Campus Alberta Quality Council

2025

Standards and Evaluations Handbook 1

ORGANIZATIONS

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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 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 *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 an 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 nonprofit;
- Non-resident – out-of-province – public institutions; and
- Non-resident – out-of-province – private institutions, both for profit and nonprofit.

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.

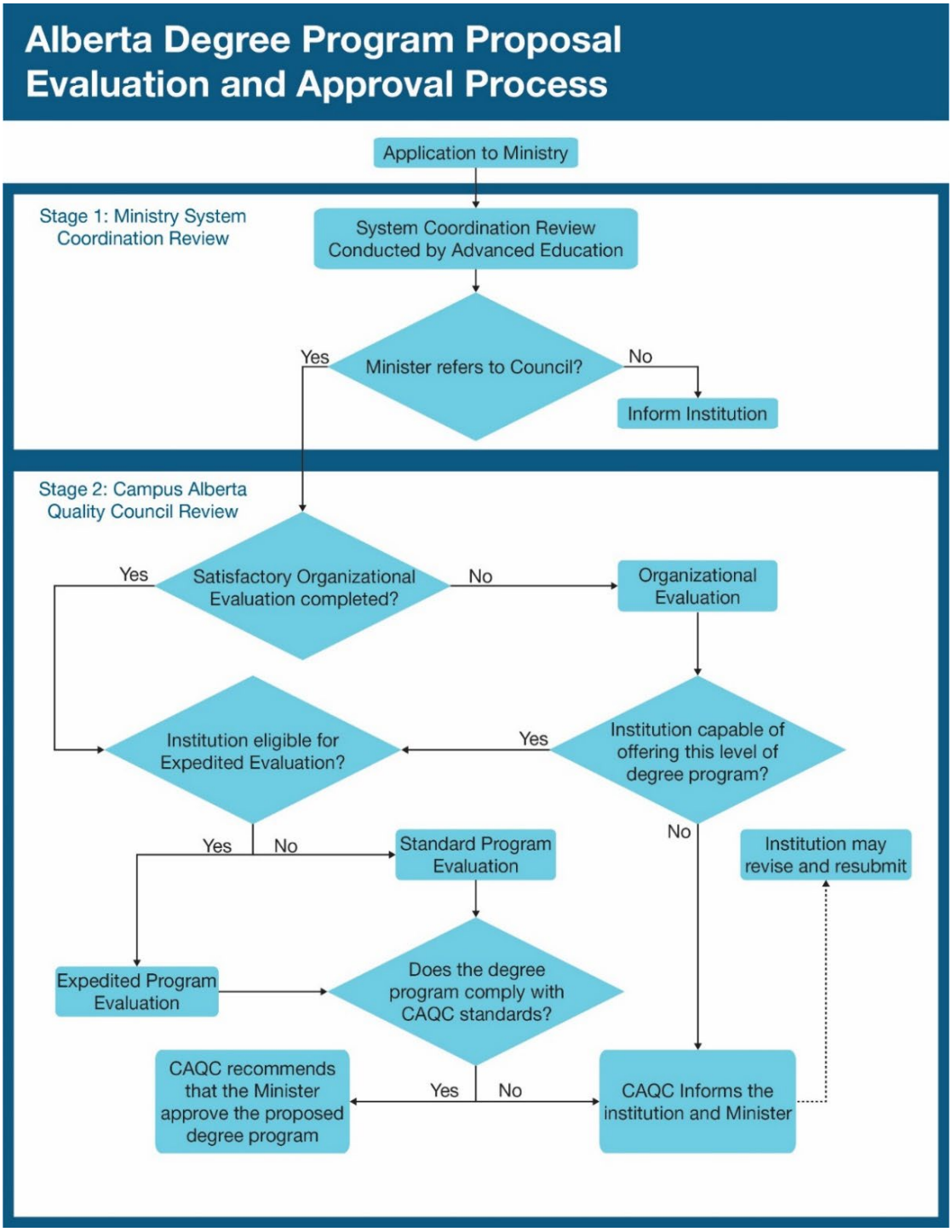
2.5.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

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. ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS

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.

As an institution must undergo a successful Organizational Evaluation before it will be permitted to offer degrees in Alberta, and is then subject to Monitoring by Council, Council's Organizational Standards were developed in alignment with the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework to provide guidance to all organizations.

These Organizational Standards are the foundation of Self-Studies and related evaluation reports and apply to applicant institutions creating a Self-Study for their first Organizational Evaluation and to existing degree-granting organizations completing Comprehensive Evaluations or Quality Assurance Process Audits (see Section 6, below).

4.1 EFFECTIVE SELF STUDIES

Many forms of Organizational Evaluation and Monitoring involve the creation of Self-Studies by an institution. While the specific requirements of Self Studies vary across the different types of evaluation and monitoring processes (see Sections 5 and 6 below), the following elements are central to the effectiveness and success of any kind of Self Study.

Produces evidence to show that Council's Organizational and Program Standards are met
A self-study should demonstrate the institution's compliance with Council's standards, examine the institution's place within Alberta's post-secondary system, and address any concerns raised in previous reviews.

Demonstrates the institution's ability to think holistically
The success of an institution is dependent on the work of many and, ideally, the self-study's contents should reflect this by incorporating a broad range of sources.

Culminates in a report that meets Council's needs
A self-study should allow the SVT to conduct a thorough site visit - for which the institution needs to be well prepared - and positively contribute to the team's decision-making process. The tone and content of the report should emphasize honest evaluation including both strengths and weaknesses, where identified.

Is analytical, comparative, reflective, outcome-oriented, and forward-looking in nature
The self-study should not be merely descriptive, contain assertions without evidence, or be defensive. It should be rigorous, honest, and forthright and be of value both to the institution and to Council. It should foster a climate of pride and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Uses information and data to create evidence to support the analysis
Where possible, the self-study should include feedback from students, alumni, transfer institutions, employers, and graduates.

Is succinct and coherent
The self-study should not exceed set page limits (approximately 50 pages), should clearly and concisely address all Standards, and should include only relevant and required Appendices.

4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS

To offer and sustain degrees in Alberta, organizations must provide evidence of:

1. Governance infrastructure codified in policies and procedures aligned with best practices among Canadian degree-granting institutions.
An appropriate governance and reporting structure that includes a legally constituted governing board and a General Faculties Council, Academic Council, or appropriate equivalents allowing for academic faculty, staff and student participation in academic decision-making and policy review and development. Institutional focus on academic freedom and academic integrity, including clear definitions, disciplinary processes, and appropriate development among all faculty, staff and students. Intellectual property commitments with clear regulations relating to disputes, conflicts, appeals, due process, and protections for faculty, staff and students.
2. Resource sufficiency, institutional stability and student protections.
Financial management policies and practices, resources, and appropriate multiyear planning to provide a stable working and learning environment, to ensure enrolled students can complete their education, and to provide staff and faculty with ongoing professional development. Sufficient student services such as mental health supports, academic advising, career advising/placement and facilities are in place to promote quality of student life outside the classroom.
3. A culture of excellence in teaching and learning.
Demonstrable support for the assessment and ongoing development of faculty, instructional practices, and curricula. Training for employees that contributes to effective learning, and professional development experiences for faculty and staff.
4. Commitment to research, scholarship, and creative work.
Organizational commitment, including but not limited to workload guidelines and academic freedom, supporting the pursuit of research, scholarship, and creative work, with an evaluation system that incentivizes and rewards these pursuits.
5. A culture of quality assurance.
There are policy-based processes for ongoing and regular assessment of academic standards and quality, which include input from both students and experts external to the institution. There is evidence of consistent implementation of quality assurance processes and findings.
6. Systemic commitments to diversity, Indigeneity, ethical practice, and accessibility.
Policy-based and funded commitments to each of the identified areas, including clear regulations relating to disputes, conflicts, appeals, due process, and protections for students, faculty, and staff.

For more detailed information on the above see the *Organizational Evaluation Self Study template* available on the CAQC website.

4.3 GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

Each proposed program must be consistent with the applicant's published mandate or mission and academic goals statement, approved by the governing board and appropriate for a degree-granting institution, and has academic policies and standards that support the institution's mission and educational objectives to ensure degree quality and relevance. The mission includes a commitment to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge, and service to the community or related professions.
The PSLA describes the governance of Alberta public post-secondary institutions in terms of the powers, duties and composition of their governing boards and general faculties councils or academic councils, key officers, and staff.

The institution has policies pertaining to all the following areas:

1. Admissions, promotions, and graduation requirements;
2. Mature students, credit transfer, and prior learning assessment;
3. Student appeals and academic dishonesty consistent with the level of the degree program;
4. Appointment and evaluation, employment conditions including employment equity, promotion, termination, and professional development for faculty and staff;
5. For programs involving work-integrated learning, policies and procedures that define the roles of the institution, employer, and student in the work-integrated learning component of the program, and resources in place to implement these policies;
6. Internal curriculum development, assessment and improvement of teaching effectiveness, academic integrity, and periodic program review to ensure the ongoing quality of its programs and learning outcomes. Such assessments normally include the advice of external experts;
7. Professional and academic dispute resolution;
8. Student assessment of teaching; and
9. Performance assessment of academic staff that includes some form of peer review.

4.4 ACADEMIC STAFF

At the Organizational level, institutions are expected to demonstrate that they have breadth and depth of faculty capable of teaching and conducting research in degree programming or, if not on staff, implementation plans to address hiring needs. Policies and procedures related to faculty recruitment, performance evaluation, workload will be reviewed as part of the Organizational assessment criteria.

Variations of the standards and norms set out below may be acceptable, provided that, in the judgment of Council, such variations are academically justifiable and do not impair the quality of the program offered.

1. At the institutional level, the majority of faculty are permanent/continuing employees of the post-secondary institution.
2. Normally, full-time academic staff members will predominate in a degree program. There should be a balance between full-time and part-time academic staff to ensure the stability and sustainability of each program.
3. Where part-time academic staff are employed in instruction, an institution's contractual appointment policies must ensure that such staff members are available for student consultation beyond the formal instructional hours.

4. Where continuing employment (such as tenure, continuous, or permanent contracts) is not offered, faculty teaching in a degree program must be eligible for long-term contracts of a minimum of 5 years.
    a. Continuing Faculty: A type of faculty appointment that is permanent, ongoing, and has no end date. Continuing faculty may be part-time or full-time. Institutional language may differ and include terms such as Tenure/Tenure Track or Continuous/Continuous Probationary or Continuing/Permanent to refer to faculty with such appointments.
5. The qualifications for both continuing and part-time academic staff should be in keeping with the mandate or mission statement and the educational objectives of the institution and be pertinent to the program or programs affected. Professional or technical degree programs may differ from other programs in the qualifications needed to ensure high quality. Institutions must have a mechanism for verifying the credibility of credentials and the accuracy of statements contained in the applications of academic staff.
    a. Staffing policies should take into consideration the balance between academic staff members holding the minimum qualification and those holding the desirable qualifications.
6. The collective agreements, contracts, letters of appointment or similar documents pertaining to the employment of academic staff must clearly describe the terms and conditions of employment - including criteria and procedures for the granting of tenure or continuing/permanent employment, if applicable.
7. An institution should have a policy with respect to the ongoing professional development of academic staff throughout their careers.
8. An institution must have a written description of roles and responsibilities of academic staff, and explicit written expectations of academic staff in the realms of teaching, scholarship and professional activity, and service. These documents must be distributed to all members.

4.5 SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

Scholarly Activity, Research, or Creative Activity are core components of degree-level programming for both faculty and students. As graduates of degrees are expected to engage in independent research or practice (see CDQF), the scholarly activity of faculty and their academic freedom to engage in these activities ties to the quality of the degree and the student experience. As Core Principles,

- 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
- Council respects the foundational role of academic freedom in the provision of high-quality degree programs.

Thus, at the Organizational level, Council requires that institutions meet its organizational assessment standards on academic freedom, institutional integrity, and scholarship, research, and scholarly and/or creative activity expected within degrees.

4.5.1 INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES ON SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

At the Organizational level, Council will evaluate if the administrative structure and policies facilitate the expectations for scholarship. Institutions that offer degrees must have policies that support and facilitate faculty and student research, scholarly, or creative activities.

The scholarship, research and creative activities policies and practices of the institution should be developed and administered under the direction of a representative committee. These policies and practices should clearly differentiate scholarly activity expectations for faculty from their professional development, such as maintaining currency within the discipline, and keeping up with changing technology, their teaching responsibilities, including course development, curriculum development, and supervising student projects, and their academic service, such as committee work and professional institutional leadership. The investigator's freedom in research, including the communication of results, shall be preserved (see 3.6 Academic Freedom). An institution may require a specific level of scholarship productivity - or other equivalent research or creative activity.

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.

In addition to policies that define and differentiate scholarly activity, Organizations will create and maintain research ethics and integrity related policies, academic freedom and intellectual property policies or statements, financial management related policies and procedures, and recognition of research within workload (may be found within statements, procedures, collective agreements). Depending on the focus of an organization, additional policies or procedures may be required such as animal care and maintenance, technology transfer and commercialization, safety and biohazards. In some instances, Organizations may partner with other post-secondary institutions to collaborate (e.g., shared use of research ethics board).

4.5.2 SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH, AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

In Canada, it is expected that students will graduate from their degree with the capacity to engage in independent research or practice, with the ability to gather, review, evaluate, and interpret information, hypotheses, and options, and with the ability to review, present, and critically evaluate information, develop lines of argument, and use their knowledge in the creative process (CDQF Degree Expectations).

For degrees to serve this purpose and to achieve a high level of quality, they must be grounded in scholarship or creative expression appropriate to the focus of the degree. This requires that there exist within the instructional staff for all degrees a sufficient level of research or creative activity such that students will receive teaching that is informed by the active scholarly research or creative programs of their instructors. This emphasis on scholarship aligns with the expectation of the CDQF that graduates of all degree programs will have gained a knowledge of methodology and research appropriate to the level of the degree.

Scholarship is a multi-faceted activity involving the creation, integration, and dissemination of knowledge or artistic expression in forms that are open to peer review. Council views scholarship and research to be synonymous. It recognizes that scholarship may be undertaken by independent researchers or collaborative teams, using a wide variety of methodologies.

Distinct from the terms "scholarship" and "research," the terms "scholarly activity" and "creative activity" refer to the many forms and processes through which scholarship may be validly pursued, commonly referred to as the Boyer Model (Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 2016). These include:

1. The scholarship of discovery, including composition, creative activity, and performance;
2. The scholarship of integration that synthesizes information across multiple disciplines, topics, or time periods;
3. The scholarship of teaching and learning involving the systematic examination of teaching and learning processes; and
4. The scholarship of application (also called the scholarship of engagement), which brings knowledge to bear on a wide variety of practical needs or problems.

Council recognizes that institutions may choose to focus on one or more of the above categories depending on their mandate, context, and disciplinary areas of focus.

In evaluating research, Council focusses on the accomplishments or outcomes that result from these types of scholarly and creative activity. It does so in the belief that scholarly or creative activity that does not result in scholarly or creative accomplishments is too diverse and its outcomes are too unpredictable to serve as a major source of information on the scholarly enterprise of an institution or program. Moreover, the goal of scholarship is to contribute to one or more disciplines or to society in some way (which may include solving issues of community or industry partners). Scholarship must result in disseminated outcomes to achieve this goal.

Council recognizes and values the broad diversity of outcomes that scholarly and creative activities produce, including, but not limited to, the following types:

1. Publications (including articles, communications, pre-prints, monographs, memoirs or special papers, review articles, conference/symposia/workshop proceedings, posters and abstracts, government publications, and reports documenting industrial contributions or contributions to engineering practice).
2. Presentations at scholarly conferences or expert/professional/industry groups;
3. Works of art;
4. Technology or product development, including tools, handbooks, manuals, software, patents, technology transfer and commercialization;
5. Contributions to policies, guidelines, regulations, or standards;

6. Contributions supporting traditional knowledge or Indigenous ways of knowing including cultural practices in the natural sciences and engineering/health/social sciences and humanities context;
7. Creation, curation, sharing, or re-use of datasets;
8. Intellectual property, including patents, copyrights, trademarks, or trade secrets; and/or
9. Products, technology, processes, services, or advice useful to, co-created with or transferred to specific organizations (from the private, public, or not-for-profit sectors), communities, or society.

CAQC expects that the academic staff teaching in any degree program will normally engage in a diversity of types of scholarly activity including 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 activity. See *Degrees Handbook* Section 4.3.3 for more detail.

4.5.3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE AS DISTINCT FROM RESEARCH

It is important to note that scholarly activity differs from professional development, which involves activities such as maintaining currency within the discipline, and with changing education technology and approaches, and undertaking teaching responsibilities, including course and curriculum development. These activities contribute greatly to the quality of programs and should be promoted and rewarded.

Professional development activities may lead to scholarship when they expand to involve research or peer-reviewed dissemination that provides a foundation of personal experience for instructors engaged in teaching research methods, role models for students to reflect on, and opportunities for experiential learning on the part of students working alongside scholars as they pursue their research.

Service to the discipline or to a post-secondary institution through such activities as serving committees or boards of the institution or professional associations are important activities but must also be differentiated from research/scholarly activity/creative activity.

Institutional policies related to research should clearly define scholarship and the institutional expectations for scholarship as distinct from professional development and service expectations and definitions.

4.5.4 INSTITUTUTIONAL CONTEXT AND MANDATE

Consistent with its core principle number seven, which reads in part “Council exhibits and promotes appreciation of institutional diversity” CAQC recognizes that the types of scholarly and creative activity will vary among institutions as they pursue their different missions and mandates. Thus, Comprehensive and Research Universities, Undergraduate Universities, Polytechnic Institutions, Comprehensive Community Colleges, and Independent Academic Institutions will legitimately present different research profiles. During the Organizational Evaluation, institutions

will demonstrate their commitment to research, scholarly, and creative work within the context of their institutional mission and mandate.

CAQC also recognizes that the type of research, scholarly activity, and creative activity within an institution may differ from one program to another, depending on each program's discipline(s). Faculty within a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree may engage more frequently in the scholarship of discovery or integration while faculty in a degree with a professional or applied focus may engage more frequently in the scholarship of application/engagement. Outputs may also differ between degrees.

Regardless of institutional mandate or program specifics, it is incumbent on the applicant to illustrate in the Organizational Self Study that the institution is committed to research, scholarly, and creative work in support of degree-level programming and provide sufficient evidence through the institution's plans, policies, and supports for faculty and students.

4.5.5 PEER REVIEW

CAQC views peer review as the primary method for ensuring the quality of scholarship and the creative process and work in the fine arts in their various forms of dissemination. It does so because it believes that reviewers with expertise are best able to judge the contribution that a scholarly accomplishment makes to a discipline and to society.

CAQC recognizes that peer review may take a variety of forms, reflecting the diversity of degrees offered in Alberta and the different types of scholarly and creative activity that underly these different degrees. Dependent on the type of scholarship, Council also recognizes that peer-review may validly be undertaken by reviewers who are not scholars, but who have substantial understanding of, or involvement in, the areas of scholarship or creative activity being evaluated.

4.5.6 POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTIONS AND COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

To promote understanding of their particular research profiles and their expectations for research conducted by the academic staff (faculty), the Polytechnics and Comprehensive Community Colleges of Alberta, working with Council, have developed statements on these topics, included here, with examples.

From the PSLA, a comprehensive community college and polytechnic institution may undertake research and scholarly activities that align with the credentials offered, or that are focused on industry or community needs and that support economic and social development in the region in which the institution is located (Advanced Education, 2019; Province of Alberta, 2022, section 102.4, 102.6). The focus on industry or community needs that support economic and social development differentiates CCCs and Polytechnic Institutions from the other sectors in the PSLA. This is supported by the Declaration of Research Assessment (DORA) which considers both the scale of influence as well as new audiences to assess the impact of scholarly activity. This allows for a broader understanding of Scholarly Activity that supports activity that contributes to societal needs and that communicates to a broader audience beyond traditional forms of research publications. This is summarized in the attached "Building Blocks for Impact" document.

The following are definitions of scholarship and align to Boyer's Model with particular reference to the context of CCC/Polytechnics.

Discovering Knowledge (Independent or collaborative research)
This is research across the full spectrum including pure and applied research projects. Collaborative applied research projects may involve one or more researchers and may include partnerships with industry. Dissemination of knowledge from applied research projects may take many forms including peer reviewed activities, presentations, or industry publications. Proprietary applied industry research projects are projects designed to meet the needs of a specific industry partner and may result in creation of intellectual property (IP) that is not suitable for peer review due to the confidential nature of the IP.

Examples:

- Researching the coloration patterns on butterfly wings that resulted in a peer reviewed journal publication.
- Researching the correlation between remote work and employee engagement that resulted in a presentation at a scholarly conference.
- Conducting applied research in collaboration with industry to develop a club root resistant canola variety for use by Alberta farmers resulting in publication through the Canadian Canola Growers Association.
- Conducting applied research to increase internet connectivity to health care professionals using rural data networks for use by primary care providers and network providers and presented at a Health Care providers conference.
- Conducting proprietary research with a company to develop a virtual reality training platform for patients with dementia resulting in proprietary IP.

Integrating Knowledge
Interpreting the use of knowledge across disciplines.

Examples:

- Preparing a comprehensive literature review that synthesizes existing research across multiple disciplines to identify gaps and emerging trends (creation). The review integrates these insights into a cohesive narrative that connects different fields of study (integration). The findings are then shared through a peer-reviewed journal or presented at an interdisciplinary conference (dissemination).
- Writing a cross-disciplinary textbook that not only compiles knowledge from various disciplines but also introduces new frameworks or concepts that connect these fields (creation). The textbook integrates these concepts to demonstrate their application across different subject areas (integration). It is then published and used as a resource for students and professionals in both academic and industry settings (dissemination).

Applying Knowledge (translation and reformulation for new applications)
Knowledge translation and reformulation refers to moving beyond the dissemination of knowledge into the application of knowledge for practical application, used in decision making or for further research, or for aiding societies or industry in addressing problems.

Examples:

- Utilizing existing regional homeless data to develop a strategy document to address homelessness in partnership with local municipality.
- Creation of a software application for industry to track and support advancement of employees of marginalized identities based on existing research and best practices.

- Developing a comprehensive manual and a set of practical tools tailored for industry professionals to implement strategies that support the advancement of employees from marginalized identities (creation). This manual builds on existing research and best practices but goes beyond educational settings by providing actionable guidelines, case studies, and assessment tools specifically designed for workplace application and policy development within organizations (integration and dissemination). The final product is shared through industry networks, conferences, or published as a resource for organizations committed to diversity.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Scholarship of teaching and learning refers to methodological, systematic, and deliberate inquiry into teaching to improve student learning and optimize educational experiences and learning in post-secondary environments which is disseminated in some form, such as through presentation or publication.

Examples:

- Completing a comparative analysis of accounting teaching methods and strategies and presenting the findings to an academic teaching and learning conference.
- Developing a framework for including sustainable development goals in teaching and learning practices published in an academic journal.

4.6 ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom is a defining feature of higher learning that is enshrined in statements and principles and in policies and practices adopted by institutions. Expressed in language appropriate to the institution, academic freedom includes freedom to investigate, teach, publish, and communicate in other ways without fear of sanction or discipline. Academic Freedom statements may include the freedom to criticize the institution and society at large. Institutions are guided by their founding and sustaining mission and organize themselves in accordance with that mission.

Academic freedom brings attendant responsibilities in scholarship, teaching, and service to and respect for the institution, the discipline or profession, and the community. Academic staff and students must respect the rights of others, exercise their freedom in a reasonable and responsible manner, and respect the academic objectives of their institution.
An institution's academic staff and students must be free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their disciplines as judged by the academic community in general. An institution must adopt and distribute to all members of the academic staff a statement regarding the principle of academic freedom as established by the governing board of the institution, assuring freedom in teaching, scholarship, research, publication, and community activities. The principles of natural justice and peer review must be followed in the event of alleged violations of the policy. These principles must be clearly stated, widely available, and actively followed in written policies and practices.

In the Organizational Evaluation, Council will review such statements which may be found within the institution's collective agreement or within a specific policy.

4.6.1 FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

Faith communities and post-secondary institutions serve complementary roles in civil society, and both must be allowed to operate with integrity and freedom within their respective spheres of influence. It is the role and responsibility of faith communities to oversee the transmission of their beliefs to the next generation. In this regard the state stands at a respectful distance from faith communities and the educational programs they offer.

Likewise, it is the role and responsibility of all institutions that offer approved degrees to transmit to the next generation the processes and methods by which we discern knowledge. This mandate extends to include knowledge about beliefs. It is the responsibility of the scholarly community at large, through the process of peer review, to provide oversight for degree-level scholarship and teaching. Faith communities stand at a respectful distance from the process of peer review which governs academic conduct.

Thus, there is no contradiction in pursuing truth from a declared faith position. Accordingly, faith-based institutions can choose to hire preferentially for scholars who share a given set of beliefs. Once hired, however, the faith community must stand at a respectful distance from any judgement about faculty members' beliefs, even if they are perceived to have altered.

4.7 TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

An institution should support, improve, and recognize the teaching and learning effectiveness of its academic staff. Recognizing the complex and contextualized nature of assessing teaching effectiveness and quality, CAQC recommends several evidence-based guiding principles when assessing teaching effectiveness:

1. Consistent with CAQC's core operating principles, the primary responsibility for program and institutional teaching effectiveness rests with degree granting institutions themselves.
2. The assessment of teaching effectiveness is a component of an institution's overall program quality.
3. Degree granting institutions will establish their own comprehensive, integrated approach to assessing teaching effectiveness that is relevant to their own institutional context.
4. Well-designed and developed curriculum plans, including clearly articulated course and program learning outcomes, are foundational to supporting teaching effectiveness.
5. The process of assessing teaching effectiveness should include multiple sources of evidence including but not limited to student feedback. It should be rigorously administered to foster confidence in the trustworthiness of assessment processes, of the results, and of how those results are used to recognize and reward the work of teaching.
6. Institutional and program-level educational development and support mechanisms are essential to supporting faculty in developing their teaching effectiveness.
7. Institutions should support individuals and committees who have responsibilities for interpreting teaching effectiveness data with evidence-based resources to guide their work.
8. Institutions should recognize and reward excellence in teaching to emphasize the importance of quality teaching to achieving learning outcomes.

4.8 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Institutions should always endeavor to ensure that students, faculty, and staff of post-secondary institutions are acting with honesty and integrity when participating in courses; engaging in scholarship, research, and creative activities; and in all other activities connected with the institution.

Institutions are expected to have policies in place defining academic integrity, and repercussions for violations. Core values commonly associated with academic integrity are honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Violations of academic integrity are often referred to as academic dishonesty or academic misconduct, and common examples of academic dishonesty include cheating – including contract cheating where an individual pays another person to prepare work that they then dishonestly submit as their own creation – inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism.

Academic integrity is supported by institutional commitments to educate faculty, staff, and students on the expectations of how to act with integrity and by well-articulated institutional policies, procedures, and practices that include clear definitions and disciplinary processes. Institutions may hold different definitions of the types of academic misconduct and have different policies and procedures for addressing complaints and suspected violations of academic integrity policies, but it is important that all members of an institutional community are held to exactly the same standards and that these standards are clearly expressed and readily accessible.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are becoming increasingly widespread, both in the post-secondary system and broader society. AI tools have the potential to enrich students' productivity and learning experiences, but also have the potential to encourage and facilitate cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty. As AI becomes ubiquitous, post-secondary institutions must equip students with the necessary skills, understanding, and perspective to make responsible use of this tool to support the learning process. Institutional policies should explore how AI tools can be used responsibly by students, faculty, and staff and what uses of AI tools would constitute a violation of academic integrity.

4.9 STUDENT ACCESS AND EXPERIENCE

One of Council's core principles is that it "encourages institutional initiatives relating to Indigenization, diversity, accessibility, and citizenship to enrich the quality of degree programs and the student experience."

Council's commitment to this principle flows from its belief that Alberta's post-secondary institutions best serve the province and its learners when these institutions encourage and support all learners to achieve their fullest potential. To realize this goal, Council believes that institutions should not only remove barriers to admission based on the personal characteristics and identities of qualified potential students, but also actively encourage these potential students to apply for admission. Council also believes that, once admitted, these students should be supported by policies, procedures, and a culture of sensitivity and inclusion that address the particular and diverse needs and identities of these students to provide them with the best possible learning experiences.

4.10 ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL STANDARDS FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

In addition to the regular organizational assessment standards, the following standards shall be applied to institutions proposing graduate programs. These organizational assessment standards may be applied in the case of an institution proposing to offer its first graduate degree program (e.g., a Master's degree), in which case the Council will, to some extent, be evaluating the institution's potential and plans to put in place the resources, personnel and organizational support to deliver and sustain graduate programs. Institutions proposing a first graduate degree at a new level (e.g., PhD) may require a second Organizational Evaluation.

4.10.1 FACULTY

Existing graduate programs are anchored by suitably and highly qualified academic faculty, normally with terminal degrees in their field of study and an appropriate level of scholarly output and research or creative activity to support supervision of graduate students, and instructional staff who are primarily responsible for the development, delivery, and continuity of the graduate degree program and the supervision of graduate students.

The institution will have a critical mass of scholars and researchers, not only in the program area but in related areas, with a range of expertise to allow for intellectual leadership and challenge. Most faculty instructing or supervising graduate students be involved in ongoing research and publication of findings, or other scholarly activity as appropriate. In the case of programs in professional areas, there must be a solid basis of appropriate scholarly or creative activities.

4.10.2 GRADUATE POLICIES

Academic governance policies and procedures should ensure the viability and sustainability of quality within graduate programming.

Policies required are, but not limited to, those dealing with admissions, placement, applicable residency requirements, maximum time limits for completion, assessment, progression and graduation requirements, the rights and responsibilities of graduate supervisors and graduate students. supervisory committee requirements, comprehensive/candidacy examination requirements, thesis oral examination committee and procedures, credit transfer and prior learning assessment, appeals, academic dishonesty, intellectual property rights, and ethical guidelines for research.

Normally faculty and instructional staff in all graduate programs shall be members of Graduate School/Faculty Council or equivalent responsible for ensuring that graduate programs across the institution meet the requirements for academic governance.
Normally graduate students shall have appropriate representation on Graduate School/Faculty Council or equivalent.

Admission to master's or doctoral programs will normally require either a recognized undergraduate or graduate degree with an appropriate specialization or relevant bridging studies.

Institutions will expect those admitted to graduate degrees/programs to have achieved a superior academic standing in the previous degree, or equivalent, to enable success in the program and will

require that students maintain standards appropriate to graduate study in order to progress and graduate from the program (see Progression Requirements).

4.10.3 COMMITMENT TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

The institution demonstrates a commitment to graduate studies and to the intellectual life of graduate students through sustained participation in activities involving graduate students (seminars, colloquia, conferences, journal clubs, etc.).

4.10.4 LIBRARY AND INFORMATION RESOURCES

The institution must provide the essential information resources and support appropriate to graduate student work. These resources must be adequate for the number of students enrolled and for the level of study.

4.10.5 RESEARCH FACILITIES

The institution has laboratory, computer, studio, or creative facilities, as well as essential resources, to support the faculty and students adequately in their research.

4.11 ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR NON-RESIDENT AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

Non-resident post-secondary institutions and resident private institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta may do so under the terms of the PSLA and the PSR. Article 124(k) of the PSLA indicates that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting applications from non-resident institutions and resident private institutions for approval to offer degrees, including regulations:

1. Respecting the form of an application for approval;
2. Respecting conditions to be met by applicants for approval; and
3. Respecting the renewal and cancellation of an approval.

Consequently, the PSR under the PSLA applies to non-resident institutions in the same manner as for resident institutions.

Article 2(b) of the PSR states that a resident private post-secondary institution or non-resident institution that proposes to establish, extend, expand, reduce, suspend, terminate, or transfer a degree program offered or to be offered in Alberta must apply to the Minister for approval to do so.

In addition to the regular organizational assessment standards, the following standards apply to proposals from non-resident institutions (public or private):

1. The non-resident institution has had the authority to offer and has been offering the degree program in its home jurisdiction in its own name for at least the five previous years;
2. Is appropriately recognized either at the program or institutional level by an accrediting body or quality assurance agency acceptable to the Ministry, where such a body or agency exists, and by the appropriate public authority);
3. The applicable oversight body in the home jurisdiction has approved or does not object to the institution's request for approval to offer the program in Alberta (evidence should be in the form of a letter or official document from the oversight body);

4. The institution can clearly demonstrate its status as public or private in the home jurisdiction; and
5. The admission policies of Canadian non-resident institutions do not automatically prohibit consideration of graduates of Alberta approved degree programs.

Financial Security: Approved degree programs offered by private non-resident institutions and by private resident institutions (not including those designated as Independent Academic Institutions) are subject to a Financial Security check, which can be found in Appendix G.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS

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). An institution must undergo a successful Organizational Evaluation before it will be permitted to offer degrees in Alberta. The purpose of the Organizational Evaluation is to examine the extent to which the systems and processes of the institution are clearly established to achieve excellence in learning. That is, the Organizational Evaluation will establish the extent to which the institution has created sustainable processes within the institution, the extent to which its financial and operational resources are adequate to sustain the learning processes students will experience, and the link between students' experiences and demonstrable needs. Once an institution has completed an Organizational Evaluation, Council will consider the completion of a Program Evaluation of a proposed degree program.

Institutions that are proposing a first degree program, a first degree at a new level, or other precedent-setting degree will normally first successfully undergo an Organizational Evaluation prior to the completion of the Program Evaluation.

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 $15,000 to $25,000.

Private institutions (Resident and Non-Resident) must make an additional payment of the $5,000 application fee. 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.

5.1 ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATION PROCESSES

As part of its Organizational Evaluation, an institution must provide evidence that it meets Councils' Organizational Evaluation Standards and is ready to implement and sustain degree programming at the applicable undergraduate or graduate level.

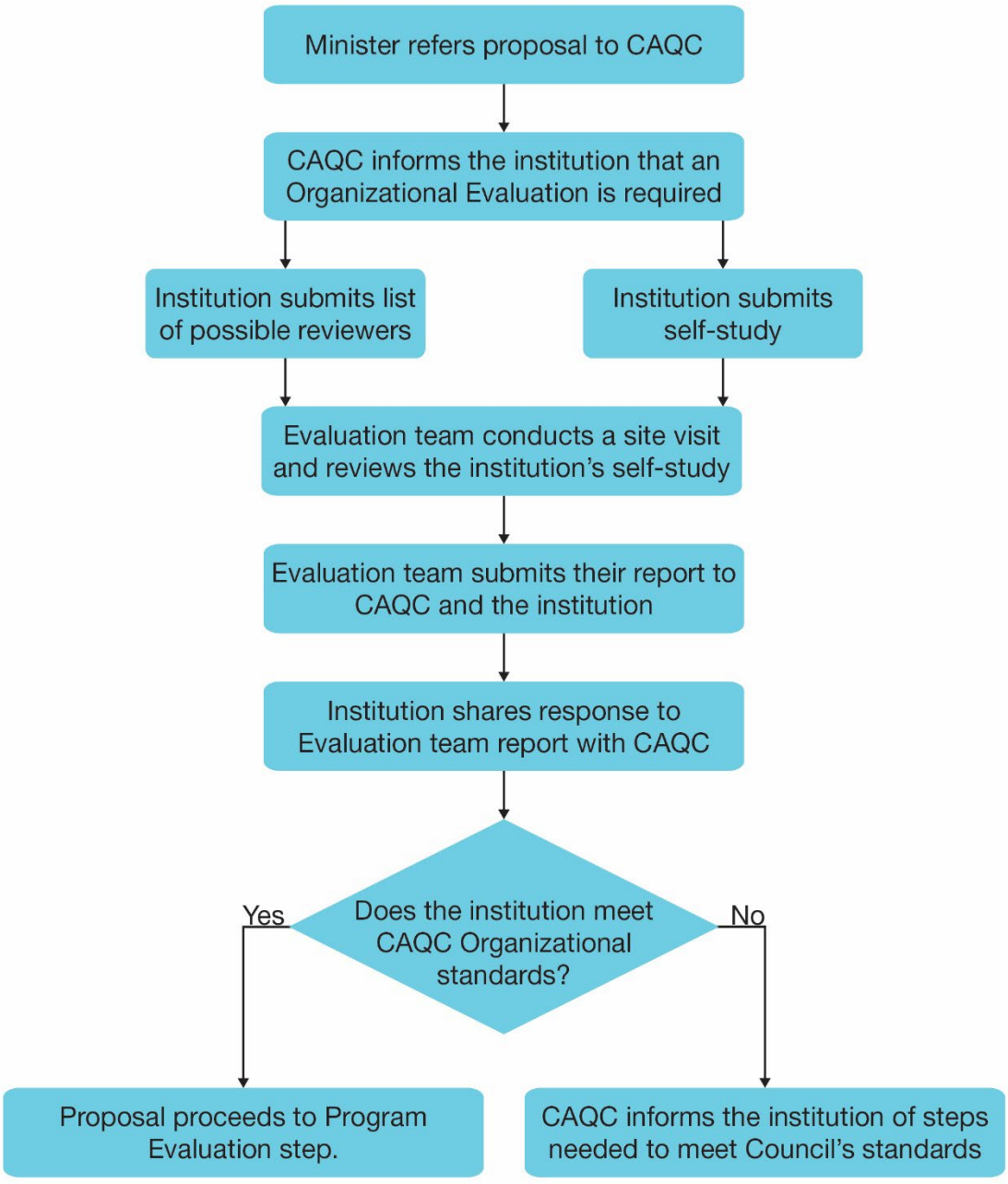
Typically, a Site Visit Team (SVT) of External Evaluators commissioned by Council assists it in determining whether an institution has the capacity to offer the program, or programs, proposed. The institution's self-study provides evidence used by Council and its evaluators to determine whether the institution is ready to implement and sustain degree programs. The institution is not required to be completely ready at the time of application to deliver the proposed program but if it is not ready at that time it is expected to have the necessary plans in place to ensure readiness prior to implementation.

The requirements for the institutional self-study are described in Section 5.3. The self-study is the primary source of information for SVTs, but evaluators may require access to all relevant

documentation, such financial records as are available, minutes of meetings throughout the institution, planning and related documents, measurement instruments, and performance data. Evaluators should be given access to any documents they require to complete their task. Documents that are confidential to the evaluators should be clearly marked as such.

Council will examine the report of the evaluators and the institution's response to determine whether or not standards have been met. The evaluation is based on the evidence provided to support the Organization's achievement of the Standards set by Council for degree-granting institutions.

CAQC Organizational Evaluation Process



5.2 NEW INSTITUTIONS

The organizational evaluation standards are designed to serve as a matrix for the assessment of an institution through its lifetime. However, the particular situation facing a new institution as it approaches the challenge of launching a first degree program calls for a different approach by Council. Clearly, a new institution will not have financial statements for previous years of operation or an existing calendar of course offerings and programs. In the case of a proposal by a new institution, the Council will look for a thorough planning process and evidence that the institution will have the resources, personnel, and organizational ability to launch the proposed program. The standards used to evaluate the new institution will be prospective, intended to detect the promise the institution shows of being able to produce the structures, processes, and outcomes outlined in this document.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS

When CAQC determines that an institution proposing a new degree program must complete an Organizational Evaluation, the institution must present a self-study in addition to the program proposal. The self-study is the main documentation needed for the Organizational Evaluation stage of Council's evaluation which assesses the institution's readiness to implement and sustain the degree program or programs.

The institutional self-study serves three purposes:

1. For an institution, it provides a useful analysis of its objectives, resources, students, and achievements and of the relationships among them that is valuable for the institution's strategic planning and improvement.
2. For Council and its evaluators, it provides detailed information to familiarize them with the institution.
3. It reveals the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for an institution to achieve its purposes and objectives. Thus, the self-study indicates to both Council and the institution the areas which the institution must change and improve.

Self-studies are intended to be comparative, reflective, and outcomes oriented. Where possible, they should include feedback from students, alumni, transfer institutions, employers, and graduates. The self-study should be attentive to the institution's current place in the broader Alberta educational context and address any concerns identified in previous evaluations.

In preparing for an Organizational Evaluation the institution should apply the above process to an analysis and evaluation relating to all approved degree programs. The following should guide the preparation of the self-study:

1. All institutions shall include an analytical summary of the major strengths of and areas requiring development within the institution.
2. Commentary on the Standards and related Assessment Criteria should be included in the body of the document while supporting documentation is to be placed in Appendices.
3. An institution that previously provided Council with a self-study should focus its subsequent self-study on changes that have taken place since that submission rather than duplicating previous information.
4. Self-Studies should be succinct and concise; Appendices should be limited to relevant and related items.

See the CAQC website for appropriate *Organizational Self-Study* templates and section 4.1 above for guidelines for effective Self Studies.

5.3.1 ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

The Ministry of Advanced Education routinely receives and reviews detailed information on the governance and financial capacity and planning of Alberta's degree-granting public post-secondary institutions. For this reason, Council does not require or review highly detailed information about these features of public institutions as part of the Organizational Evaluation process.

In contrast, the Ministry does not monitor the governance and finances of private institutions that seek to offer degrees in Alberta. Thus, Council requires information from private institutions that is more detailed than that required from public institutions to ensure that private institutions meet the standards applied to public institutions, and to make informed decisions about the readiness of private institutions to deliver degree programs. This applies both to Resident and Non-Resident Private Institutions.

As part of the initial application, private institutions (both resident and non-resident) are required to provide satisfactory proof that they will be able to provide suitable financial security. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the institution has the resources to offer the program for a sufficient length of time such that any student entering the program can be certain they will be able to complete the program at that institution within the program's expected timeframe. If a private institution offering an approved collaborative or dual degree program in Alberta does not collect tuition from students, then no financial security is required. Information requirements related to the governance and finances that private institutions must provide in their applications for degree-granting status are set out in Appendix G.

Private institutions are also required to demonstrate in their initial application that they have an appropriate plan for permanently securing and making available the academic records of their students and graduates in the event that the institution ceases to operate.

5.4 ORGANIZATIONAL SITE VISIT TEAM

Peer evaluation is an essential component of Council's evaluation. To assist in the assessment of an institution's application for a degree program, Council appoints a Site Visit Team of External Evaluators to conduct a site visit and provide independent opinion with respect to the Organizational Evaluation. The SVT's evaluation of the application documentation, its on-site appraisal and its report to Council are expected to aid Council's understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the institution's readiness to implement and sustain degree programs of the type and level for which the institution is applying.

Consistent with its core principle that peer review is an essential component of all CAQC evaluation processes, appointees to SVTs for Organizational Evaluations are experts who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in institutional governance and quality assurance.

An institution's self-study, as described in Section 5.3, is a key document for Organizational SVTs. Using Council's Organizational Evaluation Standards, the institution's self-study and insights

gained from a site visit to the applicant institution, the SVT provides thoughtful assessment of the applicant institution's readiness and capacity to offer and sustain the proposed programs.

The SVT's report will provide an independent opinion on:

1. The extent to which the systems and processes of the institution are clearly established to achieve excellence in learning outcomes;
2. The extent to which the institution has created sustainable internal processes;
3. The extent to which its financial and operational resources are adequate to sustain the learning process students will experience;
4. The link between students' experiences and demonstrable needs; and
5. For private institutions, an assessment of risk to help determine Council's financial security requirements should the program be approved.

6. ORGANIZATIONAL 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's 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.

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.

As an example of the spectrum, a newly approved major in History at an institution with approved BA 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.

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.
3. Peer review conducted by external experts is a critical element of an internal quality assurance process.
4. It is the responsibility of the institution to continue to meet Council's standards, and to report when it no longer does so.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 INSTITUTIONAL SELF-STUDIES

Institutional Self-studies are essential for Council to understand, evaluate, and enhance an institution's educational offerings, rather than simply documenting its degree programs. Self-studies should demonstrate an institution's ongoing efforts to improve its educational offerings as well as analyzing its strengths, weaknesses, and potential for excellence in achieving its purposes and objectives. The self-study indicates to both Council and the institution areas that require improvement and promotes open communication.

See the CAQC website for appropriate *Organizational Self-Study* templates and section 4.1 above for guidelines for effective Self Studies.

For the institution, the self-study:

1. Provides an opportunity for self-monitoring and evaluation;
2. Provides a useful analysis of its objectives, resources, students and achievements, and of the relationships between and among them that are valuable for the institution's strategic planning and improvement;
3. Provides input into, and an opportunity to report on, future plans, and directions to strengthen program(s) and processes, and to provide information that is not normally evident; and
4. Helps self-identify weaknesses, areas for improvement, gaps, and plans to develop associated strategies.

For Council and its evaluators, the self-study:

1. Provides the detailed information by which they are able to enhance their understanding of the institution's organizational processes and outcomes;
2. Provides insight into how the institutional culture has changed as a result of degree granting status;
3. Helps determine if the institution and its approved programs continue to meet Council's standards.
4. Helps to assess whether the institution has met or made progress towards meeting the commitments it made to Council when programs were first approved; and
5. Reveals the institution's commitment to ongoing periodic review and continuous improvement.

6.2 COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

Council normally conducts at least one comprehensive evaluation of an institution and its approved degree programs, with the first evaluation occurring no sooner than the sixth academic year after the institution begins offering its first approved degree program. This evaluation will normally include the results of the institution's review of its approved degree program or programs using external evaluators. Subsequent comprehensive evaluations may be conducted at Council's discretion.

Institutions that have been granted Delegated Review Status by Council are not required to undergo a comprehensive evaluation. At present, 6 Institutions in Alberta hold Delegated Review Status. These institutions undergo a Quality Assurance Process Audit which reviews the institution's quality assurance processes for new programs and program reviews every 5-7 years as described in Section 6.5.

The purposes of the comprehensive evaluations by Council are:

1. To determine whether an institution and its approved degree programs, including those offered collaboratively or off-campus, continue to meet organizational and program quality standards;
2. To determine whether an institution has met, or made satisfactory progress towards, meeting any commitments it made to Council regarding degree programs, staff, libraries, facilities or other matters;
3. To determine whether an institution has:
    i. Considered fully the comments, suggestions, and recommendations of reports by SVTs, insofar as they have been supported by Council, and have responded to them satisfactorily;
    ii. Developed suitable mechanisms to undertake its own self-evaluation, including monitoring and improving program quality; and
    iii. Developed effective policies and processes for new degree proposal development and internal approval.; and
4. To provide a basis for judgments regarding:
    i. The continuation of an approved degree program, including any Council requirements, if any; or
    ii. The withdrawal of approval of a degree program or programs.

5. Council's comprehensive evaluation of each institution primarily consists of:
    i. The institution's self-study,
    ii. The report of the SVT following a site visit, and
    iii. The response by the institution to the report of the SVT.

Non-resident institutions will not be required to undergo a comprehensive evaluation. However, Council may request that institutions offering approved degree programs in Alberta submit the report of the institution's self-evaluation of the program, or programs, which must include an evaluation of the program(s) by two external, independent academic experts.

6.2.1 COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION PROCESS

Approximately one year before Council intends to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, it will notify an institution of the pending evaluation and ask it to conduct an institutional self-study.

1. The institution will conduct an institutional self-study. It must contain an analysis and evaluation relating to all degree programs that were approved on recommendation of Council or the Private Colleges Accreditation Board. The self-study must follow the guidelines outlined in the *Comprehensive Organizational Evaluation Self-Study* template (available on the CAQC website).
2. The institutional self-study is to be submitted to Council by a date determined in consultation with the institution, normally within one year after notification.
3. As part of the evaluation, Council will appoint a Site Visit Team (SVT) of External Evaluators to assess the self-study and supporting information and visit the institution (see the *Comprehensive Organizational Evaluation Site Visit Team Report* template, available on the CAQC website).
4. Using the self-study and insights gained from the site visit, the SVT will write a report which will provide Council with information about the continuing academic merits of the approved degree programs offered by the institution and the adequacy of the systems and processes of the institution to support excellence in learning and program enhancement. Prior to its consideration by Council, the team's report will be provided by the Secretariat to the institution for a written response.
5. Council considers the self-study, the report of the SVT and the institution's response.
6. During the entire process, Council's Secretariat will maintain suitable contact with the institution regarding matters relating to the evaluation, including:
    i. Organization and planning;
    ii. The tentative and the finalized dates of visitations;
    iii. The nature of the SVT and the names of its members; and
    iv. The nature of any materials required of the institution and any activity it may be required to undertake.

6.2.2 THE SITE VISIT TEAM FOR COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATIONS

As peer evaluation is an essential component of Council evaluations, Council appoints a Site Visit Team (SVT) to assist it with the comprehensive evaluation. Using the institution's self -study and insights gained from a site visit to the applicant institution, the SVT assesses how successful the

institution has been in implementing and maintaining quality degree programs and meeting Council's organizational and program standards. Although this information will help Council decide on whether or not it recommends that the program be continued, the primary use of the SVT's assessment is to enable Council to offer recommendations to the institution for modifications and enhancements, and to determine whether further specific monitoring, including a subsequent comprehensive evaluation, may be required.

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted to determine whether the institution has the leadership, systems, plans, and capacity to implement and sustain the bachelor's or graduate programs of the kind it is delivering.

CAQC members and the institutions are invited to suggest SVT members that should each be recognized by their peers as accomplished academic and institutional leaders with recent leadership experience at the senior executive level. Collectively the team should have practical experience in:

1. Governance, academic administration and strategic planning;
2. Policy development;
3. Financial and infrastructure management;
4. Faculty and staff management;
5. Academic work requirements including academic freedom, teaching, and scholarship and research;
6. Student support services; and
7. Institutional assessment and evaluation.

For organizational reviewers of graduate programs, post-secondary educational management at the graduate level with at least one member having administrative leadership experience at, or above, the level of dean of graduate studies.

Although typically a three-person team, Council may vary the number of evaluators and their characteristics of a comprehensive evaluation SVT depending on the nature of the institution and the program(s) under review.

In the interest of selecting a team with diverse backgrounds, only one member from a single institution will be eligible for selection, so it is important to nominate only a few candidates from a single institution. To ensure an objective assessment, do not suggest names of individuals who have a current or previous relationship with the institution that would constitute a conflict of interest, such as individuals who were used as evaluators or consultants during the preparation of the institutional self-study. If they have had any relationship to the institution, please disclose it.

All nominations submitted by institutions for the SVT will be carefully considered. However, the final decision on the team composition rests with CAQC. Council takes appropriate steps to ensure that it does not appoint to SVTs individuals whose participation would place them in a conflict of interest.

6.2.3 FOLLOW-UP

At the meeting at which Council considers the self-study, report of the SVT and the institution's response to it, the Chair of the SVT and senior institution representatives may be invited to a

teleconference to discuss the evaluation. Subsequently, Council will hold an in-camera discussion to make its decision on the matter.

In the case of a favourable judgment, Council will notify the institution and the Minister. Where Council has concerns, Council may make suggestions about changes or enhancements that should be made or may specify its requirements about measures that need to be taken by an institution to ensure that it continues to meet Council's standards. This procedure may be accompanied by one or more meetings as requested by the institution or Council.
In the case of an unfavourable judgement, Council may:

1. Recommend that the Minister cancel the approval of one or more degree programs offered by the institution, and that the program or programs be terminated; and
2. If the institution is "a resident private post-secondary institution, also recommend to the Minister that the Minister recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the order designating the resident private post-secondary institution as a private post-secondary institution that may grant approved degrees be rescinded" (PSR 9.b).

Should it recommend cancellation of approval for a degree program Council will notify the institution and make recommendations to the Minister regarding such matters as:

1. The cessation of admissions to the program or program at any level;
2. The notification of applicants and students of the status of the program; and
3. Arrangements whereby students in the program may complete the program.

These procedures may be accompanied by one or more meetings as requested by the institution or Council.

6.3 MONITORING REPORTS

An institution may also be required to submit directly to Council a separate monitoring update on their approved degree programs consisting of specific information identified 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. 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. Prior to its submission, Council will write to institutions to remind them of its monitoring requirements and expectations. 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.

As the monitoring report covers the institutional and program-related issues, it is applicable to both organizational and program monitoring by Council.

The purpose of these reports is to monitor the quality of approved degree programs on a continuing basis. To achieve this, Council takes measures:

1. To determine whether an institution and its approved programs continue to meet organizational and program quality standards;
2. To determine whether an institution has met or has made satisfactory progress towards meeting any commitments it made to Council regarding programs, staff, libraries, facilities, or any other matter or condition set by Council;

3. To determine whether an institution has
    i. Satisfied conditions specified by Council;
    ii. Considered fully the comments, suggestions and recommendations of reports by SVTs, insofar as they have been supported by Council, and have responded satisfactorily to them; and
    iii. Developed suitable mechanisms to undertake its own self-evaluation.
4. To provide a basis for judgments regarding the continuation of an approved degree program, including any Council requirements, or the withdrawal of approval of a degree program.

Please see Section 6 of the *Degrees Handbook* for more information on Monitoring Reports.

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.

This section does not apply to institutions with Delegated Review Status (DRS) for which Council's monitoring mechanism is a Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA).

6.4 SPECIAL EVALUATIONS

Where, in the judgment of Council, circumstances warrant it - or if directed to do so by the Minister - Council may arrange a special evaluation of an institution.

This evaluation may assess aspects of the institution, any of its approved programs, or the proposed re-activation of a suspended degree program approved by the Ministry. The institution will be notified of:

1. The reason for the special evaluation;
2. The purpose of the evaluation;
3. The time of the evaluation;
4. Any preparation required of the institution; and
5. The size and composition of any SVT that may be used.

Council will then determine the outcomes of the special evaluation and communicate these to the Minister and to the institution.

6.5 OTHER EVALUATIONS

On Council's request, an institution may be required to report at a specified interval on issues relating to an approved degree program. Such issues may emanate from the reports of external evaluators, commitments made by the institution, or monitoring reporting information.

In the event that any academic agency, accrediting body, or similar association reviews and reports in writing upon any institutional matter relating to Council's responsibilities, the institution must make such a report available to Council.

6.6 DELEGATED REVIEW STATUS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDITS

Delegated Review Status (DRS) and CAQC's Quality Assurance Process Audits (QAPA) are linked. Only institutions that have received Delegated Review Status take part in CAQC's Quality Assurance Process Audits. All other institutions are subject to Council's regular evaluation and monitoring at the organizational and program levels (e.g. Program Evaluations, Comprehensive Organizational Evaluations, Monitoring Reports, and Program Cyclical Reviews).

CAQC may grant DRS to an institution which clearly demonstrates its ownership and responsibility for quality assurance in offering degree programs. The Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) is a monitoring mechanism for post-secondary institutions that have achieved Delegated Review Status (DRS). One an institution achieves DRS, they are automatically engaged in the Quality Assurance Process Audits.

Council views DRS as operationalizing the core principle that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with degree granting institutions themselves. Moving an institution to DRS indicates CAQC's confidence that the institution has accepted this responsibility, has a track record demonstrating critical self-assessment of quality assurance of its degree programs, and is thus ready for a different level and type of monitoring through QAPA.

The following six post-secondary institutions have received Delegated Review Status (DRS). They are empowered by Council to evaluate their own program proposals using internal quality assurance processes and are subject to cyclical Quality Assurance Process Audits (QAPA): Athabasca University, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, Grant MacEwan University, and Mount Royal University

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6.6.1 DELEGATED REVIEW STATUS RESPONSIBILITIES/REQUIREMENTS

Delegated Review Status (DRS) enables an institution to conduct independent institutional reviews (Delegated Program Evaluations) of proposals for new degree programs it wishes to offer.

Institutions holding DRS are not required to submit to CAQC, in advance, the usual full documentation on which CAQC bases recommendations for program approval (e.g., Part B Proposal Template). However, institutions with DRS status must continue to complete the Part B Proposal Template and retain copies of all new proposals including reports from Independent Academic Experts.

Institutions holding DRS are responsible to provide CAQC with an Institutional Attestation for Delegated Program Evaluation that the Delegated Program Evaluation process has been followed and that CAQC standards have been met.

After the proposed program receives a positive System Coordination Review result, CAQC will forward a request for Ministry approval of a new program immediately upon review of the Statement of Institutional Attestation for Delegated Program Evaluation.

It is understood that an institution with DRS may choose to follow this procedure for all program proposals or only for some. It is an internal decision at the institution whether to complete a CAQC Program Evaluation process, perhaps for proposals from a new faculty or with new academic

administrators, or to submit a program under DRS, such as where faculties have a strong record of program development.

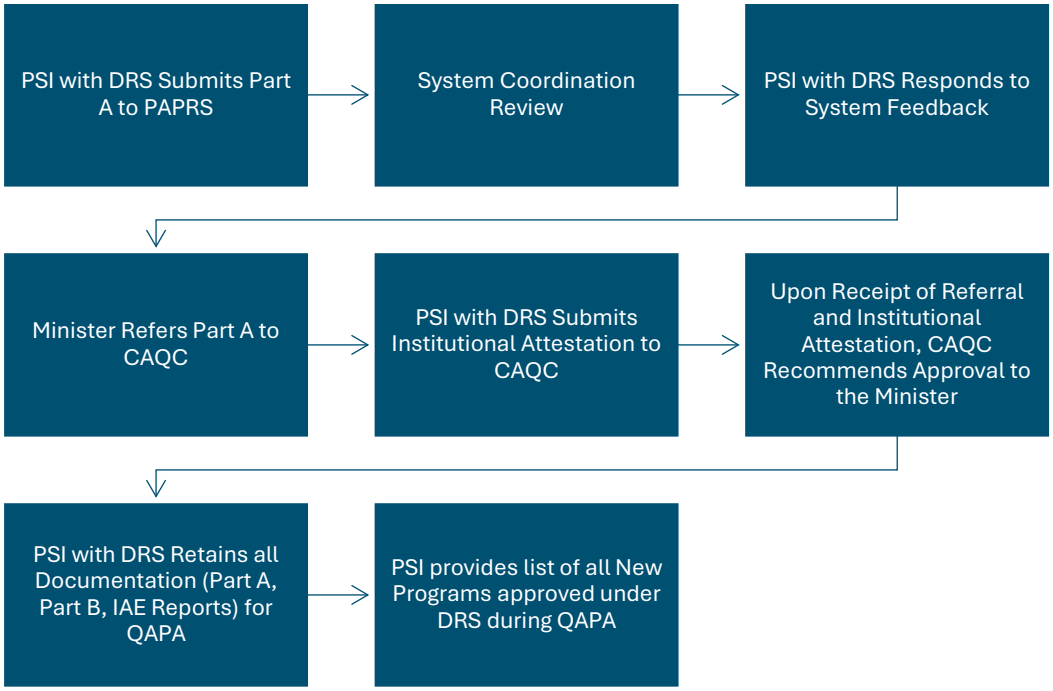
Institutions with DRS are subject to a review of their program development and approval processes. This review will normally take place as part of the Quality Assurance Process Audits every 5-7 years.

Institutions that receive DRS are required to:

- Submit Degree Proposals to PAPRS for System Coordination Review and respond to all feedback from the Ministry and other PSIs;
- Submit Institutional Attestations to CAQC;
- Engage in Peer Review of Degrees during development using Independent Academic Experts (see Part B Proposal Template);
- Complete and keep Part B templates and appendices (including reports from Independent; Academic Experts) for all new proposals as part of the Quality Assurance Process Audits;
- Take part in cyclical Quality Assurance Process Audits including Site Visits.

Institutions that receive DRS are no longer required to:

- Submit Part B of Program Proposals to Council;
- Undergo Standard or Expedited evaluations for proposed programs (though they may choose to engage in these processes;
- Provide monitoring reporting to Council on any approved degree program;
- Undergo Comprehensive Organizational Evaluations or Organizational Monitoring Reports;
- Report the results of Program Cyclical Reviews to Council.



6.6.2 DRS & QAPA ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

An institution wishing to move to Delegated Review Status, and therefore engage in Quality Assurance Process Audits, must apply to Council and demonstrate that it the Applicant Institution has:

1. Completed at least one (1) Comprehensive Organizational Evaluation by CAQC (or PCAB) with results found satisfactory to Council;
2. Policies and procedures for developing, approving, and reviewing high quality degree programs, which include
3. rigorous governance approval processes aligned with policy and the PSLA that include and
4. mechanisms for internal and external peer review;
5. A record of submitting to CAQC quality program proposals and successful implementation of new degree programs;
6. A record of cyclical program reviews (normally at least three cyclical program reviews completed and submitted to Council with results found satisfactory by Council prior to application) based on appropriate institutional policy and procedures for cyclical reviews of degree programs.
7. Demonstrated capacity to produce a reflective self-study, select appropriate Independent Academic Experts, respond effectively to the external review, and develop, implement, and monitor a sound and accountable action plan;
8. Ongoing program evaluation processes, in additional to cyclical program reviews, such as annual reviews or curricular reviews, resulting in a record of continuous improvement in curriculum, pedagogy, scholarly activity and other aspects of degree programs;
9. Rigorous evaluation policies and procedures for faculty and instructional staff that support a culture of a robust commitment to teaching and learning effectiveness and scholarly activity;
10. A forward-looking strategic process for program and organizational assessment, informed by appropriate self-studies and advice offered by external expert reviewers.

The institution must also stipulate to meeting the following fundamental criteria when conducting all future Delegated Program Evaluations of proposals for new degree programs. These criteria meet CAQC's Core Principles 2, 3, 5, and 6 about recognized standards, institutional responsibility, peer review, and stakeholder consultation:

1. The institution has fully developed and reliable quality assurance policies and procedures, as recognized in a record of successful new program proposals and in successful institutional audits.
2. The program has been developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including faculty, students, applicable accreditation and professional bodies, and appropriate communities of interest.
3. The institution agrees to use the CAQC Proposal Template (Part B) as the standard format for presenting evidence to support assessment of the quality of proposed programs across the Campus Alberta system.
4. The institution's policies and practices require at least two (2) independent academic expert reviews of program proposals, including an overall positive recommendation on the proposal, with specific attention paid to program learning outcomes and curriculum, academic staffing and resources, scholarly activity, degree requirements including admission standards, student support, and other relevant conditions.

5. The recommendations of the Independent Academic Experts' review(s) have been accepted or satisfactorily addressed.
6. The program proposal has been approved according to institutional governance processes.
7. The institution agrees to retain all documentation related to the Program Proposal and Approval, and any subsequent Cyclical Program Reviews, and to make these available to CAQC during Quality Assurance Process Audits or on request.
8. The provost/academic vice-president attests that the above conditions have been fulfilled.
9. The institution agrees that, if substantial weaknesses in its processes are disclosed in a Quality Assurance Process Audit, this status may be suspended for a period of time or revoked.

6.6.3 APPLICATION FOR MOVING TO DRS & QAPA

An institution that meets the Eligibility Criteria may apply to move to Delegated Review Status & Quality Assurance Process Audits. Institutions are advised to consult with Council prior to applying.

An institution wishing to move to Delegated Review Status shall prepare an application which demonstrates that it meets the specified criteria.

1. An application should be accompanied by the report of at least two independent evaluators that will assess the institution's readiness to move toward its ownership of quality assurance in monitoring degree programs, guided by the criteria for moving to Delegated Review Status, along with the institutional response.
    i. An institution must use the CAQC guidelines for selection of Independent Academic Experts and may wish to consult CAQC before making the selection. See the *Degrees Handbook* for guidelines on selecting Independent Academic Experts.
2. The application will be reviewed by a CAQC's ad hoc DRS Application Review Committee composed of one member from each of the CARU, UU, PI and IAI sectors (selected by those sectors) and four members from CAQC, plus the CAQC Chair or Co-Chair, who will chair the Committee.
3. The Committee will make a recommendation to Council, with rationale, on the application.
4. CAQC will then make a decision on the application based on the Committee's recommendation and communicate the outcome, with its rationale, to the institution and the Committee.
5. CAQC will inform the Minister when an institution has moved to Delegated Review Status, including participation in future QAPA, and communicate this on CAQC's website.

For those institutions that have successfully moved to DRS, CAQC will determine with the institution its place in the Quality Assurance Process Audit cycle.

See the *Application for Moving to CAQC Delegated Review Status* template available on the CAQC website.

6.6.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS AUDIT (QAPA)

Quality Assurance Process Audits are a joint venture, supported by the institutions that have been granted Delegated Review Status, the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC or Council) and the

Ministry of Advanced Education (AE). Quality Assurance Process Audits (QAPA) fulfill CAQC's legislated obligation to monitor Minister-approved degree programs at institutions with Delegated Review Status to ensure Council's standards of quality continue to be met. Quality Assurance Process Audits are conducted on a 5-7-year cycle; institutions that have achieved Delegated Review Status since the last Audit cycle will join as observers in preparation for their Quality Assurance Process Audit.

Only institutions granted Delegated Review Status are subject to Quality Assurance Process Audits.

QAPA Objectives and Purposes

A Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) is a cyclical monitoring mechanism applied to institutions with Delegated Review Status. Quality Assurance Process Audits are used by Council to determine whether an institution with DRS

1. maintains quality assurance processes for the internal review of its degree programs that meets the Minister's and Council's expectations;
2. rigorously applies its quality assurance policies and processes for its degree programs during development and review; and
3. addresses findings of Independent Academic Experts, during degree development and review, with an appropriate response.

It provides Council with confidence that criteria and processes for the systematic and self-critical examination of programs are in place at an institution, and that those criteria and processes are being rigorously applied.

While respecting the autonomy and accountability of institutions and the commonalities and differences among institutional review processes, the audit has the following purposes:

1. to ensure criteria and processes are in place at each institution for the rigorous examination of programs and to provide external assurance that those criteria and processes are being rigorously applied;
2. to inform CAQC's monitoring role by using streamlined procedures that respect the internal processes used in each of the institutions;
3. to ensure the audit process will, to the extent possible, avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and will be cost-effective for both institutions and CAQC;
4. to inform the design of a made-in-Alberta auditing system that avails itself of leading practices found in quality assurance audit systems in other jurisdictions in Canada and in the world, and to contribute to continuous improvement in internal quality assurance at each of the institutions; and
5. to identify any particularly effective practices and/or lessons learned within institutions' cyclical review and new degree program development processes that will be shared with each other and with institutions from other sectors in the system.

Quality Assurance Process Audit Principles

The audit process is guided by five key principles:

1. Principle 1: Visible and credible evidence of robust quality assurance criteria and processes is vital to each of the institutions in Campus Alberta, to Council and the Ministry, and to the national and international reputation of Alberta degrees.
2. Principle 2: The primary responsibility and accountability for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with post-secondary institutions themselves.

3. Principle 3: The on-going monitoring of quality assurance criteria and processes should be carried out so as to maximize the opportunity for affirming, and adding value to, the internal quality assurance processes at each institution through peer evaluation and sharing of best practices from other institutions in Alberta and elsewhere.
4. Principle 4: Credible quality assurance should be dynamic, responsive, and have peer evaluation as a central feature.
5. Principle 5: Monitoring of QA processes should be streamlined, avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, and the benefits should be commensurate with the costs and effort.

For institutions granted DRS, the Quality Assurance Process Audit (QAPA) will be extended to also serve as the main monitoring mechanism Council uses to ensure that appropriate policies and processes are in place for the development and quality assurance of new degree programs submitted to the Ministry for approval, and to provide external assurance that internal policies and processes are being applied, that rigorous governance approval processes are in place, and that established criteria are consistently met.

QAPA Steering Committee and Timelines
The audit process is directed by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives appointed by Provosts and Vice-Presidents (Academic) at participating institutions, and members of CAQC. The Steering Committee will be supported by the CAQC Secretariat and chaired by one of the Co-chairs of CAQC.

Audits will be conducted as expeditiously as possible within two years of commencement and following a schedule developed by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will work with each institution to determine both the schedule for the audit, including the site visit, and the information and documentation to be provided.

Completed Program Proposals and Reviews for Audit
Upon request by the Steering Committee, the institution being audited will submit lists of all cyclical reviews completed and all programs approved under Delegated Review Status**,** over the past five years. These lists are normally due **6 months** prior to the institution's anticipated audit site visit**.**

From each list the Steering Committee will select a minimum of three program cyclical reviews and a minimum of three programs approved (totalling six) in order to examine how the institution is applying its approved internal quality assurance processes. In selecting new programs, the Steering Committee will consider the diversity of types and levels of degrees offered by the institution, diversity of faculties/schools/units, the exemplars used in the previous audit if applicable, and programs involving collaborative partners. When selecting reviews for audit, the Steering Committee will prioritize based on the currency of the reviews and will select the more recent ones, where feasible.

Audit Teams & Site Visits
Quality Assurance Process Audits include a site visit (normally of 2-3 days) to each participating institution so that an Audit Team can speak both with members of the senior administration responsible for implementing programs and program reviews, and with the deans or senior academic officers whose programs were selected for sampling by the Steering Committee.

Institutions undergoing audits will cover all costs related to their reviews and site visits. The institution undergoing the audit will name a contact who will be responsible for working with the CAQC Secretariate and Audit Team with respect to logistical arrangements (travel, accommodation, etc.).

An Audit Team will normally consist of three members with senior academic administrative experience and with experience participating in institutional review processes (in addition to observers and/or members of Council or the CAQC Secretariat). Auditors must not have a conflict of interest with the institution in whose audit they participate, and at least one auditor may be from another institution undergoing audit in the same cycle.

The Steering Committee, with input from the institution, will create and prioritize a list of potential auditors. The Steering Committee will make every effort to include as audit team members those who have been highly ranked in the prioritized lists provided by the institution. However, the Steering Committee reserves the final decision on the composition of the audit team.

Once recruitment is complete, the Steering Committee Chair will notify the institution, the Steering Committee and members of the audit team of membership. The Steering Committee will also select a leader for each audit team.

Submitting Policy and Practice Documents

At least **four weeks** prior to the audit site visit, the institution will make the following documents, available electronically to the CAQC Secretariat and Audit Team members:

1. Institution's mandate and strategic plan
2. policy or other documents describing the institution's quality assurance process for cyclical program and unit reviews, as well as those related to the new degree development process;
3. a self-study including
    i. the context for the QA process which should be laid out by provision of recommendations from the previous QA process audit, the institution's response, and actions taken to address recommendations, and
    ii. a critical self-assessment of the institution's QA processes for monitoring degree programs and application of the DRS, including any changes to those processes since the last audit;
4. documentation for each of the exemplars; and
5. a draft audit site visit schedule.

At the same time, for each of the cyclical program reviews selected by the Steering Committee the institution should provide the following:

1. the policy/process in effect at the time of the review;
2. a summary of process dates;
3. the site visit itinerary;
4. the unit's or program's self-study (normally without appendices, containing CVs and similar information);
5. the external team's review report; and
6. the institution/unit's response to the review, including, when pertinent follow-up actions have been taken in light of the review.

For each of the new programs approved under Delegated Program Evaluation selected by the Steering Committee, the institution should provide the following:

1. the institutional program development policy/processes in effect at the time of the review (except for those that were included with samples of cyclical reviews);
2. completed Part B (CAQC Proposal Template);
3. the two independent academic experts' reports on program proposals (as required with Part B);
4. evidence that the recommendations of the Independent Academic Experts' reviews have been accepted or satisfactorily addressed; and
5. evidence that the program has been approved according to institutional governance processes.

This documentation will be sent electronically to the CAQC Secretariat at least **four weeks** in advance of the site visit. Other relevant documents will be made available on site and on a confidential basis to the audit team at its request.

Audit Report

Using the materials provided by the institution as well as insights gained from the site visit, the audit team will prepare a report to the Steering Committee.
The report should address the two objectives of the audit process:

1. maintains quality assurance processes for the internal review of its degree programs that meets the Minister's and Council's expectations;
2. rigorously applies its quality assurance policies and processes for its degree programs during development and review.

The report should identify strengths and weaknesses in the internal quality assurance processes it has examined, and provide recommendations for improvement, if there are any.

Finally, the audit team should identify leading policies or procedures or effective practices in an institution's internal review process that might be shared with other institutions.

Audit teams should use the Audit Report template provided by CAQC to guide their reports (provided by Secretariat) but may adapt the template to meet the specific circumstances of the institution being audited as needed.

Normally, the report should be forwarded electronically to the Steering Committee via the CAQC Secretariat within **three weeks** of the conclusion of the site visit. CAQC will then share this report with the Institution.

Institution's Response

The audit report will be forwarded by the CAQC Secretariat to the institution for a written response, in which the institution will have an opportunity to comment on the audit report and to respond to the findings and recommendations of the audit team. Normally the response should be forwarded electronically within three weeks.

Outcomes of QAPA

The audit team's report and the institution's response will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and then sent to CAQC along with the Steering Committee's recommendation. CAQC, in consultation with the Steering Committee, will then convey the outcome to the institution whose internal review processes for its degree programs were the subject of the audit.

As noted in the Institutional Attestation, if substantial weaknesses in its processes are disclosed in a Quality Assurance Process Audit, the institution's Delegated Review Status and participation in Quality Assurance Process Audits may be suspended for a period of time or revoked.

Post-QAPA Evaluation

Following the completion of the audit process, the Steering Committee will review the process and what has been learned from it, and will make a recommendation, perhaps with modifications, for future audit cycles and their improvements.

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/