

Mentorship Instructions

Background

Current OPFA By-laws 11.5 and 11.6 require that all applicants for Full or Associate Membership with the OPFA must successfully complete 18 months of progressive, relevant, mentored forestry experience. This experience must be obtained after attaining a post-secondary degree or diploma and while holding a Provisional Member category of registration, although credit for prior mentored work experience within the last 5 years may be requested. The experience does not have to be entirely attained while in Ontario.

The assessment of “progressive” and “relevant” work experience is subjective and there are many available career paths for foresters. The OPFA considers an applicant’s work to be relevant if it can be encompassed within the defined scope of practice of a Registered Professional Forester. Please refer to the [Professional Foresters Act 2000](#), Section 3 (1) for a definition of the practice of professional forestry, and the [Criteria for Relevant Work Experience](#) document for information on what the OPFA considers relevant work experience for Provisional Members.

Provisional Members are to be mentored by a registered forestry professional in Canada while attaining their 18 months progressive, relevant experience. Please note that a mentor does not have to be a workplace supervisor. The mentoring process results in regular interaction between a Provisional Member and their mentor, providing the Provisional Member with guidance on professional practice and conduct. The respective roles during the mentorship period is outlined in the OPFA [Mentoring Agreement](#), which both the Provisional Member and mentor are required to sign and implement.

Application Process

Provisional Members working towards Full or Associate Membership are required to identify their proposed mentor(s) and contact the OPFA office with completed Mentorship Agreements, usually within 30 days of acceptance as a Provisional Member.

Mentorship Eligibility Requirements

Provisional Members applying for Full or Associate Membership require at least one mentor, but can have more than one. It is recognized that employment opportunities and other events may affect the ability of a mentor to remain familiar with an applicant’s work progression. If, during the mentored experience period, an applicant’s mentor is no longer able to fulfill their mentorship role, the applicant may change mentors and submit a new additional Mentoring Agreement to the OPFA.

Mentors of Provisional Members must be registered forestry professionals in Canada who are familiar with the Provisional Member’s forestry related work. It is suggested that mentors be familiar with a Provisional Member’s forestry work for at least 4-6 months.

Whilst it is ideal that a mentor be working with and supervising a Provisional Member’s forestry work, the OPFA acknowledges that this is not always possible. A mentor who is not working with the same company or is not in the same geographic location is acceptable, as long as they are able to be in regular contact with the Provisional Member, provide guidance, and remain familiar with their work and career progression.

Mentors cannot be related to the Provisional Member as this would be a potential conflict of interest in the assessing of competency. Mentors should be familiar with the Legislation and By-laws governing the Association and the most recent OPFA guidelines for membership.

Goals and Responsibilities of Mentors

Mentors are expected to provide guidance to the Provisional Member on the duties of a registered forestry professional, and be in regular communication with the Provisional Member to discuss work undertaken, professional development and progress towards their goals. Mentors must remain familiar with the Provisional Member's work during the experience period.

If potential mentors are not familiar with Provisional Member's work, do not have the time to informally mentor the Provisional Member, or cannot positively mentor the Provisional Member, then they are not suitable to act as a mentor. Professional ethics would dictate that if a registered forestry professional could not, or would not, mentor a Provisional Member, that they would inform them of this and the reasons for the decision.

At the initiation of the Provisional Membership period, the mentor is asked to remind the applicant that they are only allowed to practice professional forestry under the supervision of an R.P.F. or Associate R.P.F. with a relevant scope of practice. The mentor is also encouraged to initiate a discussion with the applicant with regards to the OPFA Code of Ethics, the Definition of Professional Misconduct, the Continuing Education reporting requirements, and the Practice Guidance documents appropriate to the applicant's Scope of Practice.

Additional Roles of a Mentor

If a mentor has direct knowledge of the Provisional Member's work, then they are also able to act as a sponsor by completing the sponsorship form at the end of the 18 months experience period. This provides an assessment of the Provisional Member's work and its relationship to the OPFA definition of professional forestry.

Mentors may also be asked by Provisional Members to complete a Character Witness Form and/or a Competency Witness Form. These two OPFA forms may be combined on one form if the Provisional Member is undergoing the national Credential Assessment Process. Additional information on the completion of these forms is available from the OPFA office.

The OPFA thanks all members in advance for their commitment to assisting new members gain experience, professionalism and licensure in Ontario. The informal mentorship of Provisional Members is invaluable and serves to strengthen professional forestry and provide professional support for each new generation of foresters in Ontario.