



AREAS OF FOCUSED COMPETENCE
(AFC) PROGRAM ORIENTATION
MANUAL



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AREAS OF FOCUSED COMPETENCE (AFC) DIPLOMA PROGRAM

Areas of Focused Competence (AFCs) are areas of specialty medicine that address a legitimate societal and patient population need that was unmet by the system of primary and subspecialty disciplines. Akin to current clinical fellowship and post-secondary training in that they are equivalent to one to two years of additional training, the AFC category is intended to:

- Establish national standards for training and specialist competence, designed to improve quality of care and patient safety
- Prevent unnecessary fragmentation of specialty training, care and practice by providing credentials in highly focused areas of practice that may otherwise be considered for recognition as a subspecialty.
- Provide fellows with additional opportunities to acquire nationally and internationally portable credentials – the Diploma of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (DRCPSC), and
- Offer universities opportunities to enhance the academic environment.

There are two levels of AFC application processes. At national level, specialties can apply to have a discipline recognized as an Area of Focused Competence at the Royal College. Once the Royal College has recognized a discipline as an Area of Focused Competence and has approved the specialty specific documents, then individual universities can apply at the program level for accredited AFC programs in that discipline. This guide covers the application for programs in already recognized AFC disciplines. For information on applying for discipline recognition at the national level please see additional information on the Royal College website available [here](#).

A complete list of available AFC disciplines can be found on the Royal College website [here](#).

A complete list of current AFC disciplines at University of Toronto can be found on the PGME website [here](#).

AFC PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

The application process can take **approximately 9 to 12 months** for a new program to complete and consists of the following steps:

STEP 1. Program requests a copy of a discipline-specific AFC application form by contacting the Accreditation Team in PGME at pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca

STEP 2. An orientation meeting will be booked with the Program Director and Accreditation Team to review the program specific blank application form and supporting documentation that must be included in the application:

- Covering letter indicating that the Department has approved and supports this program
- Covering letters from the Chief Executive Officer of each participating institutions indicating support for the program
- AFC program committee: Terms of Reference
- AFC program committee: Membership list
- Competence committee: Terms of Reference
- Competence committee: Membership list
- Curriculum Plan
- Blank Template for each method of assessment identified in the curriculum plan
- Program Approved Policy governing trainee supervision
- Program Approved Policy governing trainee safety
- Inter-institution affiliation agreements (IIA), if applicable

STEP 3. AFC Program will work on the following:

- Contact departmental fellowship lead, to ensure they are aware of and supportive of the application
- Develop an AFC Program Committee (includes trainee reps)
- Develop an AFC Competence Committee (does NOT include any trainees)
- Develop Terms of Reference

STEP 4. AFC Program Committee will work on the DRAFT application and assessment tools.

The Accreditation Team will provide the:

- Blank Application
- Tip Sheet
- Application submission timelines

STEP 5. A further consultation meeting will be booked with the Education and Curriculum Consultant and the AFC Program Director to review the assessment tools that are specifically required for the program:

- Review program specific Education Portfolio that is required from the Royal College
- Review Educational Goals and Objectives and ensure the correct information is in the ITERs/ITARs
- Review of trainee portfolio documentation including patient confidentiality guidelines

STEP 6. DRAFT AFC Application is submitted to the Accreditation Team for review and to provide comments

STEP 7. AFC program to revise and edit the application as appropriate and send back to the Accreditation Team for final approval process.

STEP 8. Application will be reviewed by the Associate Dean, PGME and Fellowship Education Advisory Committee (FEAC) for review and feedback. Comments and required changes will be sent to the program.¹

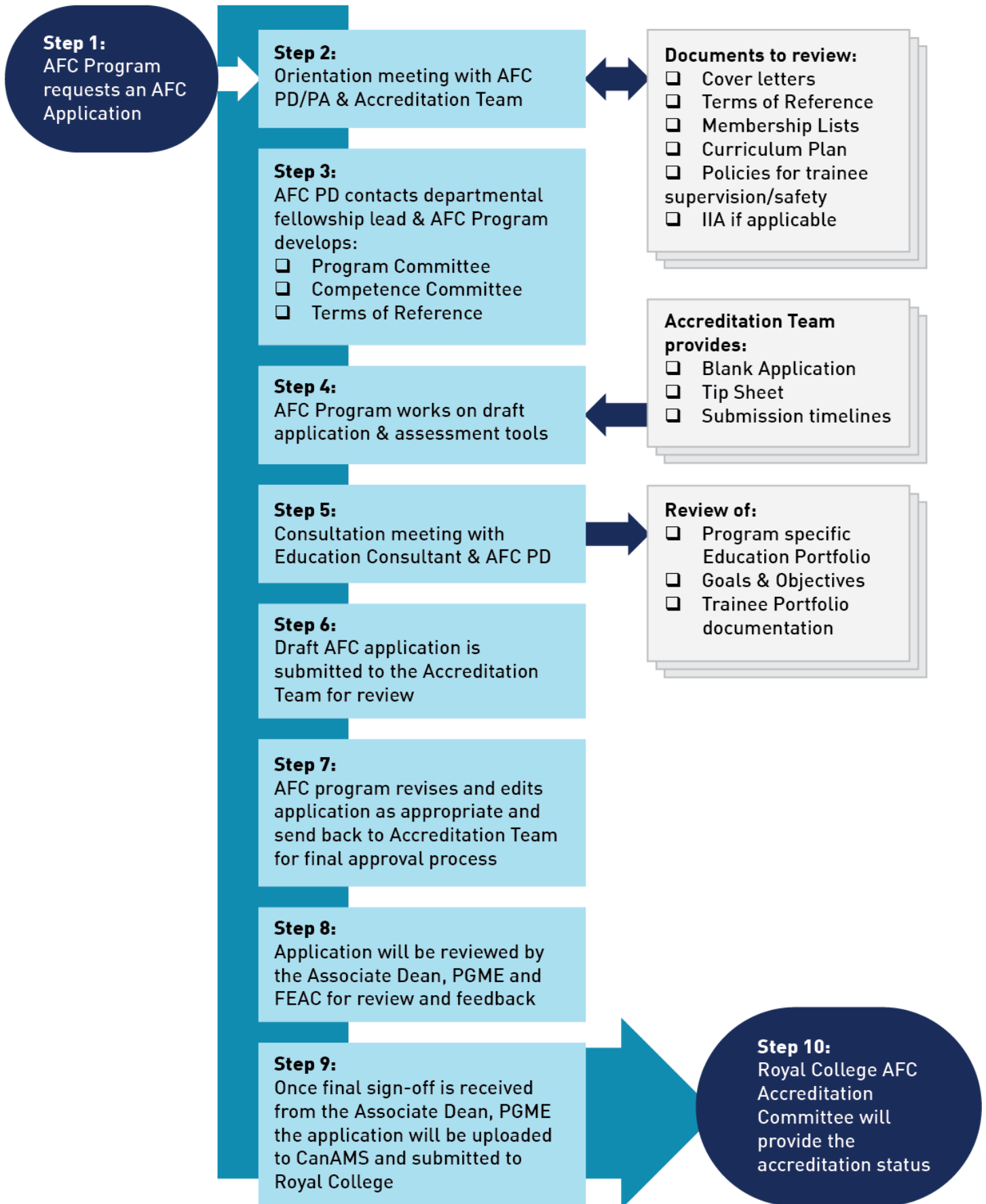
STEP 9. Once final sign-off is received from the Associate Dean, PGME the application will be uploaded to the online Accreditation Management System (CanAMS) and submitted by the PGME Accreditation Team to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada on behalf of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine.

STEP 10. There are three application deadlines per year for the Royal College AFC Accreditation Committee. The deadline is approximately 10 weeks prior to the meeting date where applications are reviewed. Following the accreditation committee meeting your program will receive one of the following accreditation statuses

- **Accredited New Program** with Follow-up by External Review in 2 years
- **Deferral** with 12 months to submit additional information or clarifications requested by the committee
- **No Approval** – program does not meet the standards and a new application is required

¹ This will be reviewed following the PGME Governance review process

Application for Accreditation of an AFC (Diploma) Program



ACTIVATION & ACCREDITATION CYCLE FOR AFC PROGRAMS

AFC's that receive an accreditation status of Accredited New Program are not considered active by the Royal College until they have accepted their first trainee into the program.

1. To be considered active the program must notify the PGME Accreditation Coordinator at pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca once an AFC trainee is accepted into the AFC program and has a confirmed start date
2. The PGME Accreditation Coordinator at pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca notifies the Royal College of the program's activation and the trainee's start date
3. The Royal College sends an Activation Letter to the Associate Dean, PGME to confirm that the AFC program is now active and provides information regarding the upcoming External Review timeline.

NOTE: *all accredited new programs will undergo an external review conducted through the Royal College within 24 months of activation and an internal review conducted by PGME prior to the external review.*

4. The PGME Accreditation Coordinator will work with the AFC Program Director and Program Administrator to book dates and prepare the documents for both the internal review and external review.

NOTE: *An internal review is a formal quality review of each training program against the accreditation standards. The reviews are done by a team of three: two physicians and one trainee. Internal reviews are a valuable opportunity to meet other Program Directors, see the internal review process and become more familiar with the new accreditation requirements. All Program Directors participate in at least 2 internal reviews, once as a Chair of the review team and once as the second reviewer.*

AFC FELLOW REGISTRATION PROCESS: PART 1 - OATS

STEP 1. When an accredited AFC program committee accepts a Canadian or International clinical fellow to the program, the Program Director must complete the following documentation for each trainee:

- Fellowship Educational Objectives MUST indicate that this fellow is in the AFC Program
- Clinical Fellowship Offer Letter
- Appointment Letter

These forms are available on the PGME website: [Appointment Forms & Templates | Postgraduate Medical Education \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

STEP 2. The documents listed above need approval and authorizing signatures from:

- Program Divisional Director/Chair (Educational objectives, offer letter & appointment letter)
- Departmental Fellowship Director (Educational objectives, offer letter & appointment letter)
- Associate Dean, PGME (Educational objectives)

Please follow your departmental process to obtain these signatures

STEP 3. Completed documents MUST be uploaded and submitted through the Online Appointment Tracking System (OATS)

Complete details are available on the PGME website: [Online Appointment Tracking System \(OATS\): User Guide | Postgraduate Medical Education \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

Should you have further questions/concerns regarding the use of the OATS system, please contact the PGME Information Management Specialist at oats.support.postmd@utoronto.ca

AFC Fellow Registration Process: Part 1 - OATS

Step 1:

Following documentation must be completed:

- Fellowship Educational Objectives
- Clinical Fellowship Offer Letter
- Appointment Letter

Step 2:

Documentation needs approval and authorizing signatures from:

- Program Divisional Director/Chair
- Departmental Fellowship Director
- Associate Dean, PGME

Step 3:

Completed documents to be uploaded on the Online Appointment Tracking System (OATS)



AFC FELLOW REGISTRATION PROCESS: PART 2 – POWER

STEP 1. Once the trainees are appointed and approved through Online Appointment Tracking System (OATS), the PGME Registrarial Administrators register the fellows in POWER under the AFC sub-program indicated in the Educational Objectives document. See the list below by department to determine which Registrarial Administrator to contact for your program:

Anna Ferrari (anna.ferrari@utoronto.ca):

Anesthesia

Critical Care

Family Medicine

Medical Imaging

Obstetrics & Gynecology

Otolaryngology

Radiation Oncology

Surgery

Toni Jarvis (toni.jarvis@utoronto.ca):

Internal Medicine

Laboratory Medicine

Medical Genetics

Medicine

Ophthalmology

Palliative Care

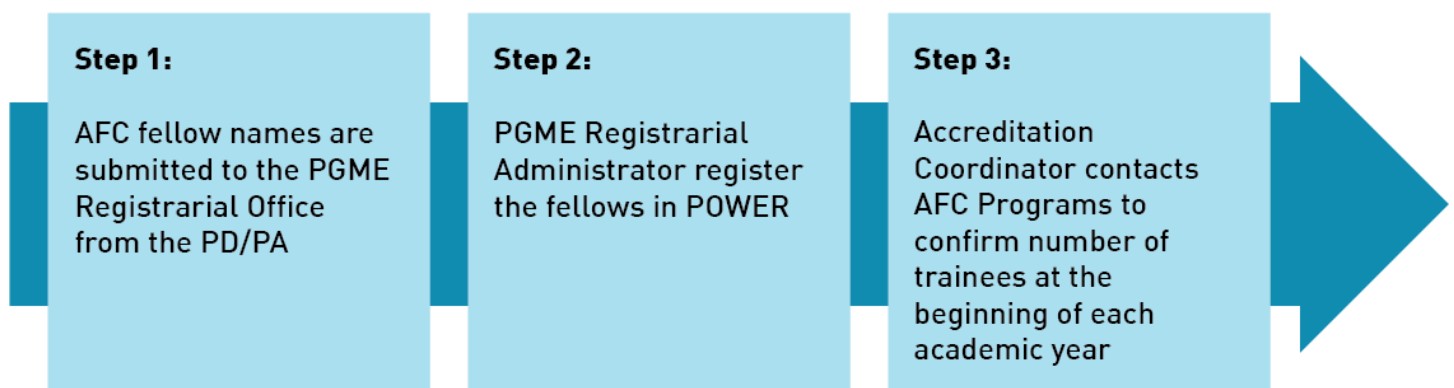
Pediatrics

Psychiatry

STEP 2. Once fellows are registered in POWER, they must complete all mandatory registration requirements prior to starting their training: [Register with PGME | Postgraduate Medical Education \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

STEP 3. The PGME Accreditation Coordinator will contact all AFC programs at the beginning of each academic year to confirm number of AFC trainees in each program and confirm that they are tracked accordingly.

AFC Fellow Registration Process: Part 2 - POWER



AFC PROGRAM FEES

AFC Programs are invoiced by the RCPSC for an annual registration fee (\$2000) once they have been granted Accredited New Program status by the Areas of Focused Competence – Accreditation Committee. All AFC programs, including those without trainees, are invoiced each April for the annual program registration fee, for the upcoming academic year (July 1 – June 30). Please note that this fee is a single, university-wide AFC program fee; it is **not** payable per hospital site.

The PGME Office is not responsible for payment of this fee.

More detailed information is found on the Royal College website:

<http://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/membership/dues-information-e>

AFC TRAINEE PORTFOLIOS

AFC programs are required to retain a portfolio for each of the AFC trainees. The requirements of these portfolios are listed in the program specific Education Portfolio document from the Royal College and can include assessments (e.g., multisource feedback forms), clinical material (e.g., consultation notes) and case tracking (e.g., logbooks). Trainee's portfolios are to be reviewed by the competence committee when making promotion and progression decisions on a regular basis.

ROYAL COLLEGE PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES:

All submitted cases or clinical material must be de-identified to preserve patient privacy. This requires the removal of key identifiers, including but not limited to laboratory accession number, name, birth date, date of consultation, and location (e.g., hospital/clinic, city). In some cases, even without these identifiers, a patient could be identified by other information included in the case of clinical material (e.g., if the patient has a very rare condition, or lives in a remote area with a limited population size). In these instances, de-identification may not be sufficient to ensure patient privacy. In such exceptional cases it would be advisable to obtain patient consent for the submission.

TEMERTY FACULTY OF MEDICINE GUIDELINES:

- Statement on Protection of Personal Health Information available [HERE](#)
- Guidelines for Appropriate Use of the Internet, Electronic Networking and Other Media available [HERE](#)

Note: *It is important to ensure that all of the tools and documentation listed in the educator's portfolios and any other specialty specific standards documents are used in your program. Your program's curriculum map must outline how you adhere to the national standards including how you use the tools listed in the portfolio and any other assessments your program uses (i.e., above and beyond those required in the standards).*

POWER/ELENTRA ONBOARDING PROCESS

If you would like to use the online assessment and evaluation systems from PGME including POWER and Elentra for your AFC trainee assessments, as well as supervisor and learner experience evaluations contact PGME at pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca to start the process outlined in the steps below:

STEP 1. AFC Program to contact PGME at pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca to request a consultation meeting for the onboarding of assessment tools to an online platform

STEP 2. PGME reviews tools to ensure they meet the accreditation standards and to confirm that the tools are in alignment with system requirements. Required edits are made by program

STEP 3. Work begins on a draft onboarding plan to be reviewed at a strategy meeting with the AFC Program and PGME

- Plan is reviewed by AFC program and revise any documentation as needed or recommended by the PGME teams
- Revisions to the onboarding plan and timelines as needed

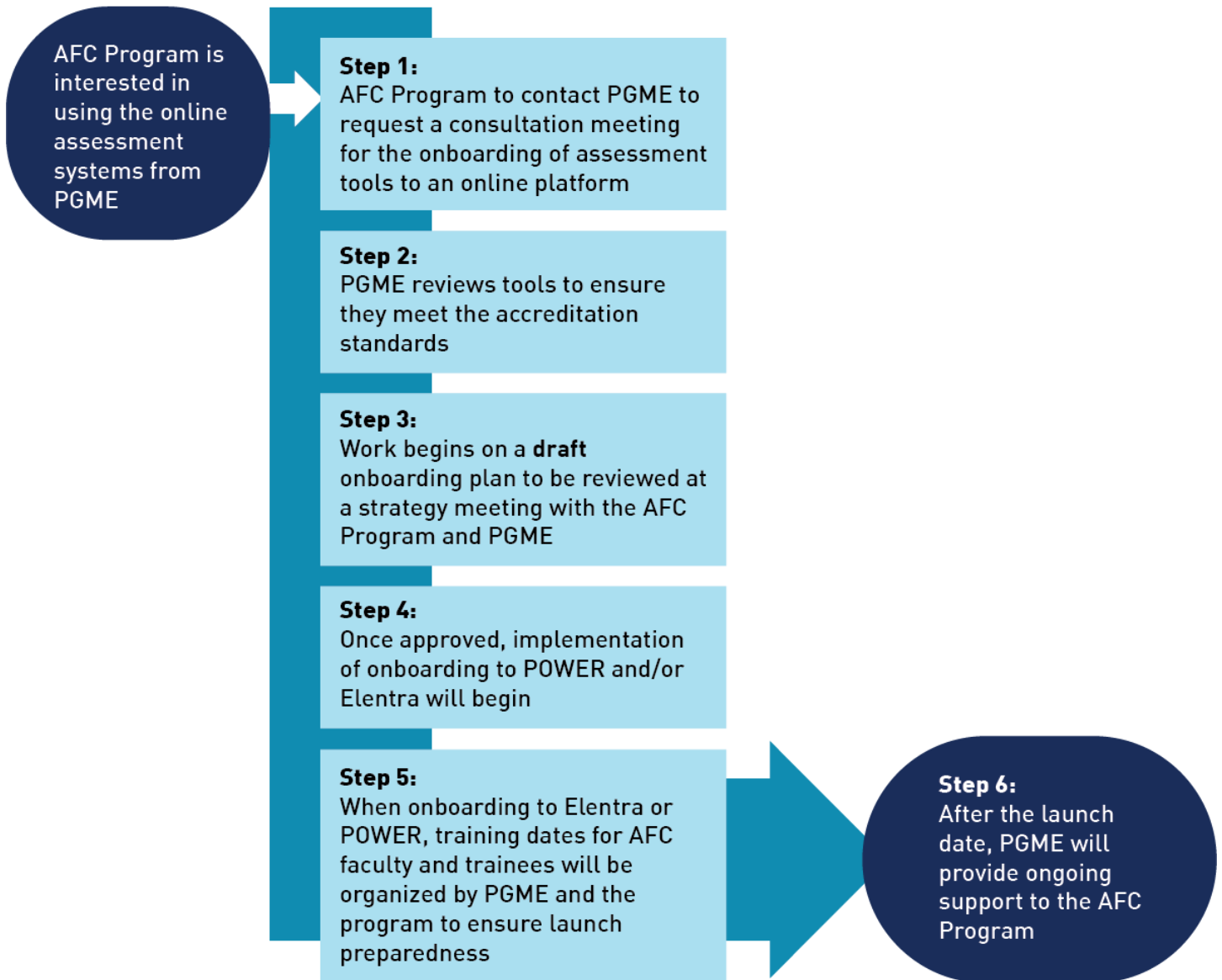
STEP 4. Once approved, implementation of onboarding to POWER and/or Elentra will begin

STEP 5. When onboarding to Elentra or POWER, training dates for faculty and trainees will be organized by PGME and the program to ensure launch preparedness as needed

STEP 6. After the launch date, PGME will provide ongoing support to the AFC program throughout implementation

*****This process can take approximately 4 to 12 months***

POWER/Elentra Onboarding Process



AFC TRAINEE CREDENTIALING PROCESS

Once the competence committee has approved that an AFC trainee has achieved competence and completed their training in an accredited AFC program, the trainee is eligible to be credentialed and recognized as a diplomate of the Royal College. The steps below outline the credentialing process:

STEP 1. The AFC Program Director informs the PGME Registrarial Administrator (postgrad.med@utoronto.ca) that the trainee has completed their training

STEP 2. PGME Registrarial Administrator notifies the AFC Administrator (diplomas@royalcollege.ca) in the Credentials Unit at Royal College that they require a Confirmation of Competencies Acquired (CCA) form

STEP 3. The AFC Administrator from Royal College sends the CCA form to the PGME Registrarial Office

STEP 4. The PGME Registrarial Administrator confirms the completion of training before forwarding to the AFC Program Director for signature

STEP 5. The AFC Program Director sends the signed CCA form back to the PGME Registrarial Office attesting that the trainee has: a) met the competencies in the discipline's national standards, b) completed the accredited training program, and c) is eligible for the AFC credential

STEP 6. The PGME Registrarial Administrator forwards the CCA form to the Associate Dean, PGME for final approval and sign off

STEP 7. The PGME Registrarial Administrator then forwards the completed CCA form back to the Royal College Credentials Unit, copying the program

STEP 8. Upon receipt of the CCA form, the Credentials Unit provides the trainee with a letter confirming their achievement of the AFC credential

STEP 9. The Membership Unit contacts the trainee, inviting them to have their AFC credential recognized by the Royal College, making them eligible to use the designation Diplomate (or DRCSPC). Annual fee information is available on the Royal College website at: <https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/membership/dues-information-e>

AFC Trainee Credentialing Process

Step 1:

AFC Program Director informs the PGME Registrarial Administrator that the trainee has completed their training

Step 2:

PGME Registrarial Administrator notifies the AFC Administrator in the Credentials Unit at the Royal College that they require a CCA form

Step 3:

The AFC Administrator from Royal College sends the CCA form to the PGME Registrarial Office

Step 4:

PGME Registrarial Administrator confirms the completion of training before forwarding to the AFC PD for signature

Step 5:

AFC PD sends the signed form back to the PGME Registrarial Office

Step 6:

PGME Registrarial Administrator forwards the completed CCA form to the Associate Dean, PGME for final approval and sign-off

Step 7:

PGME Registrarial Administrator forwards completed CCA form back to Royal College Credentials Unit for processing

Step 8:

Upon receipt of the CCA form, the Credentials Unit provides the trainee with a letter confirming achievement of the AFC credential

Step 9:

Membership Unit contacts the trainee, inviting them to have their AFC credential recognized by the Royal College, making them eligible to use the designation Diplomate

PGME CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with any questions, you may have about this process please do not hesitate to contact PGME.

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| Accreditation Support: | pgmecoordinator@utoronto.ca |
| OATS Support: | oats.support.postmd@utoronto.ca |
| Registration Office: | Postgrad.med@utoronto.ca |
| POWER Helpdesk: | Power.help@utoronto.ca |
| Elentra Support: | Pgme.mededhelp@utoronto.ca |
| General Questions: | Postgrad.med@utoronto.ca |

The full PGME contact list can be found on the following site: <https://pgme.utoronto.ca/about-pgme/pgme-staff-list/>