

Audit and Practice Review Committee Policy



**Forest
Professionals**
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Responsible for registering and regulating British Columbia's forest professionals. Updated: May 2024.

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1.0 Introduction

This policy describes and establishes requirements and criteria for competence and professional conduct audits and practice reviews of registrants, pursuant to Forest Professionals British Columbia (FPBC) [Bylaw 2 and Bylaw 11](#).

Bylaw 11 specifies the following registrant categories and subcategories ([Bylaw 5](#)) for selection in competence audits and professional conduct audits:

- practising RPF registrants;
- practising RFT registrants;
- associate registrants;
- visiting forest professionals; and
- transferring forest professionals.

In this policy these categories and subcategories of registrants are referred to as 'practicing registrants.'

The purpose of a competence audit is to assess registrants' competence (skills, knowledge, and ability), including registrants' understanding of ethical and professional standards, FPBC Bylaws, guidance, and policies. These audits are typically conducted by a peer reviewer and verify general competence, continuous professional development activities, professional development plans and competence declaration records.

The purpose of a professional conduct audit is to assess registrants' performance in applying ethical and professional standards. These audits are performance based and will be conducted by an assessor appointed by the Audit and Practice Review Committee (APRC) to verify professional conduct in professional services and products completed.

Practice reviews may only be authorized by the APRC after a notification or referral from a peer reviewer, assessor, the Registrar, or [Investigation Committee](#). The purpose of a practice review is to assess and verify a registrants' professional practice performance in applying ethical and professional standards, including demonstrated use of FPBC Bylaws, guidance, and policies within an identified scope of practice related to the scope and context provided in the notification or referral.

2.0 Appointing Assessors and Pre-approved Educational Courses and Actions

Delegation of Authority to Audit and Practice Review Committee (Bylaw 11-2)

The APRC may:

- a. appoint assessors under [section 63](#) (2)(b) of the [Professional Governance Act](#) (PGA) for the purpose of conducting audits and practice reviews; and
- b. exercise the powers and authority of the board under section 63(3), (4) and (5) of the PGA.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-2(a), the criteria for assessors to be considered for appointment by the APRC includes the following:

- practicing RFT and RPF registrants;
- in 'good standing';
- knowledge of FPBC Bylaws and the PGA;
- 10 years experience in one or more professional practice areas is preferable; and
- experience auditing or assessing forest activities conducted by forest professionals (Bylaw 1 defines forest activities) is preferable.

Pre-approved Educational Courses or Other Action (Bylaw 11-3)

The APRC may establish a policy specifying pre-approved educational courses or other action that may be included in an undertaking or consent requested by the Investigation Committee under [section 72](#)(1)(b) or (d) of the PGA.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-3, the following educational courses and other actions are specified and may be included in an undertaking or consent requested by the Investigation Committee:

- FPBC Learning Management System modules 1 to 6
- FPBC Principles of Stewardship e-course
- FPBC Climate Change Fundamentals e-course
- Any learning activity (e.g. webinar, e-courses, examination) provided by FPBC
- Any other educational courses, learning activities or actions determined by the APRC to support the specific undertaking or consent requested by the Investigation Committee.

3.0 Audit Selection, Notification, and Exemption

Selection of Registrants for Audit (Bylaw 11-4)

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-4(2), practicing registrants will be selected for competence and professional conduct audits as follows:

Competence Audit

For each FPBC registration year (i.e. December 1 to November 30), three per cent of all practicing registrants will be randomly selected for a competence audit.

The random selection of practicing registrants for a competence audit occurs in February each year, after registration renewal is completed (i.e. January 31).

Practicing registrants may volunteer for a competence audit during a registrant year by notifying FPBC before June 30 of the year during which the competence audit will be completed. Registrants choosing to voluntarily complete a competence audit must select a peer to complete the audit. FPBC only appoints assessors as peer reviewers for registrants selected for a competence audit.

Professional Conduct Audit

For each FPBC registration year (i.e. December 1 to November 30), one per cent of practicing registrants will be randomly for a professional conduct audit.

For any registration year, the APRC may also determine specific identified practice areas, professional services or geographic areas for the random selection of one percent of practicing registrants for a professional conduct audit, having considered:

- results, trends, issues or concerns identified as a result of FPBC complaints, investigations, discipline, or competence audits; and
- risk of significant harm to the environment or public or other group within specific practice areas, professional services, or geographic areas.

The random selection of practicing registrants for a professional conduct audit occurs in February each year after registration renewal is completed (i.e. January 31).

Audit Notification and Exemption

The Registrar, or FPBC staff authorized by the Registrar, will notify each practicing registrant who is selected for a competence audit or a professional conduct audit by email.

A practicing registrant selected and notified of a competence audit or professional conduct audit may be exempted by the APRC as a result of any of the following circumstances:

- completed a competence or professional conduct audit in any of the previous three registration years, including the voluntary completion of a competence audit;
- illness, injury, or family emergency;
- jury duty; or
- verified leave of absence from employment (e.g. maternity/paternity leave) supported by a declaration of non practice (i.e. did not provide any professional services, work or products for the duration of employment leave), in a form specified by the APRC.

Practicing registrants exempted from a competence or professional conduct audit will be selected for audit the following year. This does not apply to registrants who are exempted for completing an audit during the previous three years.

Practicing registrants that do not complete a competence or professional conduct audit will be selected for audit the following year.

4.0 Competence Audits (Bylaw 11-5)

Practicing registrants selected for a competence audit must comply with the requirements of Bylaw 11-5. This includes selecting another registrant to conduct the competence audit who meets criteria specified in APRC policy.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-5(2) (a), a registrant may only act as a peer reviewer for a competence audit if the registrants is:

- a practicing RPF or RFT registrant;
- in 'good standing' (see Bylaw 1 definition); and
- not in a real or perceived conflict of interest with the practicing registrant selected for audit, as a result of personal, family, business, or other relationship (e.g. direct employee/employer of registrant selected for audit).

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-5(4), a registrant selected for competence audit must provide their peer reviewer with the following information:

- the registrant's job description, job profile or list of key functions and professional services required;
- competence declaration for the current registration year and any other annual competence declarations within the previous three years;
- current continuous professional development records;
- samples of professional services and work products; and

- other information, documents and records requested by the peer reviewer that illustrate professional services and work products related to verifying the registrants' competence.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-5(5), the registrant selected for a competence audit must meet with their peer reviewer in person or by video conference or phone.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-5(6), the registrants meeting with their peer reviewer must include a discussion of the questions in the form appended to this policy.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-5(10), the peer reviewer must deliver to the registrant and to the APRC a report of the registrant's competence audit, including a peer review professional development plan, in the form appended to this policy.

5.0 Professional Conduct Audits

Professional Conduct Audits (Bylaw 11-6)

A registrant who is selected for a professional conduct audit must comply with the requirements of section 11-6. The Registrar must assign an assessor to conduct the registrant's professional conduct audit.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-6(3), a registrant selected for professional conduct audit must provide their assessor with the following information:

- the registrant's job description and a detailed description of work duties, any required competence declarations and professional development records, and samples of professional work product; and
- any further information or documentation requested by the assessor that is related to verifying the registrants' professional conduct.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-6(6), the registrants meeting with their assessor must include a discussion of the questions in the form appended to this policy.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-6(10), the assessor must deliver to the registrant and to the APRC a report of the registrant's professional conduct audit in the form appended to this policy.

6.0 Practice Reviews

Authorization of Practice Reviews (Bylaw 11-7)

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-7(1), the APRC will consider and may authorize a review of the practice of a registrant upon receipt of any of the following notifications or referrals under FPBC Bylaws:

- notification provided by a peer reviewer or assessor under Bylaw 11-5 (Audit and Practice Review)
- notification provided by a assessor under Bylaw 11-6 (Audit and Practice Review)
- referral by the Registrar under Bylaw 10-2 (Continuing Professional Development)
- referral by the Registrar under Bylaw 12-2 (Complaints, Investigation and Discipline)
- referral by the Investigation Committee under Bylaw 12-11 (Complaints, Investigation and Discipline).

For notifications to the APRC by a peer reviewer or assessor, the APRC will consider the risk of significant harm to the environment, public, or other group as a result of the registrants' competence or professional conduct, before authorizing a practice review.

For referrals to the APRC by the Registrar under Bylaw 10 -2 (Continuous Professional Development Non Compliance), the APRC will consider if the Bylaw 10 non-compliance is a result of any of the following circumstances, before authorizing a practice review:

- illness, injury, or family emergency;
- jury duty; or
- verified leave of absence from employment (e.g. maternity/paternity leave) supported by a declaration of non practice (i.e. did not provide any professional services, work or products for the duration of employment leave), in a form specified by the APRC.

Conduct of Practice Review (Bylaw 11-8)

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-8 (2), the assessor appointed to conduct a practice review must ensure the practice review includes all of the following:

- inspecting files, records or other documents in the registrants possession and control relating to the registrant's practice;
- requesting that the registrant provide a competence declaration;
- requesting that the registrant provide written responses to inquiries;
- interviewing the registrant in person or by video conference or by telephone;
- requesting the APRC issue a written notice to the registrant under section 63(5)(a) of the PGA in support of the practice review; and
- Verifying practice results in the field if possible and where practicable.

For the purpose of Bylaw 11-8(6), the assessor must deliver to the registrant and the Audit and Practice Review Committee a report of the findings of the practice review in a form specified by the APRC for the practice review.

7.0 Appendix

- [Competence Audit Form](#)
- Professional Conduct Form.