

Roles and Mandates Policy Framework

for Alberta's Adult Learning System



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Advanced Education, Government of Alberta

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1.0. Introduction

Alberta's adult learning system offers a broad spectrum of formal, non-formal, and informal learning opportunities across all regions of the province. It plays an integral role in helping build vibrant and inclusive communities, while removing barriers, supporting greater equality, and helping Albertans reach their full potential. The adult learning system also helps the province address critical questions and challenges, including those related to labour force demands and the need for Alberta to have a resilient and diversified economy, and enable innovation. By providing Albertans with a wide range of opportunities to advance their education, the adult learning system produces a highly-skilled and productive workforce, empowers citizens to make meaningful contributions to their communities, and helps enable vulnerable populations to overcome poverty.

The adult learning system is comprised of a large and diverse range of educational providers that work together to provide accessible, affordable and quality learning opportunities for Albertans in an accountable and coordinated fashion. This includes public post-secondary institutions, publicly-funded private post-secondary institutions, First Nations Colleges, community adult learning organizations and private career colleges. Although all adult learning providers are unique and serve diverse populations, they also work together collaboratively and in complementary roles to ensure the different needs of Alberta learners and communities are met.

Overview of Framework

The Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Adult Learning System (the Framework) provides policy direction for post-secondary institutions and other adult learning providers that reflects and supports the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. This includes policy direction on institutional roles, mandates, relationships with each other, with government, and to some extent with their communities.

The Framework differentiates the publicly-funded post-secondary system in Alberta into six sectors and assigns each of the 26 publicly-funded institutions to one of the sectors, providing descriptions of the programming, research and collaboration mandates of each sector as set out in the Post-secondary Learning Act (PSLA) and regulations.

1.1 Adult Learning System Vision and Principles

In October 2016, the Government of Alberta approved a strategic vision for adult learning in Alberta based on the principles of: Accessibility, Affordability, Quality, Accountability, and Coordination.

Vision

Every Albertan has the same opportunity to fulfill their full potential and contribute to their communities by obtaining a high-quality post-secondary education regardless of financial circumstances.

Principles

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.

The Government of Alberta is committed to an adult learning system that prepares Albertans for success in a changing economy. Education is the cornerstone and Albertans know that investing in high-quality, affordable, and accessible post-secondary education is key to securing a diversified economy and a strong society for all Albertans.

Not every aspect of adult learning in Alberta can equally serve all five principles. Some policies generally lend themselves to delivering on certain aspects of this mandate better than others. In the case of the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Adult Learning System, the primary focus is on supporting and enhancing system coordination, accessibility and quality.

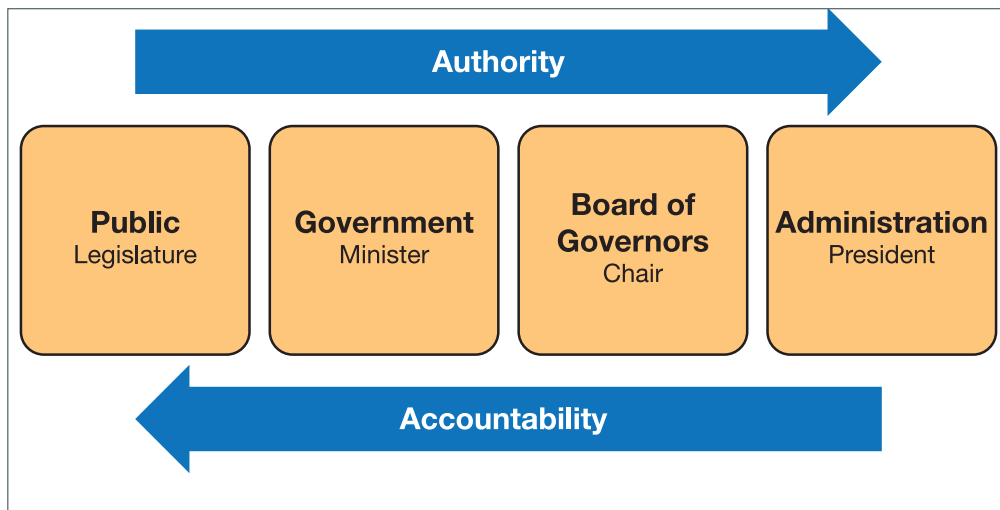
Policy Direction 1A: The broad strategic direction that guides government decision-making, policy, funding, and regulation on adult learning in Alberta is rooted in the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. All adult learning providers, as well as government, are to operate in a fashion that aligns with and/or advances progress in achieving the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles in support of Alberta's social, economic, and environmental objectives

2.0 Publicly-funded Post-secondary Institutions

Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions include 21 public post-secondary institutions, and five publicly-funded private post-secondary institutions. The majority of learners in Alberta attend one of these institutions. These institutions provide high-quality learning experiences, coordinate and play a significant role in Alberta's research and innovation agenda, generate human and information resources that lead the province's knowledge-driven economy, and advance the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. The policies governing these institutions, outlined below, have been established for the benefit of learners and the province, with the aim of advancing the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles.

2.1 System Governance - Public Institutions

The board of governors at each public post-secondary institution is required to manage and operate the institution according to its mandate, and to work in the institution's best interest. However, the boards of governors of public post-secondary institutions are accountable to government through the Minister of Advanced Education, while the Minister is ultimately accountable to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the operation and performance of the post-secondary system. In particular, the Minister is accountable for ensuring that public post-secondary institutions are fulfilling their mandates and meeting the needs of Albertans in an efficient and effective manner.



The PSLA and its associated regulations govern Alberta's post-secondary system, including all public universities, colleges, polytechnic institutions, and Banff Centre.

The PSLA:

- Enshrines the Six-Sector Model in provincial legislation;
- Outlines the roles and responsibilities of post-secondary institutions;
- Outlines the composition of boards at public post-secondary institutions;
- Provides for the establishment and management of student organizations, faculty associations, and bargaining between faculty and post-secondary institution boards;
- Outlines the powers of various staff members and institutional accountability requirements of publicly-funded post-secondary institutions;
- Outlines how most students' tuition can increase; and
- Provides for the establishment of the Campus Alberta Quality Council.

The **Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act (APAGA)** creates responsibilities for public agencies, including developing mandates and acting within those mandates, creating Codes of Conduct for their members, and developing and working towards objectives and targets. It also prescribes the powers and responsibilities of Ministers in relation to those agencies. Further, this act provides for the review of public agencies and addresses the appointment of their members. With the exception of Banff Centre, all public post-secondary institutions are subject to APAGA as government appoints the majority of the members of their boards.

Publicly-funded private Institutions: Five of the 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions are Independent Academic Institutions and their boards are not appointed by government. As such, these institutions are not subject to the provisions of APAGA and are established by their own Private Acts of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and are not subject to all provisions of the PSLA.

Policy Direction 2A: The Post-secondary Learning Act is the statutory framework governing the roles and mandates of public post-secondary institutions.

Policy Direction 2B: Boards of Governors at public post-secondary institutions are accountable to government and operate at arm's-length from government to fulfil their institutional mandate, which is established jointly by the government and the board.

2.2 System Differentiation

Alberta's approach to the publicly-funded post-secondary education system is one that values system differentiation as a means of coordinating learning opportunities and maximizing public investments in adult education to achieve outcomes that benefit learners, society, and the economy.

In 2007, the Government of Alberta introduced a Six-Sector Model to differentiate post-secondary institutions based primarily on the range of programming offered and types of research undertaken, as well as geographic location. The model is

enshrined in provincial legislation (PSLA) and there continues to be strong commitment to a differentiated post-secondary system in the province as a means for ensuring that the full range of learner needs can be met. Such an approach also provides system structure, supports access, reduces unnecessary duplication, promotes efficiency, and leverages the strengths of individual post-secondary institutions.

Policy Direction 2C: Institutional differentiation, as articulated through the Six-Sector Model, supports system coordination and optimizes the allocation of public resources to the benefit of learners.

3.0 Roles of Publicly-funded Post-secondary Institutions

3.1 Six-Sector Model

Alberta's publicly-funded post-secondary institutions are designated to one of the following six sectors, which are defined by their respective programming, research and scholarly activity, and collaboration mandates:

Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities are focused on degree programming and coordinating and leading the province's research and innovation agenda. Institutions within this sector must provide approved undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and may offer approved diploma and certificate programs. They can also undertake all forms of research, including discovery research, in support of Alberta's research and innovation agenda, and may collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Comprehensive Community Colleges provide a broad range of programming to meet the diverse needs of their communities in all regions of the province. These institutions must provide approved foundational learning programs, as well as diploma and certificate programs. They may provide apprenticeship programming where demand warrants, as well as undergraduate degree programming primarily in collaboration with a degree-granting institution, or autonomously under particular conditions and subject to Ministerial approval. Comprehensive Community Colleges are not permitted to offer graduate level programs. They may undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered or focused on industry or community needs that support regional economic and social development. They must also collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and partners in the community, business, and industry sectors to support regional access to foundational learning, diploma, certificate and undergraduate degree programming.

Independent Academic Institutions may provide foundational learning, diploma, certificate, and approved undergraduate degree programming. These institutions may provide graduate level programs in niche areas under particular conditions. Undergraduate diploma and certificate programs may be either ministry-approved

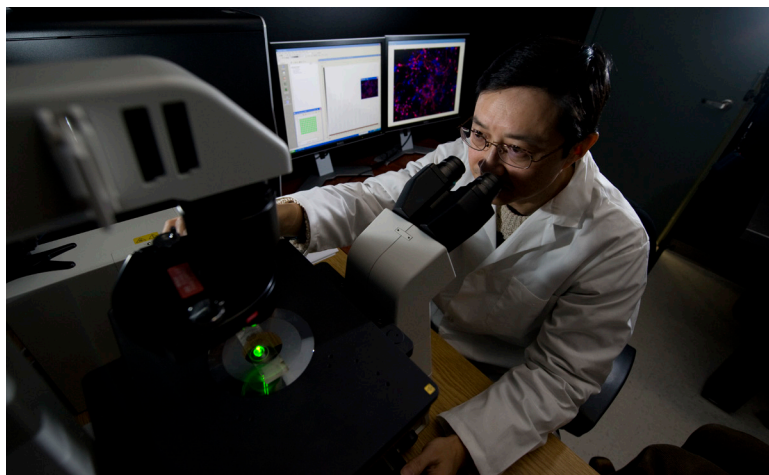
or board-approved. These institutions may undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered, and may collaborate with other institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programming.

Polytechnic Institutions must provide approved apprenticeship, diploma, and certificate programs. These institutions may also provide approved foundational learning and undergraduate degree programs, but are not permitted to offer graduate level programming. They may undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered, as well as research that is focused on strengthening economic development in Alberta. Polytechnic institutions must collaborate with other institutions and sectors to support regional access to polytechnic education, and may also collaborate to support access to diploma, certificate or undergraduate degree programming.

Specialized Arts and Cultural Institutions are unique. They may provide non-credential, certificate and diploma programming and undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with programs offered. They may collaborate with other sectors, as necessary, to support regional access to specialized arts and culture programming, through provision of non-credential certificate and diploma programming.

Undergraduate Universities must provide approved undergraduate degree programming. They may offer approved foundational learning diploma or certificate programs. Institutions within this sector, other than those that have previously been approved to do so, are not permitted to offer graduate level programming. Undergraduate universities may undertake research and scholarly activity that enriches undergraduate education, and must collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programming.

Policy Direction 3A: Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions are purposely assigned to one of the six sectors, and must work within and toward the mandate of that sector. The roles of each sector are vitally important in serving the needs of learners and the province.



Alberta's Six Sector Model for Publicly-funded Post-secondary Institutions

Sector	Institutions	Programming	Research	Collaboration
Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities (CARUs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Athabasca University University of Alberta University of Calgary University of Lethbridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide approved undergraduate and graduate degree programs. May offer approved diploma and certificate programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake all forms of research, including discovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs. *Athabasca University shall collaborate with other post-secondary institutions to support regional access to undergraduate programs.
Comprehensive Community Colleges (CCCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bow Valley College Grande Prairie Regional College Keyano College Lakeland College Lethbridge College Medicine Hat College NorQuest College Northern Lakes College Olds College Portage College Red Deer College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide approved foundational learning programs, as well as diploma and certificate programs. May provide apprenticeship programming where demand warrants, as well as undergraduate degree programming primarily in collaboration with a degree-granting institution, or autonomously under particular conditions and subject to Ministerial approval. Not permitted to offer graduate level programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered or focused on industry or community needs that support regional economic and social development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and partners in the community, business, and industry sectors to support regional access to foundational learning, diploma, certificate and undergraduate degree programming.
Independent Academic Institutions (IAIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambrose University Burman University Concordia University of Edmonton St. Mary's University The King's University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May provide foundational learning, diploma, certificate, and approved undergraduate degree programming. Undergraduate diploma and certificate programs may be either ministry-approved or board-approved. May provide graduate level programs in niche areas under particular conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May collaborate with other institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programming.
Polytechnic Institutions (PIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Alberta Institute of Technology Southern Alberta Institute of Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide approved apprenticeship, diploma, and certificate programs. May provide approved foundational learning and undergraduate degree programs. Not permitted to offer graduate level programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with credentials offered, and/or research that is focused on strengthening economic development in Alberta. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must collaborate with other institutions and sectors to support regional access to polytechnic education. May collaborate to support access to diploma, certificate or undergraduate degree programming.
Specialized Arts and Cultural Institutions (SACI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Banff Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May provide non-credential, certificate and diploma programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake research and scholarly activity in alignment with programs offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May collaborate with other sectors as necessary to support regional access to specialized arts and culture programming, through provision of non-credential certificate and diploma programming.
Undergraduate Universities (UUs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Alberta University of the Arts Grant MacEwan University Mount Royal University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must provide approved undergraduate degree programming. May offer approved foundational learning diploma or certificate programs. *Not permitted to offer graduate level programming unless previously approved to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May undertake research and scholarly activity that enriches undergraduate education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must collaborate with other post-secondary institutions and sectors to support regional access to undergraduate degree programming.

3.2 Institutional Transitions

The Six-Sector Model establishes a differentiated system of publicly-funded post-secondary institutions and is designed to foster an appropriate mix of learning opportunities to meet the needs of learners in all regions of the province. While the current model provides a foundation and structure to the post-secondary education system today, it is recognized that system flexibility and responsiveness will be key to meeting the diverse needs of learners and new challenges as they emerge in the future. This means supporting institutional transitions from their current sector and mandate designations, when necessary.

Institutional transitions have a significant impact on the community in which the institution is located, as well as the entire adult learning system. To avoid unnecessary system disruption, these transitions will only be considered by government in cases where the existing system structure is unable to accommodate the evolving needs of learners, the adult learning system, or the province. The ministry will conduct research and analysis in collaboration with post-secondary institutions to determine if and when institutional transitions are warranted. Preference will always be given to solutions that emerge from and can be implemented through the current system.

As a result, post-secondary institutions that request changes to their role in the Six-Sector Model must present a compelling business case to their institutional stakeholders and communities, to other post-secondary institutions, and to government, which ultimately has authority to approve the proposed change. To ensure a consistent understanding of government's expectations, a guideline document is included (see Appendix A) that outlines the various milestones and criteria that an institution would need to meet in order to change their sector and mandate designations.

In general, future development and evolution of the publicly-funded post-secondary education system will be determined primarily on the basis of learner need, and in support of the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. More specifically, government will consider numerous factors when determining potential institutional transitions, including but not limited to:

- Impact on learner accessibility to programming and training in the region, and the province more broadly,
- Impact on affordability for learners and overall public investment in the post-secondary education system,
- Quality of programming and training offered,
- Availability and viability of partnerships with other institutional providers,
- Impact on system stakeholders and stewardship,
- The potential impact on the national and international reputation of Alberta's post-secondary education system,
- Labour market/economic demand needs, both regionally and provincially, and community/social benefits, and
- Costs to the institution and government.

Policy Direction 3B: In exceptional circumstances, government will consider institutional transitions where the existing system structure is unable to accommodate the evolving needs of learners, the adult learning system, or the province.

Policy Direction 3C: Institutional transitions may only be pursued in accordance with government's guidelines, and following Cabinet approval.

4.0 Mandates of Publicly-funded Post-secondary Institutions

System differentiation is reflected at both the sector level, and at the institutional level. Each public post-secondary institution must develop and submit an institutional Mandate Statement that describes the institution's priorities as they relate to and align with their assigned sector mandates, which include the programming, research, collaborative and system mandates described below. Institutional Mandate Statements must be submitted for Ministerial approval and be reviewed by government on a regular basis.

4.1 Programming Mandates and Credential Offerings

Post-secondary institutions in each of the six sectors offer a range of programming and credential options for learners. Government approval is needed prior to the delivery of programs of study offered by public post-secondary institutions, including new certificate, diploma and degree programs, new specializations in already approved programs, certain non-credential programs (such as academic upgrading), and changes to existing approved programs. Publicly-funded private post-secondary institutions are required to apply for government approval for new degree programs.

The Alberta Credential Framework (ACF) was published in 2018 to support system coherence and consistency by documenting and defining the range of credentials offered in Alberta in a comprehensive structure (<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-credential-framework>). The ACF is a compilation of the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework integrated with other Alberta government endorsed post-secondary credentials. It includes all ministry-approved post-secondary credentials in the province.

Credentials are described using two main organizational categories: credential descriptors and credential standards. For degree level credentials, descriptors are drawn from those documented in the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework. In total, the Framework names 14 post-secondary credentials, including:

Undergraduate Level Credentials: Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor's Degree, Post-Diploma Certificate, Post-Baccalaureate Certificate.

Graduate Level Credentials: Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Post-Master's Certificate, Post-Master's Diploma, Post-Doctoral Certificate, Post-Doctoral Diploma.

Apprenticeship Level Credentials: Journey person Certificate

Policy Direction 4A: All ministerial approved credentials offered at publicly-funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta are to be offered and conferred in accordance with the Alberta Credentials Framework.

4.2 Pathway to Degree-granting in Alberta

In cases where there is high and ongoing demand for undergraduate degree programming in a community in Alberta that is not home to a degree-granting institution, consideration may be given to allowing a Comprehensive Community College to develop and autonomously offer specific undergraduate degrees.

Prior to applying for approval to do so, a college must first demonstrate that it has sought out and been unsuccessful in finding a university or polytechnic degree-granting institution to partner with in order to deliver the program collaboratively in its region. Government may assist the college in brokering a partnership prior to considering a change of the college's programming mandate and/or overview of a submitted proposal.

The process includes a full system coordination review undertaken by government to determine the need and sustainability of the program, followed by a quality review and organizational evaluation conducted by the Campus Alberta Quality Council. Colleges must demonstrate organizational capacity and the ability to deliver programming that meets quality assurance standards in Alberta without negatively impacting existing programming and/or sector mandate requirements. While the timeline for completion of the process will vary depending on the traits and circumstances of the college seeking a programming change, institutions should expect that the transition into a degree-granting post-secondary institution may take several years to complete. Ultimately, government is putting a process in place to provide assurance to prospective learners and employers of the academic quality and credibility of the degree so that a student's future path to further education or employment is not compromised.

To assist in understanding the process and criteria required for a college to grant an undergraduate degree, please see Appendix B.

Policy Direction 4B: Alberta colleges must seek out other options, including a partnership with an existing degree-granting institution to deliver the program collaboratively, before seeking approval to offer undergraduate degree programming autonomously for the first time.

Policy Direction 4C: Post-secondary institutions that are seeking approval to offer undergraduate degree programming autonomously for the first time, must do so according to government's guidelines and processes which include a system coordination review, a quality review and an organizational evaluation.

4.3 Research and Scholarly Activity Mandates

Alberta has a strong history of investment in research and innovation that facilitates growth and diversification, while supporting the province's success within the global economy. Alberta's research and innovation system is a partnership between government, its agencies, industry and post-secondary institutions working together for the benefit of society.

Alberta's publicly-funded post-secondary institutions are key players within the system, and must coordinate their research and innovation activities to maximize public investments. Clearly defined research roles and mandates within each of the six sectors ensure that post-secondary institutions are able to support the delivery of high-quality credentials, while also working collaboratively towards the achievement of Alberta's strategic research and innovation priorities. The following definitions describe the range of research, innovation and scholarship that occurs within Alberta's post-secondary education system:

Discovery Research (also called the Scholarship of Discovery) is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire and disseminate new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts. Like all scholarship, it must be validated by peers and communicated, but it may or may not have immediate application. Discovery research generates new ideas, principles, and theories which can form the basis of progress and development in a field.

- Mentorship and training involving discovery research is an integral component of many graduate student academic programs, and may be a component of undergraduate education. Discovery research is undertaken, primarily, at post-secondary institutions that offer graduate degree programming.

Applied Research (also called the Scholarship of Application) is conducted to explore the application of ideas directed primarily towards a specific aim or objective. Applied Research tends to be focused on the identification of practical solutions, applications and/or innovations.

- Applied research is associated with graduate, undergraduate, diploma academic, and apprenticeship programs. Applied research is undertaken in collaboration with industry and other end users, as an important component of social and environmental benefits, as well as economic development and diversification.

Innovation is the process by which ideas are implemented and executed, and value is added in the form of new and improved products, policies, services, and approaches.

The Scholarship of Integration focuses on scholars making connections in a knowledge base across or within disciplines. The scholarship of integration seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on research.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is conducted to better understand the teaching and learning process and advance this knowledge base. It can lead to new knowledge that arises from research on curriculum and pedagogical practices and on acquisition of knowledge by students.

With a commitment to strengthening the province's research and innovation system, the Alberta Research and Innovation Framework (ARIF) (<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-research-innovation-framework.aspx>) encourages collaboration among research and innovation stakeholders (including post-secondary institutions) with the goal of achieving the following outcomes:

- **Economic diversification and job creation:** catalyze growth and diversification of the economy
- **Environmental stewardship and climate leadership:** facilitate anticipation and mitigation of environmental impacts
- **Effective resource management:** enable cost-effective discovery, development and production of natural resources
- **Engaged individuals and communities for a healthy Alberta:** enhance the health and well-being of Albertans

Policy Direction 4D: Research and scholarly activity at Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions will be coordinated, support the institution's ability to deliver high-quality credentials, and reflect the province's broader strategic research and innovation priorities, as articulated in the Alberta Research and Innovation Framework.

4.4 Collaboration Mandates

Historically, there has been an expectation that post-secondary institutions in Alberta work together as a system to support learner access in all regions of the province. Institutional collaboration is an essential ingredient for the system's overall success and sustainability, particularly given the differentiated approach that defines the Six-Sector Model.

There has been success in pursuing this approach, with post-secondary institutions seeking out and developing relationships with other institutions and community partners.

To provide post-secondary institutions with greater clarity around expectations for collaboration, and to support enhanced system accessibility (particularly outside of Alberta's largest urban centres), the collaboration mandates are now a key component of the Six-Sector Model. These sector mandates, as outlined below, also serve to eliminate perceptions of an adult learning system made up of individual post-secondary institutions competing with each other, in favour of a system built on cooperation and collective strength.

Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities may collaborate with other institutions to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Comprehensive Community Colleges must collaborate with other institutions, adult learning providers, and community and industry to support regional access to foundational learning, certificate, diploma, and undergraduate degree programs.

Independent Academic Institutions may collaborate with other institutions to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Polytechnic Institutions must collaborate with other institutions to support regional access to polytechnic education, and may also collaborate with other sectors to support regional access to certificate, diploma, and undergraduate degree programming.

Specialized Arts and Culture Institutions may collaborate with other institutions, as necessary, to support regional access to arts, culture as well as certificate and diploma programs (both approved and non-credit).

Undergraduate Universities must collaborate with other institutions to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Policy Direction 4E: Rather than competing and duplicating resources, all institutions have collaboration mandates (collaboration that is allowed, required, or both), depending on their sectors, to work with other sectors and partners to ensure learner needs are met.

The collaboration mandates help to ensure that all six sectors work together to enhance system accessibility across the province. For post-secondary institutions in the Comprehensive Community Colleges sector, working closely with a range of different partners (such as other publicly-funded learning providers, Community Adult Learning providers, First Nations Colleges, municipalities, industry and other relevant partners) is essential to fulfilling their roles as regional stewards. For the purposes of this Framework:

Regional Stewardship refers to institutional leadership and collaboration with adult learning providers and other stakeholders for the purposes of increasing learner access through needs assessment, facilitating and coordinating foundational and post-secondary learning opportunities, as well as providing learner support services.

Regional stewardship includes facilitating the collection and sharing of information and knowledge, leveraging resources and building collective capacity, while determining, prioritizing, and enabling educational access to the full spectrum of learning opportunities available to learners in Alberta.

Given that some colleges represent the only post-secondary institution with a physical presence in their region, it is imperative that these institutions prioritize their role as regional stewards in order to meet the diverse learning needs of adults in a number of different communities. This work can range from foundational learning to technical training, certificates and degrees. Within this context, regional stewardship is considered a core component of a Comprehensive Community College's business.

4.5 Additional Areas of Focus

The core business of Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions consists of is the programming, research, and collaboration mandates previously outlined, that are fulfilled in support of the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. It is expected that Albertans and the province more broadly will benefit from institutions delivering high-quality adult learning opportunities and undertaking research and scholarly activity. While many

Map of Alberta Publicly-funded Post-secondary Institutions and Regions

Alberta's Publicly Funded Post-Secondary Institutions

Comprehensive Academic & Research Universities

- AU Athabasca University
- UA University of Alberta
- UC University of Calgary
- UL University of Lethbridge

Comprehensive Community Colleges

- BVC Bow Valley College
- GPRC Grande Prairie Regional College
- KC Keyano College
- LLC Lakeland College
- LC Lethbridge College
- MHC Medicine Hat College
- NQC NorQuest College
- NLC Northern Lakes College
- OC Olds College
- PC Portage College
- RDC Red Deer College

Independent Academic Institutions

- AMU Ambrose University
- BU Burman University
- CUE Concordia University of Edmonton
- SMU St. Mary's University
- TKU The King's University

Polytechnic Institutions

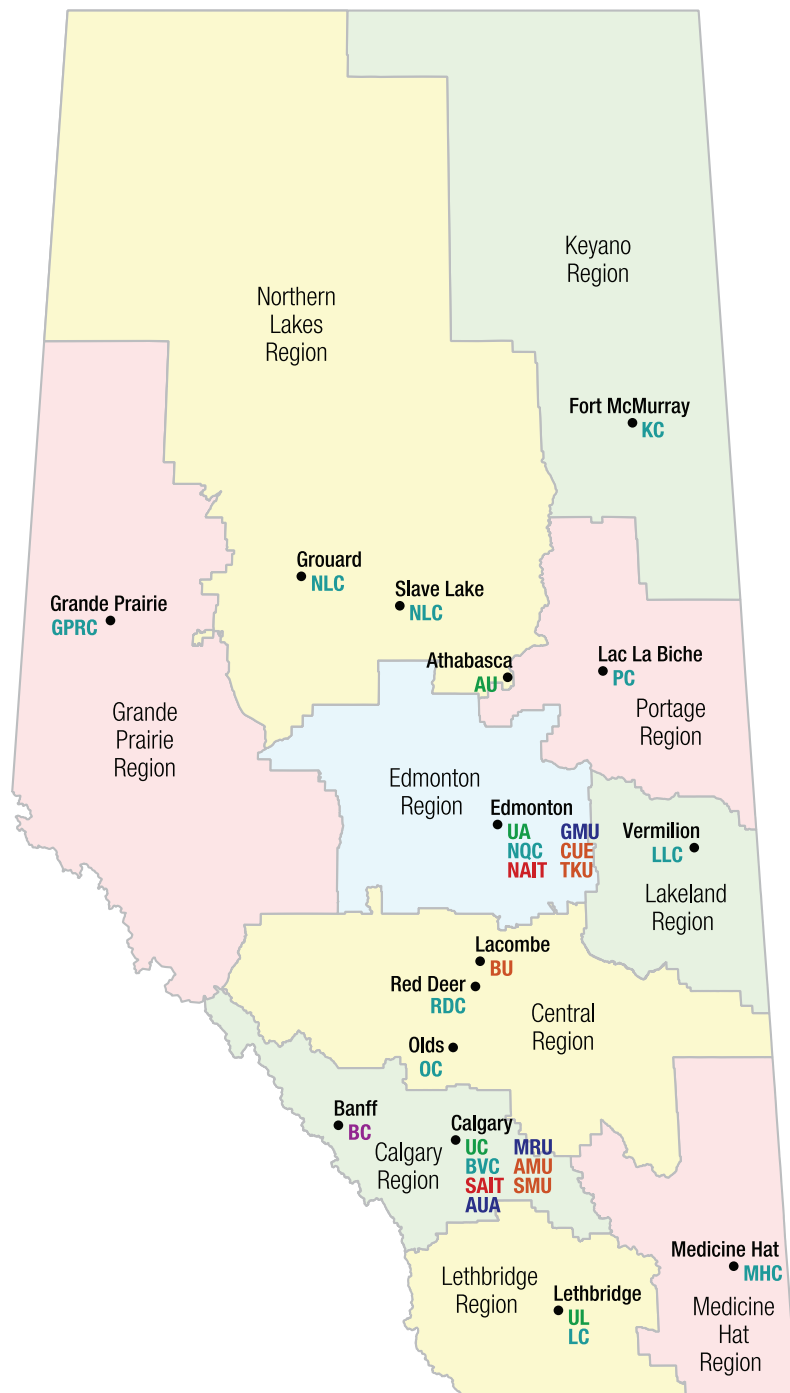
- NAIT Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
- SAIT Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

Specialized Arts & Culture Institutions

- BC The Banff Centre

Undergraduate Universities

- AUA Alberta University of the Arts
- GMU Grant MacEwan University
- MRU Mount Royal University



*Each institution's main campus is noted on the map. Additional satellite campuses are not noted.

activities are focused on achieving institutional objectives, there are a range of activities that must pursue a broader social, economic and/or environmental impact on the province.

Economic success in today's global economy relies on the transfer of ideas, technology, goods, and services across borders. Alberta's prosperity as a province is tied increasingly to its ability to compete on the world stage. This means bringing the province's resources and innovations to an international market, attracting international investment, strengthening alliances and collaborations with countries around the world, and attracting top international talent to Alberta.

Policy Direction 4F: Alberta supports comprehensive international education, including internationalizing campuses, offering international learning opportunities for Alberta learners at home and abroad, and welcoming international students and researchers at learning institutions (particularly where such activities benefit quality and accessibility for domestic students).

An adult learning system that is focused on the long-term economic and societal outcomes of its efforts is one that provides learners with the supports and services they need to succeed both academically and personally. The Government of Alberta and post-secondary institutions are responsive to the needs of their students, providing resources, learning and social supports, and assistance to Indigenous learners, learners with disabilities, and individuals that face other barriers to their equitable participation and success. Creating healthy campuses that are conducive to positive mental health and learning is part of this responsiveness. Adult learners will be learning in a system that prioritizes their health through supports and services that target health's broader determinants (e.g., physical environments, healthy behaviours, social supports and coping skills, and access to appropriate health and mental health services).

Policy Direction 4G: Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions support learners and promote healthy campuses by providing non-clinical mental health supports and services, on campus where possible.

A crucial aspect of an accessible and coordinated adult learning system is the ability for learners to transition into, and be mobile within the system. Post-secondary institutions are expected to work together as a system to ensure that learners do not face unnecessary barriers to achieving their educational goals. Alberta learners benefit from a number of collaborative partnerships between learning providers that include transfer agreements and access to system-wide information about transfer and pathway opportunities. Learner pathways and mobility are supported through the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT).

Policy Direction 4H: Post-secondary institutions in Alberta support learner mobility, work collaboratively with other institutions and learning providers to facilitate transfer, and promote learner pathways.

5.0 Other Adult Learning Providers

Consistent with the philosophy of providing access to a broad spectrum of learning opportunities that can address the needs of every Albertan, Alberta's adult learning system is much broader than the publicly-funded post-secondary institutions referenced above. The adult learning system also includes Indigenous adult learning providers, Community Adult Learning providers, and Private Career Colleges. Together with the publicly-funded post-secondary institutions and a small number of other providers in the province, they offer Albertans a diverse range of learning opportunities.

5.1 Indigenous Adult Learning Providers

Alberta's Indigenous adult learning system, which includes five First Nations Colleges as well as several Indigenous adult learning providers, delivers diverse opportunities from foundational learning and skills training to credentialed programs, including undergraduate and graduate levels. Within this system, Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous ways of knowing contextualize learning experiences. Students receive the supports they need to achieve academic success and enhance their cultural identity.

The First Nations Colleges are legally considered private institutions, and they are mandated and governed by the First Nations they serve. Other Indigenous adult learning providers have non-profit status or are affiliated with member Nations. Through education, research, and service to their communities, these providers preserve and advance Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and languages. Some of the Indigenous institutions collaborate with publicly-funded post-secondary institutions to deliver credentialed programs and have credit transfer agreements with these institutions.

The Government of Alberta provides funding to the First Nations Colleges for initiatives and activities that enhance basic skills, increase access, and improve both retention and learning outcomes for students. The relationship between the Government of Alberta and the Indigenous adult learning system has evolved over time through engagement and collaboration. The foundation of the relationship is related to the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles and government's commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

5.2 Community Adult Learning Providers

In Alberta, at least one in five adult Albertans face daily literacy and numeracy challenges. Many adult learners have had negative experiences in the formal education system and live with one or more social and/or economic barriers. The Government of Alberta supports a broad range of non-profit community-based learning providers and administers Alberta's Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) that aims to address this need by helping to deliver adult foundational learning in communities across the province.

As a key component of Alberta's adult learning system, CALP supports a comprehensive network of organizations to deliver affordable, part-time, non-formal adult literacy and

foundational learning opportunities that do not lead to a credential. By providing access to a safe and welcoming learning environment, CALP supports Alberta's Adult Learning System Vision and Principles by ensuring that adult Albertans with foundational learning needs can begin to develop an identity as a learner and gain the confidence they need to persevere in further learning or training, gain employment, and ultimately reach their full potential.

CALP-funded organizations support learning opportunities that focus on literacy, numeracy, basic digital skills, foundational life skills, and/or English language learning, whether delivered through a group setting, such as a course or family literacy program, or through one-on-one or small group tutoring. Funded organizations strive to collaborate with community partners, including post-secondary institutions and First Nations Colleges, to deliver learning in partnership, and coordinate learner transitions to further opportunities.

The Government of Alberta invests in a professional development system that support staff and volunteers of funded organizations, so they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to deliver programs and services that will improve the lives of the learners they serve.

5.3 Private Career Colleges

Private career colleges are independent businesses that offer vocational training for students to gain specialized skills and knowledge to prepare them for employment in a wide range of fields, including office administration, massage therapy, hairstyling, health care, and much more. In 2018, approximately 25,000 Albertans were enrolled in a program at one of the more than 170 private career colleges within Alberta.

These career training programs must be licensed by the Director of Private Vocational Training in accordance with the Private Vocational Training Act and Regulation. This legislation allows private providers to participate in Alberta's adult learning system and delivers consumer protection to students enrolled in licensed programs.

Policy Direction 5A: Alberta's First Nations Colleges, Community Adult Learning providers, and Private Career Colleges play important roles and are valued contributors to the province's adult learning system.

6.0 Summary of Policy Directions

Policy Direction 1A: The broad strategic direction that guides government decision-making, policy, funding, and regulation on adult learning in Alberta is rooted in the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles. All adult learning providers, as well as government, are to operate in a fashion that aligns with and/or advances progress in achieving the Adult Learning System Vision and Principles in support of Alberta's social, economic, and environmental objectives.

Policy Direction 2A: The Post-secondary Learning Act is the statutory framework governing the roles and mandates of public post-secondary institutions.

Policy Direction 2B: Boards of Governors at public post-secondary institutions are accountable to government and operate at arm's-length from government to fulfil their institutional mandate, which is established jointly by the government and the board.

Policy Direction 2C: Institutional differentiation, as articulated through the Six-Sector Model, supports system coordination and optimizes the allocation of public resources to the benefit of learners.

Policy Direction 3A: Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions are purposely assigned to one of the six sectors, and must work within and toward the mandate of that sector. The roles of each sector are vitally important in serving the needs of learners and the province.

Policy Direction 3B: In exceptional circumstances, government will consider institutional transitions where the existing system structure is unable to accommodate the evolving needs of learners, the adult learning system, or the province.

Policy Direction 3C: Institutional transitions may only be pursued in accordance with government's guidelines, and following Ministerial approval.

Policy Direction 4A: All ministerial approved credentials offered at publicly-funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta are to be offered and conferred in accordance with the Alberta Credentials Framework.

Policy Direction 4B: Alberta colleges must seek out other options, including a partnership with an existing degree-granting institution to deliver the program collaboratively, before seeking approval to offer undergraduate degree programming autonomously for the first time.

Policy Direction 4C: Post-secondary institutions that are seeking approval to offer undergraduate degree programming autonomously for the first time, must do so according to government's guidelines and processes which include a system coordination review, a quality review and an organizational evaluation.

Policy Direction 4D: Research and scholarly activity at Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions will be coordinated, support the institution's ability to deliver high-quality credentials, and reflect the province's broader strategic research and innovation priorities, as articulated in the Alberta Research and Innovation Framework.

Policy Direction 4E: Rather than competing and duplicating resources, all institutions have collaboration mandates (collaboration that is allowed, required, or both), depending on their sectors, to work with other sectors and partners to ensure learner needs are met.

Policy Direction 4F: Alberta supports comprehensive international education, including internationalizing campuses, offering international learning opportunities for Alberta learners at home and abroad, and welcoming international students and researchers at learning institutions (particularly where such activities benefit quality and accessibility for domestic students).

Policy Direction 4G: Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions support learners and promote healthy campuses by providing non-clinical mental health supports and services, on campus where possible.

Policy Direction 4H: Post-secondary institutions in Alberta support learner mobility, work collaboratively with other institutions and learning providers to facilitate transfer, and promote learner pathways.

Policy Direction 5A: Alberta's First Nations Colleges, Community Adult Learning providers, and Private Career Colleges play important roles and are valued contributors to the province's adult learning system.

7.0 Appendix A

Post-secondary Institution Transition Guidelines - Overview (Pathway from College to Polytechnic or University in Alberta)

Purpose

- The purpose of this document is to provide clarity to post-secondary institutions by mapping out the general process and key milestones in a transition pathway, primarily for a college that wishes to transition to a polytechnic or undergraduate university designation in the Six-Sector Model framework.
- As colleges can offer undergraduate degrees within their Comprehensive Community Colleges sector designation, transitions to different sector designations will be exceptional and rare.

Key Considerations

- The transition pathway outlined below represents an overview of the typical steps that a college would take to transition to another type of institution in Alberta. Detailed guidelines describing what is required in the steps will be available to institutions and tailored to the specific institution's situation.
- The steps and milestones identified in this pathway can only be pursued after a college has successfully demonstrated the ability to deliver undergraduate degrees autonomously.
 - For information on the process that a college must follow to begin offering undergraduate degrees autonomously, please refer to the Pathway to Degree-granting for Colleges in Alberta Guidelines (Appendix B).
- The primary intent of government's decision to permit colleges to pursue degree programming and possibly eventually transition into polytechnics or universities is to enhance access to degree programming in regions. This focus on accessibility must be balanced with other adult learning system principles such as quality and coordination.
- The transition pathway is focused on ensuring that learners in Alberta continue to have access to high-quality education, and that credentials awarded in Alberta are recognized nationally and internationally as meeting or exceeding quality standards.
- Milestones and criteria in the transition pathway align with national quality standards (i.e. Universities Canada criteria), Council of Ministers of Education Canada's (CMEC) Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada, and reflect processes utilized by Canadian quality assurance bodies including the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), which plays a key role in the transition pathway outlined below.
- **Note:** below is an illustrative example of the typical transition pathway from a college to an undergraduate university. The pathway from college to polytechnic would follow similar steps. However, the detail required and the length of time involved would be expected to be less, commensurate with the closer similarity in function and governance structures that currently exists between colleges and polytechnics.

Activity	Details
Request for Redesignation and Submission of Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a college has successfully demonstrated its delivery of quality undergraduate degrees autonomously (e.g., after it has successfully undergone a first comprehensive evaluation by CAQC), it may submit a request to the Minister for consideration of re-designation with a business case. • The business case should provide evidence of the need for re-designation of sector and how this sector change benefits learners, local community, and the Alberta post-secondary system. The business case should also include explanations about why collaborations with other post-secondary institutions cannot adequately address the needs and interests of stakeholders in the college region. The business case should focus on the rationale for why there is a problem, why change is needed, why the problem cannot be addressed in the current sector designation and include potential options. • The business case should include a very high-level overview of a future transition plan should the college's request be endorsed. This overview should include proposed timeframes and process.
Recommendation to Proceed to Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following review of the request for sector re-designation, the Minister will provide a response indicating whether or not the request to proceed to the next step is supported.
Submission of Preliminary Transition Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where the Minister supports the request, the college should proceed to prepare a Preliminary Transition Plan. • The Preliminary Transition Plan will focus on (but is not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed costing for transition, • Detailed budget demonstrating how the institution will pay for transition cost, • Detailed timelines for transition, • Detailed academic plan, including proposed new programming and how existing programming will be maintained, • Student impact plan, • Detailed enrolment projections demonstrating net increase in system accessibility, • System impact plan detailing how the transition will impact regional and system access throughout the transition and following the re-designation, and • Scenario planning, whereby the institution identifies a range of outcomes and roles it may play within the system following its transition.

Activity	Details
Review of Preliminary Transition Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister will review and must approve the Preliminary Transition Plan before the transition process may proceed to the next steps. The Minister may choose to deny the institution's proposed re-designation at this time, ending the re-designation process. • If the Minister approves the Preliminary Transition Plan, the Minister will outline specific benchmarks that must be met prior to the institution being re-designated. These benchmarks would be developed by the Ministry in consultation with CAQC, and may reflect the results of the comprehensive evaluation. These benchmarks may include (but not be limited to) the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate institutional governance characteristics and leadership, • Sufficient student and faculty access to learning and information resources and infrastructure, • Institutional policies to provide and maintain the necessary learning, physical, technological, human, and other resources for degree program delivery, • Sufficient academic support services, • Appropriate faculty policies, • Sufficient numbers and credentials of academic and other staff, • Appropriate academic policies and standards, and • Sufficient proportion of learners enrolled in degree programs at the institution.
Submission of Updated Transition Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After implementing the approved Preliminary Transition Plan, the college submits an Updated Transition Plan for Ministerial review and approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Updated Transition Plan provides any changes, updates or new directions at the institution since the Preliminary Transition Plan was approved. • The Updated Transition Plan also provides a progress report on all benchmarks identified by the Minister in approving the Preliminary Transition Plan. • The intent of the Updated Transition Plan is to confirm and ensure that the institution is progressing according to plan, that any challenges being experienced at the institution in relation to the transition are being mitigated, and most importantly, that learners at the institution are not being negatively impacted through the transition process.
Approval of Final Transition Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister will review and must approve the Updated Transition Plan before the transition process may proceed. The Minister may choose to deny the institution's proposed designation at this time, ending the re-designation process. • After approval of the Updated Transition Plan, the institution will provide the Ministry with ongoing progress report updates throughout their implementation process.

Activity	Details
Evaluation of Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the Minister's approval of the Updated Transition Plan, and after the college has gained sufficient experience with degree delivery, the Ministry in consultation with CAQC and other impacted stakeholders will do a final evaluation of readiness. The evaluation of readiness will be based primarily on the college's achievement of the previously identified benchmarks and fulfillment of the Updated Transition Plan.
Ministerial Final Decision on Redesignation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this time the Minister may: Recommend that Cabinet approve the re-designation of the institution and implement any legislative, regulatory and/or policy measures required to implement the change. Require further information or measures to be met prior to approving the re-designation. Deny the re-designation if, in the Minister's opinion, re-designation of the institution is not in the best interests of learners, the broader system, or Alberta.

8.0 Appendix B

Pathway to Degree-granting for Colleges in Alberta Guidelines

Purpose

- The purpose of this document is to provide clarity to all post-secondary institutions in Alberta, and in particular colleges, around the process for institutions to begin offering an undergraduate degree for the first time.
- Developing the first degree program constitutes program expansion and a significant change to program mix for colleges.

Key Considerations

- The primary intent of government's decision to authorize colleges to offer baccalaureate degree programs is to enhance access to degree programming in communities outside of Edmonton and Calgary where there is high demand, and demonstrated need.
- Colleges must first undertake to develop collaborations with Alberta degree-granting institutions to deliver degree programs in their areas. Only in cases where collaborations prove non-feasible may colleges proceed to submit program proposals.
- The Adult Learning System Principles of accessibility, affordability, coordination, quality and accountability serve as the platform upon which colleges base first degree proposals.
- Colleges will be responsible for demonstrating organizational capacity and ability to deliver programming that meets quality assurance standards, without negatively impacting existing programming and/or sector mandates.
- The quality assurance oversight function for degrees in Alberta is performed by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). The review process used by CAQC is in alignment with national quality standards (i.e. Universities Canada criteria), Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)'s Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada, and reflects processes utilized by other Canadian quality assurance bodies.

Activity	Details
Collaborating with Degree-granting Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where colleges have identified a need for a particular undergraduate degree program in their geographic area, they should first contact other Alberta post-secondary institutions offering this type of credential to explore opportunities for collaboration. • In cases where collaboration is feasible, both the college and the partnering institution should proceed with planning and associated investigation of program delivery details. • A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be developed outlining programming details, following requirements outlined in operational guidelines for collaborative delivery. • In cases where collaborative agreements cannot be developed with other post-secondary institutions, colleges should document their efforts and attempts and discuss the matter with the Ministry prior to developing its own degree proposal. • The Ministry will indicate whether the college may proceed to developing its own degree proposal or whether other solutions will be pursued.
Offering First Degrees	<p>Overall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If approved to proceed to pursuing offering their own degree, colleges are required to develop a proposal that includes three major documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A degree proposal (Part A), • A degree proposal (Part B), and • A self-study (to demonstrate institutional readiness and organizational capacity). • After submission of the proposal to the Ministry, it is subject to a comprehensive review process before the Minister makes a decision. The comprehensive review includes system coordination and quality. <p>System Coordination Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system coordination review assesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic, student and labour-market demand, • Viability and sustainability of enrolment and budget plans, • Benefits, affordability, and impacts for learners, • Interconnections and cohesiveness among learning outcomes, program elements, and resource requirements, • Work Integrated Learning elements (including availability of placements), • Positioning within Campus Alberta, including student pathways, • Risk identification and mitigation considerations, • Program distinctiveness and/or program duplication considerations, • Institutional capacity (including resources and staffing considerations), • Alignment with the institution's mandate and comprehensive institutional plan, and • Fit with provincial strategic priorities.

Activity	Details
Offering First Degrees - con't	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system coordination review results in a recommendation to the Minister for one of three outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A recommendation to refer to CAQC for a quality review (in cases where all conditions are met), • A recommendation to not refer to CAQC (in cases where all conditions have not been met), or • A recommendation to defer decision to later date (where additional information or time is required). <p>Quality Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In cases where CAQC receives a referral from the Minister a CAQC Review is undertaken. This includes an Organizational Evaluation (to determine the readiness of the institution to mount and sustain the degree program) and a Program Review (to determine the quality of the degree program being proposed) using external evaluators for each review. • A Full CAQC Review process is applicable in cases where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A first degree program is being proposed; • A first degree program at a new level (e.g. first master's degree or first doctoral degree) is being proposed; or • Other precedent-setting degree (e.g. first BSc when only BA programs offered at institution) is being proposed. • Following CAQC's review, it will recommend to the Minister that the degree program be approved or not approved. <p>Minister Decision – The Minister will decide whether or not the degree program is approved, and if approved, will outline any relevant conditions</p>

