

Manual
for
Accreditation of
Baccalaureate Programs in Agrology

Developed by:
Agrology Accreditation Committee of the



and



Revised 2005

Accreditation of Baccalaureate Programs in Agrology

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1.0 Introduction

In November of 1993 the Deans of Agriculture requested the Agricultural Institute of Canada, in cooperation with l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec, to set up a process of accreditation for programs in agriculture leading to qualification to practice the profession of Agrology. It was recognized that Faculties of Agriculture had evolved and grown well beyond the traditional bounds of agriculture. A number of the programs offered did not lead to the practice of Agrology. At the same time, there was an increased mobility of professionals not only nationally but globally. The Deans recognized the importance to provide the opportunity for graduates to work wherever employment opportunities present themselves. And equally, the importance that employers are guaranteed that graduates meet professional standards that are accredited nationally and recognized internationally.

Over the next three years the AIC reviewed the accreditation programs of other professions and, with OAQ, developed the joint AIC-OAQ Accreditation Program as outlined in a manual which was approved by the Deans of faculties of agriculture and the provincial institutes of agrologists in 1997.

Over the next year the Accreditation Committee was formed, Charter Accreditation status was granted to programs at the eight participating institutions and a pool of qualified individuals was developed from which to select Site Review Team members. The first site review occurred in early 1999 and, over the next six years programs at all eight institutions were reviewed.

In 2004 an initial review of the program was done by the Accreditation Program Manager and an evaluation team selected. The evaluation and revision of the Accreditation Manual occurred in early 2005.

University program accreditation is viewed as a means of ensuring that academic experience obtained in the program meets with national professional standards. The criteria and guidelines however, are intended to encourage creativity and innovation in agricultural education.

A program in this document refers to a sequence of courses taken by a student in order to attain expertise in a specific aspect of agriculture and to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Examples include, but are not limited to, animal science, soil science, agricultural economics, crop science, agroecology, environmental studies, food science, rural engineering and horticulture. Such programs lead to qualification to practice the profession of agrology.

2.0 Education Philosophy

National accreditation of university baccalaureate programs in agrology is a process to ensure that programs meet mandatory minimum education standards to allow graduates to meet the academic requirements for registration in a Provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec. Contrary to common usage, the term does not refer to individuals or to institutions, but refers to the evaluation of educational programs. Accreditation is the process to determine and to certify the achievement and maintenance of reasonable and appropriate national standards of education for professionals.

The guidelines for accreditation provide a framework for undergraduate curriculum development and evaluation. The responsibility for curriculum development rests with the university. The university has the freedom and flexibility to plan a program that is compatible with its philosophy and organizational structure. The establishment of minimum educational standards for granting professional designation resides with the professional associations.

Accreditation is one aspect of the evaluation of an educational program. The process includes the components of evaluation which are obtained by self-assessment and peer review rather than an inflexible disciplinary process. The faculty of the university has the responsibility to demonstrate how the program meets the educational guidelines.

The accreditation team evaluates the faculty documents from the perspective of non-involvement in the program. The members of the accreditation team are selected on the basis of their leadership in agrology education and practice. They participate actively with the university faculty in all aspects of the consultative exercise; in the review of the self-study, in the site visit and in the evaluation report.

Accreditation of university agrology programs is a process which provides support for programs and initiatives for development. Accreditation can assist universities in addressing educational issues which will affect the future practice of agrology. The accreditation process provides an opportunity for practising members of the profession to consult with educators and to share concerns related to the professional practice of agrology. National accreditation of university baccalaureate agrology is a process to ensure that programs meet minimum education standards to allow graduates to meet the academic requirements for registration in a provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec.

Equivalency is a separate, additional requirement in Québec, which is provincially mandated and governed to regulate those practicing in Québec.

While the Accreditation Program ensures a standard, national assessment of all agriculture programs based on the same criteria, philosophy and procedures, it does not ensure that all programs meet the equivalency requirement for Québec.

Therefore, graduates from an accredited program in Québec or in another province, will not automatically be granted equivalency in Québec; and, furthermore, graduates from an accredited program in Québec which does not meet equivalency requirements will still meet the academic requirement for acceptance into other Provincial Institutes.

3.0 The Accreditation Program

3.1 Overview

Faculties applying for accreditation status for their programs should notify the Director of Accreditation of their intention and begin a comprehensive self-analysis of program objectives and outcomes several months prior to completing the self-study report. The format outline for the self-study report is included in this document. The self-study report is designed to provide basic information for the accreditation surveyors and the Accreditation Committee of AIC/OAQ. It is the responsibility of the university to provide documentation to verify that the programs meet national standards for accreditation.

A date for the program(s) accreditation is arranged by the Director of Accreditation in conjunction with the university. (Normally all programs being considered at an institution would be evaluated simultaneously.)

The completed self-study report is sent to the Director and reviewed to assure that all required information has been included.

The report is then forwarded to the site surveyors, appointed by the Committee in consultation with the university. One surveyor is designated as the senior surveyor who will act as chair.

The surveyors review the self-study report, conduct a two or three day site visit and prepare a report. The report is forwarded to the Accreditation Committee for approval. The Committee considers the report and determines accreditation standing.

The university Accreditation Coordinator will receive a letter indicating accreditation status within three months of the site visit.

3.2 Accreditation Status

Accreditation applies only to the individual baccalaureate programs leading to the degree requirements which qualify students for admission to a Provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec. Note: some accredited programs do not meet the more stringent equivalency standards in Québec.

Charter accreditation is a special category which recognized that a number of Canadian institutions had, for years, been providing education programs which met the requirements for admission into professional practice. It was granted to those institutions following:

1. a statement from them that they wished to receive the status for a program,
2. a calendar description of the courses required for the program and
3. a statement from the president of the appropriate Provincial Institute or the OAQ that the program currently met their academic requirements for admission. Charter accreditation was granted only once and for a maximum of seven years.

Tentative accreditation is granted to a new program or a program which has not been accredited previously. It is granted after the self-study report is submitted and demonstrates compliance with the accreditation standards and published policies. A site visit will be scheduled following the graduation of at least one class of students.

Full accreditation is granted to a program in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation. Full accreditation is granted for a period of **seven** years.

Provisional accreditation is granted to a program which fails to comply with the Standards for Accreditation and where it would require relatively minor changes to comply with the Standards of Accreditation. Deficiencies must be corrected within **two years** or accreditation is withdrawn.

Provisional accreditation is withdrawn when a program fails to comply with the Standards for Accreditation within the specified time period of two years. Students enrolled in the program **at the time of provisional accreditation** are considered graduates of an accredited program upon successful completion of the program.

If accreditation is withdrawn, a period of 2 years must elapse before application can be made for a renewal of accreditation.

3.3 AIC/OAQ Initiated Provisional Accreditation

The status of accreditation will be changed to provisional accreditation when the program does not comply with one or more of the requirements for maintaining accreditation. These include:

Submission of annual updates by the scheduled due dates.

Notification of significant academic changes in a program within 90 calendar days of the changes.

Accreditation status decisions may be appealed. The appeal process is outlined on page 5. Decisions are considered final when the time limit for initiating an appeal lapses or after an appeal is complete.

Programs with accreditation status will receive a certificate from AIC/OAQ recognizing the status and will be placed on a list of accredited university programs circulated annually by AIC/OAQ.

3.4 Maintenance of Accreditation

An annual update of the status of accredited programs is reviewed by the AIC/OAQ Accreditation Committee. Faculties will be sent a letter in the fall of each year requesting a status report describing any major changes and an explanation of any impact that would have on accreditation status.

(See Appendix I for sample text of letter sent to universities regarding maintenance of accreditation.)

A major change in an accredited program is one that may significantly affect its quality, objectives, scope, or location of educational offerings; the degree offered; or control. The following are examples:

1. A significant change in the program's mission or objectives;
2. A change in the philosophical underpinning of the curriculum;
3. Any change in the legal status, sponsorship, or control of the institution that offers the program;
4. A merger or affiliation with another institution;
5. A significant change in quantity of education offered in the program, including the addition of course or programs that represent a significant departure in terms of content or method of delivery from those offered at the time of the AIC/OAQ Accreditation Program's most recent evaluation of the program;
6. Greater than one-third of the learning outcomes/intents are changed;
7. A change in the credential awarded for completion of the program;
8. A change in the way educational quantity of the program is measured, such as from clock hours to credit hours;
9. The initiation of a branch campus, centre or teaching clinic where students are permanently assigned, or another instructional site in an area or region not previously served, where students may fulfil any portion of their degree requirements.

3.5 Appeal Process

1. All decisions shall be final unless the Director of Accreditation receives a written request for reconsideration from the faculty within 30 days of the date of receipt of the notice of that decision.
2. The written request for reconsideration of a decision must include a concise statement of the reason(s) for contesting the decision. Information provided should be based on information available at the time the decision was made.
3. Upon receipt of the request for appeal, an appeal committee must be activated.

4. The appeal hearing will take place within two months of the appeal request.
5. Costs associated with the Accreditation Coordinator's attendance at the appeal hearing will be paid by the university.
6. The Presidents of the Agricultural Institute of Canada and l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec will name a short list of 6 members to the ad hoc Appeal Committee for the university in question. Three members will be selected by mutual agreement between both parties. None of the members will have had an affiliation with the program, filing the appeal, or with the accreditation process related to the program.
7. The Appeal Committee will review the self-study report and the report of the on-site accreditation review during the appeal hearing.
8. New information will not be considered by the Appeal Committee. Changes made to the program which were not described in the original documents will not be considered.
9. The decision of the Appeal Committee will be forwarded to AIC/OAQ Accreditation Committee.
10. The faculty will be notified of the decision by mail within two months of the appeal hearing. Notification will include a statement of specific findings.

4.0 ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR BACCALAUREATE PROGRAMS IN AGROLOGY

4.1 Precepts

The following precepts guided the development of the criteria and guidelines for accreditation.

1. The primary purpose of accreditation is to evaluate the program according to the educational guidelines approved by the AIC and OAQ.
2. Reduced to its simplest terms the requirement for accreditation is that a program must be capable of producing graduates who are academically prepared to complete experiential requirements for membership in a Provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec and to practice agrology.
3. The evaluation criteria for accreditation should allow and encourage program flexibility, innovation and growth.
4. The intent of accreditation is not to limit or set the objectives of an educational program but to ensure that the objectives required for accreditation are encompassed within them.
5. The accreditation team will utilize judgement with respect to the application of the accreditation standards. The expectation is that programs will meet all criteria.

STANDARDS

4.2 The Program

A. *Program Philosophy*

Criterion

- (i) There is an explicit philosophy which guides the program.

Guideline

Evidence is provided that the philosophy is reflected in the program and guides the continuing development and evaluation of the program.

B. *Program Objectives*

Criteria

- (i) Program objectives reflect the program's philosophy.
- (ii) Program objectives provide a basis for program planning and for evaluation of the program.
- (iii) Program objectives identify the foundation of professional practice in agrology.

Guidelines

There is an explicit statement of program objectives.

The objectives are coherent with the philosophy of the program.

Faculty and students involved in the program are aware of the program objectives and their meaning.

There is a plan setting out ways in which the institution evaluates achievement of program objectives.

C. Program Organization

Criteria

- (i) The organization of a program and its location in the administrative structure facilitates the achievement of program objectives and quality education.
- (ii) The professional nature of the program is explicitly acknowledged by the institution.
- (iii) Primary responsibility for curriculum development and program standards rests with the university faculty.
- (iv) University faculty and students participate in systematic planning and evaluation of the program.
- (v) There is a systematic effort to consider reports of the progress of graduates in their professional careers and include these considerations in program planning.
- (vi) There is a systematic effort to consider input from employers of program graduates and from the Provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes.

Guidelines

- Evidence is presented on the appropriateness of the program location (administratively and academically) within the institution and the ways in which the location facilitates achievement of program objectives and quality education.
- The program is listed as such in the university calendar and identified as a program leading to professional qualifications.
- Program faculty hold regular, formal meetings to review curriculum and courses and for program planning.
- There is provision for student representation or input to meetings of curriculum committees.
- Periodic reports on career progress of graduates are solicited and are considered in program planning.
- Periodic reports on employer and professional organization views are solicited and considered in program planning.

4.3 Accreditation Coordinator

Criteria

- (i) The program has a designated Accreditation Coordinator. (e.g. Dean, Assoc. Dean-Acad).
- (ii) The role of the Accreditation Coordinator is to provide academic leadership for the program(s).
- (iii) The Accreditation Coordinator is responsible for communication with the AIC/OAQ concerning the program.

Guidelines

The Accreditation Coordinator is a member of the academic unit in which the program is located.

The Accreditation Coordinator has a major time and career commitment to the program.

The Accreditation Coordinator is professionally qualified and provides evidence of continuing development. (e.g. scholarly publication, continuing education, active participation on committees, scientific and professional organizations).

The Accreditation Coordinator is responsible for submission of documentation on the program. Communications with regard to implementation of recommendations of the Accreditation Committee will be directed to the Accreditation Coordinator.

4.4 Faculty (including the Accreditation Coordinator)

Criteria

- (i) The number and type of faculty are sufficient for the achievement of program objectives.
- (ii) The faculty are academically and professionally qualified for their responsibilities to the program.
- (iii) The responsibilities of faculty are designated by the director or the Dean, including teaching, research, extension and public service.

Guidelines

The program faculty have appropriate training and experience to give them expert knowledge of the discipline area and of the branch(s) of agriculture relevant to the program.

Program faculty will provide evidence of continuing development in their profession (e.g. teaching skill development, scholarly publication, continuing education, active participation in professional activities and public service).

The number of faculty are sufficient to provide quality education to the students in the program.

Criteria for recruitment, tenure and promotion and the expectations for scholarly activity and research of faculty in the program are at least equal to those for faculty in other units of the university.

4.5 Students

Criteria

- (i) There is an explicit statement of standards for admission, continuation of study and graduation.
- (ii) There is a formal system for counselling students on the course of study and about career opportunities.
- (iii) Students are encouraged to develop professional attitudes.

Guidelines

Requirements for admission, continuation of study, and graduation are published by the university.

There is documentation of a formal system of counselling students in the program on the course of study and career opportunities. Counsellors are individuals in the teaching program who are academically and professionally qualified for the task.

There is evidence of student participation in activities, which are related to professional development.

4.6 Curriculum

Criteria

- (i) The curriculum meets the academic requirements for admission to the provincial Institutes of Agrologists or OAQ.
- (ii) The curriculum is consistent with the philosophy and objectives of the program.
- (iii) The curriculum provides for the sequential development of the knowledge required for professional practice.
- (iv) The curriculum provides for the acquisition of a sound basic background, knowledge of the agriculture industry and in-depth knowledge of an area of specialization.
- (v) The curriculum includes opportunities for students to develop an appreciation of professional ethics and professional attitudes relevant to practice.
- (vi) The curriculum provides for the development of skills in written and oral communication.
- (vii) The curriculum provides for the development of computer skills
- (viii) The curriculum provides for the development of skills in critical analysis and problem solving.
- (ix) The curriculum provides for the development of skills in teamwork for planning and problem solving. The curriculum takes advantage of unique or distinctive features of the university and community environment in which the program is located.

Guidelines

- The curriculum description in the university calendar indicates that the program meets the requirements.
- Evidence is presented as to how the curriculum facilitates fulfilment of program philosophy and objectives.
- Evidence is presented as to how the curriculum develops knowledge in a logical sequence.
- Applied experiences such as laboratory courses and field experiences are planned for throughout the program. These have stated learning objectives and are appropriately evaluated.
- Evidence is presented that the curriculum provides for discussions regarding professional ethics and practice. Faculty members' scholarly and professional activities provide role models of professionalism. Unique features of the curriculum are described.
- Evidence is presented as to show the development of skills in computer use, communication, problem solving, critical thinking and writing to integrate knowledge.
- Evidence is presented to show how students work on projects in teams.

- (x) The curriculum takes advantage of unique or distinctive features of the university and community environment in which the program is located.

4.7 Graduates

Criteria

- (i) Graduates of the program perform satisfactorily in the workplace.

Guidelines

Evidence of employer satisfaction is provided.

4.8 Resources

Criteria

- (i) The university is committed to the program.
- (ii) The academic resources of the university are sufficient to meet the curriculum requirements of the program.
- (iii) The physical facilities available to the program are adequate for the achievement of the program objectives

Guidelines

There is a written statement from the university administration in support of the program.

There is a statement of commitment to continuation of program support from the administrative head of the unit in which the program is located.

Faculty/student ratio in program courses are conducive to student learning and achievement of program goals.

Physical facilities for the program are adequate and appropriate for achievement of program objectives. Program facilities include faculty office space, conference rooms and student study space and laboratory space.

There is adequate clerical and technical support for the Program Coordinator and program faculty.

Library resources such as number, currency, and accessibility of books, journals and other pertinent materials are demonstrated to be sufficient to meet the needs of the program.

Courses required for the program are available within the institution and open to students in the program.

Computer facilities are available for both faculty and students.

Evidence is provided that the program receives adequate attention from support services related to student recruitment, program promotion and public relations.

4.9 External Advice

Criterion

- (i) The program will have a mechanism for obtaining external advice on a regular basis.

Guidelines

A statement describes how external advice is obtained and utilized

4.10 Outcomes for Education in Agrology

The baccalaureate program should provide graduates with the following:

- a sound basis in appropriate natural and social sciences;
- a general knowledge of the agri-food system;
- sufficient depth in the area of specialization;
- the ability to think critically and solve problems especially in a team context;
- the ability to communicate orally and in writing;
- computer literacy;
- an appreciation of the arts and humanities;
- an understanding of the elements of the business of agriculture;
- knowledge of the profession of agrology and of ethical professional behaviour.

4.11 Definitions

Accreditation — a process, an external review of an educational program designed to maintain predetermined standards and ensure uniform, reciprocal qualifications for graduates.

Accreditation Coordinator — the person appointed by the Dean who is responsible for coordinating the institution's participation in the accreditation process.

Criterion — a predetermined element or specified expectation forming the basis for testing or judging whether a standard has been met.

Curriculum — an educational plan which includes content, instructional methods, and evaluation measures.

AIC/OAQ Educational Guidelines — elements of education that are basic to entrance to the profession of agrology.

P.Ag. — an individual who qualifies to practice the profession of agrology as recognized by membership in a provincial Institute of Agrologists or l'Ordre des agronomes du Québec.

Evaluation — the process of rating or appraising achievement of a pre-determined standard or goal.

Faculty — the academic faculty with primary responsibility to the program.

Goal — a statement of purpose or intent toward which effort is directed.

Guideline — a statement that amplifies a criterion or provides an example of how a criterion may be interpreted.

Objective — a specific statement identifying desired accomplishments.

Philosophy — a statement of belief that serves to guide the planning and activities for an institution or program.

Professional Courses — those courses of instruction in agricultural subjects which provide didactic learning required for agrology practice.

Program — a collection of academic and professional courses designed to provide a total number of credits in a professional field to meet requirements for a baccalaureate degree; usually what appears in a calendar listing.

Standard — something that is established by general consent or authority as a model or example to be followed.

5.0 SELF-STUDY REPORT

5.1 Description

The self-study report will contain the following:

Application for Accreditation.

A Table of Contents with all sections including the appendices referenced by page number in order of their appearance in the self-study. (*See Appendix II for a sample Table of Contents.*)

An overview of the program providing historical background and a brief description of program organization.

Documents of compliance with the standards of accreditation.

- a) Each guideline and criterion should be stated and numbered as in the Accreditation Manual for Baccalaureate Programs in Agrology.
- b) Compliance with each criterion should be stated as concisely as possible.

The final report must be typed and all pages numbered. Pages are to be bound in plastic spiral or ring binder. Shorter reports for Site Surveyors may have appendices available on a website, CD or in another electronic format.

5.2 Distribution

New programs or programs currently in place but now seeking tentative accreditation status must contact the Director of Accreditation for current information about the accreditation fee. Accreditation Coordinators should submit the fee with **four** copies of the self-study report to the Director of Accreditation. The self-study report will be forwarded to the Accreditation Committee for review and a recommendation regarding tentative accreditation status.

Programs currently in place but now seeking accreditation status should submit **four** copies of the self-study report to the Director, three months prior to the scheduled visit.

5.3 Self-Study Report Format

Information does not have to be in the same format as in this manual, but the report must contain all information requested, for example, the NSERC tri-council form can be used.

Background Information

Name of (i) the institution, (ii) college or faculty and (iii) school or department, in which the program is located.

Name of the program including any formally designated major areas or options, and the bachelor's degree designation.

Name, title and departmental affiliation of the person who is the coordinator of the program.

Personnel data sheets must be completed for the course coordinator and all academic faculty directly associated with the program.

Personnel Data

To be completed by the Accreditation Coordinator and all academic faculty directly associated with the Program and must include the following information:

- Name
- Signature
- Provincial Institute/OAQ Membership
- Institution and department/division
- Academic Rank
- Date of appointment
- Post-Secondary Education (list most recent first)
 - ▶ Institution
 - ▶ Inclusive Dates
 - ▶ Major Degree
 - ▶ Date
- Professional Background (include all experiences, list most recent first)
- Teaching Experience
 - ▶ List courses by title and number taught in last five years.
 - ▶ List number of graduate students supervised in last five years.
- Research/Scholarly Work
 - ▶ Specialization
 - ▶ List refereed publications within the last five years.

International Service

- Inclusive Dates
- Location
- Description

Honours, Academic Distinctions, Fellowships

Public Service and Extension

- Major professional, scientific and honorary society memberships (indicate positions held during the past five years)
- Major committees or task forces.
- Major professional or scientific meetings attended during the past five years.
- Indicate participation as invited speaker, research presentation, session chair.
- Extension activities in past five years.

Number of Students in the Program

Information on numbers of students will help to assess trends in choice of specialization. It is realized that the numbers per category may not be known precisely — in this case give an estimate.

1. Total number of **graduating** students in the program in the last five years — indicate the number of students for each year and their specialization.
2. Number of students enrolled in graduate programs over the last five years — indicate the number of students for each year, the degree and their specialization.

Program and Curriculum

Please refer to Criterion in Standards, Section 4.2 The Program.

Describe the philosophy, goals and objectives of the program.

Describe particular strengths of the program, relative to its program objectives.

Attach an outline of the total program outlining the usual (i.e. customary) course sequencing and the degree requirements. Enclose four copies of the undergraduate calendar for the current year with the report.

For each specialization offered, please provide the following:

- (i) a list of course numbers and names used to meet AIC/OAQ educational guidelines
- (ii) a supplemental list of courses beyond minimum requirements, relevant to the profession of agrology which are:
 - a) required and
 - b) frequently chosen electives

Please supply copies of course outlines for professionally related subjects using the outline below.

Course Outline — Summary Information Sheet

Must include the following:

- Course Number and Title
- Course Description
- Credit Hours
- Hours per week Total Lecture Lab/Practicum
- Lecture
- Laboratory and Instructor's name
- Prerequisites
- Course Objectives
- Required Texts and/or Major References
- Evaluation (how is course grade determined)
- Lecture Topical Outline
- Laboratory/Practicum Topical Outline

6.0 THE SITE VISIT

6.1 Scheduling

The Director of Accreditation schedules all site visits under the direction of the Accreditation Committee and in conjunction with the University. Programs to be accredited will have a site visit scheduled every 7 years. Programs requiring reaccreditation will be notified by the Director one year in advance of the visit. The Accreditation Coordinator must then identify convenient dates. The Director confirms the specific dates with the Accreditation Coordinator and Accreditation surveyors. Site visits are generally scheduled for three days. Input from students is vital and visits must take place when students are available during the academic session, i.e., avoid exams, mid terms and breaks.

As part of the planning process for a Site Review, the AIC/OAQ Accreditation Program Manager will work with the designated contact at the academic institute to determine a publicity plan to announce and promote the results by issuing press releases, promoting results in campus and local newspapers and copying the results to the Provincial Institutes of Agrologists. The Accreditation Program Manager and the Accreditation Coordinator will then implement the publicity plan to announce and promote the results.

6.2 Accreditation Surveyors

Surveyors for each accreditation review are chosen by the Accreditation Committee in consultation with the university program. Each team should include at least one surveyor from the private sector and one practising agrology. The collective expertise of the team of surveyors must include, experience in university education, and in depth knowledge of agriculture and the practice of agrology. Surveyors will be selected in a manner that will avoid any conflict of interest relating to their association with the institution being surveyed. Surveyors represent AIC/OAQ in the accreditation process.

6.3 Establishing the Site Visit Itinerary

The Accreditation Coordinator should contact the Senior Surveyor at least one month before the scheduled visit to discuss the itinerary. A draft of the tentative itinerary should be sent to the surveyors for their final approval. The itinerary should be planned realistically allowing sufficient time for interviews and observations.

Meetings with the Accreditation Coordinator, administrators, faculty, staff, alumni, employers and students should be scheduled. A meeting with members of the Provincial Institute of Agrologists or the OAQ will also be arranged through the President of the organization. The surveyors may meet with faculty as a group or on an individual basis. The Accreditation Coordinator should not attend meetings with faculty, staff, students and administrative officials.

Prior to the visit, the surveyors should discuss major problem areas in the self-study report. The itinerary should also be reviewed and responsibilities should be established for segments of the observations and reviews. (*See Appendix III for a sample site visit itinerary.*)

6.4 Conducting the Site Visit

Surveyors represent AIC/OAQ in the accreditation process. Their goal is to provide objective information on the extent to which the program achieves its stated goals and objectives in accordance with established guidelines for agrology education programs. Generally, a minimum of three surveyors will be assigned to conduct a visit; however, on occasion the team may consist of four or five surveyors depending on the complexity of the program and the number of programs being evaluated.

The primary functions of site visitors are:

- a) To verify the degree to which the program is in compliance with the Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate Programs in Agrology;
- b) To assess how well the program is doing what it says it is doing;
- c) To document that the program has established goals for attaining the educational guidelines for agrology, is capable of meeting these goals, and demonstrates attainment of such goals in educational practice.

The report of the site visit and the self-study report are the basis for the decision on accreditation by the Accreditation Committee.

Conclusions of the surveyors and those of the program faculty and staff should be in agreement. Justifiable criticism may result if surveyors draw conclusions without verifying and validating the sources of relevant data. The surveyors must consider and weigh all relevant data in the light of the appropriate standards, drawing also on professional experience before reaching their conclusions.

The integrity and competence with which the Accreditation Committee and its representatives conduct their work are key elements in the continued acceptance by the public and the profession of the value of accreditation. Thorough and impartial evaluation conforming to accepted standards of professional conduct is a benefit to the institution, and the program has a right to expect this from the accreditation process.

During the site visit, the surveyors should consult with faculty, administration, staff, employers, alumni, students, members of the Provincial Institute or the OAQ and other interested parties. Sufficient time should be allowed to gather relevant data from all appropriate sources.

Accreditation Surveyors Preparation

All Accreditation Surveyors are required to ensure they are aware of the accreditation purpose and process, their role in the process and how to conduct themselves during the Site Review.

They are expected to:

- Complete the on-line training program developed by the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada for those participating in Site Review Visits.
- Become thoroughly familiar with the AIC-OAQ accreditation process as outlined in the Accreditation Manual for Baccalaureate Programs in Agrolology.
- Review and become familiar with the Self Study report prepared by the academic institution and,
- Meet with the Director of Accreditation prior to a Site Review to identify specific roles and responsibilities for each member of the Site Review Team.

The Director will arrange the date of the site visit in conjunction with the university and will inform the university of the date the completed self-study report is required. Four copies of the self-study report must be forwarded to the Director, by the specified date. Sufficient time for adequate preparation is important to the success of the site visit.

The Accreditation Standards should be used to review the self-study report. Questions and comments that relate to each Standard should be noted. Points which are not clear or need further documentation should be noted. These areas then can be reviewed during the visit. This preparation prior to the visit will assist in assuring a systematic and objective program evaluation, will demonstrate to the program faculty the professional quality and capability of the survey team, and will be the basis for writing the final report.

At the beginning of the interviews and sessions with various groups and individuals, the surveyors should explain the accreditation process and the role of the surveyors as needed. Often, only limited explanations are needed in meeting with chief administrative officials.

Introductory Meeting with Accreditation Coordinator

Since the first meeting with the Accreditation Coordinator can be instrumental in creating the atmosphere for the entire visit, it is important for the surveyors to take care in establishing at the outset the roles each is to have. The Accreditation Coordinator and faculty are the ones who are able to demonstrate/illustrate the components of their program. The surveyors are to observe, substantiate, document and evaluate. Surveyors play an important role by representing the AIC/OAQ and the profession.

During this session the schedule should be reviewed and revised if necessary. The Accreditation Coordinator should be asked to give an overview of the program and clarify any questions the surveyors may have. Documents to be available for review should be requested and might include items such as the following:

- signed written agreements

- orientation schedules
- class timetables
- study modules, etc.
- term papers, projects, special activities

At this meeting, the surveyors may wish to have the Accreditation Coordinator make suggestions for topics to be discussed with others, especially the administrative officials.

Interviews with Administrative Officials

The primary purpose of the meetings with administrative officials is to gain information concerning support for the educational program. Administrative officials would include the President, Vice President and the Associate Vice President. Some of the topics to be discussed might include financial support, possible growth of the program, the institution's educational philosophy, and the program's strengths and limitations. On occasion, administrators may have questions or concerns related to the profession of agrology; therefore, site surveyors should be knowledgeable about trends in agrology education and practice.

Meetings with the Faculty and Staff

The Accreditation Coordinator and the site surveyors should consider the size of the faculty as well as logical groupings so that meetings with as many of the faculty as possible can be arranged. In these interviews, discussions should delve into issues such as the following:

1. evidence of interaction between faculty, staff and students, as well as with other professionals (conferences, etc.)
2. content and depth of the subject matter being taught
3. involvement of faculty and staff in policy formation and program development
4. teaching methods
5. skill development

Meetings with the Students

Interviews with students provide the opportunity to gain an impression of the students' evaluation of the program. Surveyors should tactfully probe into the degree of interaction the students have with the faculty. The evaluation process should be discussed from the student's point of view. Self-study documents should be available to students on the university web site with password access. Surveyors should attempt to determine if the students believe the program description is accurate. Students should be asked to discuss any changes in the program that they would like to suggest, and to comment on what they believe are the strengths and advantages of the program. These discussions will be guided, to a large extent, by the experience levels of the students or their current status in the program

sequence. Problems that are of concern to the entire group of students may be presented in the site visit report. *Individual anonymity is to be assured.*

Meetings with Alumni

These meetings provide an opportunity to gain insight into the satisfaction of the graduates with their program of studies. It also provides the opportunity to determine the level of interaction of the graduates with the faculty and input into curriculum development at the university.

Meetings with the Provincial Institute of Agrologists or OAQ and with Employers

The meetings should be arranged by the Accreditation Coordinator. The meetings will provide the opportunity to seek the views of practising professionals and local industry. Self-study documents should be available to employers on the university web site with password access. Discussions should delve into issues related to; the level of satisfaction with the graduates, the interaction with the faculty and input into curriculum development at the university.

6.5 Writing the Site Visit Report

All team members are responsible for writing the report. Generally, responsibility for the initial draft of various sections is divided among the team members, then the Senior Surveyor edits and prepares the final report. The report is submitted to the Director of Accreditation for distribution to the Accreditation Committee. The report should be postmarked within 14 calendar days of the visit.

The report outline should be drafted during the site visit, prior to the exit interview. Completion of some preliminary work on the report before the site visit is helpful, based on the program self-study report. This procedure facilitates completion of the initial draft on-site at the institution.

Following an introductory section which includes background information on the program, the report should be organized according to the major sections of the Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate Programs in Agrology.

The report should be prepared in a narrative form, using the Accreditation Standards as the basis for preparing comments on the program. Comments should be objective and as specific as possible without identifying individuals. The discussion should document the degree of compliance with the Accreditation Standards and should elaborate on qualitative aspects of the program. Examples should be included, as appropriate, to illustrate compliance with the Standards.

The summary section should present a synopsis of the report. Suggestions not included in other sections of the report may be presented in this section as well as a review of major strengths and areas for continued development. These suggestions may be designed to assist a program to improve educational quality, even though they may not be indicative of non-

compliance with a Standard. Care and direction must be used, however, to be certain any suggestions are objective, appropriate to the situation, and do not represent personal biases. If surveyors request that the program submit additional material this should be indicated in the report.

A copy of the site visit schedule is to be sent with the site visit report to the Director of Accreditation.

6.6 The Exit Interview

The exit interview should be conducted with the Accreditation Coordinator and other administrators. The purpose of the meeting is to present an objective oral report and allow the program representatives the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the report.

Initially, the Senior Surveyor should explain the purpose of the site visit, the steps in the accreditation process that follow the visit, and the purpose of the exit interview. It must be emphasized that the final decision on program accreditation is made by the Accreditation Committee. Also, the Senior Surveyor should clarify that the site visit report is only one source of information for this decision, and that the final decision is based on the program's self-study report, the accreditation report, and any additional information provided by the Accreditation Coordinator. The site visit report should follow the organization previously described. Responsibility for presenting the oral report generally is shared by all members of the site visit team.

Comments and questions from those attending the interviews should be encouraged. Also, the session should be viewed as a final data-gathering meeting from which any additions or changes will be incorporated in the final written report.

6.7 Processing the Accreditation Report

The Senior Surveyor assumes responsibility for having the final report typed and for sending the signed report to the Director of Accreditation no later than 21 calendar days after the site visit. A copy of the revised time schedule should accompany the report.

The Director of Accreditation reviews the report and sends copies of the site visit report to the Accreditation Committee.

The Director of Accreditation should forward a copy of the site visit report to the Accreditation Coordinator indicating that comments or questions concerning the report should be forwarded within a specified timeframe.

The Accreditation Committee will review the site visit report, any program responses to it, and their own analysis of the self-study in making a final decision. The surveyors may be contacted by the Accreditation Committee for further interpretations and clarifications.

Surveyors should keep the program self-study and any other related materials on file until the accreditation decision is final. This information is confidential, and should be so treated.

The Director of Accreditation will inform the faculty of the accreditation standing of their programs and forward a copy of the accreditation report within 4 months of the site visit. The results of the accreditation are made public and the full report is sent to the dean of the institution who may distribute the report as they wish. The background information gathered and comments of site review members will remain confidential and held by the AIC/OAQ Joint Accreditation Program. The Director will also inform the President of AIC, OAQ and the Provincial Institutes of Agrologists of the decision.

Sample Text of Letter Regarding Maintenance of Accreditation

The University of has been granted Full or Provisional Accreditation for one or more of its agriculture programs by the joint AIC/OAQ Accreditation Committee. To ensure that the programs continue to reflect the Site Review Report findings, we ask that you provide the AIC/OAQ Accreditation Program with a status report on the accredited programs at your institution by the end of *Month Year*. A status report should include the following information.

A clear description of any significant changes by program. Major changes would include

1. A significant change in the program's mission or objectives;
2. A change in the philosophical underpinning of the curriculum;
3. Any change in the legal status, sponsorship, or control of the institution that offers the program;
4. A merger or affiliation with another institution;
5. A significant change in quantity of education offered in the program, including the addition of course or programs that represent a significant departure in terms of content or method of delivery from those offered at the time of the AIC/OAQ Accreditation Program's most recent evaluation of the program;
6. Greater than one-third of the learning outcomes/intents are changed;
7. A change in the credential awarded for completion of the program;
8. A change in the way educational quantity of the program is measured, such as from clock hours to credit hours;
9. The initiation of a branch campus, centre or teaching clinic where students are permanently assigned, or another instructional site in an area or region not previously served, where students may fulfil any portion of their degree requirements.

If there are no significant changes, please indicate no changes.

* An explanation of any impact these will have on accreditation status.

What constitutes a significant change is a matter of judgment and is difficult to define. Significant changes would include any major changes in course requirements or resource availability. It should also be noted that an accumulation of minor changes may at some point become a major change and should also be reported.

Sample Table of Contents for Self-Study Report

- A. **Letter of Application**
- B. **Overview of Undergraduate Programs**
- C. **Faculty**
 - 1. Number and Type
 - 2. Faculty Qualifications
 - 3. Distribution of Effort
- D. **Students**
 - 1. Academic Standards
 - 2. Counselling and Advising
 - 3. Professional Attitudes
- E. **Resources**
 - 1. University Commitment
 - 2. Academic Resource Sufficiency
 - 3. Physical Facilities
- F. **Standards for Accreditation** (this section is repeated for each degree program)

Fa B.Sc.(Agr.) Program	Fc B.Sc.(Env.) Program
Fb B.Comm. Program	*Fd B.Sc.Program

*sections 4 to 9 are repeated for each of the 4 majors in the B.Sc. degree
 Animal Biology (AB); Environmental Biology (EB); Food Science (FS);
 Plant Biology (PB)

- 1. **The Program**
- 2. **Program Philosophy** - Explicit Statement
- 3. **Program Objectives**
 - 1. Reflect Program Philosophy
 - 2. Planning and Evaluation
 - 3. Professional Practice
- 4. **Program Organization**
 - 1. Administrative Structure
 - 2. Professional Nature
 - 3. Responsibility
 - 4. Planning and Evaluation
 - 5. Progress of Graduates
 - 6. Employer Input

5. **Accreditation Coordinator**
 1. Designated Coordinator
 2. Academic Leadership
 3. Communication to AIC/OAQ

6. **Curriculum**
 1. Requirements for Provincial Institute of Agrologists
 2. Consistent with Objectives
 3. Sequential Development, Basic Knowledge & Specialization
 4. Professional Ethics/Attitudes
 5. Communications Skills
 6. Computer Skills
 7. Critical Analysis/Problem Solving
 8. Team Work/Group Skills
 9. Unique Features

7. **Graduates** - Work Place Performance

8. **External Advice**

G. **Number of Students**

1. Total Undergraduate Enrolment
2. Graduating Undergraduates
3. Graduate Enrolment

H. **Program and Curriculum**

1. Basic Science/Fundamental Courses
2. Composite Course Listing - OAS

Appendices:

I Course Profiles

II Faculty CVs

III Program Planning Guide

Sample of AIC/OAQ Accreditation Site Visit Itinerary

Wednesday December 4th

2000 h Meeting with Associate Dean (Academic) and Accreditation Coordinator

Thursday December 5th

0800 Meeting with Associate Dean (Academic)

0830 Meeting with members of the Ag program committee and the Ag Business Management Chair

0830 0845 Introduction to the programs and their administration

0845 0915 Agricultural and Resource Economics

0915 0945 Animal Science

0945 1000 Break

1000 1030 Crop and Horticultural Science

1030 1100 Range and Pasture Management

1100 1130 Sustainable Agricultural Systems

1130 1200 Agricultural Business Management

1200 1215 Pre-Veterinary Medicine and Wrap up

1215 h Lunch

1300 h Meet with Dean

1400 h Meet with Chair, Department of Agricultural; Food and Nutritional Science; Immediate Past Chair of Rural Economy; and Chair of Renewable Resources

1515 Break

1530 h Tour of on-campus Faculty facilities re undergraduate teaching

Friday December 6th

0800 h Individual meetings with alumni and academic staff

0830 h Meeting with Employers

0945 h Break

1000 h Meeting with Provincial Institute of Agrologists (President, President-Elect, Registrar and Executive Director)

1130 h Meeting with Student Services Office Staff and Associate Dean (Academic)

1200 Lunch

1300 Meeting with Associate Vice-President (Academic)

1330 Meeting with students

1500 h Individual meetings with alumni and academic staff

1600 Exit interview with Dean, Associate Dean (Academic) and Accreditation Coordinator