



Campus Alberta Quality Council

2018-2021 Action Plan

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Message from the Co-Chairs



On behalf of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), we are pleased to provide you with our 2018-21 Action Plan. This Action Plan, Council's seventh, has been developed in accordance with best-practices guidelines identified by the Public Agencies Governance Framework.

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



The 2018-21 Action Plan identifies three goals based on Council's mandate:

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

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

A milestone this year was the completion of the Agencies, Boards and Commission Review of Council, with the decision to maintain CAQC as an arms-length government agency. During the review, a number of recommendations were made to ensure that CAQC remains positioned to meet its mandate as a quality assurance agency for the post-secondary system, and this action plan reflects these recommendations. Another key achievement is our successful recent recruitment for Council membership – we are very pleased that Council now has full membership for the first time in many years.

In addition, Council will continue to work closely with institutions to refine and clarify Council's expectations with respect to the role of faculty scholarship, and research and teaching excellence in contributing to high quality degree programs. We acknowledge the reciprocal relationships we have with institutions and the value it brings to our work. Council will also continue to support collaboration within Campus Alberta by ensuring that new collaborative delivery of degree arrangements, developed on the basis of the programs approved on Council's recommendation, meet CAQC's quality standards and conditions. Regarding our monitoring function, Council will work with the Comprehensive and Academic Research Institutions (CARI) to implement the second round of audits of quality assurance processes, and will begin to implement extension of the audit process for the monitoring of degree programs at institutions beyond the CARI sector. To insure that Alberta standards are recognized nationally and internationally, Council will continue to engage in discussion with other Canadian and international agencies with similar mandates.

With the announcement that Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College will transition to offering baccalaureate degrees, the year ahead will bring important developments for Campus Alberta and additional work for Council. We look forward to working with you, the Ministry, and the stakeholders in the post-secondary system to meet the best interests of learners and ensure high quality degree programs will continue to be available. Council also looks forward to providing an update on our 2018-21 Action Plan in our 2017-18 Annual Report.

Peter Mahaffy
Co-Chair

Art Quinney
Co-Chair

Mandate

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

Principles

CORE PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

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

Goals and Priority Initiatives

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

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

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

Council's goals and priority initiatives are aligned with Advanced Education's (AE) Business Plan 2017-20, in particular with its Outcome Two:

High-quality education, training and research make a positive contribution to Alberta's economy, society, culture and environment,

The Business Plan also includes the following Key Strategies related to Council's activities:

- 1.3 Collaborate with Alberta's Indigenous peoples and adult learning providers to improve Indigenous educational outcomes.
- 3.1 Review Advanced Education's agencies, boards and commissions to ensure relevance, effectiveness and best practices.
- 3.3 Support robust accountability for the department and the system.

Council also acknowledges AE's five principles guiding the adult learning system and departmental decision-making:

Accessibility – Every Albertan should have the same opportunity to get a post-secondary education.

Affordability – Every Albertan should have the same opportunity to get a post-secondary education, regardless of financial circumstances.

Quality – Albertans should get the best education possible here at home.

Accountability – Post-secondary education providers must be accountable to students, the government and Albertans.

Coordination – Albertans should get full advantage from a diverse post-secondary system.

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

Goal 1 Council will carry out quality new program reviews that are well-developed, efficient, and evidence-based.

Priority Initiatives:

- 1.1 Continue to explore additional ways to work with institutions to emphasize institutional support for program-level teaching and learning effectiveness as they develop new programs.
- 1.2 Continue to work with institutions to incorporate more fully the use of student learning outcomes and their assessment in new program development.
- 1.3 As a follow-up to Council's systematic review of its quality assessment processes and guidelines and experience with respect to program proposals from non-resident institutions, make any necessary changes to processes and guidelines.
- 1.4 Undertake a systematic review of the *CAQC Handbook*.
- 1.5 Revise Council's baccalaureate guidelines with respect to applied degrees, baccalaureate degrees in nursing, and bachelor of education degrees.
- 1.6 Review the terms of reference for the Proposal Review Standing Committee.
- 1.7 Work with the Ministry and institutions to develop mechanisms to assure collaborative delivery arrangements involving Council-recommended degree programs meet Council's quality standards and conditions.

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

Priority Initiatives:

- 2.1 Work with institutions to more fully use student learning outcomes and their assessment in their quality assurance of degree programs.
- 2.2 Work with institutions to develop guidelines for demonstrating evidence of teaching effectiveness for the purpose of improving the quality of student learning.
- 2.3 Review the terms of reference for the Monitoring Standing Committee.
- 2.4 Work with the CARI provosts to implement the second round of audits with the CARI institutions.
- 2.5 Implement extension of the audit process for the monitoring of degree granting institutions beyond the CARI sector.
- 2.6 Continue to work with sectors to further refine expectations for scholarly activity to support high quality programs using, as appropriate, adaptations of frameworks such as Boyer's models of scholarship.
- 2.7 Continue to support institutions, sectors, and the Campus Alberta system in the development and strengthening of quality assurance processes.

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

Priority Initiatives:

- 3.1 Strike a committee consisting of Council members and representatives from the CARIs, BASIs, and IAs to review CAQC's BA/BSc guidelines and expectations.
- 3.2 Explore with stakeholders the most effective ways to increase Council's visibility and enhance dialogue on quality assurance initiatives, such as webinars.
- 3.3 In light of Council's work with Yukon Education, establish a communication protocol with Yukon Education officials.
- 3.4 Work with the Ministry on initiatives and policies relevant to Council's mandate.
- 3.5 Through Council's Co-Chairs, continue regular communication with the Minister and senior Ministry officials.
- 3.6 Through Council's Co-Chairs and Secretariat, continue to enhance consultation and share effective practices with post-secondary quality assurance agencies in Canada.
- 3.7 Continue discussions with Alberta post-secondary students about their role and engagement in the quality assurance of degree programs.
- 3.8 Continue discussions with Alberta post-secondary faculty about their role and engagement in quality assurance of degree programs.
- 3.9 Engage with Indigenous communities and Campus Alberta to develop and launch means by which CAQC, within its mandate, can advance the national project of reconciliation by supporting Indigenization in Alberta's postsecondary institutions.