



## FAQ FOR TEACHERS ABOUT THE DSA PROGRAM

Q. What role does AISCA play in teacher certification?

### **Initial Teaching Certificates:**

Teachers must apply directly to the Registrar of Alberta Education to be issued their **initial** teaching certificate. Applications for initial Interim Professional Certificate (IPC), Conditional Teacher Certificate (CTC), Interim Trade Teacher Certificate (ITTC), and Interim Specialized Teacher Certificate (ISTC) are reviewed and authorized by Alberta Education.

Applicants for initial certification apply directly to Teacher Certification Branch (Registrar) through [TWINS](#).

Application for **Extensions and Re-issuance** of IPC, CTC, ITTC, and ISTC for independent school teachers are processed through the AISCA office. Applications are available on the [AISCA website](#).

### **Permanent Certification:**

A Designated Signing Authority (DSA), approved by the Registrar, evaluates teachers holding a valid Alberta Interim Professional Certificate to determine their eligibility for permanent certification. DSAs recommend the issuance of Permanent Professional Certification (PPC) 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.

Application Forms for Re-Issuance and Extension of Interim Professional Certificate, Conditional Teacher Certificate, Interim Trade Teacher Certificate, and Interim Specialized Teacher Certificate, are available on the [AISCA website](#).

Q. Can I apply for a letter of authority?

The Conditional Teacher Certificate has replaced the Letter of Authority. A CTC may be granted to an internationally educated individual who has completed a teacher education program leading to certification in an international jurisdiction. When the individual does not yet qualify for an Alberta Interim Professional Certificate, a CTC may be issued with conditions that identify courses required to meet Alberta IPC requirements. More information is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/expedited-teaching-certificates>

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

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 and Teacher Leaders Regulation 123/2022](#). Approximately 35 DSAs are appointed annually by the Minister to perform evaluations of teachers working in independent schools and 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 extensive administrative and teaching experience. Their function as a Designated Signing Authority 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 PPC? When will he/she evaluate me?

The DSA evaluating you will contact you within two weeks of being assigned by the AISCA office either 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 and Teacher Leaders Regulation](#) and that you are eligible to be evaluated.

AISCA/DSA will require the following to proceed with the evaluation:

- Evidence that you will have taught two full years equivalent while holding a valid Alberta Interim Professional Certificate by June 30 of your current teaching contract year. [Verification of Employment template](#) is available for your school to use on the AISCA website.  
**Note:** time spent teaching under a Developmental and Conditional Certificate counts toward the 2 years of eligible teaching time

required for a PPC recommendation. However, the teacher must hold an IPC to be evaluated for their PPC.

- If you have taught in another Alberta school other than the current one to qualify for at least two years of teaching, your employer needs to provide a letter of employment history from the previous school(s); they are attesting to the time spent teaching there while holding a valid Alberta Developmental, Conditional, or Interim Professional Certificate. If you have difficulty accessing a verification of employment 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 your principal's evaluation of your teaching during the current year, signed by you.

### **Artefacts of Teaching**

During the evaluation visit, DSAs typically look at and review samples of your planning and teaching. The following types of artefacts 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 (formative/summative)
- 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**

A teacher being evaluated should be familiar with the [Teaching Quality Standard](#).

- 1) On the Recommendation form provided by your DSA, you will be asked to sign the following statement:

*I have read and understood the competencies related to Permanent Professional Certification as outlined in the Teaching Quality Standard and I hereby attest to possessing such competencies and to my ability to apply them appropriately toward student learning. I also commit to teaching practice and ongoing professional growth in keeping with the competencies and indicators identified in the Teaching Quality Standard.*

- 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) DSA will ask teachers to complete a self-reflection in which the teacher reflects upon their teaching practice by describing their current teaching role, school and context, as well as a reflection that provides specific examples/evidence that the teacher's practice meets the six competencies identified in the Teaching Quality Standard.
- 4) 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 will apply if you are the principal, a teacher librarian, home education facilitator, work experience supervisor, etc.
- 5) In addition to the above, you are welcome to provide the DSA with a 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.
  - 6) 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.
  - 7) 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. The DSA will report to you concerning the outcome of their visits immediately after the visit or may also choose to respond to you in writing soon after the visit. The DSA may report to the principal of your school, possibly in your presence but certainly with your knowledge and permission.
  - 8) After one or more visits, the DSA must make a recommendation to the Registrar at Alberta Education to issue or not to issue a

- Permanent Professional Certificate and will give you a copy of the recommendation.
- 9) The DSA will forward the recommendation to the AISCA Senior Manager of Teacher Certification 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 complete the 2nd 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 PPC in the mail during the summer, or soon thereafter, when processing is completed by the Teacher and Leadership Certification Branch.
  - 10) 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.
  - 11) 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. In the event of a negative recommendation, reasons will be provided to you in writing by your DSA.
  - 12) 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 and Teacher Leaders Regulation](#) you may appeal a negative decision. Appeal procedures are outlined in the

regulation. 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?

The Registrar of the Teacher and Leadership Certification Branch of Alberta Education and Childcare issues all certificates, not AISCA.

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

Yes. 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 ECS programs.

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

Certification of any kind may be denied to a person who has been convicted of indictable offenses.

Q: Where can I find out more about the Teacher Certification process?

The Teacher Certification Handbook for Independent schools is available on the [AISCA website](#). You may also contact the AISCA office at 780-469-9868 or by email [certification-admin@aisca.ab.ca](mailto:certification-admin@aisca.ab.ca)