



Guidelines for program approvals processes for publicly-assisted colleges and universities

Ministry of Colleges and Universities

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1. Introduction and purpose

This document provides an overview of ministry program approvals processes and related matters. The purpose of this document is to ensure a clear and transparent understanding of the ministry review process for program approvals and ministry commitments to program approval timelines.

2. Overview of the program approvals processes

Preparing an application

There are a number of requirements institutions should consider when preparing a program approval application. The following table outlines the requirements for applications for Ministerial consent under the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* as well as university and college program funding applications.

Ministerial consent application requirements	University and college funding application requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consent applications must meet the requirements outlined in the <u>Directives and Guidelines for Applying for Ministerial Consent</u>.• Consent applications must be prepared in accordance with <u>PEQAB Manuals & Guidelines</u>.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• College submissions must meet the requirements outlined in the operating procedure <u>Funding Approval of Programs of Instruction Procedures</u>.• University undergraduate core arts and science programs are not subject to the ministry's program approval process.

Ministerial consent approvals process: It takes approximately four to six months to process applications for Minister’s consent, including renewals, under the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*

Submitting an application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent applications are submitted to the Postsecondary Accountability Branch via PostsecondaryAccountability@ontario.ca. • The ministry will refer new and consent renewal applications to the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) within two business days of receiving the submission (with some exceptions). • Institutions are encouraged to submit consent and funding applications at the same time, allowing for streamlined review.
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ministry will leverage an assessment tool (see pages 6-8) to conduct a policy review of the consent application submission. • At the same time, PEQAB will conduct its quality assessment review. • Once the ministry receives PEQAB’s recommendation, additional time is needed to consider the recommendation and to finalize the policy review.
Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final decision will be made by the Minister of Colleges and Universities and will be communicated to institutions through letters. • Should the Minister decide to grant consent, a letter of intent is sent to the applicant. • The Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch (as delegated) will send a final letter of consent to the institution, subject to the institution meeting the conditions for consent outlined in the Minister’s letter of intent to grant consent.

University and college funding approvals process: It takes approximately **60 to 90 business days** to process program funding approvals

Submitting an application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding application for new college or university programs are submitted via the Program Funding Approvals and Administration Module (PFAAM).
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ministry will leverage an assessment tool (see pages 6-8) and assign scores to determine whether final approval of a program funding submission will reside with the Minister of Colleges and Universities or the Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch (PSAB).
Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on outcome of the assessment, the final decision(s) will be made by the Minister of Colleges and Universities or will be delegated to the Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch where permitted. Decisions are communicated to institutions through approval letters. College and university funding submissions are approved in PFAAM.

3. Timelines

The ministry has committed to the following timelines:

- **Four to six months** for applications for Minister's consent, including renewals, under the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*
 - The ministry will refer new and consent renewal applications to PEQAB within two business days of receiving the submission (with some exceptions).
 - While the bulk of the timeline is allocated to PEQAB's review, the ministry requires additional time after receiving PEQAB's recommendation to consider the recommendation and finalize its policy review.
- **60 to 90 business days** for program funding approvals

Please note that the timelines for program approvals are dependent on the ministry receiving all necessary information from the institution. The time during which a submission is returned to the institution for more information would not be included in these timelines.

4. Assessment

Ministry staff review submissions against the criteria outlined on pages 6-8. This review determines whether final approval of a program funding submission will reside with the Minister of Colleges and Universities or the Director of the Postsecondary Accountability Branch. The table also outlines what information the ministry may consider in its assessment of program submissions.

Ministry staff will consult with institutions should information be missing, or if there are questions about the information submitted.

The following program submissions require Minister-level approval for ministry funding:

- Programs in regulated professions (e.g., teacher education, medicine, nursing, paramedicine)
- Programs that are precedent-setting or in a new area of delivery (e.g., automated vehicles)
- Programs where the government is a major direct employer (e.g., policing, border services)
- Programs that have high operating grant costs (e.g., aviation, medical radiation technology, respiratory therapy)
- Programs deemed as requiring Minister level approval as a result of the ministry's assessment.

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Consent applications under the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* also require Minister-level approval.

Overview of ministry assessment

Labour Market Demand – 30 Points
What is being examined?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that graduates of the proposed program are needed in specifically identified fields. ✓ Evidence includes graduation rates, employment rates for graduates, national, provincial and local labour market reports and industry-specific reports or support.
What information may be considered by the ministry in its assessment?
Information provided by institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Research conducted by the institution. ✓ Reports from independent third-party organizations. ✓ Letters of support from industry and employers. ✓ Projected four-digit National Occupational Classification Codes (NOC).
Information considered by the ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Federal Job Bank and Ontario Labour Market Information (NOC codes). ✓ Ministry data (e.g., key performance indicators [KPI], enrolment levels, graduation rates).
Sample Program Submission
High-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of strong local, regional, provincial and/or national job demand. <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of support from industry/employers. <input type="checkbox"/> Average or above average key performance indicators for similar programs on metrics such as employment rate and employment rate in a related field.
Low-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Limited or no evidence of strong local, regional, provincial and/or national job demand. <input type="checkbox"/> No evidence of industry/employer support. <input type="checkbox"/> Unrelated NOC codes provided. <input type="checkbox"/> Low key performance indicators for similar programs on metrics such as employment rate and employment rate in a related field.

Program Impact – 30 Points
What is being examined?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Rationale for the program. ✓ If the proposed program is in a new area of study. ✓ If the proposed program is similar to other programs offered in Ontario, evidence of the value the proposed program would add to Ontario's postsecondary education system.
What information may be considered by the ministry in its assessment?
Information provided by institutions

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence of sufficient distribution and saturation of programs in the geographic area(s) proposed. ✓ Explanation if the proposed program has differentiating features. For example, whether it involves innovative delivery methods, builds on niche areas of program and/or research.
Information generated by ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ List of comparable programs at the same credential level at other colleges or universities with particular reference to institutions in the region.
Sample Program Submission
High-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of student demand for the program and/or credential. <input type="checkbox"/> Average or above average graduation rate and graduation count. <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence to support need for a new credential (e.g., graduate certificate, three-year degree).
Low-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Limited or no evidence of student demand and/or credential. <input type="checkbox"/> Below average graduation rate and graduation count. <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of evidence to support need for a new credential (e.g., graduate certificate, three-year degree).

Experiential Learning/Work Integrated (EWIL) Learning – 20 Points
What is being examined?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence of EWIL learning components (e.g., laboratory, workshop, fieldwork, practicum, placement and co-op supply), if applicable.
What information may be considered by the ministry in its assessment?
Information provided by institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The institution's plan for EWIL. This can also include letters from employers. ✓ An explanation should an EWIL learning component not be necessary.
Sample Program Submission
High-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Description of intended vocational learning outcomes for students through the use of EWIL learning component. <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of sufficient placement opportunities (if applicable). <input type="checkbox"/> Explanation should an EWIL learning component not be necessary (including as a result of regulatory requirements).
Low-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient placement opportunities (if applicable). <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear or insufficient rationale for the lack of EWIL learning component.

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Tuition – 10 Points
What is being examined?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that the tuition is consistent with other tuition fees at the institution and consistent with tuition for comparable programs in the sector. ✓ Evidence that the tuition is consistent with the Tuition Fee Framework.
What information may be considered by the ministry in its assessment?
Information provided by institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A proposed annualized tuition fee and tuition fee as appropriate to how tuition is charged, description of the tuition fee structure, and costing methods used to determine the proposed fee. ✓ If not comparable to other programs, evidence that it is reflective of the cost structure and expected labour market outcomes of graduates.
Information generated by ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Examples of comparable programs used to set the tuition level at the university or college and at other universities or colleges, where the information is available.
Sample Program Submission
High-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition is in compliance with the Tuition Fee Framework for the current academic year, or the proposed program falls within the parameters of existing comparable programs. <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition is based on existing levels for comparative programs.
Low-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition at the same level as existing programs and is not in compliance with the Tuition Fee Framework. <input type="checkbox"/> No comparable tuition levels exist.

Funding Levels – 10 Points
What is being examined?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evidence that the funding level is in alignment with existing funding codes or Weighted Funding/Grant Units.
What information may be considered by the ministry in its assessment?
Information provided by institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ N/A
Information generated by ministry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Other comparable programs that exist within the same ministry code with similar funding parameters. ✓ The calculated grant funding allocation for the program based on program type and duration.
Sample Program Submission
High-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Funding level is in alignment with existing funding codes or Weighted Funding/Grant Units.

Low-Scoring Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Program requires a new funding code or Weighted Funding/Grant Units.<input type="checkbox"/> Program has a high operating grant associated with it

5. Communications and Correspondence

The section below outlines recurring communications between the ministry and publicly assisted colleges and universities.

Quarterly Memos on Program Approvals [NEW]

The ministry emails quarterly updates to all publicly assisted institutions on matters related to program approvals, including programs that have been approved during the previous quarter, and the status of programs pending approval.

Updated Approved Programs Sequence (APS) Table – Publicly Assisted Colleges

The Approved Programs Sequence (APS) table provides information on active ministry-funded college programs (e.g., number of active college program offerings by institution). An updated APS table is typically published on the [ministry website](#) in early November. A memo is then circulated in November/December to publicly assisted colleges announcing the updated APS table (note: timing may vary).

Dormant Program Review – Publicly Assisted Colleges

The ministry conducts a yearly review of all college programs that have been reported as suspended, cancelled or inactive for over five years. A memo is circulated to publicly assisted colleges, typically in the spring. The ministry requests that colleges review each identified program and provide current status in assisting the ministry with this review.

Program Suspensions and Cancellations – Publicly Assisted Colleges

As indicated in the [Program Suspension and Cancellation Operating Procedure](#), the Boards of Governors at publicly assisted colleges are required to notify the ministry when a decision is made to suspend or cancel a ministry-funded program of instruction at all campuses and all delivery modes, including part-time.

Colleges can notify the ministry of their intent to suspend or cancel a program by submitting a program submission on PFAAM under the “Cancellation” or “Suspension” submission headers. This request must include a signed letter from the college president. Please refer to the *Program Funding Approval and Administration Module (PFAAM) College User Guide – Program Modifications* for further instructions on this process.

Should a college wish to cancel a current consent, a formal request must be sent to the Minister of Colleges and Universities via the PostsecondaryAccountability@ontario.ca email and the request must comply with the applicable requirements set out in the consent (typically found in the Standard Terms and Conditions of Consent to Advertise and Offer Degree Program(s) under *the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*).

Program Suspensions and Cancellations – Publicly Assisted Universities

While not required, universities are encouraged to notify the ministry should a university intend to suspend or cancel a ministry-funded program of instruction. Updates can be sent to PostsecondaryAccountability@ontario.ca.

6. Ministry Contacts

For questions about this document, program approval processes including Ministerial consents and all other related matters, please contact the ministry at PostsecondaryAccountability@ontario.ca.