

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **about the Designated Signing Authority (DSA) program**

#### **Q. What role does AISCA play in my teacher certification?**

##### **1. Initial Professional Certification:**

Initial Interim Certification is granted through Alberta Education. The AISCA office, through the DSA program helps all independent school authorities (private schools and ECS operators) in processing appropriate application forms for the Extension and Re-Issuance of the Interim Professional Certificate as well as Temporary Letters of Authority and Letters of Authority, ensuring that the teachers in their employ hold the appropriate certification. A recommendation for a Letter of Authority by AISCA is not a guarantee that teaching authority will be granted by the Teacher Certification Branch.

##### **2. Permanent Certification:**

Designated Signing Authority (DSAs) approved by the Registrar, evaluate teachers holding Alberta Interim Professional Certificates to determine their eligibility for permanent certification. DSAs recommend the issuance or non-issuance of Permanent Professional Certification to the Registrar when all conditions for permanent certification have been met. The DSA function is similar to that of public school superintendents with regard to recommendations for certification.

Forms for Temporary Letter of Authority, Letter of Authority, Re-Issuance, and Extension of Interim Certification are appended in this handbook, on the AISCA website, or available from AISCA's office. Checklists and other information that may be useful in acquiring teacher certification are also included in the appendices. Approval for initial Interim Certification is authorized by Alberta Education. Also appended are checklists and other information that may be useful in acquiring teacher certification.

#### **Q. What is a Designated Signing Authority (DSA)?**

A Designated Signing Authority (DSA) is an individual appointed by the Minister as an officer for the purpose of fulfilling requirements of the *Certification of Teachers Regulation*. Approximately 20 DSAs are appointed annually by the Registrar to perform evaluations of teachers working in independent (private) schools and private ECS programs. AISCA coordinates the DSA assignments and provides support to all concerned.

**Q. What qualifications must a DSA have?**

DSAs must have at least a Master’s Degree in Education and have extensive administrative and teaching experience. Their function as an appointed officer is similar to that which a superintendent would play in a public school.

**Q. What should I expect from a DSA once I have applied through the AISCA office to be evaluated for my permanent certificate? When will they evaluate me?**

The DSA evaluating you will contact you within two weeks of being assigned by the AISCA office by phone or email to make arrangements for your evaluation. The majority of DSA assignments and evaluation visits are done between mid-January and late May, depending upon when AISCA received your application, your DSA’s availability and your preferences or personal situations.

**Q. What will the DSA expect of me when they visit? What does the process look like?**

DSAs have some flexibility as to how they carry out the evaluation process. When the DSA contacts you, he or she will provide you with an overview of the evaluation process so you know what to expect during the visit. The following general process can be expected

**Verification of Eligibility to Be Evaluated**

- The DSA is expected to verify that you meet basic requirements of the *Certification of Teachers Regulation* as a way of double-checking that you are eligible to be evaluated. All DSAs will require the following on the day of the evaluation:
- Your Alberta Interim Certificate (bring it to the visit).
- Evidence that you will have taught two full years while holding an Alberta Interim Certificate by June 30 of your current teaching contract year.
- If you have taught in another Alberta school other than the current one to qualify for at least two years of teaching, your DSA needs a letter from the previous school(s) that employed you attesting to the time spent teaching there while holding a valid Alberta Interim Certificate. A copy of the letter is sufficient. However, if you have difficulty accessing such a letter, contact the AISCA office. Your former employer(s) should supply the letter.
- At some point during the visit, the DSA will ask to see a copy of an evaluation of your teaching during the current year, completed by your principal and signed by you.

## **Artifacts of Teaching**

During the evaluation visit, DSAs typically look at and review a sample of your planning and teaching. The following types of artifacts of your teaching should be available.

- Your daily lesson plans for the current units or course sections you are teaching
- Your long-term plans for all your assigned subjects or grades
- Samples of student assessment tools you use in your classroom
- Sample report cards written by you during the current year and/or samples of communication with parents
- Your record of current student evaluations
- If applicable, student Individual Program Plans (IPP) as well as a description of the process in place to assure proper monitoring and implementation of IPPs.

## ***Other Expectations***

- 1) One document you should review ahead of time is the Teaching Quality Standard Ministerial Order 016/97. Your principal should have a copy or else you can download it from the Internet: <http://education.alberta.ca/department/policy/standards/teachqual.aspx> On the Recommendation form provided by your DSA, you will be asked to sign the following statement:

“I declare that I have read and understood the descriptors of knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) related to the Alberta Permanent Professional Certificate as outlined in the Teaching Quality Standard Ministerial Order 016/97 and I hereby attest to my ability and commitment to apply them appropriately toward student learning. I also commit to ongoing professional growth in keeping with the Teaching Quality Standard and descriptors of quality teaching under Ministerial Order 016/97”

- 2) All teachers are required to have a Professional Growth Plan for the current year signed by the principal or a designated group of teachers.
- 3) If your teaching assignment is not a typical classroom situation, you will be evaluated on the basis of the responsibilities you are contracted to perform and their relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard. Details of the expectations need to be discussed with your DSA. This would apply if you are the principal, a teacher librarian, home education facilitator, work experience supervisor, etc.
- 4) In addition to the above, you are welcome to supply your DSA with your portfolio of past education and teaching experiences, with references from previous teaching situations including your student teaching experiences, or with any other documents that testify to your skills as a teacher in a school setting and/or to your involvement in your community. These are not required but they are welcome.

- 5) The DSA will make at least one visit to observe your teaching practices. Your principal's prior evaluation also will be reviewed and considered by the DSA. A recommendation to issue a permanent teaching certificate must be based on at least two evaluations, normally one from your school principal and one from the DSA.
- 6) The DSA may decide to make more than one classroom visit and observation. The reasons for subsequent visits will be explained to you by the DSA. All DSAs will report to you concerning the outcome of their visits immediately after the visit and may also choose to respond to you in writing soon after the visit. DSAs may report to the principal of your school possibly in your presence but certainly with your knowledge and permission.
- 7) After one or more visits, the DSA must make a recommendation to the Registrar, Alberta Education, to issue or not to issue a Permanent Professional Teaching Certificate, and will give you a copy of the recommendation.
- 8) The DSA will forward the recommendation to the AISCA office for submission to the Registrar. If you have already completed two years of teaching, the recommendation will be forwarded to the Registrar immediately and you will receive your permanent certificate in the mail when processing is complete. If you will complete the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching during the current school year, the AISCA office will forward the recommendation to the Registrar at the end of June of the current school year. You will receive your permanent certificate in the mail during the summer or soon thereafter when processing is completed by the Teacher Certification Branch. If for any reason you are not able to complete the second year of teaching after your DSA evaluation, you and/or your principal must contact the AISCA office and your application will be put on hold until you are able to complete the second year.
- 9) Upon receipt of your permanent certificate, all records and documents held by your DSA and the AISCA office relating to your evaluation will be deleted and/or shredded. AISCA will receive a copy of your permanent certificate and will keep it on file.
- 10) In the event of a negative recommendation, reasons will be provided to you in writing by your DSA. The Registrar will receive the DSA's recommendation and will notify the teacher of the Registrar's decision to grant or to not grant a permanent certificate. Under the Certification of Teachers Regulation you have 30 days from receipt of the Registrar's letter to appeal a negative decision. Grievance procedures are outlined at [http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/1999\\_003.pdf](http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/1999_003.pdf)

If requested, the AISCA office will direct you to the proper avenue for your appeal. If

you do not appeal, or if your appeal is not sustained, you are free to apply the following year for another evaluation and AISCA will appoint a different DSA to conduct the next evaluation without reference to the previous negative recommendation.

**Q: Who issues certificates?**

Teaching authority is recognized through the receipt of Alberta certification by qualified applicants. The Registrar of the Teacher Certification Branch of Alberta Education issues all certificates, not AISCA.

**Q: Is my certificate the same one that teachers in public systems hold? Is it valid?**

In Alberta, teacher certification for independent school teachers is the same authority as held by teachers in the public school system. Alberta Education does not have a different or separate category of certificates for teachers serving in independent schools and private ECS programs.

**Q: If I have a criminal record, can I get teacher certification?**

Certification of any kind may be denied to persons who have been convicted of indictable offenses.