

Executive Summary

This resource provides an overview of the participants, typologies, and timeframes involved in new program creation, approval, and launch that are followed by publicly funded, Ontario postsecondary institutions. As ONCAT remains focused on enhancing transfer, pathway development, and inter-institutional joint programs in the province, the intention with this information is to demystify the current practices involved in new program creation, approval, and launch.

The research indicates that as complexity and credential levels increase, so do the timelines and processes. This seems reasonable since quality assurance benchmarks and standards and the internal and external consultation expectations necessarily expand. The timeframes to create, develop, refine, and approve credentials delivered by colleges and universities vary: for certificates and diplomas, it typically takes approximately 1 to 1.5 years to conceive and ultimately launch a program. For degrees, whether at a college or university, the process takes approximately 2.5 to 3 years.

With an eye to focusing specifically on the Ontario college credentials (i.e., Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, and the Ontario College Graduate Certificate) and baccalaureate degrees (whether offered by colleges or universities), this resource provides further details regarding internal institutional processes, explains the mandates and high level protocols followed by the quality assurance bodies, and shares information regarding the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Examples are provided from specific institutions. It also touches briefly on apprenticeship programs and the Ontario College of Trades as there are times when such programs are offered through the colleges and, if tied to a credential, can result in additional funding allocations and program approval processes (e.g., under the Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program - “CODA”).

An overview is provided of the non-academic considerations institutions explore when creating new programs. In addition, the participation of system-wide opportunities to support program launch are identified as these can impact the timeframes. Finally, a high-level overview is provided of select other jurisdictions.

The research emphasizes the importance of internal quality assurance areas; staff within these areas were regularly identified as the main institutional partners with significant expertise in the areas of quality assurance and program development. Further, they rely routinely on the external quality assurance bodies whose staff offer overarching knowledge of the quality assurance protocols for new programs. As this resource is focused solely on identifying current practices, readers are encouraged to deal directly with these internal professionals.

This resource contributes to the government’s provincial vision for enhanced pathways and related efficiencies as it provides a comprehensive overview of the new program approval typologies, timelines, and practices to assist pathway developers.
