



**College of Alberta
Dental Assistants**

Program Approval Policy 003

Program approval decision making

PAP-POL-003 Program approval decision making

Legislative authority: This policy is established under the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation*, the *Fair Registration Practices Act*, the *Health Professions Act*, the *Health Professions Restricted Activity Regulation*, and the *Labour Mobility Act*. Authority is further supported by the Bylaws of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (2023).

1.0 Purpose

This policy establishes the decision-making framework used by the College of Alberta Dental Assistants when determining whether an education program meets College requirements for program approval.

This policy sets expectations for evidence review, recommendation processes, Council decision making, documentation, and communication of program approval decisions.

This policy confirms that program approval decisions support legislated responsibilities, align with the College mandate to protect and serve the public interest, and reflect the Strategic Plan (2025-30) Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust.

This policy ensures that program approval decisions are transparent, evidence informed, and defensible, and that decision-making authority is exercised within statutory authority and established governance expectations.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to Council, the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate), the Program Approval Committee, and any individual participating in program approval review activities on behalf of the College.

This policy applies to decisions related to:

1. initial program approval
2. determination that a program is not approved
3. changes in program approval status
4. conditions imposed on program approval
5. removal of program approval

This policy applies to education programs seeking or holding approval from the College.

This policy does not apply to operational education delivery activities conducted by education institutions.

This policy does not apply to labour mobility registration decisions, substantial equivalence determinations, or other registration pathways governed through the registration policy suite.

Operational procedures supporting this policy include program approval procedures, evidence review processes, verification activities, reporting mechanisms, and decision documentation procedures approved by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate).

3.0 Principles

The College applies the following principles to ensure program approval decisions are lawful, consistent, and accountable:

1. **Public interest** is upheld by ensuring that program approval decisions prioritize safe, competent dental assisting practice and regulatory confidence in graduate readiness.
2. **Legislative consistency** is upheld through decision-making processes aligned with the *Health Professions Act*, the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation*, the *Fair Registration Practices Act*, and other applicable legislation.
3. **Evidence-informed decision making** ensures approval decisions are based on documented evidence, monitoring findings, review outcomes, and other relevant regulatory information.
4. **Transparency and fairness** guide program approval decision making. Decisions are documented, supported by evidence, and communicated in writing.
5. **Role clarity and separation** ensure that Council retains decision authority while operational program review and evidence synthesis are conducted by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) and supporting committees.
6. **Proportionality** ensures that regulatory response and approval decisions are appropriate to the level of regulatory confidence, available evidence, and identified risk.
7. **Strategic alignment** ensures program approval decision practices support the Strategic Plan (2025-30) *Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust*.

4.0 Program approval status and review

The College exercises program approval decision authority through structured evidence review, committee recommendation, and Council decision making.

4.1 Evidence review

1. Education institutions seeking program approval must submit evidence demonstrating compliance with College requirements.
2. Evidence submissions may include program design documentation, curriculum information, clinical education models, governance structures, faculty qualifications, outcome data, and other information required by the College.
3. Evidence review may include document analysis, interviews, verification activities, site visits, outcome analysis, and any other evidence gathering the College considers necessary.
4. Evidence may be supplemented by monitoring findings, review outcomes, complaints, or other information relevant to regulatory decision making.
5. Evidence reviewed through the program approval process may be synthesized into a review summary prepared by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) or designated reviewers to support Program Approval Committee consideration.

4.2 Committee recommendation

1. The Program Approval Committee reviews evidence submissions, monitoring information, and review findings related to program approval.
2. The Program Approval Committee evaluates available evidence against College requirements and program approval standards.
3. Following review, the Program Approval Committee provides recommendations to Council regarding program approval status or related regulatory response.
4. The Program Approval Committee does not exercise independent approval authority unless expressly delegated by Council through a separate policy or terms of reference approved by Council.
5. The Program Approval Committee supports Council oversight by reviewing program approval evidence and providing governance recommendations regarding approval status and regulatory response.

4.3 Council decision authority

1. Council retains final authority to grant, refuse, condition, change, suspend, or remove program approval.
2. Council decisions are based on available evidence, committee recommendations, monitoring findings, and other regulatory information relevant to public interest and entry-to-practice readiness.
3. Council may impose conditions, enhanced monitoring requirements, or corrective actions where evidence indicates partial compliance or regulatory concern.
4. Council decisions must be documented and recorded as part of the College governance record.

4.4 Decision documentation and communication

1. Program approval decisions must be documented and maintained as part of the College decision record.
2. Decisions are communicated in writing to the education institution and identify the approval status assigned, any conditions imposed, reporting requirements, or review expectations.
3. Where applicable, decision communication includes timelines for responding to conditions, evidence submission requirements, or review processes.
4. The College maintains records of program approval decisions to support transparency, accountability, and compliance reporting.

4.5 Regulatory response

1. Regulatory response arising from program approval decisions may include:
 - a. approval or continuation of approval
 - b. provisional approval
 - c. approved with conditions
 - d. enhanced monitoring
 - e. status change
 - f. removal of approval
 - g. determination that a program is not approved
2. Regulatory response decisions reflect the level of regulatory confidence in program performance, available evidence, and entry-to-practice readiness.

4.6 Request for appeal/reconsideration

1. An education institution may request reconsideration of a program approval decision made by the College.
2. A request for reconsideration must be submitted in writing and must identify the grounds for reconsideration and any supporting information relevant to the decision.
3. Grounds for reconsideration are limited to the following:
 - a. material procedural error in the program approval review process that may have affected the decision
 - b. a material error in the interpretation or consideration of evidence relied upon in the decision
4. The request must be submitted within the timeframe established by the College.
5. Procedures established by the College define:
 - a. timelines for submission
 - b. documentation requirements
 - c. the reconsideration review process
6. A reconsideration request does not suspend the program approval status assigned by Council unless otherwise determined by the College.
7. The reconsideration process reviews the decision only on the grounds identified in the request and does not constitute a new program approval review.
8. The reconsideration review may include further analysis by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) and consultation with the Program Approval Committee where appropriate.

5.0 Expected outcomes

1. **Public interest** is strengthened through approval status decisions that support safe, competent entry-to-practice preparation.
2. **Program approval decisions** are transparent, evidence informed, and defensible.
3. **Education institutions understand** how approval decisions are made and how evidence is evaluated.
4. **Clear authority and role separation** ensure Council decision authority is preserved while operational review activities are appropriately managed.
5. **Documentation and communication** practices support accountability and public confidence in the program approval framework.
6. **Strategic alignment** ensures program approval decision practices support the Strategic Plan (2025-30) Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust.

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if required by legislative, regulatory, or strategic change.

6.0 Related legislation and references

Legislation and regulation

Dental Assistants Profession Regulation (Alberta Regulation 252/2005)

Fair Registration Practices Act

Health Professions Act

Health Professions Restricted Activity Regulation (Alberta Regulation 22/2023)

Labour Mobility Act

College authority and governance

Bylaws of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (2023)

Code of Ethics (2020) of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants

Governance Policies of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants

Strategic Plan (2025-30) Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust

Related College policies

GOV-POL-004 Committees and Decision Pathways

PAP-POL-001 Program Approval and Course Recognition Framework

PAP-POL-002 Program Approval Status and Review

PAP-PRC-001 Program Approval Application and Review Procedure

REG-POL-001 General Registration

REG-POL-002 Provisional Registration

REG-POL-006 Entry Practice Authorization

7.0 Definitions

1. **College of Alberta Dental Assistants:** the regulatory body established under the *Health Professions Act*, responsible for governing the practice of dental assisting in Alberta to protect and serve the public interest. For the purposes of policies, the term “College” refers to the College of Alberta Dental Assistants.
2. **Council:** The governing body of the College as established by legislation and the Bylaws. Council exercises authority for program approval status decisions in accordance with legislation, the Bylaws, and College policy.
3. **Program approval:** The formal determination by Council that an education program meets College requirements and is recognized for regulatory purposes, including entry-to-practice eligibility, subject to any applicable approval status, conditions, monitoring, or review requirements.
4. **Program Approval Committee:** A governance committee established by Council to review program approval matters and make recommendations to Council.
5. **Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate):** The individual appointed by Council to manage the operations of the College and implement Council policy.

8.0 Document information

Policy type	Program Approval			
Policy owner	Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants			
Approved by	Council of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants			
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Related documents	Bylaws of the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (2023) Code of Ethics (2020) PAP-POL-001 Program Approval and Course Recognition Framework PAP-POL-002 Program Approval Status and Review PAP-PRC-001 Program Approval Procedure Program Approval Standards Strategic Plan (2025-30) Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust			