



Languages Canada  
Langues Canada

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## LANGUAGES CANADA'S QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Protecting Students and  
Assuring Governments  
Through Regulation

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**T**he *Languages Canada Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)* was created to provide a comprehensive regulatory system for Canada's language education sector. This sector-led initiative unifies the sector, creates a level playing field by ensuring all programs respect similar guidelines, and provides governments and students with the necessary assurances regarding the integrity of those subscribing to the framework.

This sector-led initiative aims to achieve three important objectives:

1. To enhance the reputation of Canada as a destination for language education through implementation of a national accreditation scheme with international recognition and standing;
2. To provide consumer protection and to safeguard the interests of students and those companies and individuals who recommend Languages Canada member schools for language education;
3. To obviate the necessity for governments in Canada at all levels to create regulatory bodies to oversee Canadian language education institutions by providing the LC Accreditation Scheme buttressed by an industry-funded training completion fund.

The *Languages Canada Quality Assurance Framework* rests upon three fundamental pillars:

1. Standards and Accreditation;
2. Guaranteed program completion for students; and,
3. Bylaws and Code of Ethics

## Standards And Accreditation – Standards, Accreditation Scheme, Accreditation Advisory Panel

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### **Standards**

The Languages Canada Standards were adopted and adapted from our predecessor, the Canada Language Council. The standards were developed by language education sector experts and included a review of existing standards and best practices from around the globe. In order to create a new standard or change an existing standard, it must be put to vote at the LC Annual General Meeting. In other words, a new standard must be agreed to by members ranging from public to private, English to French, small to large programs. The process involves proposing a new standard to the Quality Assurance Committee, where it is reviewed and considered by committee members and the Accreditation Advisory Panel before being proposed to the Board of Directors. Only after approval by the Board of Directors is it presented to the membership at large for vote, and once approved by membership it is adopted in the standards and accreditation process. The LC standards examine the six areas responding to specific international standards: student services, teaching staff, curriculum, marketing and promotion, administration and student admissions.

### **Accreditation Scheme**

In order to ensure that standards are met, LC created the Languages Canada Accreditation Scheme. Language programs go through a rigorous process in order to obtain accreditation and, if successful, membership in Languages Canada. To undergo successful accreditation, the candidate program must demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the requirements specified in the standards. The accreditation process, conducted by an independent organization selected through a

national competition (Orion Assessment Services of Canada), involves a review of documents (ex. policies, advertising, etc.) and an on-site audit that employs auditing best practices (including interviews with management, teaching staff, and students).

A comprehensive and independent review of the LC Accreditation Scheme was conducted by George Tillman Consulting in early 2008. This review was commissioned by the Federal-Provincial Consultative Committee on Education-Related International Activities (FPCCERIA) and organized and funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT). This review reassured FPCCERIA that, in developing an Education Brand for Canada, the organizations that will be allowed to use the Brand are genuine, reputable educational institutions. The Committee contracted this study to determine whether the accreditation scheme of Languages Canada meets the standards of Quality Assurance that are mandated in education jurisdiction in Canada and abroad. The findings of the review were positive and are summarized below:

### **TILLMAN REPORT (March 2008)**

*The core quality assurance principles and procedures of the LC scheme compare reasonably well to those described in the CMEC Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework, Procedures and Standards for new Degree Program Quality Assessment, and the Procedures and Standards for Assessing New Degree-Granting Institutions.*

## Standards And Accreditation – Standards, Accreditation Scheme, Accreditation Advisory Panel continued

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*The LC accreditation scheme reflects reasonably well the standards and processes of even the most stringent provincial quality assurance regimes and qualifications frameworks.*

*Languages Canada has developed its scheme and standards following a review of CLC past practice, and the policies and practices of nine internationally recognized schemes in Canada, Australia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States.*

*The scheme is clearly defined; the procedures and standards are publicly available. Applicable LC principles: be a transparent process; demonstrate good value; maintain the integrity and rigour of standards and process; have an appeal process; have a provisional pass system (a remedy mechanism for minor issues); be timely and accurate; be managed in a professional, consistent and reliable manner.*

*Each program review is conducted by independent experts with experience in language studies and accreditation/evaluation.*

*In forming Languages Canada, its language programs have made the commitment to recognize the validity and the binding character of the process.*

### **Accreditation Advisory Panel**

The Accreditation Advisory Panel is responsible for oversight of the Accreditation Scheme. As such, it reviews and reports on standards to members, recommends best practices (including international developments), and handles appeals to accreditation. The panel is comprised of representatives from LC and Orion Assessment Services of Canada management, a representative from the LC Quality Assurance Committee, and three independents – one independent expert from the English language education sector, one independent expert from the French language education sector, and one independent expert on standards, accreditation/certification/audit schemes. It is agreed that for appeals, all non-independents withdraw in order to provide an impartial opinion.

## Guaranteed Program Completion For Students

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Students attending language programs in public institutions are protected by provincial and territorial policies and processes. In order to provide the same level of protection to students attending private sector programs, LC provides direct protection to students' tuition through two mechanisms, the LC *Education Completion Assurance Plan* (eCAP™) and the *Student Education Assurance Fund* (SEAF).

**eCAP™** – should a language program stop or be interrupted, students attending LC member programs are guaranteed to complete their language studies at another accredited institution.

**SEAF** – should eCAP™ not be applicable (ex. the program is in a remote region with no other accredited language programs), LC has created a fund to assist students to complete their studies elsewhere or refund tuition.

## Bylaws And Code Of Ethics

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**T**he LC Bylaws and Code of Ethics provide the principles that must be followed in order to gain admittance to the association and maintain membership. Furthermore, the bylaws provide the mechanisms required to enforce compliance with the code of ethics, the standards, and the bylaws themselves. Any member not meeting the criteria of the standards, code of ethics, or the bylaws can lose membership. Indeed, one school in Vancouver lost membership in 2011, as did one university in another Canadian province.

It is important to note that the LC Code of Ethics require members to ensure that all applicable laws and regulations are followed at all times.

## Recognition Of Languages Canada's Quality Assurance Framework For The Language Education Sector

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Official national and provincial / territorial recognition of the Languages Canada accreditation scheme and student protection measures has been given through:

- **Provinces and Territories** – Languages Canada worked closely with the Federal-Provincial Consultative Committee on Education-Related International Activities to provide a framework that meets or exceeds provincial requirements. In addition to BC with the EQA designation, several provinces, including Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island, recognize the LC Accreditation Scheme as the key quality assurance criteria for private and public language training programs to become authorized to use the Imagine Education au/in Canada brand.
- **DFAIT** – Languages Canada has satisfied DFAIT it meets and exceeds requirements for international education marketing. DFAIT now requires Languages Canada accreditation of all language education providers for participation in all embassy-sponsored education promotion events and projects overseas
- **CMEC** – the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), an agency of the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, recognizes the accreditation scheme and lists all Languages Canada members, working with Languages Canada to keep the list up to date.

- **Department of Canadian Heritage** – maintains the Federal government's official lists of accredited language programs, all LC members.

Recognition of the Languages Canada Quality Assurance Framework is not only national and provincial. On the international stage Canada's language education sector has also received recognition and is part of international quality assurance best practices efforts. In September 2011, Languages Canada participated in the first International Symposium on Quality Assurance in Language Education and intends on continuing to be active in the global stage. Additionally, English UK and other leading language education sector associations recognize Languages Canada standards, and international organizations such as ICEF accept only Languages Canada accredited members from Canada's language sector at their events and in their publications.

## Conclusion

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The language education sector in Canada is a world leader in quality. Our language educators have prepared students successfully for academic and professional pursuits for decades. The provincial/territorial governments have recognized the robust quality assurance framework that Languages Canada has created, as have CMEC and DFAIT.

It is the position of Languages Canada that the LC Quality Assurance Framework effectively achieves what it sets out to accomplish. It has successfully enhanced Canada's reputation as a destination for language education. It provides effective consumer protection and safeguards the interests of students who attend LC member institutions.

Most importantly in the context of the current review of the International Study Program, the LC

Quality Assurance Framework affords governments in Canada at all levels a ready-made solution to oversight of Canadian language education institutions. As such, it is the view of Languages Canada that governments should designate Languages Canada as the recognized accreditation body for the language sector. In so doing, membership in LC would qualify institutions to host international students under new CIC regulations.

The Languages Canada Quality Assurance Framework can provide an important part of the underpinning needed to support guidelines and processes involving visas and permits for international students, and thereby support program integrity and CIC and provincial processes.