

The Qualified Persons Initiative

The Qualified Person, the College, and you

THE BC GOVERNMENT'S Qualified Persons' (QP) Cross-Ministry Working Group recently completed a multi-year project investigating the roles, expectations, needs, and use of QPs across the natural resources sector. This article summarizes the QP Initiative and how it relates to the role of the College and your professional practice.

What is a Qualified Person?

The Working Group defined a QP as “one who possesses the specific knowledge, skills, training, and experience needed to perform a specific type of work as: set out in legislation, set by government policy, or required by an organization satisfactory to government that has the responsibility for specifying the requirements”.

Attainment of the requirements to be a QP is either verified through a process undertaken by government, a professional association, or other organization satisfactory to government.

Three essential components of a QP framework include guidance, competency and accountability. Guidance includes the application standards, best management practices, land-use designations, etc. Competency is measured to determine the appropriate level of education, training, and experience. Accountability is measured to indicate acceptable performance to interested parties such as the resource user, client, public, government, the public, and professional regulatory organizations.

Models for the application of QPs range from simple to complex. At the simple end of the spectrum, QPs must ensure basic competency through an examination and be able to follow manuals and guidance documents. At the complex end of the spectrum, QPs must follow specific standards of practice, meet competency requirements through continual professional development, and ensure accountability through the application of a code of ethics and audits of professional practice.

What is the role of the College?

The College meets and exceeds the criteria described by the QP Working Group through a number of measures. The College is legislated under the *College of Applied Biology Act* and meets the definition of a self-regulated professional body as defined by the QP Working Group.

Our entrance requirements ensure that members entering the profession meet the acceptable requirements of education and training necessary to perform applied biological work. Moreover, the College's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program ensures that members maintain their competency through updating their education and training, and undertaking appropriate steps to expand areas of practice.

The Audit and Practice Review Committee ensures regular accountability of members. Members must demonstrate that they are meeting their CPD requirements, working within their defined scope of expertise, and that they are current with changes in the College's standards and other pertinent legislation.

Lastly, the College has been increasing the number of guidance documents related to professional practice to assist members in meeting and maintaining their obligations under the *Code of Ethics*. Examples include the recent *Practice Guidance for Members* and the *Principles of Stewardship* documents released by the College.

How do your professional obligations compare to the expectations of a QP? Your role as a member of the College is to ensure that you meet or exceed the requirements of membership within the College. The College has established standards for professional accountability, continuing education, and practice that meet all the requirements of the most complex model of QP practice.

Follow these steps to ensure you meet the requirements of a QP as defined by the Working Group and the College standards:

- > Complete annual CPD requirements and maintain detailed records. These records are required should you be selected for an audit.
- > Work within the scope of expertise you have self-declared as a professional. If you need to broaden your scope, ensure you take the required training, and
- > *Review guidance documents that are posted on the College website.* These articles are put together to ensure that members have easy access to information to assist with decision-making.

For further information on the Qualified Person Working Group visit: www.gov.bc.ca and search for 'Qualified Persons in the NRS'. 