

# Support for new applications for accreditation: Guidance for AFC committees

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## Executive summary

Accreditation of post graduate medical education (PGME) training is an established process through which the Royal College ensures programs meet the standards of accreditation. Accreditation is a peer review process managed by the Educational Standards Unit (ESU), in collaboration with PGME offices.

Faculty interested in accreditation should always begin by contacting their PGME office to explore whether having a Royal College accredited program is feasible. PGME offices know the accreditation process well and will be able to answer questions, provide guidance regarding deadlines and offer support.

## Applying for an accredited program

1. PGME office contacts the Educational Standards Unit (ESU) to request access to the discipline's application in CanAMS, the digital accreditation management system.
2. The application is completed and supporting documentation is uploaded to CanAMS for submission.
3. Applications are reviewed for completeness by ESU. PGME may be contacted if there are missing components.
4. The Royal College's discipline-specific AFC Committee provides input on the application to the AFC Accreditation Committee (AFC-AC) which is considered as part of that committee's decision.
5. Applications are reviewed by AFC-AC at the next scheduled meeting.
6. PGME office is notified of the AFC-AC decision.

### Submission deadlines:

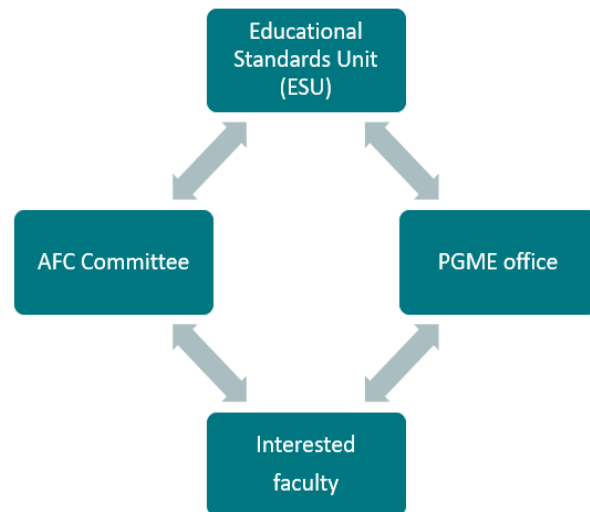
May 31,  
October 15,  
and January 31

(for review in the fall,  
winter or spring  
respectively.)

## The role of the AFC committee in accreditation

In addition to the relationship between the Royal College and PGME offices, AFC committees play a critical role in accreditation. The committee is both the body responsible for the timely, full implementation of the new AFC discipline<sup>1</sup> and it is also the link to the discipline's community of practice. Within accreditation, AFC committees are responsible for:

- reviewing and providing input on new applications for accreditation via CanAMS prior to the AFC-Accreditation Committee's (AFC-AC) consideration of the application;
- reviewing and providing input to surveyors and the AFC-AC on an accredited program during a regular accreditation review;
- reviewing and maintaining discipline-specific indicators in the standards of accreditation (AFC-SA);
- reviewing and maintaining discipline-specific questions in the CanAMS profile instrument; and
- coaching faculty who are interested in having a training program accredited.



Orientations are provided by ESU on the AFC committee's role and responsibilities to review and provide input during accreditation. In terms of supporting new applications, we encourage the committee to access its network of colleagues and/ or fellowship programs to generate interest in applying for Royal College accreditation. Beyond this initial work of generating interest and advocating for the discipline, it is the decision and responsibility of the PGME office to request, ensure completion and submit an application for accreditation.

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<sup>1</sup> Following recognition of a new discipline by COS, the discipline is required to complete the following three milestones to achieve full implementation: development of national standards for dissemination to stakeholders, opening the training route by having at least one accredited training program and opening the practice route for specialists already practicing in the discipline. Once fully implemented, the discipline moves into the "maintenance phase".

## Getting the first AFC training program accredited

Applications for discipline recognition must include a letter of support from at least one training site authority (i.e., Department Head, PGME dean, etc.). This letter articulates their ability to host a Royal College accredited training program and ensures that the infrastructure is in place when the discipline's new standards are approved. This support assures the Committee on Specialties (COS), when considering the application for recognition, that having an accredited program is feasible and a realistic expectation of the discipline.

### Recommended action:

Contact the training site authority who supported the application for recognition and let them know when the new standards will be available.

### Tips:

- During the working group phase, as the standards move closer to approval by the Specialty Standards Review Committee (SSRC), chairs are encouraged to follow up with those who provided letters of support during the recognition phase, especially the training site authority, to let them know the status of the new standards and the expected dissemination date. You may also want to informally socialize the expectations outlined in the standards. We do not recommend sharing the standards until they are approved, but at this point in the process, the working group has a very clear understanding of what will be required by an accredited program. Early outreach ensures interested faculty/training site authorities know when they can expect to contact their PGME/apply for accreditation.
- After SSRC approves the discipline's new standards, the chair will be asked to customize the "application for accreditation" form for the discipline so that it can be uploaded into CanAMS. *Please prioritize this request from your AFC administrator* – without the customized form completed, dissemination of the new standards may be delayed.
- The Royal College provides PGME offices with the standards for all new AFC disciplines. The working group will receive a copy at the same time. You are welcome to share the standards with your community and we encourage you to use the link from the [information by discipline page](#) to ensure the standards in circulation are always the current version.

### What is discipline recognition?

The Royal College oversees the medical education of specialists and is responsible for the health of the evolving system of specialty medicine in Canada. This includes considering applications for new disciplines and regularly reviewing each Royal College discipline. This work is the responsibility of the COS, a subcommittee of the Committee on Specialty Education (CSE). After a discipline is recognized, PGME offices can apply to have an accredited program. Visit our website for more information about the [discipline recognition process](#) or the list of [accredited AFC training](#) programs.

- When speaking to interested faculty or a training site authority (other than a PGME office), the key message is to ask them to contact their PGME office to discuss the feasibility of an application. The infographic on page 1 may be an easy way to share this message.

## Supporting applications for additional training programs

Following the accreditation of a discipline's first training program, AFC committees consider their role and reasons for encouraging additional applications. The primary consideration should be whether societal health needs are being met with one or more accredited programs. COS considers this during the discipline's "regular discipline review"<sup>2</sup>. Another consideration is whether outreach to interested or potentially interested faculty can help promote the new discipline or improve the credential's visibility. Unlike established Royal College primary and subspecialty disciplines, AFCs are not yet as visible or well known within the system of specialty medicine, so it can be beneficial to promote the discipline and credential within the community of practice. This will also make PER-AFC applicant recruitment easier if there is a shared understanding and knowledge in your community.

The following are recommended actions for AFC committees that want to support additional applications for accreditation.

### Recommended actions:

1. Identify and contact faculty and/or fellowship program staff to explore their interest in having an accredited program.

#### Tip

- At your committee's next meeting, include an agenda item on supporting applications for accreditation and use this time to compile a list of colleagues and/or fellowship programs that may be interested in accreditation. Divide the list of interested faculty among members asking them to initiate and report back to the committee on these discussions.
2. Suggest to interested faculty that they review the discipline's standards and do a gut check as to whether their existing fellowship/site could meet the requirements. This is an opportunity to identify what additional supports or work is needed to apply (i.e., new curriculum or an Inter-Institution Affiliation (IIA) if a competency needs to be taught at another site). This exercise gives interested faculty a sense of the task ahead to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> All Royal College recognized disciplines, regardless of discipline type, participate in a cyclical six-year discipline review aimed at promoting the discipline, reflecting on its health, and managing emergent issues. This review is a collaborative process between discipline committees and the COS, whose mandate involves oversight of the overall health and configuration of the system of specialty medicine in Canada. A new discipline is typically reviewed approximately 6 years following recognition. Your committee administrator will provide notice of the review one year in advance.

accreditation (before approaching their PGME office). You may also want to direct them to the [information by discipline](#) page to access the discipline's standards.

3. Interested faculty should always be encouraged to reach out to their PGME offices as the first step to exploring whether an accredited program is feasible. Faculty should direct questions about the accreditation process to their PGME office, as each medical school has its own way of managing accreditation requests. PGME offices can also request more information from one of the accreditation specialists in ESU if they have questions.

4. AFC committee members should be able to answer questions from interested faculty about the application and interpretation of the discipline's standards (as some members will have been a member of the working group that defined the discipline and developed the standards). If you receive questions about the interpretation of the standards that can't be answered by the committee, especially owing to turnover in committee membership, we can put you in touch with the previous chair of the committee or working group (ask your [AFC administrator](#) for contact information). Or the chair may contact [Karolina Daniel](#), Policy Analyst, ESU, for assistance interpreting the standards.

5. If there is a group of interested faculty who have questions about the standards, a chair may want to provide an opportunity to bring them together virtually to answer questions or collaborate. For example, a chair may request from the Specialties Unit (SU) an ad hoc virtual meeting for 'serious' applicants to review the discipline's requirements and to level-set in terms of what is being asked for in the application. For this kind of meeting, your committee administrator can provide polling and a web conferencing login, however no minutes are provided, and typically Royal College staff do not attend.

6. If at this point, following a more thorough examination of the requirements, the AFC Committee encounters questions regarding the interpretation of the standards or the application form, the chair is encouraged to contact [Karolina Daniel](#), Policy Analyst, ESU. If the committee faces other challenges with accreditation or are unable to generate interest in accreditation, please contact [Linda Rumleski](#), AFC Program Manager, Education Strategy, Innovations and Development (ESID). We want to support our AFC committees

### AFC accreditation checklist for interested faculty

- Download the discipline's standards from the [information by discipline](#) database.
- Review the standards and gut check as to whether the standards can be met - are the requirements achievable at your site? Where are the gaps? What additional resources/supports are needed?
- Contact your PGME office to discuss interest and feasibility of having a Royal College accredited AFC training program.

while maintaining the integrity of the accreditation relationship between PGME offices and the Royal College.

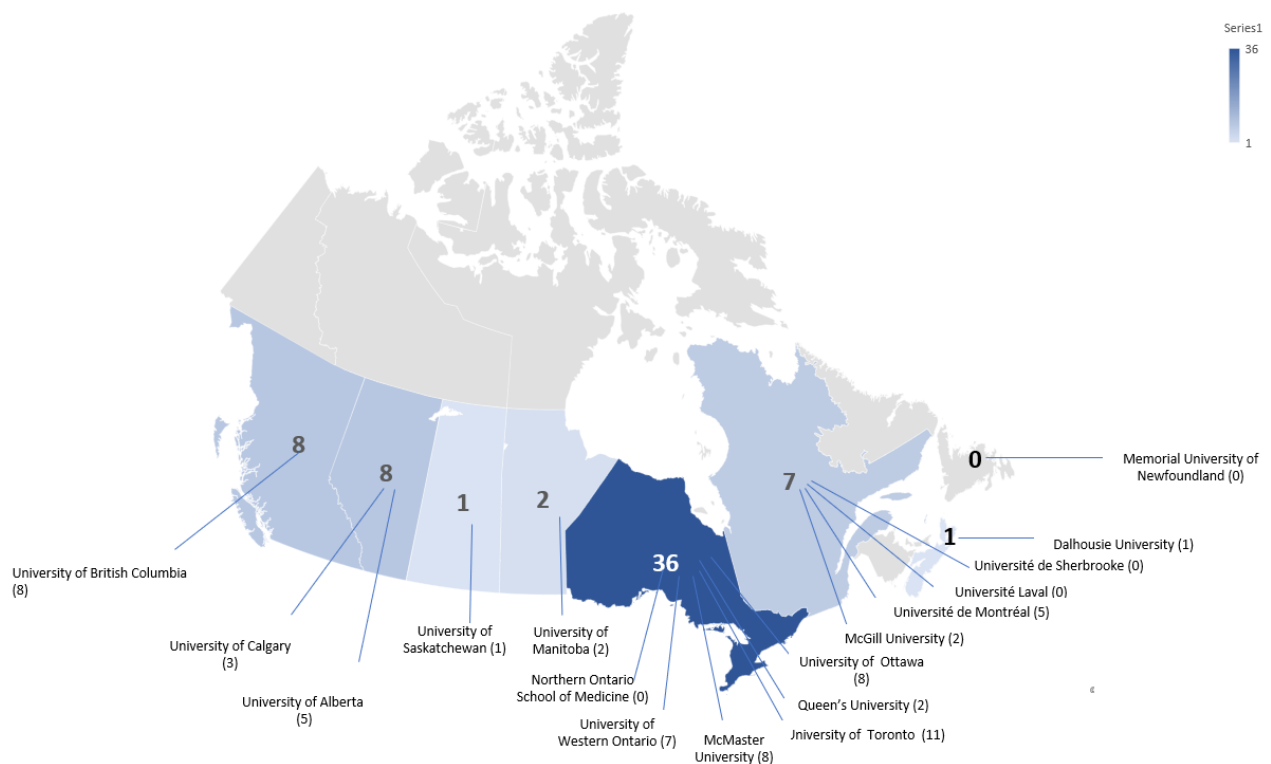
### Need more information?

- **Faculty** with questions about having a program accredited or the process?  
Contact your PGME office.
- **PGME offices** with questions about accrediting an AFC training program?  
Contact the PGME Accreditation Specialist, ESU.
- **AFC chairs** with questions about interpreting the general standards or the AFC-SA?  
Contact [Karolina Daniel](#), Policy Analyst, ESU.
- **AFC committees** with questions about other challenges relating to accreditation or the guidance provided in this document?  
Contact [Linda Rumleski](#), AFC Program Manager.
- A snapshot of Royal College AFC accreditation statistics?  
See [Appendix A](#) below.

# Appendix A: Royal College AFC accreditation, September 2022

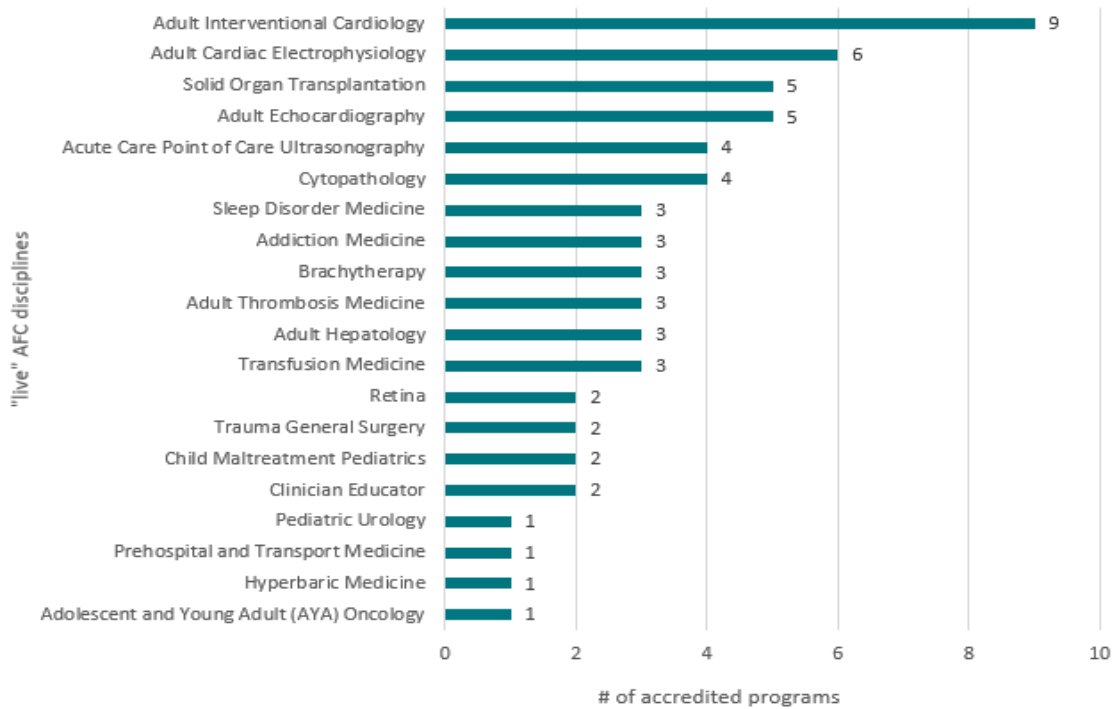
## Distribution of accredited AFC training programs in Canada

Thirteen of 17 medical schools have accredited training programs.



## Accredited AFC training programs by discipline

Twenty of 28 AFC disciplines have 1+ accredited programs.



\*a discipline becomes "live" following the dissemination of the new approved national standards

## Number of accredited AFC training programs over time

There are currently 63 accredited AFC training programs in Canada.

