

CAQC CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

This Code of Conduct is consistent with the policy on ethics and conflict of interest set out on page 29 of the *Public Agencies Governance Framework* and it also meets the requirements of the *Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act*.

The purpose of this Code is to establish rules of conduct to govern the professional and ethical responsibilities of Council members in carrying out the responsibilities of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC).

In accordance with established norms of good governance, the Code is based on the principles of integrity, honesty, openness and concern for the public interest. It is designed to maintain the effectiveness of CAQC as a whole and to ensure the fairness of all CAQC procedures and decision making. It addresses common situations that CAQC members may experience as they carry out their responsibilities, while it recognizes that not all situations can be anticipated. All CAQC members have a responsibility to consider appropriate standards of behavior and to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. In order to guard against real or perceived conflict and/or unethical behavior, the Code strives to balance CAQC's duty to the public, personal and private interests, and individual rights. The Code assumes that it is not only the actual situation, but also the perception others may have of it that may lead to a perception of bias or conflict of interest.

Code Administration

The Code applies to all members of CAQC in their roles as members of Council. It applies as well to all participants in Council's committees, whether they are Council members or not.

The Code governs the conduct of CAQC members from the date of appointment. It also includes the continuing responsibilities of members after the completion of their terms with respect to decisions made by CAQC while the person was a member.

Council's Chair will administer the Code for the members. The Code Administrator for the Chair is the Vice-Chair, who receives disclosures from the Chair and responds to an allegation that the Chair has breached the Code.

Members are encouraged to report in writing a potential breach of this Code by another member to the Code Administrator. When reporting a potential breach in good faith and with reasonable grounds, members are protected from reprisal for such reporting.

Breaches of this Code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including recommendation to the Minister of the removal of the member from Council.

General Rules of Conduct

All members shall complete a statement attesting that they have read and agreed to the statements included in the Code of Conduct.

Sample Statement

I, _____, have been appointed as a member of the Campus Alberta Quality Council under the *Post-secondary Learning Act*. I have read and understand the CAQC Code of Conduct for its members.

I agree to comply fully and to the best of my ability with the provisions of the Code and any subsequent amendments which have been ratified by CAQC.

Dated at _____ this _____ day of _____.

Members should be committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in post-secondary education. When considering proposals referred to them, members shall make each decision on the merits of the application, and shall consider the information provided in good faith and to the best of their ability, not being concerned with the prospect of disapproval from any person, institution, or community.

a. Confidentiality

Any part of an agenda, of a CAQC meeting or of any CAQC committee which is conducted *in camera*, including the minutes or any records, shall be kept in confidence by the Chair, every member of CAQC, and any member of any committee or other person invited or permitted to attend the meeting. All CAQC members have the responsibility to respect the confidentiality of the agenda material and CAQC discussions. The confidentiality requirement set out in this Code does not apply to any part of the information which is in the public domain at the date of disclosure to the member or which after that date enters the public domain, other than by any act or failure to act on the part of the member.

Members shall not discuss or request advice from employees of their current or former institution about matters that are under the review of CAQC, unless formally requested to do so by the Chair. CAQC members employed by a post-secondary institution do not represent their home institution. They shall not report to their home institution on privileged information of any type about another institution. Nor shall they report on decisions regarding their home institution until they are in the public domain.

Members shall not take improper advantage of information obtained through official duties as a CAQC member and not generally available to the public to obtain a personal benefit.

Members shall respect the confidential nature of third-party business information submitted to CAQC and restrict the use of this information to their CAQC work.

Members shall, at all times, adhere to the intent and requirements of Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* which applies to all information, material and records relating to, or obtained, created, maintained, submitted or collected during the course of a review.

b. Conflict of Interest

CAQC members must avoid situations that might impair or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of CAQC. Conflict of interest is any interest, relationship, association or activity that is incompatible with a CAQC member's responsibilities as an impartial decision maker acting in the best interests of Council. The relationships, interests or activities of a close family member or close associate may raise a potential conflict of interest for a CAQC member.

Members shall not participate in any proceeding or CAQC discussion of any matter in which they or a family member or close associate have a significant financial interest.

Members shall not participate in any proceeding or participate in CAQC discussion with respect to any matter in which they believe that their impartiality may be affected by a personal interest or by a relationship with one of the parties.

Additional professional activity and volunteer work is allowed as long as it does not result in a conflict of interest, is not done under the name of the Council or government, and does not make use of government resources. Any potential conflict must be disclosed.

Members will not normally be eligible to participate in a review involving a party or representative with whom they were formerly in a significant professional relationship until a period of 12 months has elapsed since the termination of that relationship. A significant professional relationship includes: employment, collaboration on a project, supervision of students in the program, etc.

Members shall not own shares in a company or private for-profit post-secondary institution that may make application to CAQC or is likely to be directly affected, beneficially or detrimentally, by CAQC decisions.

The Chair shall ask each CAQC member to declare all potential conflicts of interest prior to any discussion or decisions regarding an applicant. As a CAQC member may be the only person in a position to recognize a possible conflict of interest, it is the responsibility of each CAQC member to identify a possible conflict and take appropriate steps (e. g., reporting this to the Chair, removing him/herself from discussion and voting). The meeting record will reflect this disclosure.

c. Public Statements

A member shall not make public statements, orally or in writing, on any issues that are currently under consideration by CAQC, unless designated to do so by the Chair. In cases where it is not clear what an individual member may say publicly about an issue, discretion should be used, and the member should consult with the CAQC Chair or the Secretariat. Members should review carefully CAQC's *Policy on Release of Information*, especially section A, which outlines the responsibilities of CAQC members. The policy is available on CAQC's website.

A member other than the Chair shall refrain from communicating with the media regarding the deliberations or decisions of CAQC unless designated to do so by the Chair or the Secretariat. All inquiries from the media shall be referred to the Secretariat or the CAQC Chair.

d. Gifts

A member shall not accept money, awards or gifts from persons who may be, or have been affected by a CAQC decision. A member will be allowed to accept a small token gift only.

e. Conduct of Members

Members shall be sensitive to issues of gender, race, language, culture and religion that may affect the conduct of a review or decision.

Members shall attempt to conduct all reviews expeditiously, without unnecessary delay. Members shall not communicate directly or indirectly with any applicant or representative in respect to a program proposal, except in the presence of all members. Should a member require further information he/she should request that the Chair or Secretariat obtain such information.

CAQC members will deal with groups and persons, with staff, and with each other in a manner that reflects open and honest communication, respect, fair play, and ethical conduct.

Members shall promote positive relationships among CAQC members and Secretariat staff, and will make themselves available on a timely basis for consultation or discussions initiated by the Chair on policy or procedural issues.

Members will demonstrate respect for the views and opinions of colleagues. Members will not publicly comment on a decision of a colleague or the manner in which another member(s) have conducted themselves during a meeting or decision.