



Campus Alberta Quality Council

2019-2022 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 2019-22 Action Plan. This Action Plan, Council's eighth, 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 provide advice to the Minister with respect to new degree program proposals; and secondly, to monitor approved degree programs after their implementation.

The 2019-22 Action Plan identifies three goals based on Council's mandate:

- 1) Council will carry out high quality, efficient, and evidence-based reviews of new degree program proposals;
- 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 key achievement this year was the completion of the second round of audits of the CARU institutions, ensuring that criteria and processes are in place at each institution for the rigorous examination of programs and providing external assurance that those criteria and processes are being rigorously applied. In addition, the term of Paul Gooch was renewed, and Council welcomed Arlette Zinck as a new member. However the biggest transition was Council bidding farewell to outgoing Co-chairs Peter Mahaffey and Art Quinney and welcoming the two of us as Co-chairs as of 1 July 2019.

Looking forward, Council will continue to work with representatives from across Campus Alberta to review CAQC's BA/BSc guidelines and expectations and will also work closely with institutions to further incorporate student learning outcomes and their assessment in new program development and in quality assurance of existing programs. We acknowledge the reciprocal relationships we have with institutions and the value it brings to our work. To help focus Council's efforts and make sure that its processes and practices are efficient, effective, and avoid undue bureaucracy we are also undertaking systematic reviews of the Handbook and operations of key committees. Finally, to ensure that Alberta's standards are recognized nationally and internationally, Council will continue to engage in discussion with other Canadian and international agencies with similar mandates.

We look forward to working with 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 2019-22 Action Plan in our 2019-20 Annual Report.

Dietmar Kennepohl
Co-Chair

Gayla Rogers
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.

MINISTRY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

Council's goals and priority initiatives are aligned with Advanced Education's (AE) Business Plan 2018-21, in particular with the following outcomes:

Outcome Two: High-quality education, skills development and research make a positive contribution to Alberta's economy, society, culture and environment.

Outcome Three: The adult learning system is accountable and coordinated.

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

- 2.1 Support high-quality education and skills development programming and improve campus experiences through investing in post-secondary infrastructure.
- 3.1 Review Advanced Education's agencies, boards and commissions to ensure they are relevant, efficient, effective, and demonstrating best practices in governance.
- 3.2 Articulate the roles and responsibilities of Advanced Education's public agencies within the adult learning system.

Council also acknowledges AE's five principles guiding the adult learning system and Ministry 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.

CAQC 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 the Campus Alberta system including degree-granting institutions and sectors, to support their own efforts to build and maintain effective quality assurance processes and practices and to continue to strengthen their quality assurance systems. Council ensures that its processes and practices are efficient, effective, and avoid undue bureaucracy as it works to increase Council's visibility and enhance dialogue on quality assurance initiatives.

Council has outlined three goals, along with priority initiatives and continuing operations that lead to the achievement of these goals. Priority initiatives are short term actions deemed a high priority by Council and requiring focus until the actions are complete. Continuing operations are of equal importance to Council and include actions that are ongoing components of Council's work because of the important role they play in achieving Council's performance goals.

Goal 1 Council will carry out high quality, efficient, and evidence-based reviews of new degree program proposals.

Priority Initiatives:

- 1.1 Undertake a systematic review of the *CAQC Handbook*.
- 1.2 Revise Council's baccalaureate guidelines with respect to applied, nursing, and education degrees.
- 1.3 Review the terms of reference for the Proposal Review Standing Committee.

Continuing Operations:

- 1.4 Work with institutions to incorporate more fully the use of student learning outcomes and their assessment in new program development.
- 1.5 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 Review the terms of reference for the Monitoring Standing Committee.
- 2.2 Extend, as appropriate, the audit process for the monitoring of degree granting institutions beyond the CARU sector.

Continuing Operations:

- 2.3 Work with institutions to effectively use student learning outcomes and their assessment in their quality assurance of degree programs.

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 Explore ways to work with institutions to emphasize institutional support for program-level teaching and learning effectiveness and to develop guidelines for demonstrating evidence of teaching effectiveness for the purpose of improving the quality of student learning.
- 3.2 Working in a committee of Council members and representatives from across Campus Alberta, review CAQC's BA/BSc guidelines and expectations.

Continuing Operations:

- 3.3 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 model of scholarship.
- 3.4 Communicate regularly with the Minister and senior Ministry officials on initiatives, policies, and other matters relevant to Council's mandate.
- 3.5 Enhance consultation and share effective practices with postsecondary quality assurance agencies in Canada.
- 3.6 Discuss with Alberta post-secondary students and faculty their role and engagement in the quality assurance of degree programs.
- 3.7 Council recognizes the importance of and supports efforts to move forward the reconciliation process in the Alberta post-secondary system.