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Introduction to Accreditation

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURAL CERTIFICATION BOARD

Presented by
Zoë Campbell

A Brief History of CACB

1976	ACADEMIC CERTIFICATION	The Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB) is established as Canada's national, independent non-profit organization responsible for assessing the academic qualifications of architecture graduates.
1991	ACCREDITATION PROGRAM	CACB becomes the sole organization recognized by the architectural profession to accredit professional architecture degree programs offered by Canadian universities.
2010	RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE	CACB expands its mandate to contribute to national and international research related to architectural accreditation and academic certification.
2012	BROADLY EXPERIENCED FOREIGN ARCHITECT (BEFA) PROGRAM	CACB begins certifying the qualifications of broadly experienced foreign architects, supporting pathways to professional recognition in Canada.
2024	EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENTS (ECA)	CACB is designated by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to provide Educational Credential Assessments (ECAs) for architects seeking to immigrate to Canada, further strengthening support for internationally trained professionals pursuing careers in the Canadian architectural profession.
2026	50 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE	CACB proudly marks its 50th anniversary. This milestone reflects five decades of dedication to maintaining high standards, supporting the profession, and helping architects—both Canadian and internationally trained—achieve their path to licensure.



Members of CACB

ROAC

Regulatory Organizations of
Architecture in Canada

ROAC represents the provincial and territorial architectural regulatory bodies across Canada. As a founding member of CACB, ROAC ensures that accreditation and certification standards align with the requirements for professional licensure in each jurisdiction.

CCUSA

Canadian Council of University
Schools of Architecture

CCUSA represents the accredited schools of architecture at Canadian universities. As a founding member of CACB, CCUSA ensures that academic programs maintain the highest standards of architectural education and prepare graduates for professional practice.

Together, ROAC and CCUSA form the governance of CACB, ensuring balanced representation between the profession and academia.





Guiding Principles of the CACB

MISSION

To develop, implement, and maintain high-quality certification programs and standards for the practice of architecture in Canada.

VISION

To foster a Canadian architecture community working together toward an inclusive and sustainable future.

VALUES

Excellence: To deliver high-quality programs and services to our applicants and members through outstanding administration.

Collaboration: To work collaboratively with members and partners in an inclusive way that builds shared focus, strengthens consensus, and fosters mutual respect and trust.

Integrity: To uphold fairness and ethics as the foundation of how we operate and deliver our programs and services.

Leadership: To strengthen leadership in the Canadian architecture community by facilitating dialogue and consultation across academic, professional, and government sectors.

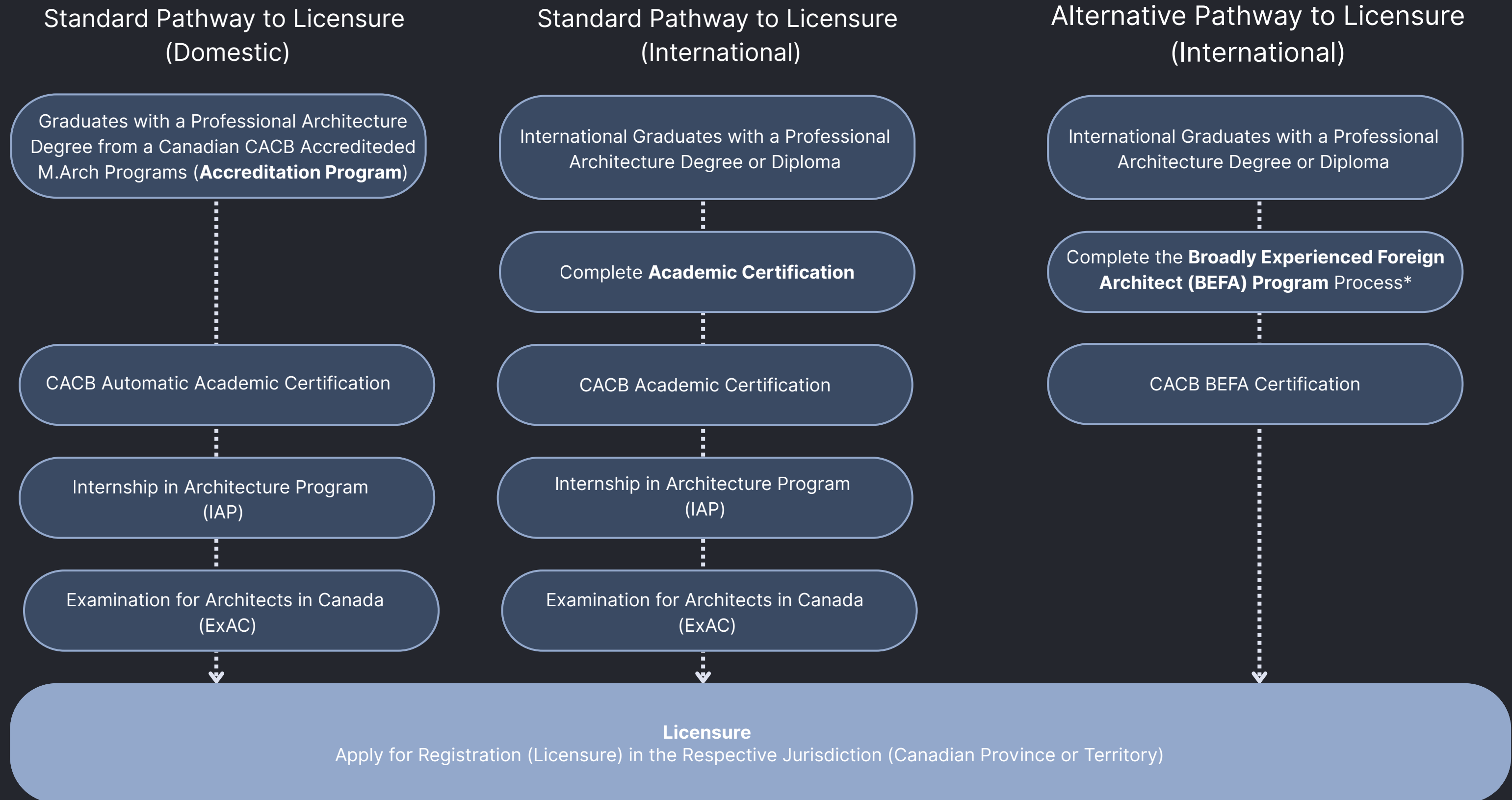
Within Canada, the required professional competence is normally obtained and demonstrated through a combination of formal education, supervised experience and professional examinations. The regulators (the eleven provincial and territorial architectural regulators) have collectively agreed to endorse a variety of pathways to licensure in order to allow broad yet comprehensive and robust access to the profession for candidates from diverse circumstances. These include options for domestic candidates and foreign candidates, and are included in the Roadmap to Licensure on the following slide.



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Become an Architect

Roadmap to Licensure



Please note that the BEFA Certification Pathway is not a shortcut to licensure. The process involves multiple stages (including eligibility assessment, demonstration of competency, and an interview) and requires a minimum of approximately two years to complete. Timelines vary and may take significantly longer depending on the individual applicant's circumstances and progress through the process.



McEwen School of Architecture, Laurentian University

In Canada, becoming a licensed architect is a regulated profession.

For students who want to study architecture in Canada and become licensed architects, completing a professional Master of Architecture (M.Arch) at a CACB-accredited school is the mandatory first step towards licensure. Accredited programs meet national standards and provide the recognized educational qualification required for licensure across Canada.

What is Accreditation?



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Accreditation is the public recognition granted to a professional degree program that meets established educational standards and professional qualifications. It is achieved through an initial evaluation and maintained through periodic reviews to ensure ongoing quality, consistency, and alignment with required standards.

Why Accreditation Matters

Accreditation is essential to maintaining the quality, consistency, and credibility of architectural education. It provides an equitable, evidence-based framework for quality assurance while respecting the autonomy of individual programs. Through regular evaluation, it encourages continuous improvement and innovation.



CACB accreditation helps **programs** maintain and improve the quality of architectural education through regular review. It promotes consistency and accountability while allowing programs to develop their own academic identity within a framework of standards.



CACB accreditation assures **students** that their education meets recognized standards of quality. It supports their readiness for professional practice and provides confidence in the credibility of their degree.



CACB accreditation supports the **profession** by ensuring a continued supply of graduates who are prepared for entry into practice. It validates the credibility of accredited degrees and confirms that programs equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for internship and future **professional** practice.



The Role of CACB

The CACB is the national body responsible for accrediting professional architecture programs in Canada. Its role is to carry out regular accreditation reviews to ensure programs continue to meet established national standards and prepare students for entry into the profession.

The accreditation process is coordinated by a full-time Program Officer, who manages the review process and supports communication with programs throughout each stage. Reviews are carried out by volunteer architects, academics, and professionals who serve on Visiting Teams and provide peer-based evaluation.

A Board of Directors provides overall governance and oversight, ensuring the integrity and consistency of the accreditation system.



Governing Documents



Aanischaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute | Douglas Cardinal Architect Inc. | Photo by: Aanischaukamikw/Mitch Lenet

Conditions and Terms for Accreditation

Outlines the established criteria to be used in the process of evaluating university programs for accreditation.

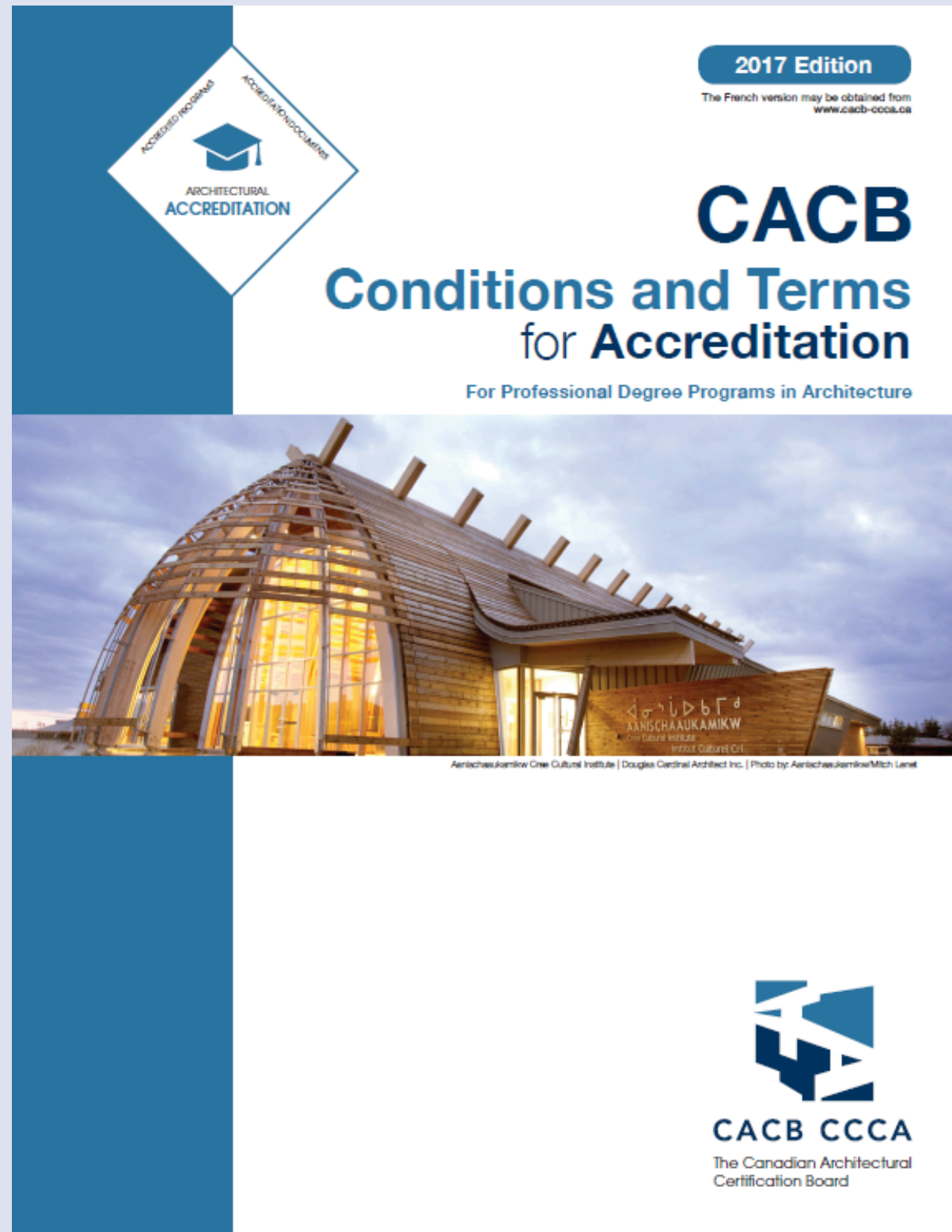


Halifax Central Library. Architects: Fowler Bauld & Mitchell, Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects. Doublespace Photography

Procedures for Accreditation

Outlines the procedures for evaluating programs and making accreditation decisions.

Conditions and Terms for Accreditation



1. Program Self-Assessment
2. Public Information
3. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
4. Student Composition, Well-Being, and Enrichment
5. Faculty and Staff Resources
6. Space and Technology Resources
7. Information Resources
8. Financial Resources
9. Administrative Structure
10. Professional Degrees and Curriculum
11. Performance Criteria (PPCs, SPCs)

Program Performance Criteria (PPC)

1. Professional Development
2. Design Education
3. Global Perspectives and Environmental Stewardship
4. Collaboration, Leadership, and Community Engagement
5. Technical Knowledge
6. Breadth Of Education

Student Performance Criteria (SPC)

A. Design

1. Design Theories, Precedents, and Methods
2. Design Skills
3. Design Tools
4. Program Analysis
5. Site Context and Design
6. Urban Design
7. Detail Design
8. Design Documentation

B. Culture, Communications, and Critical Thinking

1. Critical Thinking and Communication
2. Architectural History
3. Architectural Theory
4. Cultural Diversity and Global Perspectives
5. Ecological Systems

C. Technical Knowledge

1. Regulatory Systems
2. Materials
3. Structural Systems
4. Envelope Systems
5. Environmental Systems

D. Comprehensive Design

Comprehensive Design

E. Professional Practice

1. The Architectural Profession
2. Ethical and Legal Responsibilities
3. Modes of Practice
4. Professional Contracts
5. Project Management

Procedures for Accreditation



Procedures for Accreditation *For Professional Degree Programs in Architecture*

This document should be read in conjunction with the
CACB Conditions and Terms for Accreditation document.
In case of inconsistencies between the two documents, the
CACB Conditions and Terms for Accreditations shall govern.

2026 Edition



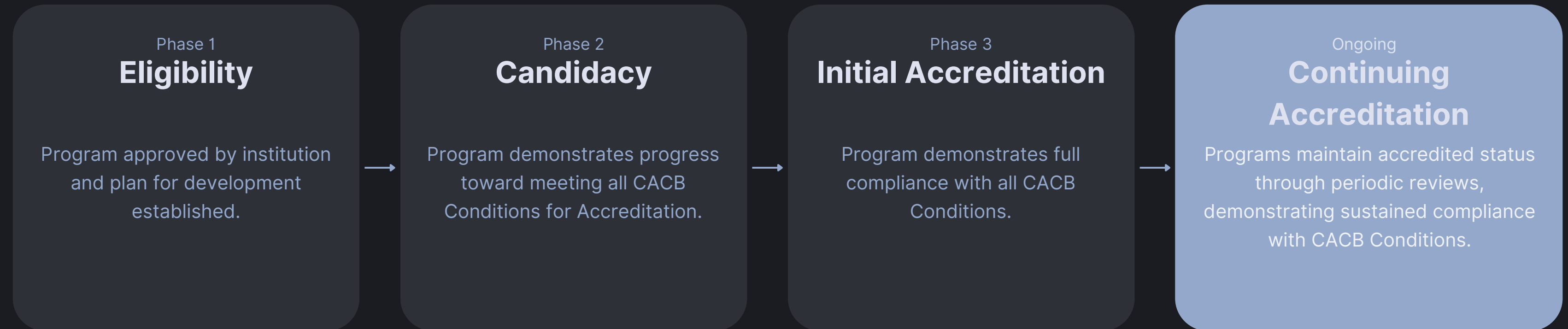
Canadian Architectural Certification Board
1 Nicholas Street, Suite 710
Ottawa (Ontario) Canada K1N 7B7
Phone: (613) 241-8399
Email: accr@cacb.ca
Website: www.cacb-cca.ca

The Conditions and Terms for Accreditation and the Procedures for Accreditation are the two guiding documents for the accreditation of Programs offering professional degrees in architecture. They outline the requirements that the accredited Programs must meet and the **procedures to follow to ensure a uniform, fair, and equitable accreditation process that will uphold the minimum standards in architectural accreditation.**

The Procedures outlines the roles and responsibilities of all participants in the accreditation process, including the Program, CACB, and the visiting team. It also provides detailed requirements, timelines, and guidance for the preparation and submission of key accreditation documents. It also describes each stage of the review process and what participants can expect throughout the accreditation cycle.

Accreditation Review Process

INITIAL ACCREDITATION



The accreditation review process for professional degree programs requires a self-assessment by the program to evaluate its adherence to the CACB Conditions for Accreditation, an evaluation of that assessment by CACB, and a decision regarding the term of accreditation by the CACB Board of Directors.

Eligibility

Application Requirements for Eligibility Stage of Initial Accreditation

Requirements

A program may be granted eligibility once:

- The program has been approved by its institution; and
- A plan for program development has been established

Applications may be submitted to the CACB at any time during the year.

Required Documents

Letter of Intent

From the institution's chief academic officer confirming intention to seek accreditation.

Application Fee

Payment as specified in the CACB Fee Schedule.

Institutional Recognition

Evidence of recognition as a post-secondary institution within its province or territory.

Program Approval

Evidence that all required approvals have been obtained.

Plan for Achieving Initial Accreditation

Analysis of current status, long-term objectives, and assessment of compliance with CACB conditions including: Program Identity, Resources, Curricular Framework, and Student Performance Criteria (SPC) Matrix.

Eligibility

Review and Decision Process

Review Panel Assessment

The CACB appoints a review panel to assess the application.

The panel evaluates:

- Institutional commitment and support
- Adequacy of the plan for achieving accreditation
- Evidence of compliance with CACB conditions

The panel prepares a written report with recommendations for the Board.

Eligibility Consultation

Following the panel review, a consultation is held with the program.

This provides an opportunity to:

- Discuss the panel's findings
- Clarify any concerns or questions
- Provide additional context or information

The consultation informs the final recommendation to the Board.

CACB Board Decision

The Board reviews the panel report and consultation outcomes.

Possible decisions:

- Grant eligibility status
- Defer the decision pending further information
- Deny eligibility

If granted, the program becomes eligible to apply for Candidacy status.

Candidacy

Application Requirements

Requirements

An eligible Program may apply for Candidacy Status once:

- Students have been admitted to the Program; and
- Classes have commenced

Applications must be submitted in hard copy to the CACB. Applications received by September 15 will be processed by July 1 of the following year.

Required Documents

Letter of Application

From the Institution's Chief Academic Officer requesting candidacy for initial accreditation.

Application Fee

Payment of the fee specified in the CACB Fee Schedule.

Evidence of Program Launch

Documentation confirming students have been admitted and classes have begun.

Architecture Program Report (APR)

A comprehensive report documenting the Program and its progress toward meeting accreditation requirements.

Candidacy

Granting and Maintaining Candidacy Status

Candidacy Visit

Receipt of the application initiates a Candidacy Review, which follows the Continuing Accreditation Review process with several modifications:

- The Visiting Team consists of three voting members:
 - One educator
 - One practitioner
 - The CACB Executive Director
- The site visit is four days in duration.
- An exhibition of student work is not required.
- All Visiting Team expenses are paid by the Program.

CACB Board Decision

The CACB Board reviews:

- The Architecture Program Report (APR)
- The Candidacy Visiting Team Report (VTR)
- The Program's plans for meeting CACB Conditions and Terms for Accreditation
- Any additional relevant information

Candidacy Status is granted when the Board determines that:

- The Program is actively implementing its development plan; and
- The Program can achieve accreditation no later than two years after the planned graduation of its first student cohort.

Maintainig Candidacy Term

Candidacy Status remains in effect until:

- Initial accreditation is granted; or
- Two years after the planned graduation of the first student cohort, whichever occurs first.

To maintain Candidacy Status, Programs must:

- Participate in biennial site visits;
- Submit an updated Architecture Program Report (APR) prior to each review; and
- Pay all direct expenses associated with the review visits.

The maximum duration of Candidacy Status is limited to two years after the planned graduation of the first student cohort.

Initial Accreditation

Applying for Initial Accreditation

Requirements

Candidate Programs may apply for Initial Accreditation once they have:

- Maintained Candidacy Status for a minimum of two continuous years; and
- Graduated at least one cohort of students from the professional degree Program for which accreditation is being sought.

Applications must be submitted electronically to the CACB. Applications received by April 30 will be processed by July 1 of the following year.

Required Documents

Letter of Application

from the Program head applying for initial accreditation that states that by the end of January of the following year, at least one cohort of students will have completed the professional Program for which accreditation is being sought.

Initial Accreditation

Review and Decision Process

Accreditation Visit

The Initial Accreditation process follows the same procedures as a Continuing Accreditation Review.

An Initial Accreditation Site Visit cannot occur until at least one cohort has completed the professional degree Program for which accreditation is sought.

CACB Board Decision

Programs that achieve Initial Accreditation are granted a three-year accreditation term, indicating that all major Program components and resources are in place. The Accreditation Review following the initial three-year term will be a regular Continuing Accreditation Review, where the terms of Continuing Accreditation will apply.

If a Program does not achieve Initial Accreditation on its first attempt:

- It may reapply for Initial Accreditation the following year.

If a Program fails to achieve Initial Accreditation after a second attempt:

- The institution may submit a new proposal and restart the process by applying for Eligibility for a new Program proposal.

Student Eligibility for CACB Certification

To be eligible for CACB certification, students must have graduated from the Program no more than two years before Initial Accreditation is granted.

Continuing Accreditation

Ongoing Assessment

Review Process

Accreditation is reviewed on a continuing basis determined by the previous term of Accreditation which is conducted to ensure ongoing compliance with CACB Conditions for Accreditation.

The process is undertaken by three parties: the Program, represented by the Program Head; the Visiting Team, represented by the Team Chair; and the CACB Board, represented by the Executive Director.

Review Stages

The continuing accreditation process is cyclical, involving the visit process, which includes pre-visit activities, the virtual visit, on-site visit, and post-visit actions, and the ongoing maintenance of accreditation

Pre-Visit Activities

The Pre-Visit Activities include reminders to the Program about the upcoming accreditation process, setting up a virtual workspace for document sharing, and selecting a Visiting Team. The team is reviewed for conflicts of interest, and the Program submits the APR, detailing its structure and compliance. The Visiting Team Chair reviews the APR and, if deemed complete, finalizes the visit schedule. 50 days before the on-site visit, the Program provides access to the virtual student work exhibit, and by 45 days, the Team Chair and Program Head confirm readiness for the visit.



Virtual Visit

The Virtual Visit begins 50 days before the on-site visit and includes reviewing documentation, student work, and program materials remotely. Meetings with the Program Head, administrators, faculty, and students are scheduled to assess compliance. By 45 days, the student work exhibit is reviewed, and by 38-40 days, the Team Chair assigns review tasks. At 28-30 days, the Visiting Team discusses initial APR reactions and identifies missing materials. By 14 days, the team finalizes site visit questions and drafts the preliminary VTR.



On-Site Visit

The On-Site Visit takes place from Sunday to Tuesday and includes in-person facility tours, class observations, and meetings with faculty, staff, students, and university leadership. The team verifies findings from the Virtual Visit, refines the VTR, and discusses accreditation compliance. The final night is dedicated to accreditation deliberations, and exit meetings on the last day summarize key strengths and concerns. The visit concludes with the Team Chair ensuring the final VTR draft is complete before departure.



Photo Credits: Carleton University, Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism

Post-Visit Activities

The Post-Visit Activities include finalizing the draft Visiting Team Report (VTR). The Team Chair submits the confidential recommendation and final VTR to the CACB. Within two weeks of receiving the draft, the Program reviews it for factual accuracy and submits corrections. The final VTR is issued within four weeks after review. The Visiting Team members complete evaluations and submit expense claims within 15 calendar days. The Program submits the Cyclical Accreditation Review Cost Report and the Program Head's Evaluation within one month of the visit. The CACB reviews evaluations, makes accreditation decisions, updates its records, and notifies the Program of its accreditation status.



Ongoing Maintenance of Accreditation

Programs must submit Annual Reports (AR) by June 30 each year, addressing unmet CACB conditions, curriculum changes, and required data. The CACB reviews ARs and may accept, request revisions (due by September 15), or take further action.

For Automatic Certification, Programs must submit a graduate list within one month of graduation, ensuring students receive certification letters needed for licensure.

For Focused Evaluations, if required, Programs submit a Focused Evaluation Report (FER) by April 30, detailing improvements. A Focused Evaluation Team reviews the FER and may recommend additional evaluations or a site visit with three months' notice. The CACB then determines whether to maintain or advance the next accreditation visit.



Photo Credits. Laurentian University McEwen Architecture

Accreditation Programs *in Canada*

