Applicant Guide to Becoming Accredited with ECO Canada and the Canadian Environmental Accreditation Commission
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This guide will provide Canadian Post-secondary Environmental Programs with an understanding of the process and requirements for becoming accredited with ECO Canada.

OVERVIEW
Congratulations! You’ve made the first step forward in demonstrating the quality and commitment of your Environmental Program towards the environment profession. The environment profession, inclusive of industry, government and academia, expects its members to be competent within their area of specialization, but also in understanding the impacts of environment on society. Accredited programs must therefore not only prepare students in their area of specialization, but also contribute to their development as a responsible Environmental Professional. The accreditation process provides quality assurance for environmental education programs and ensures programs reflect a culture of continuous quality enhancement.

As your program works towards its accreditation status, there are four basic principles that should drive you:

Protect the Public Interest: Accreditation provides assurance to the public that Canada’s accredited environmental education providers are committed to high program standards and academic quality.

Quality Assurance: Accreditation ensures that Canada’s accredited environmental education providers are committed to academic quality and reflect the profession’s standards of practice and ethical standards.

Quality Enhancement: Accreditation ensures that Canada’s accredited environmental programs are current and are committed to ongoing improvement. It ensures that programs reflect the evolution of professional knowledge and prepare environmental professionals for the diverse needs of industry, government and academia.

Accountability: Accreditation ensures environmental programs are accountable to society – the environmental profession and industry, government and academia for delivering high-quality academic programs.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS
The Canadian Environmental Accreditation Commission (CEAC) has approved the National Standard for Environmental Programs, developed and administered by ECO Canada. The National Standard defines the minimum requirements for Environmental Programs to be accredited.

In addition to general requirements, definitions, and principles, the National Standard consists of eight (8) areas to be assessed and validated through the accreditation process:
1. Environmental program development and maintenance
2. Environmental Program Curriculum
3. Faculty complement
4. Admissions
5. Student services
6. Institution facilities and learning resources
7. Program Financial Resources
8. Research & Scholarly Activity

Within Environmental Program Curriculum, ECO has further defined Environmental Curriculum Standards which define the specific curriculum requirements for programs of different levels and/or focus.
1 ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The accreditation process is an ongoing cycle, which begins with the rigorous assessment and review of your Environmental Program. Once your program undergoes this initial review and becomes accredited, you’ll have ongoing, annual reporting requirements throughout the five-year term of your accreditation. Through that fifth and final year of your accreditation term, your program will undergo a reaccreditation review to ensure the ongoing conformance of your program with the National Standard. If successful, your accreditation term will be renewed for another five-year term, and the maintenance process will begin anew.

2 APPLICATION PHASE

The application phase will allow your institution and program to declare and demonstrate their interest, eligibility and commitment to becoming accredited. The application phase consists of two steps: 1) call for interest and 2) invitation to apply.

ECO Canada will conduct semi-annual calls for interest to post-secondary institutions. Forms would be due March 15\textsuperscript{th} and October 15\textsuperscript{th} each year. In general, programs submitting interest on March 15\textsuperscript{th} would undergo a site visit the following Winter (March/April), and programs submitting interest on October 15\textsuperscript{th}, would undergo a site visit the following Fall (October/November). There are a limited number of programs that can be accommodated each cycle. Programs are encouraged to submit their Expressions of Interest as soon as the decision to undertake Accreditation has been made; waitlists can be long and site visit schedules booked up to two years in advance.
You should consider the availability of resources throughout these time frames to determine your programs’ capacity to develop the required documentation (self-study), as well as host the site visit.

The Expression of Interest and Eligibility form can be downloaded from the ECO Canada website.

Once received, the Accreditation Registrar will review all interested programs and recommend those eligible to the CEAC for approval. Where the number of eligible programs exceeds the capacity for site visits, programs will be put on a waiting list, and invited to apply for subsequent accreditation cycles.

Programs approved by the CEAC will receive an Invitation to Apply notice from the Accreditation Registrar. The notice will include the Application Acceptance which must be completed and signed by the appropriate program authority. The application form should be submitted to ECO Canada, along with the required Application Fee (see Appendix A), within 30 days of invitation. Programs that fail to submit the application form may forfeit their place in the accreditation cycle and be moved to the waiting list; another program will be invited to apply for that cycle.

### 3 SELF-STUDY PHASE

The Self-Study Phase provides an opportunity for programs to demonstrate their compliance with the National Standard, and for ECO Canada to assess and validate this against the Standard. It consists of three steps: 1) development, 2) evaluation, and 3) validation.

**Development** is the step in which programs assemble and/or create the required policies, procedures, practices and documentation that demonstrate that they meet the National Standard.

**While it is expected that programs meet the National Standard, it is not expected that programs have established/existing documentation that demonstrates they meet the National Standard. It is anticipated that many programs will need to create some of the required policies, procedures or practices in order to meet the requirements of accreditation.** Because this may be the first time that this level of documentation has been required, you should consider this in your self-study planning to determine additional development time and approvals required for new documentation, where necessary.
In general, the self-study development is the process by which environmental programs articulate how their program was developed and is maintained, as well as how it is managed, to ensure its ongoing relevance and quality. The resulting documentation – the self-study – supports the continual improvement of the program.

There is no set requirement for how programs must prepare their self-study report, but all programs must submit a document matrix that defines which document/section/pages correspond to which clause/requirement of the National and Curriculum Standards. Programs will, however, be provided with a template for the self-study report should they wish to use it.

Some institutions have benefited from establishing a Self-Study Steering Committee or engaging an existing committee to lead this development. The committee includes individuals who can provide a broad representation of the program, and assist in collecting and/or creating materials and documents. Because many Environmental Programs are cross-departmental, a committee can facilitate greater communication and coordination among these departments.

To further support the development and documentation of the self-study report, ECO has also developed an interpretive guide for the national standard to assist programs in determining what is required in order to demonstrate compliance with the standard; programs will receive this, as well as the self-study report template, once they've submitted their application and fee. In addition, the ECO Accreditation Team will facilitate a webinar with the program to review the self-study phase and provide further guidance regarding the Standard and documentation.

Typically, programs are given eight (8) months to develop their self-study report. All documentation must be received electronically\(^1\) by ECO Canada a minimum of two (2) months prior to the scheduled site visit; specific dates will be finalized with the Registrar once Application Forms and Fees are received.

**Evaluation** is the step in which the Registrar reviews all submitted documentation against the National and Curriculum standards. The document review will:

- Determine if the programs’ self-study report addresses all requirements of the standard;
- Identify deficiencies in the documentation, should they exist, and/or opportunities for improvement; and
- Provide a basis on which the Site Visit plan will be established.

As possible, any documentation deficiencies will be resolved prior to the Site Visit. Where documentation is insufficient, site visits may be postponed until major deficiencies are addressed.
Validation

Once the document review is complete and sufficiency of the self-study report is confirmed, the Registrar will establish a Site Visit plan and team, for review and approval by the program. The Site Visit plan will define the objectives, scope, activities, schedule and roles throughout the site visit.

The purpose of the Site Visit is to validate that the self-study report is implemented/practiced as defined by the documentation. Validation will occur through the collection of evidence, which can be gathered through supplemental documentation, interviews and/or observation of activities.

In general the Site Visit team will consist of three (3) people: 1-2 Academic representatives, an Environmental Professional, and an ECO Canada Accreditation team member. The Academic and Environmental Professional team members are volunteers and are required to agree to and sign a confidentiality and conflict of interest agreement prior to participating in any site visit. Profiles of the Academic and Environmental Professional team members will be sent to the program a minimum of 60 days prior to the site visit, at which time programs can identify any perceived conflicts of interest. In general, site visit team members will be responsible for the following:

- Academic: Institution and Program criteria
- Environmental Professional: curricula criteria (environmental relevance)
- ECO Canada staff: team and activity management, planning, communications, reporting

Typically, a Site Visit will take place over the course of 2 days; this time may fluctuate depending on the site visit plan. The Site Visit plan will define the interviews and observation activities required for validation of the documentation; the program manager and Site Visit team lead will work collaboratively to coordinate the schedules of program staff throughout the Site Visit. Programs can expect to engage the following individuals/groups for the Site Visit:

- President
- VP academic
- Chair/Dean
- Program Coordinators
- Professors
- Internship Coordinator
- Students
- Alumni/Employers
- Internship Associations
- Lab/Field Technicians
Programs will also be asked to provide a conference room for the site visit team to use during the Site Visit, which has a phone and internet access, as well as refreshments, snacks and working lunches. Each day will begin and end with briefings between the Site Visit team and the program lead; official opening and closing meetings will also take place. Due to the nature of the site visit and conflict of interest, the site visit team may not participate in socials or dinners with the institution or program.

Throughout the Site Visit, team members will evaluate evidence against the Standard to generate findings to be included in the final Site Visit Report. The site visit findings can indicate that the program has met the requirements of the standard or that there are deficiencies, and/or identify opportunities for improvement. Site Visit findings will be reviewed and discussed in the daily debriefing meetings to obtain acknowledgement that the evidence is accurate and that the deficiencies are understood.

4 ACCREDITATION DECISION

Upon conclusion of the Site Visit, the site visit team will finalize the draft Site Visit report. The Site Visit report will provide a complete, accurate, concise and clear record of the Site Visit, and will be distributed to the Program within five (5) business days of the Site Visit. The program will have five (5) business days to raise any concerns with the report, after which time the report will be finalized and distributed to the CEAC for consideration.

Where the site visit team has identified deficiencies, the program will be required to prepare a Conformance Plan. The Conformance Plan will define how the program intends to address the deficiency(ies) identified and establish a timeline for completion. The Conformance Plan will be submitted to the Registrar for approval within five (5) business days of the report finalization, and once approved, will be submitted to the Accreditation Commission for consideration in its decision.

The Accreditation Commission meets twice annually – typically in June and December – to review and put forth motions on the accreditation status of applicants. Programs will be notified by the Registrar, once a decision has been made by the commission on the accreditation status of an application.

Accreditation is granted for a five-year term.

5 ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Programs that are granted accreditation status will receive:

• An Approval letter
• An Accreditation certificate
• A marketing kit, including accreditation seal and acknowledgement standards
• Annual reporting forms
• Annual fee schedules

Programs that completed Conformance Plans, will be required to report on their status in their first year, and verification of improvements will occur within two years of the accreditation term. Should deficiencies still exist, the programs’ accreditation may be suspended.

Through the annual reporting, programs must identify any substantive changes made to the program which affect its quality, such as a change in its location, scope of educational offerings, credentials, or control. An evaluation of the report could result in the scheduling of a site visit to confirm the program’s accreditation status.

Programs that maintain their Accreditation in good standing will receive:
• The Rite to Use of the ECO Canada seal and Accreditation certificate
• NEW: Exclusive EPt for Accredited Program Graduates
• Exclusive discounted national advertising opportunities
• Visibility and exposure on the eco.ca website, newsletter articles and social media
• Visibility at relevant events

ECO’s membership and audience reach is over 180,000 individuals, broken down as follows:
• 103,000 Professionals (57%)
• 56,000 Students (31%)
• 10,000 Employers (6%)
• 8,000 Educators (4%)
• 2,000 Other (2%)

6 REACCREDITATION

Through a programs fifth-year of their accreditation term, a subsequent document review and site visit will be conducted. The purpose of this reaccreditation review and visit will be to confirm the programs’ ongoing conformance with the National Standard. The program will submit an updated self-study and host a Site Visit team, similar to the initial process.
APPENDIX A – FEES
**ACCREDITATION FEES**

Accreditation invoices are issued by ECO Canada and are payable by cheque or credit card, in Canadian dollars, plus applicable taxes. Contact the Accreditation Registrar for clarification or concerns (accreditation@eco.ca; 403.233.0748).

**APPLICATION FEES**

This non-refundable fee will be payable with the submission of the Application Form, within 30 days of receipt of Invitations to Apply from the program registrar. Application fees are non-transferable; i.e. they must be used in the time period specified in the Invitation to Apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Application Fee for all new institutions applying for accreditation</td>
<td>$1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SITE VISIT FEES**

This non-refundable fee will be payable in two installments: 50% with submission of the self-study, 50% upon completion of the site visit. Travel costs are payable upon completion of the site visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Site Visit Fee for all new institutions undergoing a site visit</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaccreditation Site Visit Fee for all accredited programs, in the last year of the accreditation term, to confirm conformance with the National Standard</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Visit Volunteer Team Travel for relevant and reasonable travel costs for site visit volunteers</td>
<td>Up to $2000</td>
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**ANNUAL MAINTENANCE FEES**

Annual maintenance fees are payable yearly on the anniversary date of an environmental programs’ accreditation. Non-payment of invoices may result in suspension of accreditation status.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fee</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Maintenance Fee for each accredited environmental program</td>
<td>$1000</td>
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