



Criteria for Relevant Experience

1.0 EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT

The OPFA by-laws include the following requirement for membership (Article 11.5 (4) for Full membership and Article 11.6 (3) for Associate membership):

“4. successful completion of 18 months of progressive, relevant, mentored forestry experience which experience within the last 5 years which may include:

a. experience obtained after attaining a post-secondary degree or diploma and while holding a Provisional Member category of registration and being mentored by a Full, Associate, Inactive or Life Member of the OPFA, or other registered forestry professional in Canada, who is in good standing with their regulatory body.

b. relevant forestry experience acquired while not a Provisional Member, but within the last 5 years, that was mentored by a Full, Associate, Inactive or Life Member of the OPFA or a registered forestry professional licensed in another province or country, who is in good standing with their regulatory body, if requested and approved by the Registration Committee.

c. credit for experience equal to 1/3 of the time spent in a Master and/or PhD program in a relevant program, to a maximum of 6 months, if requested and approved by the Registration Committee.

At least 6 months experience must be acquired after a minimum of 80% of the competencies have been demonstrated;”

2.0 RATIONALE FOR EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT

Forest resources are important to people locally, nationally and internationally. Requirements aimed at protecting societal forest values are set out in legislation, policy, and standards. However, these requirements cannot cover every administrative and technical issue that may arise in the practice of forestry. The public of Ontario relies on the judgment and discretion of an OPFA Full (R.P.F.) Member or Associate (Associate R.P.F.) Member, who has acquired specialized skills, education, and training, to manage and conserve forest resources and the values they contribute to society.

Public confidence and trust are maintained when practitioners are competent and independent, act with integrity (defined by the Code of Ethics and in the Standards of Professional Practice) and are held accountable for their competence and conduct.

Relevant experience under the supervision and/or mentorship of OPFA members provides the following benefits:

- Serves as a means of providing Provisional Members with professional guidance and the right to practise under the supervision of an active Full (R.P.F.) Member or Associate (Associate R.P.F.) Member;

- Supports a mentoring program that counsels new Provisional Members in competence, independence, integrity, and accountability of practice;
- Provides mechanisms through which Provisional Members may be guided in their development towards professionalism;
- Ensures sponsors gain first-hand knowledge of the Provisional Member's capabilities;
- Encourage sponsors to provide advice and direction to Provisional Members; and
- Helps Provisional Members prepare for registration and professional as registered members.

3.0 ACCEPTABLE EXPERIENCE

Acceptable experience is normally gained as a Provisional Member (R.P.F. in Training). Subject to the approval of the Registration Committee, mentored relevant professional forestry experience prior to Provisional membership may be considered.

This guiding document outlines what experience will be considered relevant to professional forestry and to the Ontario work environment.

3.1 General Criteria for Experience (mandatory; required by all applicants):

- 18 months experience under the mentorship or supervision of:
 - a) A Full, Associate, Inactive or Life Member of the OPFA; or
 - b) a professional forester licensed in another province or country.
- The 18-month mentored experience requirement refers to full time positions, which are considered to be 30 or more hours a week. Part-time positions are eligible, but the hours must be equivalent. For example, 6 months of working 15 hours a week would be the equivalent of 3 months of experience.
- Experience does not have to be consecutive.
- Experience must be under the informal mentorship of a registered forestry professional;
- Working knowledge of one or more of Ontario's forest regions: the Boreal Forest, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest, the Carolinian Forest and/or the Urban Forest, or the equivalent in another country;
- Experience may be gained anywhere and does not need to be gained exclusively in Ontario or in Canada;
- Experience may be gained from paid or volunteer work;
- Experience must show progression from the technical level to the professional level;
- Experience must show adherence to the applicable legislative environment. For example, Ontario experience must show adherence of Ontario forest policy, legislation and guidelines if applicable.

3.2 Examples of Acceptable Professional Forestry Experience and Competencies

Examples of the demonstrable competencies can be viewed in the [national Certification Standards for the profession of forestry in Canada](#). The member must adhere to the OPFA Code of Ethics at all times.

3.3 Consideration of prior experience as a credit towards the required 18 months:

Some applicants that apply for Provisional membership may already have significant forestry-related experience and have received guidance on the practice of professional ethics and forestry from forestry professionals. The Registration Committee can give consideration for credit for an applicant's experience prior to being approved as a Provisional Member. This experience must be attained within the last 5 years after attaining a post-secondary degree or diploma and it must be forestry-related supervision and/or mentorship of registered forestry professionals from other Canadian provinces or other international jurisdictions will be accepted.

For those who have graduated from a program accredited by the [Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board \(CFAB\)](#):

- The Registration Committee may grant a credit to a maximum of 18 months for relevant, mentored post-graduation (from a post-secondary diploma or degree) experience that was obtained within the last 5 years. These applicants will have demonstrated all required core competencies during their accredited program. A minimum of 6 months of the relevant experience must be required after graduating from the CFAB accredited program.

For those have not graduated from a CFAB accredited program:

The Committee may grant a credit up to a maximum of 12 months of experience for

- The Committee may grant up to a maximum of 12 months of experience for relevant, mentored post-graduation (from a post-secondary diploma or degree) experience that was obtained within the last 5 years before core competencies are substantively demonstrated ($\leq 80\%$).
- A minimum of 6 months of relevant experience must be required after core competencies are substantively demonstrated ($\geq 80\%$).
- If a Provisional Member's competency assessment report identifies no substantive gaps in competencies ($\leq 20\%$; or less competencies not demonstrated), the Committee will then consider additional credit for relevant experience prior to the date of the CAP assessment report. If the applicant does not have additional relevant experience to claim, they may continue to complete the remaining work experience requirement.
- If a Provisional Member's competency assessment report identifies substantive gaps in competencies ($>20\%$), the applicant will have to fill those gaps (up to 80% competency) in a manner approved by the Registration Committee, and then complete the final 6 months of mentored experience.

How to make a request for prior experience credit:

The applicant must make the request in writing (email, fax or mail are acceptable formats for the request). It must include:

- A statement of how many months of credit are being requested. Equivalent hours for part-time work must be provided. For example, 6 months of working 15 hours a week would be the equivalent of 3 months of experience.
- Provide a brief written summary of the duration/dates and description of relevant forestry experience that you are requesting credit for.
- A CV or resume that includes this experience.
- The names of the licensed professional foresters (and their registration numbers if possible) that either directly supervised or mentored the applicant. If the professional forester is not from Ontario, then their province/country of registration is also required.

With the above information, OPFA staff will confirm supervision/mentorship of the applicant with the identified registered member(s). The Registration Committee will then consider the request at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision of the Registration Committee and if successful, how much (if any) of the required 18 months of experience still has to be met while a Provisional Member.

A person that has already been approved as a Provisional Member (R.P.F. in Training) may still request consideration for previous relevant experience by submitting the request and the supporting documentation as outlined above.