

# Assessor Governance Framework

## College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)

### Introduction

Assessors play a key role in many program areas of the CPSO in order to meet its statutory requirements and obligations. In order to standardize some of the programs' assessment approaches, modules have been developed and regularly revised in order to provide a consistent and effective framework for assessment.

This document was developed to reflect the CPSO's commitment to consistent expectations for recruitment, performance and evaluation of members who do assessment work for the CPSO. This document provides guidance to assessors in their various assessor roles. It also supports the Values Statement for assessors, which states that:

*The College recognizes the value of the assessor as integral to maintaining the quality of medical practice in Ontario and to assisting in the College's fulfillment of its legislative requirements. The College recognizes the value of providing assessors support in a framework that offers training, resources and opportunities for networking in order to facilitate assessors' continued proficiency in their assessments and in order to reinforce assessors' ongoing commitment to medical regulation. The College recognizes assessor participation in College assessments as consistent with the stated [Values of the Profession](#) and the [Canadian Medical Association's Code of Ethics](#).*

The Assessor Governance Framework document addresses the following:

- A. Recruitment Criteria
- B. Orientation
- C. Ongoing Training & Engagement
- D. Evaluation
- E. Conduct/Behaviour
- F. Conflict of Interest/Apprehension of Bias
- G. Resources
- H. Delisting and Retirement/Resignation

Each of these areas is defined below reflecting the CPSO's expectations and its commitments to assessors in their various assessor roles.

## **A. Recruitment Criteria**

Recruitment includes a consistent approach and screening process for potential assessors. The assessor recruitment criteria articulate the requirements needed to become an effective assessor. Assessors need to be knowledgeable of and understand the legal and regulatory framework, mandate, procedures, and practices relevant to their respective roles. There needs to be an overall understanding of the similarities and differences in CPSO assessment activities provided for in legislation and regulation.

Assessors are individuals who review or provide an opinion on a physician's practice to ensure that s/he is practising at an acceptable standard or has met a standard of care. Having assessors in each medical discipline ensures that physicians are reviewed by peers who understand the normal limitations of the practice that they are assessing and the difference between ideal and reasonable care.

### **Requirements, Qualifications and Expectations**

Requirements may differ for the various programs for which assessors can become involved with respect to qualifications and time commitment. Specific criteria have been embedded into the application process to ensure a member is aware of the minimum requirements.

Potential assessors for any program area will normally have undergone a peer assessment and received a satisfactory outcome prior to being accepted as an assessor. In addition, assessors will:

- Have an understanding of and commitment to medical regulation
- Be in active clinical practice with a minimum of five consecutive years practising in the scope of practice in which they would be an assessor
- Not currently be the subject of any complaint, disciplinary or incapacity proceeding
- Have a strong sense of professional responsibility demonstrated by a commitment to life-long learning
- Be experienced in providing constructive feedback
- Be skilled in rapport-building with excellent verbal, written and listening skills
- Promote and uphold a high standard evidence-based practice
- Be an active participant in continuing professional development

### **Time Commitment**

The time commitment will vary depending on the assessment type, and will include preparation, report writing and travel time.

## Program Areas and Assessment Activities

A clear description of the various roles for which assessors are required includes:

CPSO Program Area	Descriptor of Assessment Activities
Quality Assurance (including Change of Scope)	<a href="#">Peer assessment</a> is a cornerstone of medical regulation, and peer assessments have been in existence since the early 1980s. The purpose of the program is two-fold: to ensure physicians are practising at an acceptable standard and to promote continuous quality improvement by providing physicians with feedback to validate appropriate care and show opportunities for practice improvement.
Methadone	All physicians who have been granted an exemption by Health Canada to prescribe methadone for the treatment of opioid addiction must undergo periodic assessment to ensure they are practising in compliance with the <a href="#">Methadone Maintenance Treatment Guidelines</a> .
Independent Health Facilities	The CPSO conducts quality assessments in all Independent Health Facilities (IHF). The assessment is based on the Clinical Practice Parameters and Facility Standards, as well as generally accepted medical standards. An assessment team is comprised of a specialty-specific peer physician and a technologist or nurse, depending on whether the facility is diagnostic and/or surgical.
Out-of-Hospital Premises	The CPSO inspects out-of-hospital premises (OHPs) where procedures are performed using certain types of anesthesia. The inspection is based on the <a href="#">Out-of-Hospital Premises Standards</a> , as well as generally accepted clinical standards for all health care providers working in the OHP. These inspection assessments are conducted by a team of assessors comprised of a proceduralist, nurse and/or anesthesiologist.
Registration (including Re-entry to Practice)	There are several <a href="#">pathways to registration</a> for physicians who do not have the standard qualifications to become registered in Ontario. Some of the pathways to registration may require an assessment which will be included in the decision making of the Registration Committee. Of these pathways, the assessment is required after a year of supervised practice.
Investigations and Resolutions	The Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee (ICRC) receives complaints or reports about physicians. The Committee requires the experience and training of physicians to conduct various types of investigations. A physician in the role of an inspector or independent opinion provider may be asked to

CPSO Program Area	Descriptor of Assessment Activities
	review complaints about a single patient, or be involved in a more comprehensive review of care. This comprehensive review of care usually includes a review of multiple records, along with an interview with the physician, and at times other health care providers. Observation of practice may also be a component of this type of investigation. Physicians may also be needed to provide an assessment of another physician’s health status as it relates to his/her capacity or competency to practice medicine.
Compliance Monitoring	Compliance monitoring is conducted to support various program areas with their assessment activities. Physician involvement includes a number of different assessment activities, including reviews of specific areas of a physician’s practice after s/he has completed a required educational remediation plan.
Committee Support	In the Quality Management Division, there may be a need for physicians to support a Committee in certain situations. This may include assessor attendance at a Committee meeting in an advisory capacity to assist Committee members or providing written submissions for the Committee’s consideration.

### Application and Recruitment Activities

Applications for assessor recruitment can be completed online.

There are several ways a physician is recruited. These include:

- physicians who have expressed interest in becoming an assessor (generally when responding to a notice in Dialogue or following conversations with colleagues);
- physicians who have recently been assessed and indicated interest in the assessor role as a result; or
- physicians who have been recommended by others to cover a specialty area of interest or practice in a geographical location where more assessors are needed.

CPSO recruitment activities include:

1. Communication strategies via CPSO online and print mediums
2. Future Leaders’ Day (<http://www.cpso.on.ca/CPSO-Members/Member-Engagement/Future-Leaders-Day>)
3. Outreach efforts
4. CPSO website

Assessor recruitment information is available online (<http://www.cpso.on.ca/CPSO-Members/Member-Engagement/Assessor>) with contact names for follow-up. Once someone is

interested in being an assessor, further information will be provided specific to the type of assessment work that the potential assessor is interested in. Prior to becoming an assessor, assessors will be required to agree and/or abide by a number of formal undertakings and agreements.

## **B. Orientation**

Assessor orientation plays an important role in fostering consistency among assessors in conducting assessments and assessment related activities. It is important for assessors to understand their overall role as a CPSO representative and, when doing multiple types of assessments, understand the differences required of them in those roles.

For this reason, assessor orientation (and initial assessor training) will include the following:

1. Assessor orientation that is general to all assessors (overview to the different CPSO assessment areas). This includes:
  - a. Clarification of types of assessments
  - b. Declaration of conflicts of interest, or potential biases
  - c. Confidentiality, privacy and breaches
  - d. Assessor report storage
  - e. Importance of language/attitude
  - f. CPSO policies and other reference resources
  - g. Continuing professional development (CPD) credits for assessment activities (e.g., CFPC, RCPSC and MDPAC)
  - h. Role of legal counsel and assessment activities
  - i. Other relevant training as required
  
2. Specific information and orientation pertaining to the role(s) the assessor is being trained for. This includes:
  - a. Regulatory framework or legislation surrounding the assessment type(s)
  - b. Educational/peer support, quality improvement framework (where applicable)
  - c. Communication considerations
  - d. Outcome statistics
  - e. Time commitment per assessment
  - f. Submitting expense claims (i.e., Statement of Services Rendered forms)
  - g. Specific assessment details (e.g., documents to be reviewed, initial contact conversation, chart selection and review process, follow-up discussion)
  - h. Assessment tools being utilized and importance of content and tone (walk-through of specialty-specific sample reports, with reference to online tools)
  - i. Possible challenges when reviewing manual (paper) patient records and/or electronic medical records (EMRs)

j. Reporting of significant deficiencies and/or care concerns

Training differences exist among the program areas, and assessor training/orientation can take the form of web/teletraining or in-person training, both in an individual or group setting depending on the situation and clinical area(s) of practice. E-learning modules are also available to new assessors (or established assessors for refresher purposes) to enable self-driven training regarding the assessor roles. For assessors interested in conducting peer assessments and methadone assessments, assessors are also provided an opportunity to attend an observation assessment, by shadowing an experienced assessor during an assessment. This allows for more “hands-on” training.

### **C. Ongoing Training & Engagement**

Assessors will be receiving ongoing training pertaining to the assessment activities they are involved in. This training may include, but is not limited to, the:

1. Impact of changes to various assessment processes
2. Changes in practice requiring alterations to assessment protocols
3. Changes driven by legislation and/or outside stakeholders (e.g., CFPC, RCPSC and MDPAC)
4. Changes/amendments to CPSO policies

Ongoing training requirements may include a needs assessment (with change in expectations), participation and/or involvement in ongoing activities at the CPSO, such as engagement in peer redesign and involvement in the established Assessor Network Groups. As well, assessors will be provided with feedback about their performance once they commence work at the CPSO.

Assessors are expected to demonstrate a commitment to:

- medical regulation,
- inter-professional collaboration,
- compliance with CPD requirements, and
- staying up-to-date on CPSO policies and other relevant documents.

### **D. Evaluation**

A variety of tools and activities are used to ensure assessors continue to perform the assessor role satisfactorily. These include:

- Measurement tools (e.g., participation in e-modules)
- Performance indicators (e.g., report writing, participation in peer redesign)
- Continued data capture (e.g., Assessor Feedback Forms, Post-Assessment Questionnaires and electronic capture of assessor information)

- Ongoing feedback
- Recognition (both group and individual assessor recognition)

Where possible, it is a goal for assessors to have a periodic review of their assessment activities, as well as more immediate review where warranted.

## **E. Conduct/Behaviour**

Assessors are expected to exhibit professionalism, and demonstrate commitment to their role as an assessor. This encompasses ensuring maintenance of confidentiality and neutrality.

Assessors will be required to sign and abide by the *CPSO Confidentiality and Representation Undertaking* (made available on the CPSO website) and an *Assessor Statement of Commitment*. Assessors are representatives of the CPSO and, therefore, need to also agree and abide by:

- the *College Code of Conduct*;
- the *CPSO Privacy and Confidentiality: Best Practices* document; and
- the *CPSO Information Breach Protocol*.

As representatives of the CPSO, assessors are expected to perform their role in a professional and respectful manner. The assessor's demeanour during the assessment process directly impacts the assessed physician's perception of the overall assessment process. It is also important that assessors conduct their own practice with integrity, as described in [The Practice Guide: Medical Professionalism and College Policies](#), to ensure they are in a position to evaluate others.

Despite notification in other applicable CPSO areas, all assessors are required to notify assessment program staff if they become a subject of a CPSO complaint or investigation, and/or are arrested or charged with any offence. Processes have been established to deal with such notifications on an individualized basis. In some instances, an assessor may simply be placed "on hold" from conducting assessments, while in other circumstances there may be a need for the assessor to be delisted from the assessor roster. Communication and feedback occur for each situation that arises.

## **F. Conflict of Interest/Apprehension of Bias**

Additionally, assessors who conduct assessments/evaluations on behalf of other organizations are required to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and/or apprehension of bias relative to their CPSO assessor role before accepting those assignments. Please refer to the *College Code of Conduct* for more specific information.

## G. Resources

The CPSO is committed to ensuring that assessors have access to relevant and necessary assessment documents and information in order to satisfactorily fulfill their role. These include:

- Assessor Network membership
- CPSO meetings/conferences, workshops and webinars
- Assessor newsletters
- Assessor e-learning modules
- Assessor resource webpage
- Websites and links (including the RCPSC, CFPC and MDPAC)
- OntarioMD EMR videos
- Assessor driven/created learning opportunities

## H. Delisting and Retirement/Resignation

Processes are in place to address situations where it is determined that an assessor requires performance management, additional training or delisting, or the assessor wishes to retire from the assessor role or resign as a CPSO member.

In instances where an assessor has been identified as demonstrating conduct and/or behaviour unbecoming of an assessor, there is a need to address these promptly and all situations will be considered on an individual basis. A documented record of all important verbal and written communication will be kept for future reference.

## Conclusion

The Assessor Governance Framework demonstrates the CPSO's commitment to supporting assessors in their roles. The document provides guidance to assessors in their various assessor roles.

Should you require further clarification on any aspect of this document, please contact the following individuals by email or at our toll-free number, 1-800-268-7096:

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