, applicants should write to the Chair of Council to apply for Expedited Program Evaluation and provide their rationale for the request using the *Expedited Program Evaluation Request Template*. Council is not able to decide on a fully expedited review until the final program proposal, including both Parts A and B, has been received. Some institutions submit the request for Expedited Program Evaluation when they submit their full program package including Part B to Council.
2. Following a successful system coordination review, the Minister will formally refer the proposal to CAQC and request that it conduct its quality review (Stage 2).
3. Council will inform the applicant institution of the program's referral to Council and request that it send the necessary documentation via e-mail, preferably in Word or editable PDF format, to caqc@gov.ab.ca:
    i. Payment of the $5,000 application fee, for private, not publicly funded, resident and non-resident, institutions only. The application fee, payable to the Government of Alberta, should be submitted to the CAQC Secretariat in Canadian funds and is due at the time the program has been referred to Council. Further information and the Fee Schedule are available on Council's website. Should the program require a Standard Program Evaluation, the additional direct costs for all evaluation activities for applications from both public and private institutions will be charged to the applicant institution.
    ii. A copy of the program proposal, Parts A and B. Part A must reflect any changes resulting from discussions with the Ministry during the system coordination review. Part B is the additional information Council needs and includes the reports of 2 Independent Academic Experts. To ensure all necessary information is included, please ensure that programs are proposed using the current Part A and Part B Templates.
4. Additional documents may be requested as required.
5. When Council has received a completed Part B application, including the reports of 2 Independent Academic Experts, it will assess the institution's Expedited Program Evaluation request. In some instances, Council may recommend an Expedited Program Evaluation to the institution.

5.2.2 NON-RESIDENT INSTITUTIONS

Eligibility Criteria

In addition to meeting all criteria required of resident institutions, programs proposed by non-resident institutions must also meet the following additional criteria to qualify for Expedited Program Evaluation:

1. Equivalence of standards: The standards of the degree program provided by the non-resident institution are comparable to or commensurate with Council's guidelines and assessment standards for resident institutions. Provide a copy of the assessment standards used in the home jurisdiction.
2. Degree program comparability: The institution must demonstrate that courses the institution offers in its home jurisdiction are comparable in requirements and learning

outcomes to courses at the same level in a similar field in Alberta. The curriculum and delivery methodologies for degree programs in Alberta are substantively the same as, or comparable to, those used for the same or similar degree program in the institution's home jurisdiction. A sound rationale for any differences is clearly demonstrated.

3. Canadian content: Where appropriate, consideration has been given to ensure that the curriculum demonstrates relevant levels of Canadian content.
4. Admissions and transfer: Admissions standards and policies are stated such that they conform to Alberta's post-secondary educational context and are understandable to Alberta students. Credits earned by students of the non-resident institution in Alberta will be accepted as credit towards degrees offered in its home jurisdiction. The institution demonstrates it has established policies and procedures that outline the process by which transfer of academic credits is awarded and is committed to exploring and maximizing transfer opportunities for its Alberta students at Alberta institutions.
5. Credential recognition: For degrees intended to prepare graduates for employment or licensure in a particular profession or occupation, the institution provides evidence that the degree will be recognized as acceptable for employment by Alberta employers or licensure by professional or occupational associations.
6. Financial and academic resources: Appropriate financial, academic, and other resources exist to permit the successful delivery of the program in Alberta.

Application Process

In addition to completing the full application process for resident institutions using the *Expedited Program Evaluation Request Template*, non-resident institutions requesting Expedited Program Evaluation must provide evidence that they:

1. Meet the Organizational Standards listed in the *Organizations Handbook*; and
2. Will be able to provide suitable financial security. If a private non-resident institution offering an approved collaborative or dual degree program in Alberta is not collecting tuition from students, then no financial security will be required.

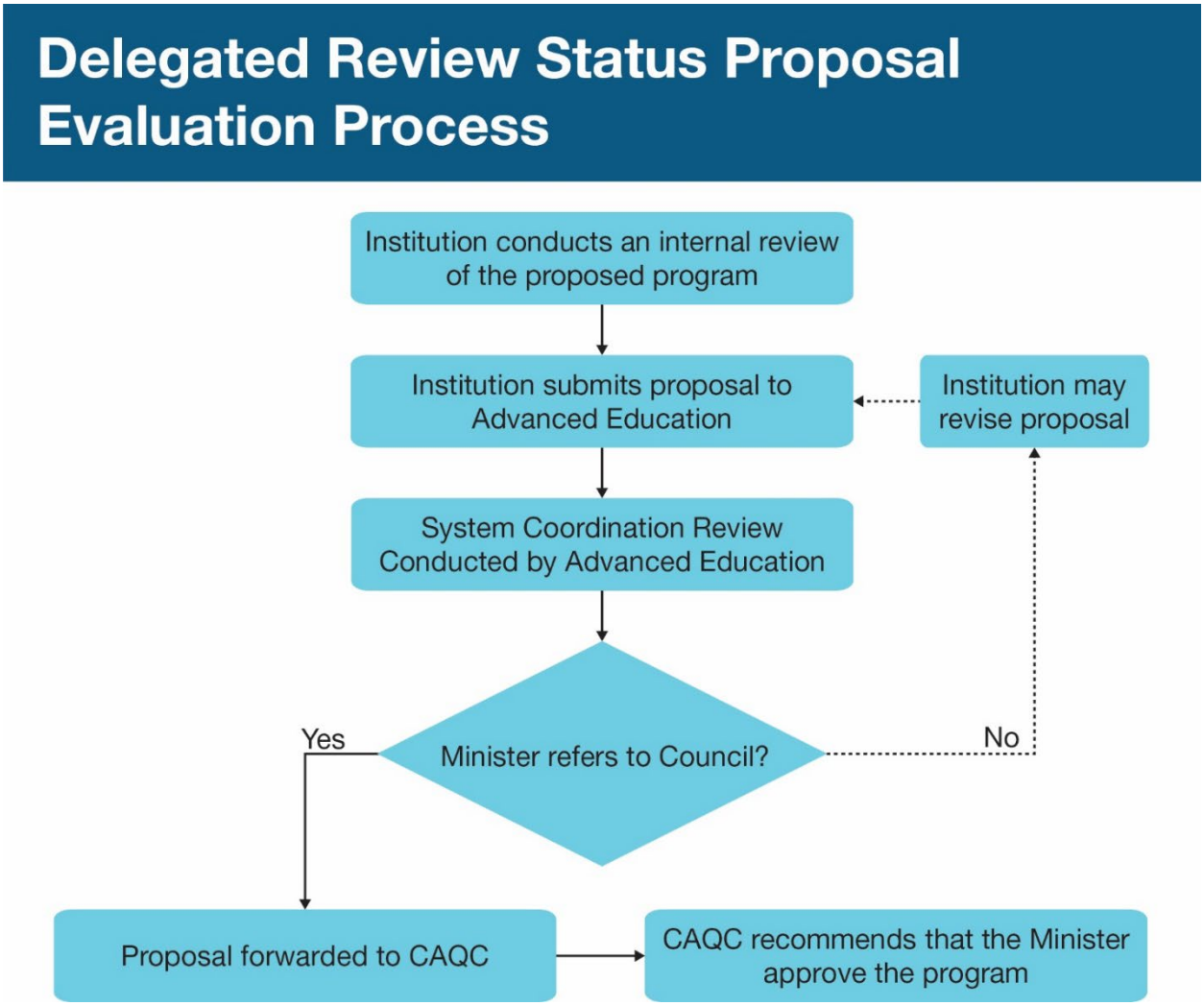
5.3 DELEGATED REVIEW STATUS PROGRAM EVALUATION

Delegated Review Status enables an institution to conduct independent institutional reviews of proposals for new degree programs, based on which CAQC would recommend a program for approval by the Ministry. Institutions holding Delegated Review Status are not required to submit to CAQC, in advance, the usual full documentation on which CAQC bases recommendations for program approval. Information about the requirements for attaining Delegated Review Status can be found in the accompanying *Organizations Handbook*.

Delegated Program Evaluation is only conducted by the 6 Institutions who hold Delegated Review Status. See the Organizations Handbook for more information.

Once an Institution holds Delegated Review Status, they conduct internal evaluations (Delegated Program Evaluations) of their degrees, submit Part A to PAPRS for System Coordination Review, including feedback from other post-secondaries in Alberta, and, upon referral to Council by the Minister, provide the Institutional Attestation (see the *Statement of Institutional Attestation for Delegated Program Evaluation Template* available on the CAQC website). Upon receipt of the Institutional Attestation, Council automatically recommends the degree for approval. The degree,

once approved by the Minister, may be audited in the next cycle of Quality Assurance Process Audits (see *Organizations Handbook*).



5.4 INDEPENDENT ACADEMIC EXPERTS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Council's Degree Program Proposal Templates (Part B) require institutions to engage 2 (two) Independent Academic Experts (IAEs) to review the degree proposal. For Programs undergoing a Standard or Expedited Program Evaluation, these are submitted to Council with the full Program Proposal. For Institutions with Delegated Review Status, Part B and the IAE Reports are kept on file and may be reviewed during the next Quality Assurance Process Audit. The institution is also required to include the institution's response to their reports. In the Part B Template, the applicant institution is asked to provide the names of the two Independent Academic Experts and a rationale as to why they were selected. As an Appendix to Part B, the applicant institution must also provide brief CVs for each Independent Academic Expert, obtained with permission.

Note that the Independent Academic Experts engaged by an institution when it is developing a proposal are not to be confused with CAQC's External Evaluators who are invited by Council to join Site Visit Review Teams established for Standard Program Evaluations. IAEs (and others consulted

in the development of a program proposal) cannot also serve on the CAQC Site Visit Team for Standard Program Evaluations. Applicant institutions will be asked for names of potential reviewers for the Site Visit Team and should be mindful of selecting IAEs in the context of the future need for Site Visit Team Members.

Independent Academic Experts also play a pivotal role in the cyclical review of an institution's programs, the general purpose of which is to monitor the quality of approved degree programs on a continuing basis. All institutions are expected to develop a systematic program evaluation plan; one expectation of cyclical program reviews is that qualified external experts should participate in the evaluation by reviewing the self-study, visiting the campus and conducting on-site interviews, and preparing a report. See Section 6.3 on Cyclical Program Evaluation

The guidance below with respect to the selection and use of external experts and the sample terms of reference are provided to institutions for their benefit as they prepare new degree program proposals and/or prepare for a cyclical review of an approved degree program.

5.4.1 GUIDELINES ON SELECTING INDEPENDENT ACADEMIC EXPERTS

The following are guidelines with respect to the selection and use of Independent Academic Experts when institutions are seeking to engage experts to review new program proposals:

1. The two Independent Academic Experts (IAEs) are engaged by the institution and operate independently.
2. Independent Academic Experts should have:
   i. An advanced academic credential related to the subject area under review (normally at the doctoral level in the discipline or at the terminal level if in a particular field).
   ii. Relevant academic experience in areas such as quality assessment (e.g. as appraisers for accrediting bodies or reviewers of degree programs), curriculum design, teaching and learning, and administration.
   iii. Depending on the nature of the proposed degree, it may be preferable for one Independent Academic Expert to have expertise or relevant experience in the industry or profession. In these cases, institutions should ensure that one IAE has the relevant professional/industry experience and one IAE has the relevant academic experience.
3. Ideally, at least one reviewer should be from a comparable, Ministry-approved program within the Alberta system to provide systems perspective. If there are no comparable programs in Alberta, ideally at least one reviewer should be from a comparable Canadian program.
4. In order to avoid conflict of interest and to ensure objective assessments, any connection between an IAE and the applicant institution must be disclosed. Institutions are wise to avoid potential and perceived conflicts by selecting experts who have no connection with the institution or faculty/administrators of the proposed program, or who are from institutions that are not affiliated with the applicant institution.
   i. Given *Access to Information Act* and *Protection of Privacy Act* considerations, the institution should seek permission from the expert for submission to Council of the expert's CV or resume.
5. Academic experts should be provided with terms of reference, including specific issues/areas to be addressed in the review (see below for a sample that can be adapted to suit the particular institution and program being proposed).

6. For some program proposals, the institution should consider the merits of having academic experts visit the campus to assess the student experience and learning environment (including the face-to-face experience and virtual environment) and support system, the institution's infrastructure, including library holdings and information access arrangements pertaining to the program area, as well as other physical resources such as laboratories. For some program proposals, it may suffice to have a desk review without site visit completed by the Independent Academic Experts.
7. If the experts' reports fail to address critical elements of the proposed program, the institution should consider engaging another expert to assist it in the development of a strong proposal.

Please see the *Appendix E: Terms of Reference – IAE for New Program Proposals* and the *IAE Report Template for New Program Proposals* (available on the CAQC website).

6. DEGREE PROGRAM MONITORING

In addition to its responsibility to assess the quality of all degree program applications referred to it by the Minister, Council is also responsible for monitoring institutions' internal quality assurance processes and approved degree programs to ensure they continue to meet Council' conditions and standards of institutional and program quality.

Section 8 of the PSR stipulates that CAQC may review and monitor any degree program to ensure compliance with the standards and conditions established under Section 7 - duty to establish standards and conditions. Council is therefore also responsible for monitoring approved degree programs to ensure they continue to meet Council's conditions and standards of institutional and program quality.

Section 9 of the PSR indicates that, if Council determines that any of the standards or conditions established under Section 7 are no longer being met with respect to an institution or an approved degree program offered by an institution, it may recommend that the Minister cancel the approval of one or more degree programs offered by the institution. In the case of a resident private post-secondary institution, Council may also recommend that the Order in Council designating the institution as a private post-secondary institution that may grant approved degrees be rescinded.

Council's monitoring activities are broadly defined as oversight and assessment of Council's requirements with respect to institutional quality assurance and to the implementation of, or changes to, approved degree programs. These activities are conceived as a spectrum - the extent of monitoring is proportionate to Council's appraisal of an institution's experience and capacity in offering degree programs as well as Council's assessment of the development, rigour, and application of an institution's internal review processes.

As an example of the spectrum, a newly approved major in History at an institution with approved Bachelor of Arts programs in other areas of the Humanities might receive less monitoring than an institution without previously approved humanities programs. In contrast, the addition of a graduate program at an institution with minimal experience offering graduate level degrees would be more intensively monitored by CAQC.

To ensure a program's compliance with its quality standards, CAQC may monitor, among other things:

1. the achievement of a program's objectives and learning outcomes,
2. the currency of its curriculum,
3. the impact on quality of shifts in enrolments,
4. the faculty complement,
5. the availability of appropriate forms of support for students, and
6. the role of research and scholarship in the educational experience of learners.

The individual character of institutions and their internal review practices is the key factor affecting the modes of monitoring that Council may use, which range from Monitoring Reporting (required annually, biennially, or triennially at Council's discretion) to Comprehensive Organizational Evaluations to cyclical Quality Assurance Process Audits.

In discharging its monitoring responsibilities, Council respects the following principles:

1. The primary responsibility for academic quality assurance rests with post-secondary institutions.
2. CAQC supports institutions establishing robust internal quality assurance mechanisms and expects institutions to accept increasing responsibility for monitoring as they demonstrate their ability to assure the quality of their programming to Council's satisfaction. Peer review conducted by external experts is a critical element of an internal quality assurance process.
3. It is the responsibility of the institution to continue to meet Council's standards, and to report when it no longer does so.
4. An institution's experience and capacity in offering degree programs at the same level, such as undergraduate, master's, or doctoral and in the same or closely related fields of study will affect CAQC's positioning of an institution's new programs on the spectrum referred to above.
5. Council intends that monitoring activities avoid unnecessary duplication of effort wherever possible and are cost-effective for the institution, Ministry, and CAQC. To this end, the nature and extent of Council's monitoring considers the availability of information from the Government of Alberta and other sources.
6. The monitoring role Council has in respect of a program originally approved on the recommendation of CAQC will be extended to apply to a new collaborative or brokering arrangement.

6.1 OVERVIEW OF DEGREE MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCESSES

Council primarily monitors degrees in one of the three ways:

1. Monitoring Reports (may be required annually, biennially, or triennially)
2. Cyclical Program Evaluations
3. Quality Assurance Process Audits (only for institutions granted Delegated Review Status – see *Organizations Handbook*).

Following the Minister's approval of any degree recommended by Council, Council provides the institution with an Outcomes Letter that details any conditions applied to the approval. These may include Pre-Implementation Conditions which must be met before the program starts or ongoing/post-implementation Conditions. Council requires the institution respond to the Conditions by the deadline(s) noted in the Outcomes Letter or as part of Monitoring Reporting.

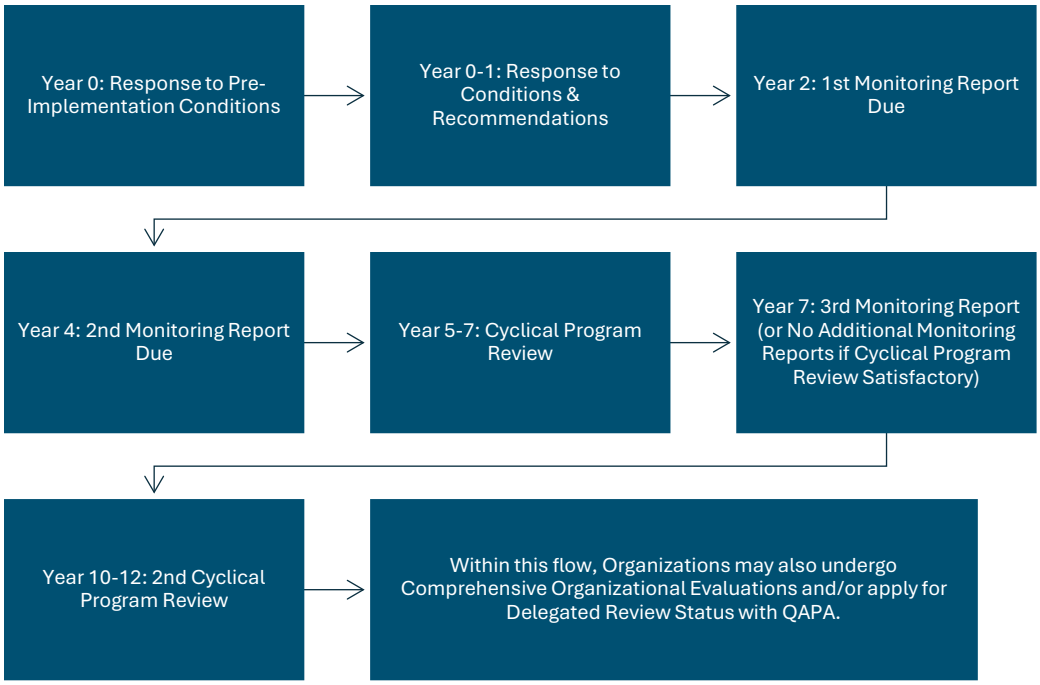
Based on the Program and other institutional factors, Council will also inform the institution (in the Outcomes Letter) of the date of their Monitoring Report. For new degrees, this is normally required within 2 years of Program Implementation on a biannual cycle (Biannual Monitoring Reporting).

In addition to Monitoring Reports, all degrees must undergo a Cyclical Program Review following internal institutional policies and procedures and including assessment by external Independent Academic Experts (minimum of 2 IAEs who co-write a report). The results of a degree's Cyclical Program Review must be submitted to Council. Council's review of the Cyclical Program Review will normally be communicated to the institution in an Outcomes Letter with follow-up required as noted in the Outcomes letter.

Council also expects institutions to update Council regularly on changes to their degrees or external factors that may impact their degrees. This may include, but is not limited to, changes to

collaborative partnerships or the results of external reviews (e.g., accreditation). Advanced Education informs Council when a degree has been suspended or terminated. Council may be asked to review a suspended degree prior to reactivation which may result in that degree being subject to Council's monitoring processes.

The following flow chart illustrates the possible lifecycle of degree monitoring with CAQC:



It is a Core Principle of Council that the Quality of Degrees rests with the institution and it is incumbent on the institution to demonstrate their capacity to mount and sustain quality degrees responsive to feedback from Council and peers (external evaluations). When institutions have successfully demonstrated their capacity to mount and sustain quality degrees and meet all eligibility criteria, Council supports applications for Delegated Review Status which moves institutions to Quality Assurance Process Audits and removes the requirement for ongoing submissions of both Monitoring Reporting and the results of Cyclical Program Reviews. See the *Organizations Handbook* Section 6.5.2) for DRS/QAPA Eligibility Criteria.

6.2 DEGREE MONITORING REPORTS

This section does not apply to institutions with Delegated Review Status for which Council's monitoring mechanism is the Quality Assurance Process Audits. QA process audit. Please see Organizations Handbook for DRS and QAPA.

Institutions are normally required to submit directly to Council separate monitoring reports on their approved degree programs consisting of specific information identified by Council. As the monitoring report covers the institutional and program-related issues, it is applicable to both organizational and program monitoring by Council.

This requirement is in addition to the institutional reporting required by the Ministry but will not duplicate the information reported to the Ministry at the institutional level.

Institutions will submit their updates to CAQC on annual, biennial, or triennial cycles as determined by Council and based on institutional maturity in offering degree programming or issues that need follow-up by Council. The monitoring update will be due to CAQC on the schedule established by Council for annual, biennial and triennial reporting.

Normally, Monitoring Reports are required biannually for most new degrees with the first report due 2-years after implementation of the degree. Depending on the program and the institution's history of degree granting and organizational reporting to Council, Council may require Annual Monitoring Reports. Following submission of a Monitoring Report and Council's review of the Report, Council may also determine that a program requires either Annual Monitoring Reporting or Triennial Monitoring Reporting. Moving to Annual Monitoring Reporting should not be viewed as punitive. This may be done in cases where a program has undergone significant changes or where an institution has undertaken significant policy work and Council seeks more regular reporting on the implementation of changes. Programs may be moved to Triennial Reporting when they have demonstrated stability and have addressed Council's Conditions or Recommendations satisfactorily.

Prior to its submission, Council will notify institutions of their specific monitoring requirements and expectations. These requirements normally include (but are not limited to):

1. Update on any outstanding Organizational Conditions or Recommendations
2. Update on Organizational Level Culture of Degree Granting and Changes
3. Response to any outstanding Program-Specific Conditions or Recommendations
4. Update on Faculty Complement (including completion of Academic Staff Reporting Tables provided by CAQC and appending the C.V.s of new permanent/continuing/tenure-track faculty using the CAQC Narrative CV Template)
5. Update on any Curriculum or Program Changes
6. Report on the Research/Scholarly Activity in the Program (including completion of the Scholarly Activity Reporting Tables provided by CAQC).

The Monitoring Report should provide a reflective analysis of all required elements and appropriate appendices.

Note on Scholarly Activity Reports

As part of its monitoring process, CAQC requires institutions to report on the level of scholarship in the programs using Excel templates (provided by Council or customized by the PSI sectors to better reflect their mandates and scholarship foci) and narrative reporting. The Excel templates are used to collect program-level scholarly activity data for continuing faculty members supported by institutions to engage in scholarship and students on annual basis. Council uses these tables in conjunction with the narrative reporting to assess that the level and quality of scholarship evidenced by the programs is commensurate with degree programming and complies with the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework. In each case, CAQC expects institutions to submit a self-critical program-level narrative that informs CAQC about the context (i.e., the culture, what the data mean based on the institution's/program's expectations, what was achieved and future areas for emphasis and improvement as it relates to program quality, and, if there is unevenness in

scholarly activity, what is being done to remediate it). Combining its quantitative and qualitative assessment and providing recommendations for improvement, the main purpose of Council is to encourage institutions and programs to achieve excellence in scholarship through critical self-assessment and self-improvement and in connection with institutional mandates and strategic priorities.

An institution will not be required to provide monitoring reporting on a program if Council is satisfied with the results of the institution's cyclical review of the program (see Section 6.3, below).

As part of the Government of Alberta's accountability process, institutions submit reporting as determined by Alberta Advanced Education, such as the annual submission of enrolment data. Where appropriate to fulfill its monitoring mandate, Council may consider institutional reporting submitted to the Ministry.

6.3 CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEWS

As a core principle, CAQC recognizes that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with degree granting institutions themselves. Council expects an institution to accept responsibility for a self evaluation of its organization and programs. All institutions are expected to have a cyclical program evaluation policy and procedure that provides for the robust and rigorous assurance of quality within programs and aligns with the expectations of Council and policies at comparable institutions in Alberta.

Each approved degree program is expected to be reviewed every 5-7 years. Institutions may wish to organize their cyclical reviews so that all programs within that unit or faculty are reviewed at the same time.

Normally, for new degrees, an institution will have submitted regular Monitoring Reports prior to the first Cyclical Program Review. These Reports and Council's feedback should inform the first Cyclical Program Review.

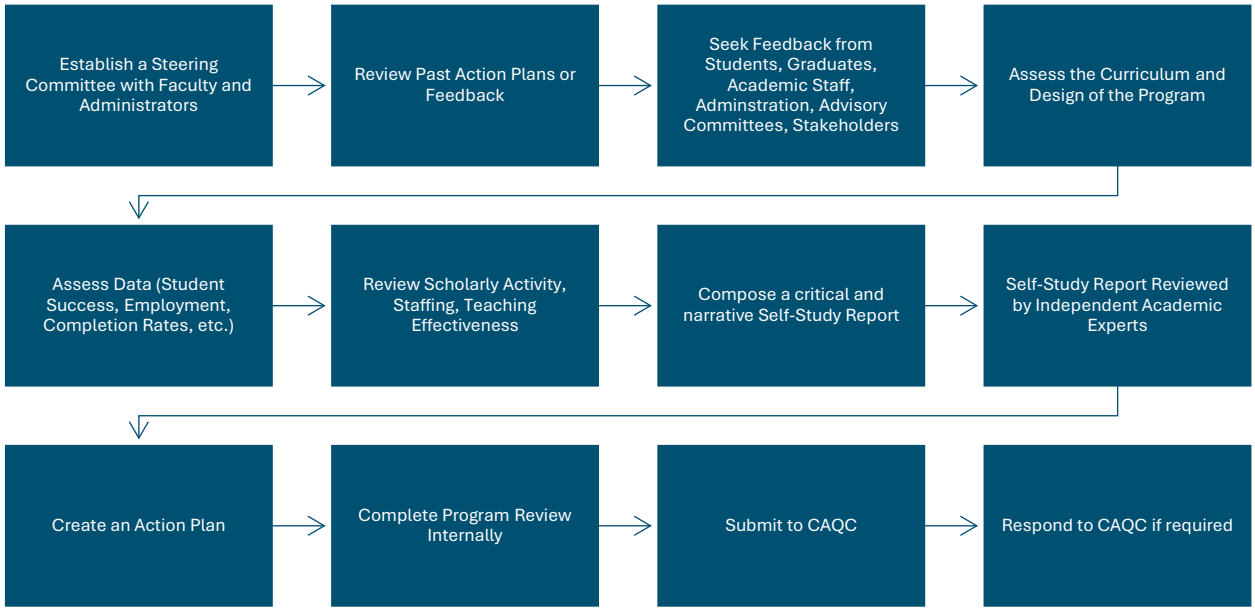
Following completion of the Cyclical Program Review, the institution must submit the report to Council.

For transparency, institutions are encouraged to provide information on their publicly facing website regarding the timing and outcome of Cyclical Program Reviews, such as an appropriately constructed public report, an action plan, and the institution's cyclical review policy and procedures.

6.3.1 CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

The result of the Program Review Process is the creation of a critically reflective Self-Study and Action Plan for improvements to the program.

This graphic provides a high-level overview of the process for Cyclical Program Reviews. Institutions are required to have policies and procedures that align with Council's expectations of quality assurance and may deviate from the high-level process within the boundaries of their policies. Additional details for each step are provided, below.



Steering Committee: The development of the self-study is guided by a steering committee composed of faculty and administrators from the unit responsible for the program. Depending on the program(s) under review, institutions may choose to include an academic staff member from the institution who teach in a program that is not being reviewed, as well as an academic staff member who teach service courses for that program.

Review of Past Action Plans: The first step in a cyclical review is reviewing the action plan resulting from the last cyclical review (or the results of annual reviews or Monitoring Reports if this is the program's first Cyclical Program Review).

Focus on Stakeholder Input: This is followed by the preparation of a self-study including input from students, graduates, academic staff, administration, advisory committees, and other stakeholders involved in the unit or degree program under review. An important aspect of the self-study is a critical self-reflection of all the elements of the program.

Focus on Degree Design Using Evidence: The self-study will focus on the degree program's design, how the learning outcomes are mapped throughout the curriculum and how they are assessed, and other outcomes. This may include student and graduate satisfaction, enrolment flow, completion rates, employment rates of graduates, numbers of graduates who go on to further education, etc.

The self-study shall include program specific information as opposed to primarily institution wide information, where applicable, such as program specific student satisfaction vs. institution wide survey results. Including common data sets from a central data repository is a high priority for all program evaluations.

Focus on Teaching Effectiveness: One element of the self-study is a self-reflective and evidence-based assessment of the teaching effectiveness by faculty teaching in the program. This can include the professional development undertaken by the faculty to strengthen their teaching. For CAQC's guiding principles for assessing teaching effectiveness, see Section 4.6 of CAQC's *Organizations Handbook*.

Focus on Scholarly Activity: Another element of a self-study is a review of the scholarly activity of each academic staff in the program who has an expectation to engage in scholarship as part of their work. This includes the currency, quality and amount, and an overall self-reflective narrative on the scholarship within the program. Internal and external grants, and engagement of students in scholarly activity should also be reported.

Evidence for the Discipline and Action Plan: To inform the changes and improvements in the program, provide a summary of the state of the discipline and current knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices in the discipline. This could include a review of the literature, reports from appropriate educational bodies, and an environmental scan/discussion of leading programs in the discipline.

Self-Study Review by Independent Academic Experts: A minimum of two qualified Independent Academic Experts are expected to evaluate the self-study and prepare a single report identifying program strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations for enhancing program quality.

Timing of Review: As currency of documentation and information contribute to the quality of the review and its outcome, it is important that program evaluations be completed as expeditiously as possible so that the data remain current, and the review does not detract from other important work taking place in the unit. In many cases it may be possible to complete the full review in 12 months but in some institutions, additional time will be required to complete the full program evaluation cycle.

Action Plan: An essential element of the review is an action plan outlining the steps and processes proposed by the institution to improve the program and to respond to the reviewers' suggestions and recommendations. Timelines and persons accountable for each step shall be included. As a best practice, the action plan is monitored and reported on an annual basis to ensure that the unit is meeting its commitments.

Internal Review: The final results of cyclical reviews shall move through the appropriate governance processes of the institution, which is normally to the institution's academic governing body.

6.3.2 SUBMISSION OF CYCLICAL REVIEW RESULTS

For institutions required to submit results of cyclical reviews to Council, the results of the review shall be submitted to Council, together with the steps to be taken to improve the delivery and outcomes of the program. Institutions are expected to provide the following information:

1. An overview of the review process, components and timelines;
2. Information regarding the last cyclical review, including an assessment of the implementation of that review's action plan;
3. The membership of the steering committee, including their role in relation to the program;
4. The institution's cyclical review policy and procedures as an Appendix;
5. The program self-study, including who was involved in its preparation and their role in relation to the program, which should contain:
    i. Program learning outcomes and their assessment as well as a curriculum map showing how the program learning outcomes are achieved in each course;
    ii. Student flow and completion rate data;
    iii. Student and graduate satisfaction data;
    iv. Alumni employment and further education outcomes;
    v. Stakeholder input;

vi. Academic staff CVs, preferably in a common institutional format;
vii. Assessment of teaching and learning effectiveness, including professional development opportunities completed by the teaching staff;
viii. Review of the status of the field and teaching of the discipline;
ix. Scholarly activity data accompanied by a reflective narrative analysis;
x. The rationale for the selection of the Independent Academic Experts, as well as their CVs;
xi. The site visit schedule;
xii. The Independent Academic Experts' report;
xiii. The institutional response to the reviewers' report including an action plan; and
xiv. How the results have moved through the governance processes.

Council will review the results of the program evaluation and provide feedback to the institution regarding both the process and the outcome.

6.3.3 IAE & CYCLICAL REVIEW OF PROGRAMS

The following are guidelines with respect to the selection and use of (minimum 2) independent academic experts as part of an institution's cyclical review of approved degree programs. A minimum of two qualified Independent Academic Experts are expected to evaluate the self study, visit the campus, and conduct onsite interviews, and prepare a single report identifying program strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations for enhancing program quality.

In order to assist Independent Academic Experts with their assessments, it is recommended that they be provided with all relevant documentation related to the Program Review (Self-Study, appendices, institutional policy, CAQC monitoring requirements) and information about the monitoring of approved degree programs - in particular, Sections 5 and 6 of this *Handbook* and the CDQF. In the case of undergraduate degrees, the applicable guidelines with respect to staffing, degree structure and curriculum content, etc. should also be provided.

Council acknowledges in certain cases the value to institutions of selecting as a reviewer an expert who was involved in the original review of the program (either one selected by the institution during the development of the proposal or one appointed as one of CAQC's reviewers). However, Council advises institutions not to use the same reviewer more than twice.

Academic experts must have:

1. An advanced academic credential related to the subject area under review (normally at the doctoral level in the discipline or at the terminal level if in a particular field).
2. Relevant academic experience in areas such as quality assessment (e.g. as appraisers for accrediting bodies or reviewers of degree programs), curriculum design, teaching and learning, and administration.
3. Depending on the nature of the degree, it may be preferable for one Independent Academic Expert to have expertise or relevant experience in the industry or profession. In these cases, institutions should ensure that one IAE has the relevant professional/industry experience and one IAE has the relevant academic experience.
4. Ideally, at least one reviewer should be from a comparable, Ministry-approved program within the Alberta system to provide systems perspective. If there are no comparable programs in Alberta, ideally at least one reviewer should be from a comparable Canadian program.

In order to avoid conflict of interest and to ensure objective assessments, any connection between an IAE and the applicant institution must be disclosed. Institutions are wise to avoid potential and perceived conflicts by selecting experts who have no connection with the institution or faculty/administrators of the proposed program, or who are from institutions that are not affiliated with the applicant institution. Given *Access to Information Act* and *Protection of Privacy Act* considerations, the institution should seek permission from the expert for submission to Council of the expert's CV or resume.

Independent Academic Experts should be provided with terms of reference, including specific issues/areas to be addressed in the review (see below for a sample that can be adapted to suit the particular institution and program being reviewed).

Cyclical reviews should include a site visit to the institution by the Independent Academic Experts to conduct on-site interviews and assess the student experience and learning environment (including the face-to-face experience and virtual environment) and support system, the institution's infrastructure, including library holdings and information access arrangements pertaining to the program area, as well as other physical resources such as laboratories. In cases where a site visit is not conducted, the institution should explain the rationale.

If an expert's cyclical review report fails to address critical elements of the program, the institution should consider engaging another expert to assist it in arriving at a rigorous program review. Please see *Appendix F: Terms of Reference – IAE for Cyclical Program Reviews* and the IAE Report Template for Cyclical Program Reviews (available on the CAQC website).

6.3.4 CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW OF ACCREDITED DEGREES

In some cases, program accreditation reviews can align and complement the institution's cyclical review processes and, in some cases, may take the place of the institution's process if the criteria and purposes align. It is important to recognize that the two reviews may have different purposes and in cases where the accreditation review is conducted primarily to ensure graduate outcomes align with professional industry practice, the program may require a Cyclical Program Review that follows institutional processes.

To minimize duplication of work, and with written approval of the CAQC Secretariat, an accreditation review could be used as the basis for a cyclical review if a supplementary document is provided that clearly indicates where each of the required elements listed above are found in the report. Where the expected information is not covered in the accreditation review, supplementary documents must provide the required information.

For institutions with Delegated Review Status (see *Organizations Handbook* Section 6.5), Council reviews Cyclical Program Reviews during the Quality Assurance Process Audits. In cases of accredited programs, the institutions approved quality assurance policies, reviewed by Council during application for Delegated Review Status, should clearly explain the connection, overlap, or use of accreditation reviews (e.g., in place of or supplemented by institutional reviews).

6.4 SPECIAL EVALUATIONS

In some instances, Council may require a Special Evaluation or other/ad hoc evaluation of a program or organization.

Please refer to the *Organizations Handbook* for Special Evaluations (6.4) and Other Evaluations (6.5) as well as Organizational Evaluations, Comprehensive Organizational Evaluations, Delegated Review Status, and Quality Assurance Process Audits (*Organizations Handbook,* Section 6: Organizational Monitoring).

If you have questions about anything in this Handbook or associated templates and appendices, please contact the CAQC Secretariat by emailing caqc@gov.ab.ca. Templates, forms, and additional information may also be found on the CAQC website: https://caqc.alberta.ca/
