



**College of Alberta
Dental Assistants**

Program Approval Policy 002

Program approval status and review

PAP-POL-002 Program approval status and review

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 framework for assigning, maintaining, changing, and removing program approval status for education programs approved by the College of Alberta Dental Assistants (the College).

It sets expectations for approval status decisions, review, conditions, enhanced monitoring, and regulatory response where a program does not demonstrate sustained compliance with College requirements.

This policy confirms that approval status 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 status decisions are transparent, reasonable, and defensible, and that review processes are proportionate to the level of regulatory confidence in program performance, outcomes, and entry-to-practice readiness.

This program approval policy suite establishes a consistent relationship between approval status, monitoring, review, and Council decision authority.

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, monitoring, or review activities on behalf of the College.

This policy applies to education programs that are seeking, holding, or subject to a change in program approval status.

This policy applies to approval status decisions, status changes, enhanced monitoring, scheduled review, focused review, and status removal arising from evidence submitted to or obtained by 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, monitoring activities, verification processes, reporting mechanisms, and review procedures approved by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate).

3.0 Principles

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

1. **Public interest** is upheld by ensuring that approval status decisions reflect regulatory confidence in safe, competent entry-to-practice preparation.
2. **Legislative consistency** is upheld through approval status and review practices aligned with the *Health Professions Act*, the *Dental Assistants Profession Regulation*, the *Fair Registration Practices Act*, and other applicable legislation.
3. **Accountability** is demonstrated through clear roles for Council, the Program Approval Committee, and the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate). Responsibilities for status assignment, monitoring, review, and decision making are defined and monitored.
4. **Transparency and fairness** guide approval status and review decision making. Decisions are documented, defensible, and supported by clear evidence, review processes, and written communication.
5. **Proportionality** is maintained by ensuring that review intensity and regulatory response are appropriate to the level of concern, available evidence, and identified risk.
6. **Continuous quality improvement** is maintained by requiring programs to respond to findings, address conditions, and demonstrate improvement over time.
7. **Strategic alignment** ensures approval status and review practices support the Strategic Plan (2025–30) *Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust*.

4.0 Program approval status and review

The College applies approval status and review processes to ensure that program approval remains evidence informed, proportionate, and responsive to regulatory confidence, program performance, and entry-to-practice readiness.

4.1 Approval status categories

1. Council may assign one of the following approval statuses to an education program:
 - a. Preliminary approval
 - b. Provisional approval
 - c. Approved
 - d. Approved with conditions
 - e. Not approved
 - f. Approval removed
2. Approval status is assigned based on available evidence, review findings, monitoring outcomes, and the level of regulatory confidence that the program meets College requirements.
3. Approval status may change over time in response to new evidence, review findings, monitoring outcomes, corrective action, or unresolved concerns.

4.1.1 Application of program approval status

1. For dental assistant registration purposes, the approval status of the education program at the time the applicant completed all program requirements, as confirmed by the education institution through final grades or equivalent completion documentation, determines the applicable registration requirements. Subsequent changes to program approval status do not apply to individuals who completed the program while a different approval status was in effect. Convocation or ceremony dates are not used to determine program completion for regulatory purposes.

4.2 Preliminary approval

1. Preliminary approval may be assigned before a program admits students.
2. Preliminary approval may be assigned where the College determines that the proposed program design, curriculum, governance, resources, and clinical education model meet College requirements.
3. Preliminary approval does not authorize admission of students, does not confirm graduate outcomes, and remains subject to further review once the program is operating and additional evidence becomes available.

4.3 Provisional approval

1. Provisional approval may be assigned where a program is operating but the College requires additional evidence of graduate outcomes, clinical readiness, or program performance before full approval is granted.
2. Provisional approval may be assigned where available evidence supports continued program operation but does not yet support full regulatory confidence in entry-to-practice readiness.
3. Programs holding provisional approval are subject to enhanced monitoring and review requirements established by the College.

4.4 Approved status

1. Approved status may be assigned where a program demonstrates sustained compliance with College requirements.
2. Approved status may be assigned where evidence supports regulatory confidence in program performance, graduate outcomes, and entry-to-practice readiness.
3. Approved programs remain subject to ongoing monitoring, scheduled review, and any focused review required by the College.

4.5 Approved with conditions

1. Approved with conditions may be assigned where a program substantially meets College requirements but identified issues require remediation, additional evidence, or enhanced monitoring.
2. Conditions may include corrective actions, timelines, reporting requirements, verification activities, or any other measures the College considers necessary to support regulatory confidence and public protection.
3. Failure to meet imposed conditions may result in further review, status change, or removal of approval.

4.6 Not approved

1. Not approved indicates that a program seeking approval does not meet College requirements for approval.
2. A not approved decision may be made where evidence is insufficient, material deficiencies are identified, or the College does not have regulatory confidence that the program meets required expectations.

3. Not approved applies to applications for program approval, including applications from new programs and any program seeking approval that does not currently hold approved or provisional approval status with the College.
4. A program that is not approved may submit a new application in accordance with College requirements.

4.7 Approval removed

1. Program approval may be removed where monitoring activities, scheduled review, focused review, or unresolved conditions identify material concerns affecting regulatory confidence, entry-to-practice readiness, or public protection.
2. Approval removed applies where a previously approved or provisionally approved program no longer demonstrates compliance with College requirements.
3. Approval removed is a status change decision affecting programs that previously held approved or provisionally approved status with the College.
4. Removal of approval does not prevent the College from conducting further review, requiring additional information, or communicating regulatory implications arising from the decision.

4.8 Monitoring and review

1. Programs holding preliminary approval, provisional approval, approved status, or approved with conditions are subject to review, reporting, and oversight activities established by the College.
2. Programs are subject to approval status review through ongoing monitoring, scheduled review, and focused review.
3. Ongoing monitoring includes annual reporting and evidence submission requirements established by the College.
4. As part of the ongoing monitoring cycle, programs are subject to a scheduled review at least every four years to support deeper examination of program performance, outcomes, and alignment with College requirements.
5. Focused review may occur at any time where monitoring findings, complaints, material program changes, unresolved conditions, outcome indicators, or other information indicate potential regulatory concern or risk affecting program performance or entry-to-practice readiness.
6. Review may include document review, interviews, site visits, verification activities, outcome analysis, or any other evidence gathering the College considers necessary.
7. Findings arising from monitoring or review activities may result in continuation of status, imposition of conditions, enhanced monitoring, or a recommendation to Council regarding status change.

4.9 Transitional recognition of graduates

1. Council recognizes that education program approval status may change over time as part of normal regulatory monitoring, review, or system transition.
2. Where a program experiences a change in approval status, Council may determine whether graduates from a defined cohort remain eligible to meet the education requirement for registration.
3. In making this determination, Council may consider:
 - a. the timing of the approval status change
 - b. the stage of program completion for affected students

- c. evidence available regarding program outcomes and graduate competence
 - d. the need to ensure fairness to students while maintaining public interest protection
4. Council may recognize graduates from specified cohorts as meeting the education requirement for registration where sufficient regulatory confidence exists that entry-to-practice readiness has been achieved.
 5. Recognition of graduates under this section does not alter Council authority to modify, remove, or impose conditions on program approval status.
 6. Where transitional recognition applies, the College will communicate the decision and any applicable conditions to the education institution and affected students.

4.10 Status change and regulatory response

1. The Program Approval Committee reviews status related evidence and makes recommendations to Council regarding approval status and review outcomes.
2. Council retains final authority to assign, maintain, change, condition, or remove approval status.
3. Regulatory response may include continuation of status, imposition of conditions, enhanced monitoring, status change, or removal of approval.
4. All decisions are communicated in writing with reasons and, where applicable, identify conditions, reporting requirements, review expectations, or other next steps.
5. The College maintains a record of all decisions to support accountability, transparency, and compliance reporting.

4.11 Public reporting

1. The College publishes current program approval status on its website.
2. Public reporting may include the current status of approved programs and any other information the College determines appropriate to support transparency and informed decision making.

5.0 Expected outcomes

1. **Public interest** is strengthened through approval status decisions that reflect evidence of program performance and entry-to-practice readiness.
2. **Clear approval categories and review expectations** support consistent and defensible regulatory decision making.
3. **Education programs** understand how approval status is assigned, maintained, reviewed, and changed over time.
4. **Proportionate monitoring and review** support continuous quality improvement and timely regulatory response.
5. **Transparent decision making and public reporting** support confidence in the College's program approval framework.
6. **Strategic alignment** ensures approval status and review 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-PRC-001 Program Approval Procedure

REG-POL-001 General Registration

REG-POL-002 Provisional Registration

REG-POL-006 Entry Practice Authorization

7.0 Definitions

1. **Approved:** An approval status assigned by Council where an education program demonstrates sustained compliance with College requirements and provides sufficient evidence supporting entry-to-practice readiness.
2. **Approved with conditions:** An approval status assigned by Council where a program substantially meets College requirements but must satisfy specified conditions, timelines, or monitoring requirements to maintain approval.
3. **Approval removed:** A determination by Council that an approved or provisionally approved program no longer meets College requirements and that program approval is withdrawn.
4. **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.
5. **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.

6. **Focused review:** A targeted review conducted by or on behalf of the College in response to identified concerns, monitoring findings, changes, risks, or other information relevant to program approval status.
7. **Not approved:** A determination made by Council that an education program seeking approval does not meet College requirements.
8. **Preliminary approval:** An approval status granted before a program admits students, confirming that the proposed program design, curriculum, governance, resources, and clinical education model meet College requirements.
9. **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.
10. **Program Approval Committee:** A governance committee established by Council to review program approval matters and make recommendations to Council.
11. **Provisional approval:** An approval status granted where a program is operating but the College requires additional evidence of outcomes, clinical readiness, or program performance before full approval is granted.
12. **Registrar and Chief Executive Officer (or delegate):** The individual appointed by Council to manage the operations of the College and implement Council policy.
13. **Scheduled review:** A planned review conducted at defined intervals as part of the ongoing monitoring cycle to support deeper examination of program performance, outcomes, and alignment with College requirements.

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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Approval history	Version	Date	Council Motion #	Summary of Revision
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-PRC-001 Program Approval Procedure Program Approval Standards Strategic Plan (2025-30) Leading with Vision, Ensuring Public Trust			