

**APGNS Admissions Board Policy and Procedures
(Approved by Council: May 2015)**

INTRODUCTION

This policy and procedure document is intended as an addendum to the current by-laws of the Association and reflects the currently accepted procedures as well as the by-laws under development for the revised *Geoscience Profession Act* and *Geoscience Practice Regulations*. Where accuracy is critical, please consult the current *Geoscience Profession Act* and the by-laws of the Association.

SECTION 1: ADMISSIONS BOARD

The Association of Professional Geoscientists of Nova Scotia ('APGNS') or 'Geoscientists Nova Scotia' has a legislated mandate, under the *Geoscience Profession Act* of 2002, (submitted for revision in 2015), to regulate the practice of geoscience in Nova Scotia and to register professional geoscientists. This legislation constitutes 'right to title' and 'license to practice' for registered geoscientists in Nova Scotia.

The role and responsibility of the APGNS Admissions Board (the 'Board') is to evaluate applicants for professional geoscience registration in Nova Scotia. APGNS Council (the 'Council') has mandated that all applicants for professional geoscience registration must be determined to be in compliance with the established and accepted standards and criteria of the Association in:

- (1) knowledge requirements,
- (2) geoscience work experience,
- (3) good character, and
- (4) language proficiency.

Based on the Board's examination of all the information available through and/or in support of an application, the Board may recommend to the Council acceptance or rejection of the applicant. Board recommendations are subject to review and approval by Council.

Therefore, the Board is mandated and commissioned by the *Geoscience Profession Act* and the by-laws of the Association made under it, as well as this Council approved policy and procedures document.

1A. Reporting

The Board reports to the Council of the Association. All of the work of the Board is presented to Council in the form of recommendations. Council has the final decision-making power to accept, reject or modify recommendations from the Board.

1B. Relationship of the Admissions Board to the Canadian Geoscience Standards Board

APGNS is a Constituent Association ('CA') member of the Geoscientists Canada ('GC'). As a CA, APGNS appoints a Director to the Board of GC as well as a Representative to the Canadian Geoscience Standards Board ('CGSB'). The CGSB has been mandated by CCPG to research and develop the recommended requirements for professional geoscience registration in Canada. These recommendations are then presented to the CA's for approval.

APGNS Council formally adopted the CGSB geoscience knowledge and work experience requirement guidelines in April 2001. The CGSB, **Geoscience Knowledge and Experience Requirements for Professional Geoscience Registration in Canada** (GKE) was updated and re-issued in May 2008. The updated GKE was formally adopted by APGNS Council in 2008. The utilization of the GKE as a reference document for assessing applicants for professional geoscience registration was reviewed and the approval was confirmed by APGNS Council in 2011. The review of the GKE by CGSB, scheduled for 2013, was deferred until at least 2015 since the current version of the GKE has been accepted for use by the majority of Canadian CA's. APGNS Council has also adopted the application of the assessment procedures outlined by the **Framework for Assessment in the Licensing of Professional Geoscientists in Canada**, a CCPG document dated April 2012.

1C. Relationship of APGNS to the NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education

The government of Nova Scotia has mandated, through the *Fair Registration Practices Act* (FRPA), that all regulatory bodies must use transparent, objective, impartial, and procedurally fair registration practices and are required to monitor and report registration activities and results. This reporting is intended to allow the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to track trends and identify areas for improvement. It is also intended to facilitate APGNS in acquiring the data to meet the reporting requirements of the Canadian Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) and the Pan-Canadian Framework for Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Credentials.

The Office of the Registrar is authorized by Council to track and report the qualitative and quantitative registration activities as required under the FRPA legislation.

SECTION 2: ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

2A. Application

All applications for professional geoscience registration, (member, license to practice, member-in-training, retired member, life member, honorary life member), will be directed to the Registrar.

The Registrar will facilitate and coordinate all contact and communications with the applicant.

All applications for professional geoscience registration must be submitted to the Registrar on the most current version of the application form(s) available from the Office of the Registrar and/or as posted on the Association website. Applications which are submitted using an out of date application form may not be accepted for evaluation.

All applications for registration must include the payment in full of all current and applicable fees and service charges. Applications submitted without full payment of the applicable fees and service charges may not be accepted for evaluation.

It is the responsibility of all applicants to provide official documents for evaluation by the Board. Where translation and/or verification are required (*e.g.* internationally trained applicants) the provision of documents acceptable to the Board (including the cost) will be the applicant's responsibility.

2B. Application Assembly

The Registrar will function as the source and contact for all communications between the Board, the Association and the applicant regarding the application and its disposition.

1. The Registrar will create a file for the applicant, record the date the application form was received, assemble the supporting documentation, issue letters of request for professional references, and authorize the deposit of all fees and/or service charges to the applicable Association account.
2. Once the complete application file has been assembled, the Registrar shall forward the application file and all supporting documentation to the Chair of the Board. The Registrar shall notify the applicant that the application file has been compiled and submitted to the Board for consideration as well as an estimate of the time required for the Board evaluation and recommendation to Council.
3. If the application is not complete within one month of the date of submission/request for letters of reference, the Registrar will contact the applicant informing them of what information remains outstanding.
4. If the application is not complete within two months of the initial date of submission/request for letters of reference, the Registrar will contact the applicant to identify the documentation that remains outstanding. At that time the applicant may submit alternate supporting information (*i.e.* contact references). The Registrar may indicate that if the application is not completed by the end of the third month, the application will be considered terminated. In that case, the applicant will be required to re-apply with supporting documentation as well as all applicable application fees and service charges.
5. The Registrar may, on written application, extend the application deadlines, if the Registrar is satisfied that the delay is due to extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the applicant, which have prevented the timely completion of the application.

2C. Application Examination

1. The Chair will assign the application file to a member of the Board for review, evaluation and presentation to the Board. The Chair may assign all or part of the review of either the academic or the experience portion of the application to a second member of the Board or to an external reviewer, a member-in-good standing of the Association, if applicable.
2. The assigned reviewer(s) will evaluate the application and all supporting materials, using the approved assessment tools and/or worksheets, to confirm that all requirements for professional

registration have been met, and/or noting which requirements have not been met. The reviewer(s) shall notify the Chair when the evaluation is complete, and the Chair shall schedule a presentation of the application file by the evaluating reviewer at the next available Board meeting.

3. At the scheduled presentation meeting of the Board, the evaluating reviewer(s) will present their examination findings, including the evaluation worksheets and any other supporting documentation, indicating whether the requirements for professional geoscience registration have been met or not, identifying any deficiencies in qualifications, and making a recommendation regarding the disposition of the application.

The Board will then decide:

- (a) that the applicant meets the requirements for professional registration, either as a member or a member-in-training, in which case the file and the completed worksheets will be returned to the Registrar with the appropriate notations;
- (b) that the applicant does not meet the requirements for professional registration, either as a member or a member-in-training, in which case the file and the completed worksheets will be returned to the Registrar with the appropriate notations;
- (c) that further information is necessary to evaluate the candidate, in which case the complete file and the completed worksheets will be returned to the Registrar with a request specific to the file and/or the applicant to compile the additional information;
- (d) that further evaluation, for example, through a personal interview, or examination(s), or other evaluation tool(s), is necessary to evaluate the candidate, in which case the file and the completed worksheets will be returned to the Registrar with a request to facilitate and schedule the interview, examination(s), or other evaluation tool(s), *e.g.* a confirmatory examination(s);
 - an interview may be recommended where the evaluation has identified knowledge gap(s), but the reviewer(s) have determined that there is sufficient evidence to believe that the applicant may have the knowledge to address some, if not all, of the identified knowledge gaps, or if further confirmation of the applicant's knowledge is considered desirable;
 - the applicant will be informed, prior to the interview, of any specific knowledge areas the assessors wish the applicant to address during the interview and the interview should allow the applicant to provide further information and to give a brief presentation if the applicant so desires;
 - the interview panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the applicant in order to ascertain the applicant's understanding of the subject matter in the various knowledge gap subject areas;
 - if an interview is not practicable or possible to accommodate, a confirmatory exam(s) may be assigned; or
- (e) that the application should be reviewed by other member(s) of the Board, in which case the file and the completed worksheets will be returned to the Chair who shall assign the review to another member(s) of the Board.

4. Based on the evaluation of the application and the recommendation of the Board, or alternatively, based on a specific request by the applicant, the Board may consider a 'seeking to exempt' philosophy and conduct an evaluation of the applicant's knowledge and experience based on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition ('PLAR'); in either case, there may be circumstances in which a significant accumulation of cumulative and progressive geoscience work experience (normally on the order of 10 or more years) may be considered in lieu of select academic requirements.

If an evaluation under PLAR is considered, based on the initial evaluation and recommendation of the Board, the applicant will be informed of the specific deficiencies, the application file will be held as 'pending' for a specified period of time and the applicant will be offered a specific period of time to collect and present the required additional documentation; the time frame will be determined by the Registrar in consultation with the Board and it will be based on the specifics of the additional material required to complete the application file; on receipt of the additional information by the Registrar, the evaluation of the application by the Board would be resumed.

The applicant will also be advised that, simply requesting or participating in an evaluation under the PLAR process, the result (recommendation and/or approval) will not be predetermined, or ensured, or guaranteed, or binding on either the Board or Council.

Each applicant, including those requesting a PLAR evaluation, will be advised to complete a geoscience knowledge requirements self-assessment document; the self-assessment document should be included with the application; it should be noted that the self-assessment is the opinion of the applicant; the Board and/or the Council are under no obligation to accept the self-assessment; the self-assessment document is a tool to assist the applicant and the Board with communication.

The applicant will be informed that should the self-assessment identify academic training deficiencies, in the applicant's opinion, and should s/he believe that the knowledge requirement deficiency has been satisfied through learning in or outside of the formal education environment, s/he should provide sufficient detailed information to satisfy the Board that the knowledge requirement has been satisfied; this information may be demonstrated through, but not limited to, the following:

- additional courses or academic training completed (documented by official transcripts, course description/syllabus, etc);
- supervised geoscience work experience; (documented in the work experience diaries);
- structured and/or independent research; (demonstrated through work product, peer reviewed publications, etc); and/or
- formal and/or informal presentations, courses, etc; (conference sessions, field guides, short courses, poster presentations, corporate seminars, etc).

For each of the above examples, and any other method through which the knowledge may be demonstrated:

- the specific knowledge requirement, and the component(s) of that requirement, as defined by the GKE and/or other Board documents, and which are submitted to demonstrate compliance or completion, should be clearly identified, and

- supporting documentation, clearly linked to the knowledge requirement being demonstrated, should be provided (e.g. certificates; attendance records; research results; copies of presentations, etc); for each knowledge requirement to be demonstrated; further, statements of support from registered professional geoscientists, or professional engineers who are qualified to conduct geoscience, indicating that, to the best of their knowledge, the noted knowledge requirement has been satisfied; any other supporting documentation.)

For an applicant to be considered under this policy, the geoscience work experience must be determined to be ‘current’, specifically, it must represent relevant geoscience experience within the last 10 years, and it must be supported by professional and character references representing the same time frame; this should be supported by examples of geoscience work product and may be subject to consideration in a personal interview.

However, without limiting the specific requirement for currency, it must also be recognized that the application of PLAR may be utilized to determine knowledge gained by the applicant, through learning in and outside of the formal education environment, in order to fulfill knowledge gaps noted by academic assessors; therefore, the date at which the knowledge was acquired may not be in question; it is a matter of whether the required knowledge has been gained.

It must also be stressed that ‘seeking to exempt’ or ‘PLAR’ will only be extended and evaluated in the context that the public interest is protected from unprofessional and/or unregulated geoscience practice and by the registration of only qualified, competent geoscientists.

5. As approved by Council, the review of applications by the Board will utilize the CCPG/CGSB document, *Geoscience Knowledge and Experience Requirements for Professional Registration in Canada*, dated May 2008 as a reference. The Board will also consider the GC document, *Framework for Assessment in the Licensing of Professional Geoscientists in Canada*, dated April 2012 as well as the Nova Scotia *Fair Registration Practices Act* (FRPA) and the *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT, Chapter 7). The APGNS worksheet, incorporating the practical application of these documents, has been developed for use by the Board. Council has also considered that the Board may utilize the GC, Entry to Practice Competency Profile as a tool for evaluating and assessing knowledge requirements, work experience and prior learning.

The applicant assessment worksheet will be completed as part of the review of each application file and the original will be returned to the Chair. The worksheet will be signed and dated by the reviewing member as well as the Chair. The original worksheet will be retained by the Registrar as part of the application file, regardless of the disposition of the file.

2D. Admission Board Decisions

1. If the decision of the Board is that the applicant does not meet the requirements for professional registration, the decision will identify on what academic and/or experience and/or other requirements the decision was based and what, if any, will be required to compensate or address the shortfall in qualifications.
2. If the applicant does not meet the requirements for professional geoscience registration as a member, the Board may recommend registration as a member-in-training (MIT) with specific conditions that will be required for the MIT to transfer to professional member status.

3. If it is determined that the applicant is missing academic courses (EU's), the Board will provide a list of acceptable options to meet the requirements of the GKE that are applicable to the applicant's educational and work training and the identified professional practice stream (*i.e.* Geology, Environmental Geoscience and/or Geophysics).
4. The applicant will be expected to have the course selection(s) approved by the Registrar in consultation with the Board.
5. If the decision of the Board is that additional information is required to adequately assess the applicant's qualifications for professional registration, the Chair will request the Registrar to obtain the required information.
6. If additional information is required to be submitted by the applicant, the Registrar will indicate that it must be submitted in a timely manner, normally 30 days.
7. If the candidate fails to respond within 30 days, the application may be considered terminated as incomplete, in which case the applicant will be required to resubmit the application including all applicable assessment fees and service charges.
8. The Registrar may, on written application, extend the application deadlines, if the Registrar is satisfied that the delay is due to extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the applicant, which have prevented the timely completion of the application.

If the decision of the Board is to conduct an interview with the applicant; the Chair will request the Registrar to contact the applicant and the members of the interview panel to schedule the interview as soon as practicable. The Registrar, in consultation with the Board, will identify the members of the interview panel. The panel will appoint a reporting chair for the interview panel.

9. If the candidate fails to respond within 30 days, the application may be considered terminated as incomplete in which case the applicant will then be required to resubmit the application including all applicable assessment fees and service charges.
10. The Registrar may, on written application, extend the interview deadlines, if the Registrar is satisfied that the delay is due to extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the applicant, which have prevented the timely completion of the interview.
11. The interview panel will normally be comprised of at least three (3) individuals. At least two (2) panel members will be members of the Board, preferably including the Chair and/or the Registrar, and at least one (1) will be a registered professional geoscientist, member-in-good-standing, with experience in the area or stream of professional practice in which the applicant has applied for registration.
12. The interview will be constructed to ascertain, identify and/or explore the applicant's:
 - geoscience knowledge and/or technical competence;
 - geoscience work experience, (location, role and responsibilities, work product, supervision, progressive responsibilities, etc.);
 - understanding of professional ethics and practice as well as evidence of good character,

conduct and reputation; and

- competence with respect to English language skills, both written and oral.

13. The reporting chair of the interview panel will compile the findings of the panel, as determined by majority vote.

14. The reporting chair will submit the findings of the interview panel, in a written report, including recommendation(s), to the Board.

15. The Board will incorporate the findings and recommendations of the interview panel into the review of the application file.

16. If the decision of the Board is that another member should examine the application, the Chair will assign the file for review and further action by the Board will be deferred to the next meeting.

2E. Admissions Board Recommendations

1. At each meeting of the Council the Admissions Board Chair and/or the Registrar will present a report from the Board, including recommendations for acceptance or rejection of application files. The recommendations will include a short biography of the applicant for consideration by Council. Board recommendations are subject to the approval of Council. Any other matters identified by the Board for consideration, consultation and/or action by the Council may be submitted as Council agenda items.

2. On approval of the Board's recommendation(s) by Council, the Registrar will notify the applicant(s) of the acceptance or rejection of their application and issue the required registration materials (*i.e.* registration certificate, professional stamp, copy of the Code of Ethics, etc.).

3. All completed applications and terminated applications (regardless of status), their associated worksheet/checklist/tracking forms, letters of communication between the Registrar and the applicant, assessment forms and/or worksheets associated with the application, and all other written information, will be archived in a file documenting the application maintained by the Registrar.

2F. Appeal of a Council Decision Regarding Professional Geoscience Registration

1. An unsuccessful applicant may appeal the application decision within 30 days of being informed of the Council decision by the Registrar.

2. The appeal must be filed in writing (a 'letter of appeal') and submitted to the Registrar.

3. The letter of appeal must clearly state and document the grounds for the appeal.

4. The letter of appeal must include payment of the applicable assessment fees and service charges.

5. If the candidate fails to file a letter of appeal within 30 days, an appeal of the registration decision will not be accepted, and the application will be considered terminated.

6. The Registrar may, on written application, extend the appeal deadline, if the Registrar is satisfied that the delay is due to extenuating circumstances, beyond the control of the applicant, which

have prevented the timely completion of the appeal.

7. An appeal of a registration decision may be undertaken in one of two available categories:
 - an ‘additional information’ appeal, or
 - a ‘challenge’ appeal.

‘Additional Information’ Appeal

1. In an additional information appeal, the grounds for the appeal are that information relevant to the application was missing, and the applicant’s appeal involves submitting this additional information to the Registrar along with the letter of appeal.
2. On receipt of a letter of appeal indicating an additional information appeal and payment of the applicable fee(s), the Registrar will immediately inform the Chair.
3. On receipt of the additional information from the applicant, the Registrar will forward this information and letter of appeal, along with the original application file, to the Chair for consideration.
4. The Chair will assign the review of this additional information to a member of the Board, normally the member who undertook the original review, although the Chair may assign the additional information review to another Board member or an external reviewer.
5. On completion of the review of additional material, the reviewer/member will notify the Chair who will schedule a presentation of the findings at the next available meeting of the Board and the Board will render a decision.

‘Challenge’ Appeal

1. In a challenge appeal, grounds for the appeal are that the Board made an error in judgment or procedure in the evaluation or review of the application.
2. On receipt of a letter of appeal indicating a challenge appeal, and payment of the applicable fee(s), the Registrar will immediately inform the Chair.
3. The Registrar will acknowledge receipt of the letter of appeal and advise the appellant that they have the right to review the subject application file.
4. The appellant will have thirty (30) days from the date of acknowledgement of the filing to prepare and submit, to the Registrar, a letter or a report detailing any errors they believe were made in the evaluation of their application.
5. The Council will appoint a Registration Appeal Committee (the ‘Committee’), to review the application. The Committee will be comprised of three (3) to five (5) members in good standing, not currently sitting on Council or the Board. The Committee will select the reporting Chair and meet to review the application and appeal file materials as required.

6. The Registrar will forward the information including a copy of the original application file, any worksheets or supporting materials, the letter of appeal and any supporting information from the appellant, to the Committee for consideration.
7. On completion of the review, the Committee will give its decision in writing to the Registrar who will provide a copy of the written decision to the appellant
8. The decision of the Registration Appeal Committee is final.
9. On completion of the appeal, the application file, and all of its associated documentation, including information and materials related to the appeal, will be archived in a file documenting the application. The file will be kept and maintained by the Registrar.

SECTION 3: LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

Where the applicant's first language is English, it is anticipated that the Board may assess language competency as a function of the successful completion of the National Professional Practice Examination (NPPE).

Where the applicant's first language is not English, the Board may require the demonstration of satisfactory communication skills in the English language. This may be done by, for example, a CANTEST, approved test of English as a Foreign Language or an alternative test acceptable to the Board, or in other documentation acceptable to the Board.

In some cases, the Board may require that language competency be demonstrated in a personal interview arranged as noted above by the Registrar.