

Audit Program Guide

January, 2015

1. Introduction

The College of Applied Biology (the College) Audit Program is an educational, professional development, and accountability assurance process that monitors and promotes excellence in members' practice of applied biology. The program assists the College in meeting its legislated public interest mandate by providing the means for a proactive quality assurance check on members' practice. The audit process examines how members:

- generate and administer their work products;
- adhere to the College's Code of Ethics; and,
- track and document professional development activities.

Section 21 of the *College of Applied Biology Act* authorizes the College to establish an Audit and Practice Review Committee (APRC), and provides the authority to establish the audit process by way of a Rule. Rule 14 and Schedule 6 of the College of Applied Biology Rules outline the parameters for the composition and conduct of the APRC, as well as the audit process. This guide is intended to expand upon the direction provided by the Rules in order to provide auditees, new auditors, and all College members a sense of what to expect when they become involved with the Program.

2. Audit Program Policy

2.1 Criteria for the appointment of Auditors

Prior to their appointment as an auditor, prospective auditors must first be subject to an audit to improve their understanding of the College's standards and audit process, and to demonstrate high competency in the profession. Auditors must have diverse and extensive experience in applied biology, be long-standing members of the College, and must also be mentored by an experienced auditor (*i.e.*, with a minimum of three years of auditing experience) during their first year. Auditors are asked to serve for a minimum of two years. Those with at least two years of auditing experience and an interest in the administration of the Audit and Practice Review Programs may be appointed to the APRC. Additional information pertaining to the qualifications and responsibilities of auditors is provided in Appendix I.

2.2 Audit and Practice Review Committee

The APRC oversees the administration, conduct and continual improvement of the Audit Program. As prescribed in Rule 14.2.1, the Committee consists of at least one individual who is not a member of the College (*i.e.*, lay member) and at least three registered members. Committee members serve for three-year terms and may be reappointed by Council. With the exception of any non-College members, all committee members also necessarily serve as auditors, and are therefore required to meet the auditor criteria outlined in Appendix I.

2.3 Audit program expenses

The College is responsible for all costs associated with administering and undertaking audits, with the auditee bearing responsibility only for their personal audit-associated costs (*e.g.*, long distance phone calls, postage for any additional materials required by auditors, legal advice,

and time taken off from work). The College will take every effort to minimize personal expenses incurred by auditees.

2.4 Members' obligation to comply

Subsequent to being selected for an audit, auditees must demonstrate cooperation by responding promptly (*i.e.*, within five business days unless otherwise directed) to requests for more information, and by maintaining a polite, professional demeanor throughout the engagement with College staff and auditors. Failure to do so is in contravention of the College's Code of Ethics and could result in an audit deemed unsuccessfully completed, resulting in a referral to the Discipline Committee for investigation, or in the member being struck from the register. Section 21.2 of the *College of Applied Biology Act* and Rule 14 of the College Rules outline the legal obligation that members have to comply with the Audit Program requirements, and in doing so, they must satisfy their auditor that they are in compliance with the College requirements evaluated throughout the course of the audit.

2.5 Confidentiality and use of audit findings

Consistent with Section 26(1) of the *College of Applied Biology Act*, information generated during the course of audits will remain confidential. The names of auditees and the results of all audits will also remain confidential. All meetings of the APRC and/or auditors are closed; any resultant meeting minutes will be marked 'confidential', and any audit-related files acquired by auditors or members of the APRC are destroyed upon the completion of an audit.

Only anonymous and aggregated data and information, generated over the course of audits, may be used by the College for educational purposes. Auditees should not use or refer to the successful completion of the Audit Program as an indication of College certification of practice or endorsement. By extension, auditees' audit findings reports and the official letters outlining audit results should not be used by members, their employers, or clients, for promotional or other purposes.

3. The Audit Process

3.1 Process summary

The annual Audit Program begins in November of each year with the random selection of auditees, and concludes when all auditees have received their official letters indicating the outcomes of their audits. A flow chart outlining the audit process is included in Appendix II, and an annual audit schedule in Appendix III.

A typical audit consists of the submission of completed forms by the auditee, a preliminary review to ensure completeness by the Executive Director or designated College staff, followed by a review by the assigned auditor, who may require clarification and/or additional information from the auditee to verify their compliance with College requirements. The auditor will subsequently make a recommendation on the outcome of the audit for the consideration of the APRC. Following the successful completion of an audit, a member's name is removed from the random draw list for a period of five years. There are a number of possible outcomes for audits that are deemed to be unsuccessfully completed, which is defined as a failure to demonstrate compliance with the practice standards set out in the *College of Applied Biology Act*, Rules, and policies.

Following the receipt of letters outlining the results of audits, auditees will be contacted by a member of the College staff to solicit feedback regarding their experience during the audit process, to assist with program planning and continuous improvement.

3.2 Initiation of audits and submission of auditee information

3.2.1 Selection of auditees

When the Audit Program is initiated each fall, the Chair of the APRC will inform the Registrar of the number of audits that will be undertaken in the subsequent calendar year, based on the availability of auditors. The Registrar will choose at random from the registered membership categories a corresponding number of names, plus one additional name in the event that an auditee has a valid reason to decline participation in the program in that particular year (see below).

Registered members of the College may also volunteer to be audited. Such requests will be considered by the APRC during the course of their planning for the annual audit program.

Following the selection of auditees, the Committee Chair and the Executive Director or designate will match auditors with auditees, according to the availability of auditors. The Executive Director or designate will notify auditors of the matches, who must immediately declare any real or perceived conflicts with their auditees (*i.e.*, within 5 business days of being notified).

3.2.2 Notification of audit

In December, auditees will be notified in an email from the Executive Director or designate of their forthcoming audit in the next calendar year. The audit notification emails will include the following:

- links to Rules 14 and 16, and Schedules 4 and 6;
- a reminder of the purposes of the Audit Program and the consequences of non-compliance;
- a copy of this Audit Program Guide;
- the name of a proposed auditor, with whom the auditee must declare any actual or perceived conflicts of interest within 5 business days; and,
- the audit form and continuing professional development (CPD) tracking spreadsheets.

Auditees will be required to submit completed forms to the Executive Director or designate within 20 business days of being notified of the audit.

3.2.3 Requests for extensions on audit form submissions

If the deadline for the submission of completed audit forms cannot be met, the auditee must notify the Executive Director or designate as soon as is practical, providing reasons and stating the requested extension period. For cases in which the reasons are acceptable to the Chair of the APRC, the schedule may be amended.

3.2.4 Audit deferral due to inability of auditees to participate

In rare circumstances, the personal circumstances of an auditee may warrant the deferral of an audit to a subsequent year. Auditees must notify the Executive Director or designate of the

reason(s) they may not be able to participate in an audit when the process is expected to take place. The Executive Director or designate will inform the Chair of the APRC, who will grant approval to defer the audit and specify the year in which it is to occur, if the reason(s) are considered acceptable.

3.3 Preliminary audit review by College staff

Upon receipt of the completed forms from the auditee, the Executive Director or designate will undertake a preliminary review of the forms to ensure that all sections and responses are complete, and to ensure that the submitted forms capture an appropriate level of detail to enable the auditor to undertake his/her comprehensive review. If the Executive Director or designate is of the opinion that the audit form submissions are incomplete or reflect inadequate detail, he/she will contact the auditee to recommend improvements to the forms. The Executive Director or designate will record their contact(s) with the auditee on the 'Summary of Audit Contacts' form in the Audit Findings Report.

When he/she is satisfied that the content of the submitted forms is adequate to proceed with the audit, they will be forwarded to the appropriate auditor, along with the auditee's contact information, and the Audit Findings Report containing a record of any substantive correspondence or changes to the audit forms made as a result of previous correspondence with the auditee.

3.4 Auditor's review

The auditor assigned to a given file will review the auditee's completed audit and CPD tracking forms as well as any supplementary materials supplied by the auditee (e.g., resume, job description, etc.) to consider the extent to which the member has demonstrated compliance with the standards and guidelines published in the *College of Applied Biology Act*, the College of Applied Biology Rules, the Code of Ethics, the Practice Guidelines for Members, and other College publications. After completing an initial review, the auditor may contact the auditee to seek additional information, to clarify details, or to substantiate or request further evidence of the CPD points claimed by the auditee. A period of 5 business days will be considered a reasonable response time for requests for more information or clarification. It is at the discretion of the auditor to determine if more or less time is appropriate, based on the complexity of the request.

Auditors are expected to complete their reviews within a timeframe of one month. When the auditor is satisfied that the auditee has met the audit requirements, or if the auditor has made reasonable efforts to gather additional information but has been unable to verify that the auditee meets the requirements, they will summarize their findings and recommendation in an Audit Findings Report.

3.5 Determination of the outcome of audits

At an annual meeting of the APRC, auditors will present their recommendations to the APRC concerning the outcome of each audit. The APRC will consider the recommendation of the auditor(s) and make a determination by choosing one of five possible outcomes (see below).

The APRC may request additional information from auditees for consideration prior to reaching a decision regarding the audit outcome. Any auditor's recommendations not considered at the annual meeting due to unforeseen delays will be reviewed during meetings scheduled later in the year, as required.

3.5.1 Successful completion

If the auditor is of the opinion that the auditee has met the Audit Program requirements, he/she will recommend a successful audit completion, and the auditee will not be required to take any further action (Rule 14.14.1).

3.5.2 Referral for a practice review

If the auditee fails to demonstrate their compliance with the College requirements within the scope and timeframe of the audit, or if practice-related concerns become apparent through the audit process, the auditee may be required to undergo a practice review (see Rule 14.14.4).

3.5.3 Remedial action required

If the audit process reveals an isolated practice-related issue that is easily addressed, the auditee may be required to take remedial action (Rule 14.14.3). In such circumstances, the auditee must satisfy the APRC that the mandatory remedial action has been implemented by reporting to the College according to a timeframe stipulated in the official audit results letter. A failure to comply with the mandatory remedial actions will result in a referral to the Discipline Committee.

3.5.4 Removal from the College register for non-compliance

The APRC may request that Council direct the Registrar to strike a member from the College register if it is determined that they are not in compliance with the Audit Program due to a failure to provide completed audit forms within 30 business days of being notified of an audit, or to respond to requests for additional information within a reasonable timeframe, defined as 5 business days, unless otherwise indicated by the auditor (see Rule 14.14.5).

3.5.5 Breach of practice

If the audit process reveals egregious breaches of professional misconduct in contravention of the College's Rules and policies, the auditee's file will be forwarded to the Discipline Committee to initiate an investigation of the member's conduct (see Rule 14.14.6).

3.6 Notification and archiving of audit outcomes

Following decisions of the APRC concerning the outcome of each audit, the Executive Director or designate will inform the Registrar of the audit results and place the completed Audit Findings Report, as well as a copy of a confidential letter outlining the audit results in the auditee's membership file. Copies of the relevant sections of the Audit Findings Report and the original letter explaining the outcome of the audit will be sent to the auditee by registered mail to ensure secure receipt.

Duties

Generally, to conduct an audit of a member's practice by way of reviewing:

- elements of the process by which work is produced, reviewed, documented, signed off on, and stored;
- the member's adherence to the Code of Ethics; and,
- the member's continuing professional development activities relative to the member's self-ascribed field of practice within applied biology.

Specifically, an auditor applies Rule 14 on behalf of the College and conducts a cursory review of a member's practice encompassing:

- scope of practice;
- administrative practice elements;
- quality assurance processes;
- records management;
- the means by which competence is maintained; and,
- use of the seal.

The auditors' review of members' practice must reflect the intent of the Audit Program, which is to make it an objective and instructional experience that promotes the continuing professional development of the member, while meeting the College mandate of protecting the public interest in the practice of applied biology.

Required Criteria

- Be a member in good standing of the College;
- Possess a minimum of 10 years of diverse experience in the practice of applied biology;
- Have been a registered member of the College for 7 years;
- Have 5 years of experience in project management in applied biology;
- Be available for 3 hours/month on average;
- Be current in the practice of the profession (*i.e.*, not more than 5 years removed from active practice);
- Be objective, fair-minded and unbiased;
- Submit to an audit undertaken by members of the Audit and Practice Review Committee; and,
- Be willing to serve for a two-year term.

Required Interpersonal Qualities

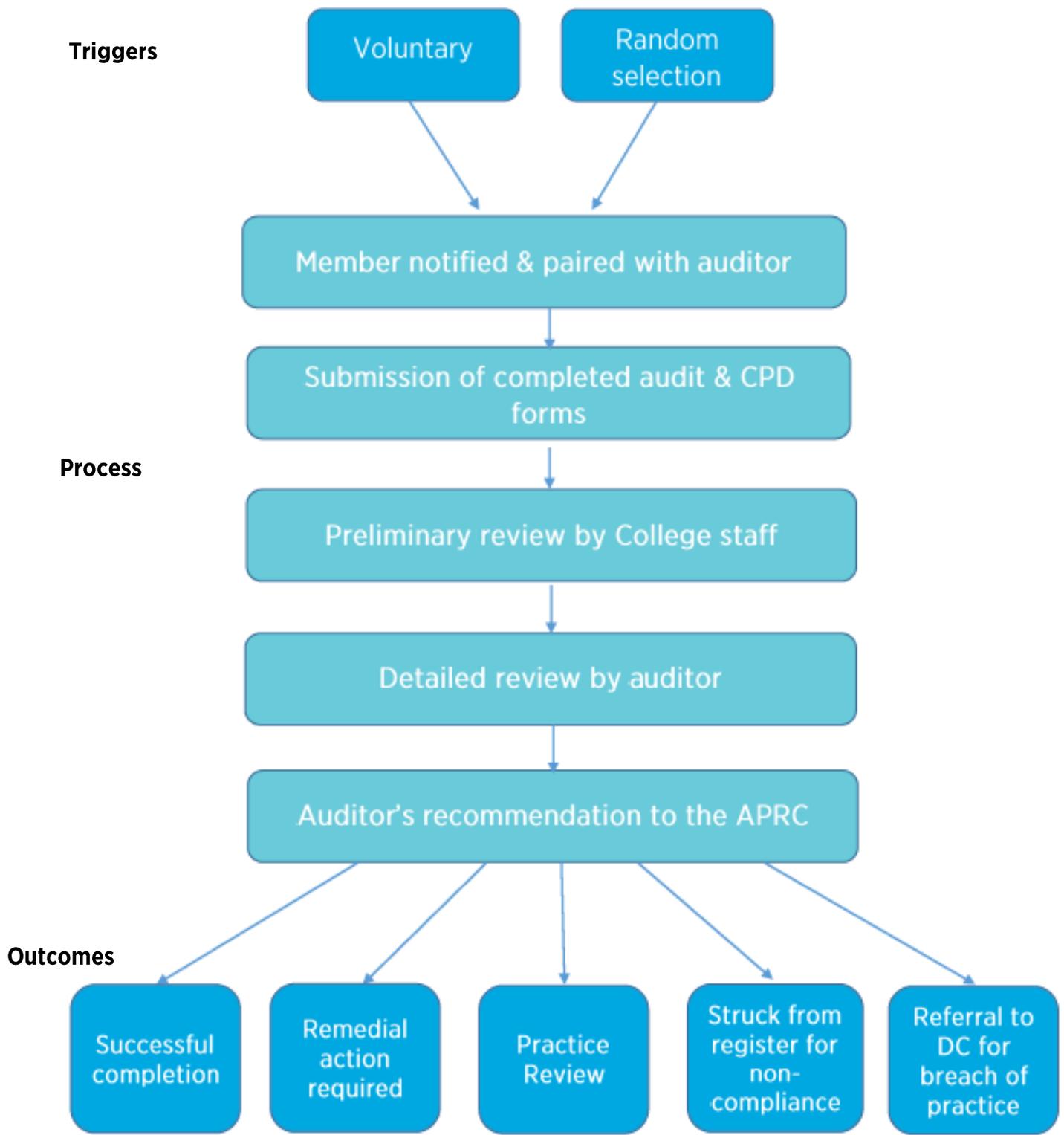
- Demonstrate a marked interest in the profession of applied biology;
- Be self-confident;
- Possess a keen sense of human relations, resourcefulness, and demonstrate ease of expression, both verbal and written;
- Be an effective communicator.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY – THERE IS NO REMUNERATION FOR AUDITORS.

Selection Process

Registered members who are interested in becoming auditors should contact the College's Assistant Registrar (assistantregistrar@cab-bc.org) with a statement of interest and a current resumé/*curriculum vitae*. This information will be forwarded to the Chair of the APRC, and applicants will subsequently be screened by the APRC against the above criteria.

Appendix II: Audit Process Flowchart



Appendix III: Annual Audit Program Schedule

Timeframe	Activities
Mid-November	APRC Chair selects no. of audits for the subsequent year (x) & Registrar randomly selects Auditees (x + 1 to account for deferrals, leaves, etc.)
Early December	Auditors notified of matches & asked to identify conflicts of interest (real or perceived)
December	Audit notification, forms, Audit Guide, & Auditor match sent to auditee
January	Deadline for submission of completed audit forms to the designated College staff member
January-early February	Designated College staff member conducts preliminary review of forms and makes recommendations to auditees to improve forms prior to submission to auditor
Early-mid February	Completed/revise audit files submitted to auditors with a record of contact between auditee & staff coordinator, and auditee's contact information
Mid-March	Deadline for completion of audit reviews and submission of recommendations to the APRC
April - May	APRC meeting held to consider auditor recommendations for each audit
Late spring	Audit results letters sent to auditees by registered mail and placed in member folders at the College
June - September	Compilation and secure archiving of all audit files; Optional meeting of the APRC & auditors to review any remaining auditor recommendations evaluate the annual data to inform recommendations/tips for members
November/December	Publish recommendations/tips for members to improve practice & audit outcomes (in the <i>College Matters</i> newsletter and the College website)
February	Provide a report to College members on the previous year's audit program



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