Accreditation of MLT Educational Programs

Accreditation is a process that ensures educational programs are delivering quality education and producing graduates that meet pre-defined national standards of entry-to-practice competence. The national accreditation process is essential to the certification and licensure of allied health professionals in Canada. The national certifying organizations rely on the accreditation status to provide graduates of accredited programs access to their certifying examinations. The provincial regulatory bodies rely on the accreditation process as a standard to approve the educational programs; therefore, enabling graduates to be issued a practice permit and license to practice in the profession. Accreditation serves to protect the interest of the public by defining standards for educational programs and ensuring compliance with those standards within Canada. The goal of accreditation is to ensure an educational programs complies with established standards set by the respective professions. Accreditation is a valid assessment of academic quality and clinical integration of students in preparation for competent, safe, and effective entry level practice in the regulated profession. As an external review process, accreditation provides the benchmark for continuous quality improvement and excellence in education.

For many decades the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) Conjoint Accreditation Services has provided accreditation services for a number of health science professions in Canada. The CMA oversees the accreditation process of allied health programs under the guidance of Conjoint Accreditation Services which provides the administrative services, and two committees responsible for governance and operation, respectively the Committee on Conjoint Accreditation (CCA) and the Committee on Program Accreditation (COPA). The Assembly of Health Science Professions with representation from the nine professions and their regulators served as an advisory group to the CCA. The CMLTA has been an accreditation sponsor since 2008 and has served on the Assembly of Health Science Professions as well as participated in onsite accreditation inspections at various Alberta educational institutions.

On January 22, 2016 the CMA announced that it will divest itself of responsibility for assessing and accrediting health education programs by February 1, 2018. CMA Accreditation will continue to operate during this time; scheduled accreditation will continue; however, new applications will not be accepted. In order to maintain a standard of quality for the entry-to-practice health science professions in Canada, a replacement to the CMA accreditation services is required.

The Allied Health Program Accreditation Working Group (Working Group) is a not-for-profit working group representing the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists, Canadian Association of Physician Assistants, Canadian Society of Cardiology Technologists, Canadian Society of Clinical Perfusion, Canadian Society of Ophthalmic Medical Personnel, Paramedic Association of Canada, Sonography Canada, The Canadian Orthoptic Society, the Alliance of Medical Radiation Technologists of Canada, and the Canadian Association of Allied Health Programs. This Working Group encompasses 11 allied health disciplines, and collectively 132 active related accredited education programs, including the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), and the University of Alberta. The purpose of this group is to engage a third-party organization to establish and implement a new process for the accreditation of Canadian allied health education programs and to replace the current CMA Conjoint Accreditation Services before February 1, 2018.
Currently the regulatory bodies for Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec and the membership associations for British Columbia and Prince Edward Island are collectively working together to find an accreditation solution for the educational programs of medical laboratory professionals in Canada. Potential solutions may include participation in the Working Group, collaborating with the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS), or an amalgamated model involving all aforementioned parties. More information will be shared as this process moves forward and consensus on a new accreditation model is reached.