

Guidelines:

Pre-Employment Programs

These guidelines identify considerations and offer advice in support of submission of comprehensive proposals for new pre-employment certificate programs.

Such programs can present a set of considerations that are distinct from those for other certificate programs, and these guidelines address considerations unique to pre-employment programs.

If a topic is not addressed in these guidelines, it should be assumed that advice offered in other ministry guidelines is also applicable to pre-employment programs.

Pre-employment programs are governed by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* (and accompanying regulations) and are subject to the same review and approval processes that all certificate, diploma, and degree programs undergo. The Post-Secondary Programs branch oversees this process and makes recommendations to the Minister regarding proposals for new programs, including new pre-employment programs.

The role of Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT), as governed by the *Apprenticeship and Training Act*, is only to determine recognition of the program. AIT recognition of a program does not pre-empt the proposal from the system co-ordination review process. Pre-employment programs, like other certificate programs, are required to undergo such a review in order to demonstrate demand from learners and employers for the program, financial viability and sustainability, institutional capacity, and alignment with criteria and standards as documented in credential frameworks.

Scope

Pre-employment programs differ fundamentally from apprenticeship programs in two ways:

- students are not registered apprentices; and
- the program of study typically includes some curriculum components that are in addition to AIT course outline requirements for period-1 apprenticeship training.

Pre-employment certificate programs are offered only by Polytechnic Institutions (PIs) and those Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCIs) offering apprenticeship training (as well as by some private providers).

Apprenticeship programs are outside the scope of these guidelines. Post-Secondary Program's role with regard to these programs is exclusively recording (see *Guidelines: Program Recording*).

Guiding Principles

- Pre-employment programs facilitate student pathways and career preparation by creating an entry-level educational portal into a trade.
- Industry demand is typically the primary driver of development of a pre-employment program proposal.
- PIs and many CCIs are well positioned to offer pre-employment programming since they have qualified instructors with trades experience and have available trades-related facilities and equipment.
- AIT recognition is typically grounded in conditions about alignment with AIT course outlines and site reviews of facilities.

Definitions

Pre-Employment Program: a certificate program of less than one year's duration that offers trades-related preparation in a designated trade or occupation and is recognized by AIT so that program graduates are eligible to write period-1 apprenticeship exams.

Comprehensive and Integrated Planning

The ministry expects that proposed new pre-employment programs are part of a broader strategic plan and, as such, are reflected in comprehensive institutional plans that institutions submit annually to the ministry. Although there will be cases where changes in the labour market or in the larger economy spur unexpected additions in programming, these circumstances should be relatively rare.

Timeline Considerations

Pre-employment programs often have implementation dates that do not coincide with the typical academic year or terms. The ministry works to accommodate such implementation dates whenever possible.

Institutions should submit pre-employment program proposals six months in advance of the proposed implementation date (see *Guidelines: Proposal Timelines*).

The ministry does its best to expedite the review and approval process for pre-employment program proposals in recognition of the fact that demand for such programs from employers and learners is often sudden, immediate, and urgent. Nonetheless, expedited reviews and approvals for pre-employment programs are contingent on the submission of comprehensive proposals by institutions that include documentation of AIT recognition.

Program Structure

Pre-employment program duration can range from 9 to 16 weeks, but are typically 12 weeks in length.

Pre-employment programs should typically be in the 12 credit to 16 credit range and the 0.5 FLE range, although exceptional circumstances may warrant variability.

AIT recommends that provincial apprenticeship committees only recognize programs that are, at minimum, 1.5 times the length of the comparable period of apprenticeship. The rationale behind the recommendation is that full-time pre-employment students generally have no on-the-job learning, unlike registered apprentices.

AIT Recognition

Pre-employment programs, unlike other certificate programs, are required to document program recognition from AIT (following a review of curriculum and a site visit). AIT recognition of a program is necessary to facilitate program graduates being eligible to write period-1 AIT exams for the associated trade.

Institutions need to initiate the AIT recognition process, since it is a separate process from the system coordination review process. Institutions should contact AIT for further information on the application procedures for program recognition.

The department expects institutions to have already obtained or be in the process of obtaining such recognition at the time of proposal submission. Proposals should provide evidence of AIT recognition through the form of correspondence or other documentation.

AIT recognition of a program prior to submission of a proposal to the ministry does not expedite or otherwise streamline the review and approval process for a pre-employment program proposal. Proposals for programs that already have AIT recognition undergo the same review processes to obtain approval.

Demonstrating Demand

Demand from industry is the primary driver of development of new pre-employment programs. This demand can manifest in different ways depending on the economic cycles for industries.

Pro-Cyclical Demand

In some cases, institutions may be faced with demand from learners and industry for apprentice positions in excess of the system's capacity. Normally, this demand is driven by intense growth in an economic sector.

In cases where industry demand is pro-cyclical, institutions should provide evidence of demand for programs in excess of capacity in the associated apprenticeship programs. This evidence can take several forms, including (but not limited to):

- ASI data showing qualified applicants well in excess of applicants offered admission;
- statements from professional associations, attesting to the need for further apprentices; and
- surveys of industry employers regarding their plans and capacity to hire new apprentices in the near term (2-4 years).

Counter-Cyclical Demand

In other cases, demand for a pre-employment program stems, paradoxically, from a lack of industry demand.

Without pre-employment programs to enable learners to ladder directly into period-2 apprenticeships, the supply of tradespeople in an industry and/or region could diminish, which could delay or hamper growth in a sector when economic activity begins to intensify again.

If demand for the program is counter-cyclical, institutions should:

- provide reports or other documentation forecasting longer-term economic trends in a sector and/or region; and
- supply evidence of a predicted shortfalls of tradespeople in that industry and/or region on a longer-term horizon (5-10 years).

Local Demand Considerations

An inability on the part of students to obtain apprenticeships in their home communities can be a contributing factor prompting development of a pre-employment program.

In such cases, institutions should provide evidence that potential learners are unable to find period-1 apprenticeships in their home communities, or are unable/unwilling to leave their communities to attend necessary training, but there are employers in these communities willing to hire graduates as apprentices.

Other Proposal Considerations

PAPRS proposals for pre-employment programs should contain all the information required for all other types of certificate programs. In addition, pre-employment program proposals should:

- describe and document how the training covers the period-1 curriculum of a specific designated trade;
- list the geographic location of site or sites for the training (AIT recognition typically specifies the approved locations); and
- list and describe any additional conditions imposed by AIT (please use Other Considerations section of the program proposal template).

Setting-Up the PAPRS Workflow

In completing the PAPRS proposal workflow, data fields for pre-employment certificate programs should be filled-out as follows:

Program Name	Pre-Employment
Specialization Name	[Name of associated trade]
Credential Type	Certificate
Program Type	Pre-Employment
Level of Study	Career Preparation

Post-Approval Considerations

Following ministry approval of a program, there are several considerations that institutions need to be aware of and integrate into their planning:

- Institutions should keep PAPRS records updated by submitting program suspension or termination proposals in cases where pre-employment programs listed in PAPRS are no longer admitting new students or are no longer being offered.
- For load change proposals for approved pre-employment programs, the institution needs to seek renewed recognition from AIT for the program and include evidence of such in the proposal submitted to the ministry.

Program approval letters may include a requirement related to reporting specified program outcomes to the Program Design and System Innovation (PDSI) unit for an initial period after program implementation.

- This reporting requirement is typically in the form of requesting institutions to copy PDSI on annual reports submitted to AIT about program activities, pass/fail rates for the program, and other success indicators.
- This reporting information assists PDSI to evaluate whether pre-employment programs result in graduates obtaining apprenticeships and employment.

Further Information and Assistance

For additional information contact:

Director, Program Design and System Innovation

Alberta Advanced Education

780-643-9472

Related Guidelines:

- Proposal Timelines
- Enrolment Planning
- Program Recording

Other related documents:

- PAPRS Template: Program Recording

To obtain a copy of other guideline documents, or to ensure that you have the most recent copy of this guideline, please send a request via email to ae.psp-paprs@gov.ab.ca.