Ontario College of
Social Workers and
Social Service Workers

Parallel Registration Processing Plan

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Ontario Regulation 479/24: General made under the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006 (FARPACTA) requires professions regulated under FARPACTA to develop a parallel registration processing plan for submission to, and approval by, the Ontario Fairness Commissioner (OFC).

The Parallel Registration Processing Plan (Plan) was developed by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (College).

PURPOSE

The Plan sets out a clear and structured framework that enables applicants to complete steps in the registration process concurrently, where feasible, including how and when applicants will be able to do so and information about the circumstances that will allow applicants to pursue different parts of their registration processes sequentially or concurrently. The Plan is designed to promote transparency and efficiency by enabling applicants to understand the full scope of the registration process, the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, including their own, and the specific documents required from each party. This approach supports applicants in managing their applications effectively, anticipating requirements and making informed decisions throughout the registration process.

Purpose of the Plan:

- **Enhance the applicant experience by prioritizing service and supporting informed choice:** The Plan ensures that applicants are informed of their registration options and are empowered to make decisions that best align with their individual circumstances.
- **Improve transparency and communication:** Applicants are provided with clear, accessible information regarding application requirements, anticipated timelines, steps in the College's registration process, parties involved and their roles and responsibilities.
- **Clarify the steps in the registration process and options available to applicants:** The Plan outlines which steps of the registration process may be completed concurrently and which must be completed sequentially, enabling applicants to make informed decisions in planning their registration pathway and pursue the most efficient route.
- **Affirm the College's commitment to continuous improvement and regulatory excellence:** Through the implementation of this Plan, the College seeks to ensure that its registration processes are aligned with current legal requirements, including the requirements set out in FARPACTA, and are responsive to changes in the regulatory sector.

SCOPE

This Plan applies to all applicants seeking registration with the College.

BACKGROUND

Applicants must provide supporting documents to demonstrate that they meet the College's registration requirements outlined in the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998* (Act) and the regulations made under the Act.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE APPLICATION PROCESS

i. Role and responsibilities of the College

The primary mandate of the College is to serve and protect the public from unqualified, incompetent and unfit practitioners.

The College fulfills its public protection mandate by:

- Setting entry-to-practice requirements to ensure that only those with specific educational qualifications are eligible for registration.
- Setting, maintaining and ensuring that all registrants follow the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.
- Maintaining a public register of registered social workers and registered social service workers in Ontario.
- Requiring registrants to engage in ongoing learning through the Continuing Competence Program.
- Maintaining rigorous complaints and discipline processes.

Once an application for registration is submitted, the College is responsible for:

- Acknowledging receipt and notifying applicants if additional information or documentation is required.
- Providing clear and timely information about the registration process.
- Reviewing complete applications and determining if the registration requirements have been met.
- Evaluating equivalency applications to determine substantial equivalence to an accredited degree in social work or an approved diploma in social service work offered by an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology.
- Issuing timely registration decisions.

- Providing applicants with the opportunity to request a review of the registration decision.
- Ensuring applicants are afforded fair and transparent due process.

ii. Role and responsibilities of third parties

Applicants must submit supporting documents and information in a format and manner acceptable to the College. Applicants are responsible for contacting relevant third parties (e.g. academic institutions, regulatory bodies, supervisors) to obtain the required documentation.

a. Roles and responsibilities of academic institutions, other regulatory bodies and supervisors/employers

These parties are responsible for:

- Issuing supporting documents to applicants.
- Providing assistance or information about how applicants can obtain required supporting documents.
- Responding to inquires in a timely manner.
- Forwarding supporting documents to the College in the manner or format required by the College.
- The College does not have formal agreements or arrangements in place with academic institutions or individual parties such as supervisors or employers.

b. Role and responsibilities of third-party credential assessment agencies

The College maintains a Memoranda of Understanding with the following organizations that assess academic qualifications on behalf of the College:

- Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)
- World Education Services Canada (WES Canada)
- International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS Canada)

In addition to the Memorandum of Understanding, the College maintains a Service Agreement with CASW, under which CASW is tasked with evaluating international social work credentials obtained outside Canada and the United States and preparing an evaluation report for the College. The report indicates whether the international social work degree is equivalent to an accredited Canadian Bachelor of Social Work degree (BSW) or Master of Social Work

degree (MSW). The College relies on this evaluation as evidence of an applicant's academic qualifications; therefore, applicants who have undergone this evaluation are not required to submit transcripts directly to the College.

WES Canada and ICAS Canada evaluate all post-secondary international credentials, including credentials not related to social work or social service work. Their role is to authenticate the international credential(s) and to determine their equivalent within the Canadian educational system (e.g. diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc.). The College considers the assessment provided by WES Canada or ICAS Canada and further evaluates the international credentials to determine whether their content, including both theoretical and practicum components, is substantially equivalent to Canadian BSW or MSW degrees, or OCAAT diplomas.

Both WES Canada and ICAS Canada are members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada and, as such, comply with The Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials. These practices are consistent with the principles of fairness outlined in FARPACTA.

iii. Role and responsibilities of applicants

- Applicants are responsible for:
- Familiarizing themselves with the College's application process and/or the application process with the relevant third parties and seeking clarification when needed.
- Providing the College and third parties with the required information to complete the application process.
- Responding promptly to requests for additional information, documentation or clarification from the College or other parties to progress their application.
- Staying informed about the status of their application(s) and adhering to deadlines throughout the registration process.

ENABLING CONCURRENT REGISTRATION PROCESSES

Current registration process

As illustrated in Appendix A, the current process is a linear progression from initial application submission to registration decision. While the College does not mandate applicants to submit their supporting documents or information in a specific order, under this process, applicants must provide a complete application before their file is considered for registration. This requirement ensures that the College gathers all required documents necessary to conduct a review.

While the expectation for a complete application will remain in place with the implementation of the Plan, the application journey will be more clearly articulated. Enhanced communication will help applicants understand the overall registration process as well as each individual step, allowing them to complete their application in a timely and informed manner.

Several steps in the registration process, such as verification of academic qualifications, verification of out-of-province registration, professional conduct history and vulnerable sector check are not interdependent and can be initiated concurrently. By splitting the linear process into multiple parallel streams, as illustrated in Appendix B, applicants can progress through different components of the process simultaneously, resulting in a more efficient and streamlined experience.

Common sources of delay

A delay in the registration process refers to an interruption or extended timeframe to complete a specific step. While not all delays exceed a defined timeframe of 60 days or result from factors beyond applicant's control, cumulative waiting periods with different organizations are perceived by applicants as delays in the registration process.

The common sources of delay include the following:

- **Official transcript does not confirm conferral of academic credential:** This is a very common source of delay for new graduates. Applicants often request the transcript too early in the process, before their degree or diploma has been officially conferred. The College's registration regulation requires applicants to provide evidence that they obtained their academic credential. As a result, new graduates may experience delays when they must request an updated transcript that indicates the conferral of their qualification.
- **Incomplete or missing documentation:** Applications with incomplete or missing documentation require a follow-up or resubmission, resulting in delays for applicants. Even minor omissions on the application may prompt requests for clarification or additional information from staff, resulting in perceived delays in processing times.
- **Delays from third-party organizations:** Delays can result from verifications conducted by external organizations. These delays may be caused by a range of factors, including incomplete submissions from applicants or high volumes of requests during peak periods.
- **The backlog at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC):** To be eligible for registration with the College, applicants must hold a legal authorization to work in Canada. Delays in the issuance of permanent resident status and work or study permits are common due to the high volume of applications managed by IRCC. The processing time often exceeds IRCC's published timelines and are beyond the control of applicants.
- **High volume of applications:** The College experiences a high volume of applications from new graduates during the spring and summer months, with another peak period occurring in the fall. These periods of increased application activity also generate a

significant rise in email and phone inquiries. The need to respond promptly to inquiries diverts staff resources from application reviews, potentially slowing down the overall registration process.

To address the delays noted above, the Plan outlines the options available to applicants for concurrent or sequential progression so that they can make informed decisions about how to move forward, ultimately reducing overall application processing times.

The high volume of applications is not within the College's direct control. However, the College takes a proactive approach to monitor application volumes and internal resources to ensure operational readiness.

In summary, the current registration process can be optimized by allowing concurrent completion of independent steps.

RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED CHANGES

The Plan seeks to inform applicants of their choices through clear and transparent communication so that they can take ownership of their application journey and make informed decisions.

The Plan also introduces greater flexibility within the registration process and ensures that their overall application journey continues to advance despite isolated delays.

Furthermore, the Plan aligns the College's registration process with current policy changes and emerging trends in the regulatory sector. The Plan also supports ongoing compliance with new legal requirements and reinforces the College's commitment to continuous improvement and regulatory best practices.

Intended impact on applicants

By adopting a parallel processing approach, the College aims to enhance the overall applicant experience. Applicants will be better equipped to make informed decisions and select the option that is most appropriate to their individual circumstances. This approach will reduce overall wait times, thereby supporting a more efficient, streamlined and applicant-focused registration process.

CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH APPLICANTS CAN CHOOSE CONCURRENT OR PARALLEL PROCESSING

Applicants can opt for concurrent or parallel processing when registration steps are independent and not contingent on the outcome of another step in the application process. To support informed decision-making, the College will provide applicants with essential information required to help them make an informed choice between concurrent and sequential processing. This will include a comparative guide outlining the registration steps, the risks and benefits of concurrent versus sequential processing, along with other information such as associated costs, number of allowable exam attempts, where applicable, and known areas of delays. This information will be available on the College's website (see page 15 for details) and communicated directly to applicants through targeted communications, such as the email acknowledging receipt of application.

Applicants can choose to complete certain registration steps concurrently in the following circumstances:

- When the same document is required by multiple organizations (e.g., an official transcript is required both for the College application and another regulatory body).
- When applicants are experiencing delays in obtaining specific documents from third parties, they can still proceed with other steps. This approach allows most supporting documents to be submitted and approved by the time the delayed items arrive, enabling the application to move forward efficiently. This situation often applies to internationally trained applicants who may face longer processing times to obtain their documentation from international jurisdictions.

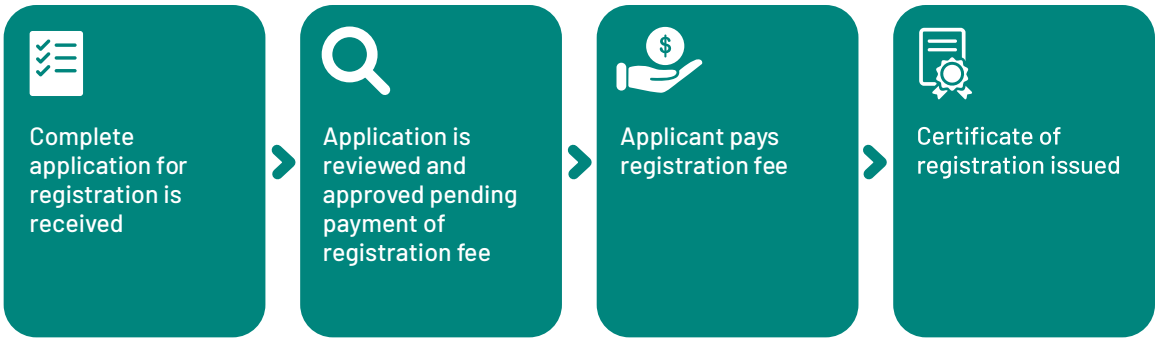
Applicants must complete registration steps sequentially when:

- The outcome of one step determines eligibility for the next. In such cases, each step must be completed in order, with subsequent steps contingent on the successful completion of the previous one. Examples include situations where:
    - Applicants must receive confirmation from the College that their equivalency application meets the academic and experience requirements.
    - Applicants must receive confirmation from the College that their circumstances qualify under the *Acceptable Alternatives to Official Documentation Policy* before submitting alternative documentation.
- Applicants must demonstrate that they are able to practise the professions in a safe manner. While the College may accept an applicant's explanation or disclosure regarding their professional conduct or health, registration will not be granted until a copy of their vulnerable sector check or other relevant documentation is received. Registering applicants before receiving a vulnerable sector check could put vulnerable populations at risk.
- Applicants must receive approval from the College to advance to the registration phase.

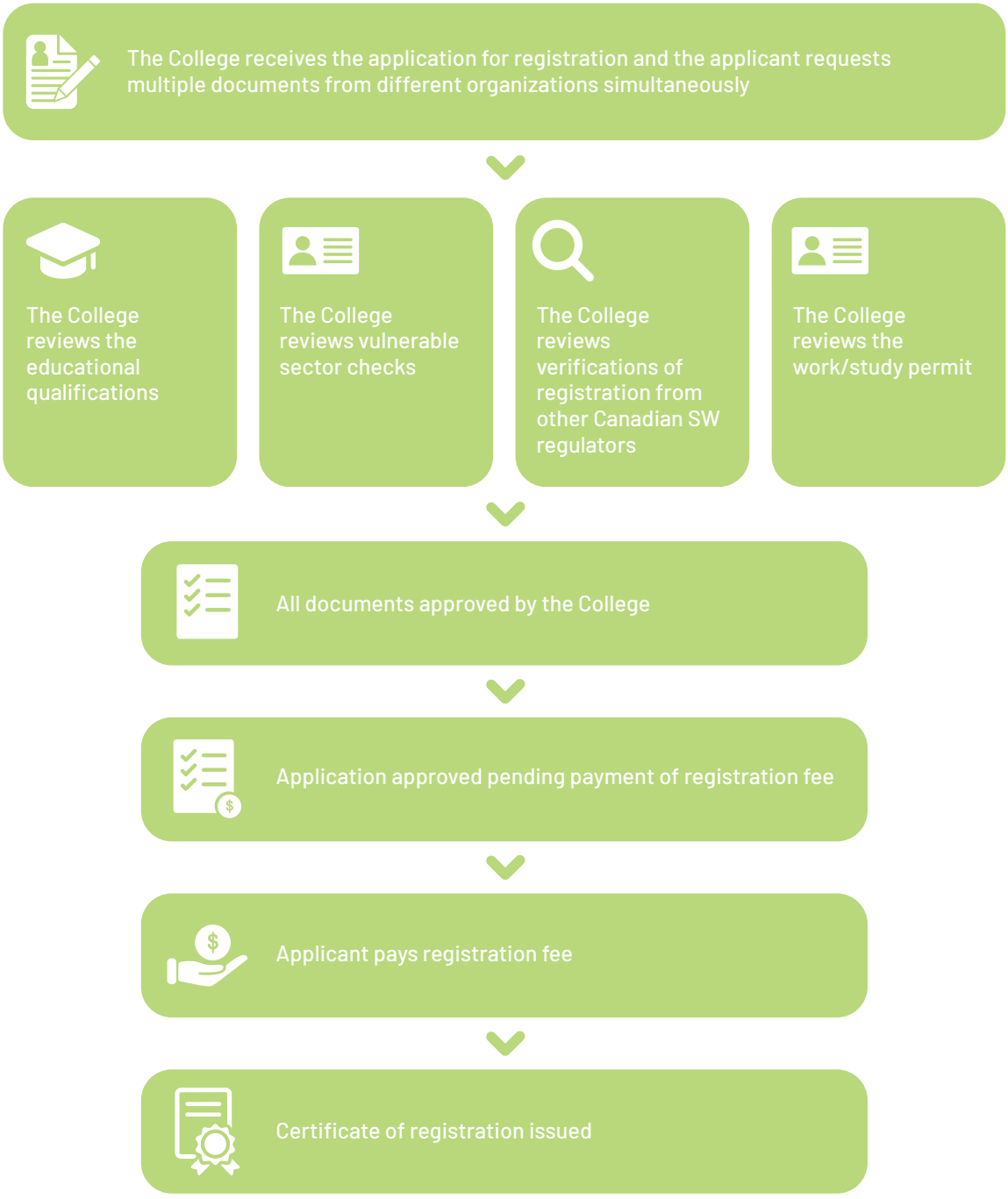
In other situations, applicants may choose to complete registration steps sequentially in the following circumstances:

- Applicants may wish to avoid unnecessary expenses or effort. For instance, in cases involving equivalency applications, progressing from preliminary review to the evaluation phase requires a decision from the College. Waiting for the review outcome before submitting documents to a third party may help applicants save resources, time and effort.
- Applicants may choose to focus on one application at a time, rather than managing multiple simultaneous applications and timelines with different organizations.

APPENDIX A: SUBSEQUENT STEPS IN THE PARALLEL REGISTRATION PROCESS WORKFLOW



APPENDIX B: CONCURRENT STEPS IN THE PARALLEL REGISTRATION PROCESS WORKFLOW



Ontario College of
Social Workers and
Social Service Workers

250 Bloor St. E.
Suite 1000
Toronto, ON
M4W 1E6

Phone: 416-972-9882
Toll Free: 1-877-828-9380
Fax: 416-972-1512
ocswssw.org