

Guidelines:

Program Transfer

These guidelines support the successful transition of a ministry-approved program from one post-secondary institution to another. The *Programs of Study Regulation* stipulates that Minister approval is required when public post-secondary institutions propose to transfer ministry-approved programs.

Circumstances arise occasionally whereby a post-secondary institution wishes to curtail offering a ministry approved program, although student and labour market demand may still be strong for that program and/or the program may be unique within the Alberta Adult Learning System. In these cases, transferring a ministry approved program to another post-secondary institution is typically preferable to program termination.

Program Transfer differs from brokering and collaborative delivery arrangements in that a host or credentialing institution retains ownership of a program in the latter cases.

Definitions and Scope

Program Transfer is when a ministry-approved program is formally relocated from one Alberta post-secondary institution to another Alberta post-secondary institution following ministry review and approval. Once this transfer is approved, the institution into which the program is transferred is responsible for delivery of the program and issuing the parchment.

These guidelines do **not** apply to:

- non-ministry-approved programs;
- instances in which an Alberta institution shares, sells, or purchases program curriculum with, to, or from institutions outside of the province of Alberta;
- circumstances in which an entity other than an Alberta post-secondary institution wishes to transfer a program to a post-secondary institution (although principles and advice contained in these guidelines can be informative and beneficial); and
- situations in which a post-secondary institution proposes to transfer a program specialization from one ministry-approved program to another ministry-approved program within its own institution (e.g., moving a human resources major from a management degree to a commerce degree).

Guiding Principles

Program Transfer arrangements between institutions should:

- protect prospective and current students by supporting student access and success;
- honour commitments made to students at the time of registration and, in this way, avoid disruptions associated with significant tuition, policy, program delivery, and geographic location changes;
- support program accessibility within Alberta's post-secondary system;
- accommodate an individual institution's programming priorities and strategic directions;
- support program standards of high quality;
- support labour market and employment outcomes; and
- provide formal notice with sufficient timeframes in publications and websites to accommodate planning and avoid disruptions.

Pre-Planning

In cases where an institution is discontinuing a ministry-approved program, the institution should:

- advise and consult with Post-Secondary Programs (PSP);
- consult with important stakeholders including students; and
- consult with potential partner institutions.

In cases where an institution decides to work with another institution to transfer a program, the understandings and agreements reached should be documented in a written agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

An MOU should be prepared a minimum of 6 – 12 months in advance of a targeted approval date (best practices suggest formal communications occur a year in advance of implementation) and signed by the institutions' Vice Presidents Academic or designate(s). It is recommended that the MOU documents key aspects of the program transfer such as:

- rationale and purpose (explaining why this in the best interest of the two post-secondary institutions, students, and Alberta Adult Learning System);
- student considerations and protections (transcripts, services, etc.);
- curriculum considerations (specifying program of study or modifications to program regulations);
- FLE and funding considerations (including amount of grant funding being transferred);
- timeframes and principles;
- staffing considerations (including collective agreement provisions when applicable);
- facilities and equipment considerations (including if equipment will transfer);
- stakeholder considerations (e.g., notifications to regulatory and quality assurance bodies); and
- communication considerations.

A copy of the MOU should be formally submitted via e-mail to PSP a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed approval date; PSP will review the MOU and provide feedback and advice within three weeks of receipt. In cases where PSP supports the program transfer moving forward, the Executive Director, Operations, will notify both institutions of the department's approval in principle.

Gaining approval for a program transfer is a multi-faceted undertaking. The Ministry:

- approves in principle an agreement made by a transfer-out and a transfer-in institution;
- approves a new program in PAPRS from the transfer-in institution (based on the historical program of the transfer-out institution); and
- approves a program suspension/termination from the transfer-out institution (following approval of the program at the transfer-in institution).

Phases of Program Transfer and Approval

Program transfer is a five-phase process:

- Preplanning
- New Program Proposal Development and Review: Transfer-in Institution
- Suspension/Termination Proposal Development and Review: Transfer-out Institution
- Approval
- Implementation and Communications

New Program Proposal Development and Review: Transfer-In Institution

The transfer-in institution is required to submit a comprehensive program proposal in PAPRS six months in advance of proposed transfer implementation date. Once received, the proposal is subject to a full and rigorous review by the department and is not considered to be a program record-keeping matter.

While the transferred program may have previously undergone a review at the transfer-out institution, the transfer-in institution may be introducing modifications (e.g., staffing, budgets, enrolments, etc.) that require review and approval by the ministry. The proposal also needs to be reviewed for system alignment and capacity considerations related to the transfer-in institution.

The program proposal should present an evidence-based record of information that includes all elements required in a proposal of the credential type under which it is proposed. This includes:

- student and labour market demand;
- enrolment, admissions, and financial/budget planning;
- credential and program description;
- FLE, credit, and load information;
- key and relevant background information from MOU;
- arrangements for accommodating active program students into the institution; and
- communication plans for students and other stakeholders.

The program proposal should identify and clarify/support key proposed differences from what has been delivered by the home institution transferring the program. These may include:

- what changes are being made to the program of study;
- what changes are being made to program delivery and student services;
- what changes are being made to enrolment projections and budgets;
- what changes are being made to credit and load calculations (if any); and
- staffing, equipment, and program resourcing considerations.

Proposals should note, in particular, if there are staff transferring between institutions and if collective agreement conditions apply.

The effective date of the proposed program should align with the proposed suspension date of the transfer-out institution. The rationale and background information leading to the program proposal should be described, with the signed MOU attached.

In cases of degree proposals, following a successful system coordination review, institutions should contact Campus Alberta Quality Council for direction about whether a Part B proposal is required. PSP will conduct a system coordination review and consult with the two institutions involved as the review progresses.

Suspension/Termination Proposal Development and Review: Transfer-Out Institution

The institution proposing to transfer out a program is required to submit a comprehensive program suspension proposal in PAPRS six months in advance of a proposed transfer implementation date. The effective date of the proposed suspension should typically align with the proposed implementation date of the transfer-in institution, although in some cases there may be overlap needed depending upon the arrangements made by the two institutions concerning services to active program students.

The rationale and background information leading to the suspension/program transfer should be described. A copy of the signed MOU should be attached to the PAPRS record. Once received, the proposal is subject to full and rigorous review by the department; it is not considered to be a program record-keeping matter.

In exceptional cases where institutions wish to proceed immediately to proposing program termination (rather than program suspension), this request should be discussed with PSP prior to proposal submission.

The suspension proposal should present an evidence-based record of information which includes:

- enrolment information;
- access considerations; and
- student accommodations.

Institutional impacts and risks should be identified and explained (including impacts on enrolments, budgets, staffing, space and infrastructure, reallocation of resources, student mobility, etc.) in the proposal.

Approval

Transferring-in institutions should not advertise the proposed new program or advise program students of transfer arrangements until the Minister formally approves the proposals stemming from a program transfer.

Transferring-out institutions should not advise program students of transfer arrangements or publish suspension/termination information on websites until the Minister formally approves the proposed suspension/termination.

The Deputy Minister shall advise the transferring-in institution by letter whether the program is approved, not approved or whether a decision has been deferred.

The Deputy Minister shall advise the transferring-out institution by letter whether the program suspension/termination is approved, not approved or whether a decision has been deferred.

Approval letters will include effective dates as well as any additional conditions imposed by the ministry as a result of the approval decision.

PSP will update PAPRS records to reflect the Minister's decision.

Implementation and Communication

Following receipt of ministry approval, both institutions should update their websites to reflect current approvals for new programs and for program suspensions/terminations.

Both institutions should communicate formally with all program students and student applicants that a program transfer is being conducted and how it is being implemented, including:

- the nature of student accommodations (e.g., student records, transcripts, admissions, registrations, loans, scholarships, research grants, etc.);
- services available to students in order to facilitate a successful transition from one institution to another (e.g., advising, orientation sessions, etc.);
- program requirements and deadline dates that students meet in order to transition and graduate;
- information about relevant policies (e.g., student appeals, student rights and responsibilities, etc).

Both institutions should communicate with program stakeholders as needed (e.g. in matters related to program/credential recognition, work-integrated learning placements, advisory committees, etc.)

Both institutions should execute implementation plans in conformity with the MOU agreement.

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

Other related documents:

- PAPRS
Templates

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.