



CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT PORTFOLIO

OPFA Suggestions for Preparing Your Submission

BACKGROUND

The Canadian Federation of Professional Foresters Associations (CFPFA) has worked with its member agencies (including the OPFA), provincial governments and the Government of Canada to develop credential assessment procedures for applicants who are foreign-trained or who have graduated from university programs in Canada that are not accredited by the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board (CFAB). The procedures have been adopted by each subject regulatory body in Canada and involve the assessment of an applicant's current education, training, and experience to determine the extent to which the competencies of the competency-based Certification Standards for Professional Forestry in Canada have been met.

The national Credential Assessment Process (CAP) holds assessment panels four times each year. The deadlines for submitting portfolio material to the OPFA for review and assembly is approximately one month prior to the national deadlines:

December 1st

March 1st

June 1st

September 1st

CAP portfolio national deadlines (the start of actual assessment period) are:

January 1st

April 1st

July 1st

October 1st

The following guidance and suggestions are intended for use by potential applicants and OPFA Provisional members who have not graduated from an accredited forestry program in Canada.

ASSEMBLING YOUR PORTFOLIO

1. Review the [Applicant's Manual](#) and [OPFA Full Membership Through CAP](#) for an overview of the process to become a Registered Professional Forester (Full member of the OPFA) after having competencies for professional forestry assessed. Review the [Self-assessment Matrix](#) (or [2008 Certification Standards](#)) for a listing of the 35 competencies required for professional foresters (and the performance indicators for each competency).

Look at the **Applicant Orientation Video** (produced by the CFPFA) - [link](#)

Consider whether you already have most of the competencies required, and if you are willing to gain additional training and/or experience to fill any competency gaps (either before or after the CAP assessment).

Applicants are also expected to have a sufficient level of exposure to the arts, science (social, biological and physical) and the humanities to support forestry core learning and professional forestry practice. These [Foundational Studies](#) are included in the Certification Standards, Attachment 3 on Page 28. Foundational Studies are met through graduation from a four-year science-based baccalaureate program, or equivalent. As a minimum for

“equivalency”, you need some formal continuing education at the post-secondary level, including basic scientific knowledge in Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics, and some professional experience in synthesizing information, and applying critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to take sufficient time in completing CAP portfolio documentation. The better your submission and evidence, the less competency gaps may be identified.

If you are committed to proceed with the CAP process, then continue with the following steps:

2. **Contact the OPFA Registrar** and discuss any questions, and agree upon the timing for preparation of CAP portfolio material. This helps you and the Registrar plan ahead so that the **CAP submission deadline** is met. It is recommended that the preparation of materials begin 2-3 months prior to a CAP deadline, and that most portfolio documents be submitted to the Registrar 4 weeks prior to the CAP deadline. This will allow time for document review, and needed revisions, and uploading of portfolio documents to the national CAP portal.
3. **Academic Transcripts** - Contact your post-secondary academic institution(s) to have original transcript(s) sent directly to the OPFA office. Do not have the transcripts sent to you.
 - OPFA must ensure that electronic copies of academic transcripts are legible. This is sometimes a problem with security features or watermarks on some transcripts.
 - Course outlines (Step 4) may be requested at the same time.
 - Academic transcript in a language other than English must be translated by a certified translator into English. Both the original transcript and the translation are submitted.

Internationally-trained applicants require an **evaluation of post-secondary academic credentials** by a third-party evaluation service. You need to arrange to have your official university transcripts evaluated by any assessment service agency or organization that is a member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC). A listing of current ACESC members is available at: www.canalliance.org. These organizations investigate the qualifications of your educational institution and make a determination about whether your university degree is equivalent to a four-year, science-based degree offered by a Canadian university.

NOTE: An academic evaluation is not required if you completed a graduate-level Master or Ph.D. degree in Canada after completion of your international academic training.

NOTE: Graduates from a Canadian program not accredited by the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board (CFAB) do not need to have your academic credentials evaluated by a third-party to determine equivalency.

4. **Course Outlines** – Contact your academic institution(s) to get detailed course outlines for any post-secondary courses you have completed that you will use as evidence of any competencies.
 - Compile course outlines into a single PDF document, with courses bookmarked in the document by course number and name.

- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] course outlines [submission month year].pdf Example: “**SmithK course outlines Dec 2017.pdf**”
 - Course outlines must contain sufficient detail to support demonstrable competencies (or performance indicators) in the self-assessment matrix.
 - Course outlines in a language other than English must be translated by a certified translator into English. Submit both the original course outlines and the translation.
 - Ensure course numbers and names in the course outlines match the course numbers and names in your academic transcript, and in the self-assessment matrix.
 - Missing course outlines are serious. Assessors cannot assume the content of a course. If you want assessor to determine what you may know, then a detailed course outline is required.
 - Do not list courses if you have not included a course outline, or if they are not relevant to the competency or performance indicator.
 - Vague or incomplete course outlines can only confirm applicant competence in the aspects outlined, and may not provide evidence for the whole competency.
5. **Resumé or Curriculum Vitae (CV)** – (after updating your CV and only 1 or 2 Standards for Step 6, See Step 8)
- Save your CV as a PDF document.
 - Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] cv [submission month year].pdf Example: “**SmithK cv Dec 2017.pdf**”
 - Your CV must include consecutive line numbering throughout the document. The line numbering is used for line references in the self-assessment matrix.
 - A [sample partially completed CV](#) is available on the OPFA website.
 - Competencies and performance indicators use specific verbs that reflect the level of knowledge of skill required by a competency. The verbs are listed in [Bloom's Taxonomy](#).
 - Expand your CV to refer to specific professional forestry activities that you have done in your work or volunteer experience. Consider using phrases from the demonstrable competencies / performance indicators in your CV (if you are referencing the experience in the matrix in Step 6). If you have multiple jobs or references with similar activities undertake, you may expand the more recent or most relevant example(s) and remain more brief in older, less relevant experience.
 - Be consistent of the verbs required by a competency and the verbs (level of competency) you use in your CV to detail experience (as applicable).
 - When your CV describes a major responsibility or report that may address several competencies or performance indicators, include the document (include a Supplemental Documentation in Step 7) and applicable page(s) so the assessors can verify the level of accomplishment.
 - Consider including a section for Continuing Education (forestry-related) to support certain competencies or performance indicators that you have acquired after formal academic training. Relevant courses should be described in the Course Outlines pdf, or compiled into a separate supplemental document pdf file. Additional targeted learning for specific performance indicators may be briefly listed in the CV and referenced in your matrix.
 - If you are going to abbreviate some term or name, provide the long version first.

6. Self-assessment Matrix – (after updating resume and only 1 or 2 Standards for Step 6, See Step 8)

- Save your CV as an MS Excel document.
- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] self-assessment matrix [submission month year].pdf Example: “**SmithK self-assessment matrix Dec 2017.pdf**”
- A [sample partially completed Matrix](#) is available on the OPFA website.
- Add your name, submission month/year and “Ontario” to the top header row.
- Column B - Start by entering your relevant academic courses in Column B. Include the educational institution name, course number and name. Ensure course numbers and names in the course outlines match the course numbers and names in your academic transcript, and in the self-assessment matrix. If you have more than 1 degree from the same academic institution, then list the courses after the faculty/degree is noted.
- If all courses are from the same academic institution, then you may add the institution name in the table header row.
- Where course numbers have changed in the course outline, from those taken by applicant, and referred to in the matrix or transcript, the index should include both numbers (current course # in brackets.)
- Do not list courses in Matrix with little or no relevance to the PI
- Column C – Provide “evidence” that you successfully performed tasks in the performance indicators by including the applicable line number(s) from your resume; do not simply reference that you have done some indicators/aspects of the competency. List the most relevant examples first, then the others.
- Column D – Reference relevant examples of your work or courses you have completed that are submitted as CAP Supplemental Documentation. List the most relevant examples first, then the others. It is recommended to use short file names to reference these documents in the matrix. See Step 7 for a suggestion to shorten referenced supplemental document file names, and reference the shortened name in your matrix (example: **SmithK SD 1**).
- Column E – Explain how you have the specific competency being evaluated; not just that you have done some indicators/aspects of the Standard.
- Column F – Leave empty until your Competency Witnesses have submitted his/her Feedback Forms (See Step 11).
- Other Columns to the right of Column F – leave blank.

General:

- On your self-assessment matrix, Assessors will read what is visible. Ensure that all information you insert is visible. (In MS Excel, ensure that “wrap text” is active and row height is sufficient to see all text, then “Save” the format.)
- Applicants should spell check the matrix before submission.
- The review of your capabilities is based on evidence, not what the assessor may think by reading between the lines. Applicants need to directly address the capability identified in both the Competency and the Performance Indicator.
- If you do not possess a certain capability, do not bluff, as that may make assessors question other capabilities. Instead address how you will obtain the missing capability.
- If you are going to abbreviate some term or name, provide the long version first.

7. Assemble Examples of Work (Supplemental Documentation) –

- 3 or 4 examples of work are ideal, and should be selected to support various competencies, if possible. You can use documents that you authored: school projects, work reports, silvicultural prescriptions, audit reports, etc.
- Supplemental documents are to be pdf files.
- Save your supplemental documents individually as PDF documents, or if smaller, some may be compiled into a bookmarked PDF document.
- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] SD [number] – [short title].pdf
Examples: “**SmithK SD 1 – Silvicultural Prescription A.pdf**”, “**SmithK SD 2 – Woodlot Management Plan.pdf**”, “**SmithK SD 3 – Inventory for XX Forest.pdf**”. In the self-assessment matrix, these documents could be referenced simply: SmithK SD1, SmithK SD 2, and SmithK SD 3. In the listing of supplemental documentation in the Portfolio Submission Form (Step 14), the full file name should be referenced. This suggestion will assist assessors in easily finding the correct file for review.
- For the examples of work you have done that are authored by multiple people, you must identify what sections or components you did or led specifically. This way, assessors can give you credit for work, as they likely will not give credit for work if they are not sure who did it. The role or contribution of the CAP applicant should be acknowledged as correct by the senior author or company principal.
- If citing a report as evidence, note the page(s) where the specific evidence is printed. Assessors will not read long reports to look for sporadic evidence of individual performance indicators. Provide page numbers so evidence can be located quickly.
- Pertinent information could be highlighted, and or a sticky note placed in the supplemental documentation PDF.
- Blank forms are not particularly helpful as evidence. Explanations of how they are used should be provided. Completed forms should be submitted as evidence of competency, particularly with relevant comments and recommendations, etc.
- Avoid/minimize submission of forms where most of the entries in the form are “x’s” put in boxes. These types of forms do not provide much evidence of the applicants knowledge.
- Include documentation/copies of work projects, reports etc. to back up claims of knowledge/ experience in applying the performance indicators for competencies.
- If you include a link to a web-based supplemental document, ensure that the document may be viewed free-of-charge.
- Ensure all internet links referenced are active and valid.

8. Submit Initial Drafts of Resumé/CV and Matrix to Registrar (OPTIONAL) – The Registrar does not make any CAP assessment or registration decisions regarding your portfolio, however is available to provide constructive comments on your draft documents. It is beneficial to have an early draft of your documents reviewed, to ensure that you are providing sufficient information, and to avoid unnecessary future revisions to documents.

9. Complete Resume and Self-assessment Matrix – Following direction in Steps 5 and 6, and any subsequent suggestions from the Registrar in Step 8 (optional), revise and complete the documents.

10. Witness Feedback Forms – You require both Character Witnesses and Competency Witnesses for your CAP assessment. The CAP process combines feedback for both types of witnesses on one Character and Competency Witness Feedback Form.

- Have witnesses save their form as a PDF document.

- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] character and competency witness feedback form ([witness last name][witness first initial]) [submission month year].pdf
- File name should reflect if witness is a character witness, or competency witness, or both character and competency witness.
- Example: “**SmithK character and competency witness feedback form (JonesT) Dec 2017.pdf**”
- The various sections of the Character and Competency Witness Feedback Form that are complete by the Character Witness or the Competency Witness are illustrated on in [Witness Feedback – Who completes which section](#).
- Character and Competency Witnesses must submit his/her Witness Feedback Form directly to the OPFA office. They may copy you on the email so you are aware of the submission of their document.
- You must provide your completed CV and self-assessment matrix to your Competency Witnesses for their information before he/she completes the Witness Feedback Form.
- Your Character Witnesses may be the same persons as your Competency Witnesses (and they may be the same persons as your Sponsors for OPFA membership which is a separate requirement).
- Having 2-4 competency witnesses strengthens your portfolio submission.
- Competency Witnesses must be competent in every performance indicator that they sign off for you. To support their competency, each Competency Witness must provide their CV or a short biography outlining their professional background. The CV or biography should be submitted to the OPFA at the same time that the witness feedback Form is submitted.
- Competency Witnesses must be knowledgeable first-hand of your competency for each performance indicator that they sign-off. Competency witnesses will have typically observed your work experience as a supervisor or colleague over a period of time. Competency witnesses will be registered professional foresters, or other qualified professionals (academic professors, other forest practitioners with relevant qualifications/certifications).
- OPTIONAL: While not required, a Competency Witness may submit a short document (1 page) to further describe how they are familiar with your competencies. This document would provide improve credibility of evidence for his/her competency feedback, more so than only the required check mark on a listing of performance indicators.

11. Update Matrix with Competency Witness Initials – After Competency Witness Forms have been submitted to the OPFA by your witnesses, update the matrix file with the initials of each competency witness that has attested to each performance indicator.

- Do a final check of the matrix, ensuring all cells are visible and spelling is checked. Remember to save as an Excel file.

12. Applicant Declaration – The Applicant Declaration is a signed document that advocates for your abilities and credentials. It gives the assessors and regulatory body an overview of your professional competence. More importantly this declaration provides an opportunity for you to write a personal message about why you think you should be considered for registration as an R.P.F.

- Save your Applicant Declaration as a PDF document.

- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] declaration [submission month year].pdf Example: “**SmithK declaration Dec 2017.pdf**”
- See Page 15 in the Applicants Manual for requirements for the Declaration (maximum 2pages), and see Appendix 5 (Page 36) for a sample completed Declaration.
- The Declaration must be signed and include the certification: “I understand that making false or misleading statements in this application may be considered professional misconduct. Such statements may result in expulsion from the assessment process, loss of assessment fee and, if discovered later, disciplinary action by the regulatory body up to and including removal from the professional regulatory body.”

13. Pay **CAP Assessment Fee** to OPFA -

- The \$500 CAP fee is payable to the OPFA before the CAP portfolio submission deadline. Payments may be made by credit card online or by phoning the OPFA office at 905-877-3679. Payments may also be made by cheque, credit card or money order mailed to the OPFA office.
- The CAP fee will be forwarded by the OPFA to the national administrators of the Credential Assessment Process.

14. Portfolio Submission Form

- Save your portfolio submission form as a PDF document.
- Name the file: [Last name][First name initial] cv [submission month year].pdf Example: “**SmithK portfolio submission form Dec 2017.pdf**”
- Complete the portfolio checklist after completing all previous steps.
- Include a listing of your Character and Competency Witnesses, and a listing of your Supplemental Documentation file names.
- Be sure to sign and date the form.

15. Supply All Portfolio Documents to the Registrar - The OPFA Registrar will upload your documents for electronic submission to the CAP panel, and notify you when the submission is complete.

- Other provinces require that the applicant upload some documents, and the Registrar upload the remaining documents.
- The OPFA streamlines this process for applicants since the Registrar is required to check the files uploaded by the applicant, which is more easily completed offline prior to electronic submission (saves time if any revisions are needed).
- You will receive an email from the Registrar with written confirmation when your portfolio is uploaded and ready to be assessed in the upcoming CAP assessment panel.

If you have any CAP related questions, contact the Registrar, Susan Jarvis, R.P.F., by email at registrar@opfa.ca. Follow-up phone calls can be arranged to discuss the process and document requirements.