

## CAASPR: Well on Its Way to Developing a National Competency-Based Assessment Framework

The Canadian Alliance of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Regulators (CAASPR) has begun work on a project to improve labour mobility for licensed workers and to expedite licensure and labour market integration of internationally-trained and Canadian applicants through the development of a national assessment process for both professions.

Over the last eight months, the development of a proposed competency-based framework has been the primary focus of CAASPR's Board of Directors and staff. The first portion of the project aims to establish the following three-step screening process, to be completed through a centralized application system (see Figure 1) or through a comparable provincial process:

1. The verification of **academic credentials** through partnerships with document authentication agencies who also provide an analysis of the Canadian equivalency of international academic degrees and transcripts;
2. The assessment of **language proficiency** through the development of benchmarks and the identification of the most appropriate tools to ensure that candidates have the communicative competence required to successfully integrate into the workforce;
3. The creation of a **portfolio tool** to be completed by internationally-educated professionals prior to entry. The portfolio will be made available online so that candidates can demonstrate their compliance with key competencies from their home country. It will be based on the Proposed Practice Competencies for Professionals Working in Canada (2011).

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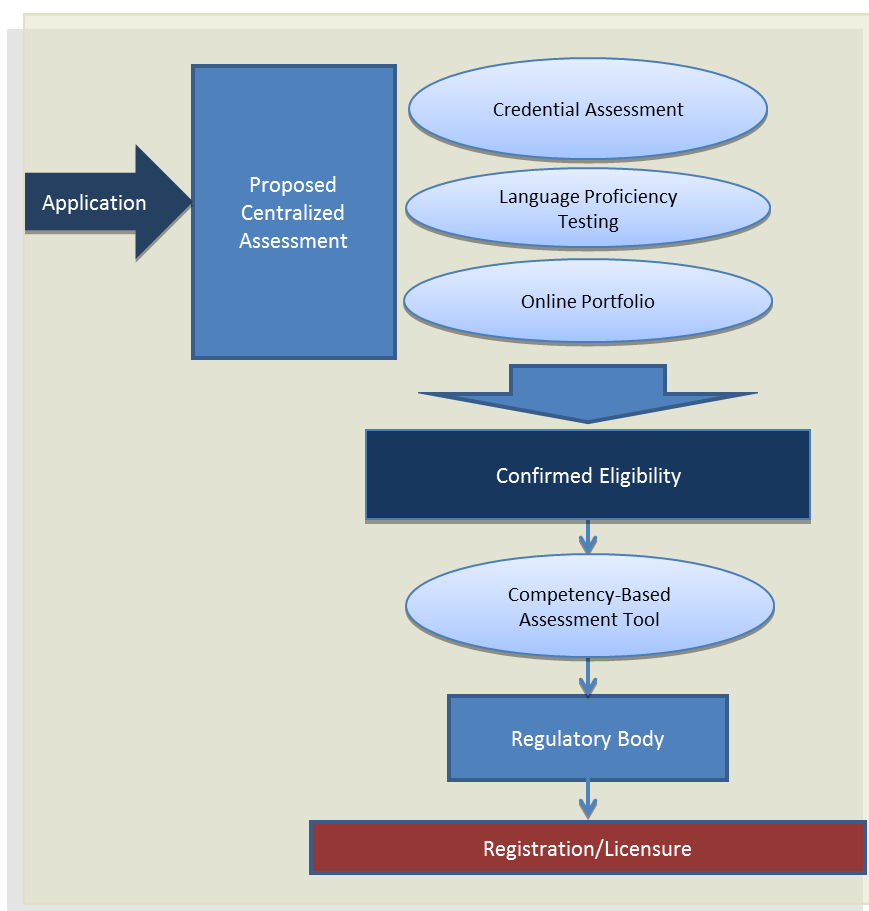


Figure 1. Proposed Centralized Assessment Framework for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Seeking Licensure in Canada (CAASPR, 2011)

The new application process will be developed with the input of all provincial regulatory bodies and key stakeholders, which include professional associations and university programs. The long-range goal is for as many provinces as possible to adopt the process according to their legislative model and internal structures/resources. This may be accomplished by having regulatory bodies enter into an agreement with the central assessment body or by using the tools some provinces will have developed in collaboration with other members of CAASPR. It should be noted that the development and implementation of a central body will be dependent on a sustainability study which is to be completed in 2013.

Should the central body come into existence, an Evaluation Services Committee would provide oversight for the implementation of the three-step process. This committee would include, at a minimum, representatives from each of the provincial regulatory bodies. Among the committee’s responsibilities would be developing policies and procedures, and ensuring compliance with provincial legislation and fairness acts. A National Assessment Panel would undertake the actual analysis of screening data and results, and make a recommendation for each applicant.

Regardless of the path a candidate’s application might take (central/provincial), the result of individual analyses will assist applicants in determining whether or not they meet the requirements to participate in the next step in the process,

which will be a competency-based assessment. The tool, which will be adopted for this assessment, has not yet been identified. However, the introduction of a mandatory examination is currently under consideration. Based on the result of the competency-based assessment, candidates may be directed to a remediation plan (if there are significant gaps that must be addressed) or to the regulatory body for licensure. The final decision to admit an applicant will remain with the provincial regulatory body.

“The project will lead to CAASPR achieving its goal of streamlining the credentialing and assessment process, by ensuring that it is consistent across the country”, says Anne Assaly, Chair of CAASPR.

### What is Competency-Based Assessment?

- It involves an assessment of knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Its goal is to assess what a person knows, what s/he can do and how well s/he does it

### Examples of Tools

Supervised practice  
Structured interview  
Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)

## Project Milestones

<b>Feb 2012</b>	Project launch Appointment and training for Advisory Committee and project sub-committees Development and validation of portfolio indicators
<b>Dec 2012</b>	Completion of portfolio indicators
<b>2013</b>	Approval of portfolio indicators Design & development of online portfolio tool Design & development of centralized assessment model Language benchmarking & proficiency recommendations Identification of competency-based assessment tool
<b>2014</b>	Pilot testing & validation of online portfolio tool Final decisions regarding implementation of the centralized model

Ms. Assaly explained that this will ensure fair and streamlined access to the application process for both Canadians and internationally-educated professionals (IEPs). The project was designed based on an evaluation of preferred practices in assessment, as well as consultations with other professions such as occupational therapy, medical laboratory sciences, and engineering. Ms. Assaly also noted that “while the primary focus of the project is to facilitate the integration of IEPs, CAASPR will also examine the current system for Canadian graduates in an effort to identify opportunities for increasing consistency in application procedures”.

[Read the project FAQs here](#)

### For more information:



Contact Karen Luker, Executive Director,  
CAASPR, at [office@caaspr.ca](mailto:office@caaspr.ca) or 613-858-6544

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# Frequently Asked Questions



**I've heard about the professions developing competency profiles, but I'm not sure what these are.**

Competency profiles are a compilation of statements that are intended to define the minimum required standard for speech-language pathologists and audiologists in Canada, stating the specific knowledge, skills and attributes to practice safely and effectively in a variety of practice settings. A *practice competency* is a description of a job function that can be carried out to a specified level of proficiency. The level of proficiency that is required will depend on the demands of the work setting as well as employer and regulatory expectations.

- Strengthen consistency within educational programs and assessment mechanisms
- Build confidence in labour mobility (whereby members move from one regulated province to another)



**How are competencies measured?**

Practice competencies in and of themselves are not measurable. Further development, in the form of indicators and learning outcomes (educational competencies), is needed to define ways by which individuals can demonstrate their competence. Learning outcomes are used to identify specific ends to be met by a learner. Using the competency cited above, an individual may have to outline the knowledge he/she has acquired related to a specific intervention approach in the context of a written examination. Indicators are used in the clinical setting as a means of verifying that a practitioner has demonstrated a particular skill. Presenting to colleagues at a "lunch and learn" might be one way to demonstrate that one has reviewed emerging evidence and considered it in the context of the program's practice and priorities. Indicators will vary depending on the needs of the tool to which they relate. Another example follows:

<u>Practice Competencies</u>	<u>Performance Indicators</u>	<u>Educational Competencies</u>
Provide services within scope of practice (SOP)	The member is able to describe the SOP applicable to his/her workplace	Define SOP Distinguish SOP from "Job description"
	The member can give examples of functions he/she may be asked to perform, but which are beyond the SOP	Explain how SOP is determined Describe the possible consequences of practicing outside one's SOP Identify other professionals whose SOP might overlap with yours



**Why are the professions moving to competencies?**

Traditionally, applicants for membership to a regulatory body or association have had to provide their academic credentials and evidence of having successfully completed a number of entry-level clinical hours. It is difficult, however, to measure competence in

terms of hours of experience or exposure rather than through the demonstration of prescribed knowledge, skills and behaviours. The development of competencies is an effort to standardize requirements for all practitioners who wish to work in Canada. It is an effort to verify that all basic requirements have been met, but also that applicants have attained a defined level of proficiency with all applicable competencies (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Proficiency increases over time



**Can you provide an example?**

The competency profiles are organized within a framework which outlines 7 core, interconnected roles: Central Role, Communicator, Collaborator, Advocate, Manager, Scholar and Professional. The following is an example of a practice competency within the role of "Scholar": *Review new knowledge regularly and determine applicability to practice.*



**What will the competencies be used for?**

Organizations involved with the practice of the professions across Canada have made a commitment to incorporate the competencies into education, accreditation, evaluation and examinations as well as objectives of training and standards for continuing professional development. Utilization of the competencies by educators, regulators, accreditation and examination bodies will:

- Play a central role in how individuals gain admission to and maintain registration/membership with regulatory bodies/associations
- Assist in ensuring that individuals who apply to work in Canada are able to practice safely and competently
- Provide a solid foundation for development of professional growth and development plans for practitioners



**Who will conduct assessments?**

The Canadian Interorganizational Steering Group (CISG) consists of representatives from Canadian regulatory bodies, professional associations, and academic programs. In 2011, these organizations partnered to develop a framework which has begun to answer this question. The three partners have an interest in working on assessments for the following purposes:

- Regulatory bodies assess applicants for admission into regulated provinces
- Professional associations assess applicants for admission into unregulated provinces/territories and as part of their membership and certification program
- Academic programs assess students' competence throughout the course of their program, in both the classroom and clinical settings

The relationship between the partners continues to be defined, however each is involved in the development of the proposed framework.

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# Frequently Asked Questions...continued



## What methods will be used to conduct assessments?

The first step consists of a “screening”, which involves the development of an online portfolio tool for internationally-educated applicants. This tool will allow candidates to provide evidence of having attained the required competencies through both educational training and experience. Credential verification and language testing (when required) will also be conducted. The screening process will result in a recommendation regarding an applicant’s readiness to participate in a competency-based assessment, using a tool which has yet to be determined. Finally, the project includes a study to determine the feasibility of developing or adopting an existing examination for candidates for entry into the profession as the preferred assessment tool.



## What impact will this have on existing members?

No impact is anticipated. This project aims to develop and implement a national competency-based assessment framework for new applicants seeking to gain entry to practice within Canada.



## Aren’t immigrants allowed to work in Canada through Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) signed by CASLPA?

CASLPA has signed MRAs with a number of other countries: United States, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and United Kingdom. Under some conditions, it is recognized that these countries’ respective associations have substantially equivalent requirements for membership and/or certification and it is therefore possible for certified members of one professional association to become recognized by the other associations. However, this agreement is not one of reciprocal recognition of qualifications; it is not extended to provincial licensing/registration, nor does it assure immigration or employment in Canada. Those interested in working in a regulated province will continue to apply to the regulatory body.



## What impact will there be for members in provinces with regulatory bodies?

Where applicable, there may be some administrative changes associated with the proposed centralization component, however members will continue to be registered with their provincial regulatory body and/or professional association(s).



## I understand that this is related to new applicants. Does it include students trained in Canada, internationally educated applicants, or both?

While the funding received from the federal government is aimed primarily at addressing the needs of internationally educated applicants, there is a need to ensure that candidates are treated fairly and using methods which are compatible to those used to assess Canadian students. One of the goals of the organizations involved in this project is to develop processes which are aligned.



THE CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY REGULATORS

ALLIANCE CANADIENNE DES ORGANISMES DE RÈGLEMENT EN ORTHOPHONIE ET EN AUDILOGIE

## For more information:

Readers are encouraged to review the “Frequently Asked Questions” above, and to contact Karen Luker, Executive Director, CAASPR, at [office@caaspr.ca](mailto:office@caaspr.ca), or call 613-858-6544.



## Who will ensure this is the case?

A national Advisory Committee has been convened to oversee the project. It consists of the following representatives:

### For the regulatory bodies:

Mardi Lowe-Heistad (British Columbia)

Laura Manz (Alberta)

Louise Watley (Saskatchewan)

Sharon Halldorson (Manitoba)

Brian O’Riordan (Ontario)

Céline Giroux (Quebec)

Eileen Keating (New Brunswick)

### For the professional associations:

Chantal Kealey (CASLPA, also representing the unregulated provincial/territorial associations and the Canadian Academy of Audiology)

### For the academic programs:

Jean-Pierre Gagné (Université de Montréal, representing faculty)

Lynn Ellwood (University of Toronto, representing Academic Coordinators of Clinical Education)

Subject-matter experts and a working group have also been engaged to assist with the development of each project component. The working group is composed of country-wide volunteer representatives, practicing clinicians, administrators, and clinical educators. Subject-matter experts provide consultative services and have extensive knowledge and experience at the academic, regulatory, and/or clinical levels.

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