



# Canadian Tutor Standards

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Quality practices and accreditation guidelines for tutor program development in learning environments in Canada.

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## Canadian Tutor Standards

This document has been developed through the work of the Canadian Tutor Standards Accreditation Committee, which consists of members of the Learning Specialists Association of Canada (LSAC) (see – <https://learningspecialists.ca>). We have aligned the development process with that required by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO2993) and have considered various approaches to tutor program development and accreditation within and outside Canada.

Through this work, the committee strives to enact the mission of LSAC to support Learning Specialists in their work to ensure the best possible services and supports for students in Canada.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Canadian Tutor Standards (CTS) are intended to provide guidelines for designing, developing, implementing, maintaining, and improving tutoring programs in post-secondary environments across Canada. They may be applied to different forms of tutoring, such as advice on study skills, content area support, and course or writing tutoring; and they may inform programs involving both individual and group tutoring situations. The Standards have been developed through the work of the Canadian Tutor Standards Accreditation Committee (a subcommittee of LSAC) and enact the mission of LSAC to help learning specialists deliver the best possible learning services and support for students in Canada.

The Standards have been created to fulfill two related functions: as **guides** for program development and as a basis for **accreditation**.

The Standards are not prescriptive. They have been developed to be flexible enough to be useful in providing a framework for high quality support services, and at the same time, robust enough to be practical and useful.

The development process for these standards has been in alignment with that required by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (see [ISO 29993:2017](#)). The inaugural CTS Accreditation Committee members must be acknowledged for their dedication and support in providing input into the Standards development and extending the consultation and feedback processes to the broader learning support communities across Canada. Thank you to all who contributed to or submitted input into this process.

Lyn Benn (Chair)

On behalf of the CTS Accreditation Committee.

### **AIMS**

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The Canadian Tutor Standards have been developed to serve two functions. The first is to provide guidelines for setting up, maintaining or improving tutoring programs in learning environments across Canada. The second is to provide an avenue to formally acknowledge and accredit the quality of the programs and tutor training delivered by institutions or organizations. This accreditation will initially be peer reviewed by members of the LSAC Canadian Tutor Standards Accreditation Committee and will subsequently involve learning specialists who have had their programs accredited.<sup>1</sup> Program developers are supported in this process by joining a community of practice to continue to strengthen tutor program development.

The Standards are designed to reflect and acknowledge the fact that tutoring programs vary according to their institutional and academic context. As such, the Standards provide a frame of reference for setting up services, identifying needs and learning outcomes, monitoring, assessment and evaluation.<sup>2</sup> They can be used for self-evaluation or as part of an accreditation process to provide feedback and assurance regarding the quality of the tutor program.

### **HOW TO USE THE STANDARDS**

The Canadian Tutor Standards offer prompts and guidance on the following six areas of focus:

- i. Program Set-up and Administration (Infrastructure and Integrity)
- ii. Needs Analysis
- iii. Program Planning and Design
- iv. Tutor Training and Development
- v. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
- vi. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Developers and administrators of tutoring programs should reflect carefully on each of the questions/prompts provided in the Standards document, responding to them as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> Where multiple tutoring programs are being offered within an institutional setting, the different programs may wish to submit separate applications. Please confer with the Accreditation Committee Chair for advice regarding how to proceed if there are multiple tutoring programs where training and program delivery is different in focus and content.

<sup>2</sup> These standards are designed for tutor programs that support general study skills, writing tutoring, content area/subject/course specific tutoring. They may be applied to both individual and group tutoring programs. It should be noted that these standards are not intended for Supplemental Instruction programs which have their own avenues for ensuring quality practices.

## **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

When creating a tutoring program, developers may use these questions and prompts as general guidelines for creating and implementing tutor training modules and other program features.

The Standards provide a broad view of tutoring and practices based on the values of Social Justice, Ethics, Diversity and Inclusion, Indigenization, Interculturality, and Accessibility. These values are grounded in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

By using these standards as guides, contributors add to the collegial process of shared and collaborative learning, learner-centred teaching and learning practices, the development of resources that build better programs and that contribute to professional development in the field of tutoring, tutor training and development, and tutor programs. This is a process for continuous improvement.

## **ACCREDITATION**

When seeking accreditation for a tutor program, developers must directly engage with and address each of the questions/prompts. They are expected to provide examples or evidence of how the tutor program meets the guidelines, or to explain why those requirements may not be appropriate or pertinent to that tutoring operation.

These standards are not prescriptive, but developed to be applicable, practical, and useful. Flexibility is key in this process to allow for differences in needs, goals, and contexts. The criteria then do not require specific content, learning environments, or time periods, but do provide enough detail to guide the developers in establishing quality programs to meet the specified program goals.

The Standards act as guides in setting minimum standards, and include the identification of learner needs, tutor training needs, service delivery, assessment, evaluation, and certification. They provide a framework for consistent quality of services, training, supervision, and evaluation that ensures academic integrity and accountability.

Applications for accreditation will initially be peer reviewed by members of the LSAC Canadian Tutor Standards Accreditation Committee, and subsequently involve learning specialists who have had their programs accredited. The accreditation process and feedback are designed to support good tutor training, and to confirm the quality of the institution's program(s). Accreditation strives to help raise the credibility and profile of the tutoring program(s). Initial accreditation is designed to last for three years, after which, programs may wish to accredit every five years. Further support for accreditation can be found on the LSAC website under Canadian Tutor Standards.

## THE STANDARDS

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### STANDARD 1: PROGRAM SET-UP AND ADMINISTRATION (INFRASTRUCTURE AND INTEGRITY)

- a. The need for a tutoring service or program is identified so that those responsible for funding and support can make informed decisions. The tutoring program aligns with the organization's mission and goals. Institutional needs are identified and considered when proposing and offering tutoring services. The type of institution e.g. College, University UG/G; and culture of the institution is identified.
- b. The title and objectives of the tutoring services and program are established.
- c. The program is adequately budgeted for staff, tutors, equipment, and space.
- d. Job description(s) are developed for tutors. Tutor responsibilities are identified and articulated as part of their employment. Other roles/responsibilities might also be included (e.g. Teaching Assistants).
- e. The tutor program meets institutional requirements for FIPPA confidentiality, student rights and rules. Applicable institutional and HR policies and procedures are identified. Records and files are protected.
- f. The hiring process is done by committee, using fair practices, to avoid favouring one group over another.
- g. The hired tutor pool reflects diversity.
- h. Identified learner needs, tutor prerequisites, competencies and experience are considered when hiring tutors.
- i. Faculty reference(s) and/or interview(s) from tutor centre administration ensures tutors are qualified and a good fit for the tutor program or service.
- j. Relevant Employment Standards and/or Agreements are put in place for hiring including but not limited to Policies and HR practices for hiring within the institution, and Union related issues that may affect tutors.
- k. A service model or administrative structure is established that supports tutor development, and that includes employee expectations, compensation, tutor hours, tutoring procedures, training, evaluation and data collection.
- l. Tutors are required to complete training as specified by the tutor program administration and protocols. There is a clear timeframe for the development of their tutoring competencies.
- m. Marketing and advertising strategies are developed to promote tutoring. Any high needs, specialized cohorts, or target groups are identified. Internal communication systems are utilized for promotion where possible.
- n. The possibilities of using tutor training for any other academic support/mentorship positions on campus has been explored.

## **STANDARD 2: NEEDS ANALYSIS**

- a. Understanding and identifying the needs of the learners ensures that the program and tutoring objectives, and content and assessment methods meet those needs.
- b. Qualified staff and faculty analyze learner needs to ensure the tutoring program is set up effectively to meet learning needs within the scope of their services.
- c. The identified needs of learners are reflected in the objectives, design of the program/service, supported content areas, and assessment methods of the program.
- d. Systems are set up to determine the learner's tutoring needs when they book a tutor or use tutoring services.
- e. Learning outcomes for students and tutors are clear and measurable.
- f. The intended outcomes for the tutoring services are identified, measurable, and understandable to the users and administration.
- a. Tutor training requirements and competencies are identified.
- b. Measures to ensure diversity, inclusivity and accessibility within the program are evident. Any restrictions on the tutoring services are identified and explained.

## **STANDARD 3: PROGRAM PLANNING AND DESIGN**

- a. Program developers take the needs analysis into consideration as they develop curriculum, learning materials, and methods of assessment and evaluation.
- b. Curriculum is designed and developed by facilitators experienced or trained in the design and development of tutor training programs.
- c. Learning outcomes are used to structure and enhance learning, improve communication about important concepts and skills and are linked to assessment practices.
- d. Training is developed to reflect the program objectives. The rationale, length, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and tutor learning outcomes and/or competencies are clearly identified.
- e. Where possible, the principles of UDL are incorporated into the design of the training program, along with methods designed to support the needs of diverse students, JEDI principles (justice, equity, diversity, inclusion), and awareness of Indigenous issues, interculturality, and neurodiversity.
- f. Learning-how-to-learn skills and learning strategies have been incorporated into the program design with attention given to current research into effective learning strategies for diverse learners.
- g. Professionalism, the development of an ethical disposition (including academic integrity), and the need to maintain privacy is clearly represented within the program design.
- h. The duration of the training, assessment and evaluation methods, and modes of the training are made clear to the tutors in training.
- a. Academic integrity is integral throughout the curriculum and practices recommended for tutoring.
- b. Learning materials are developed for the course or training aligned with the curriculum and modes of learning.
- c. Learning materials are current, relevant, up-to-date, and consider institutional, social, and cultural needs, as well as learners' backgrounds.



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- d. Learning materials are reviewed regularly to maintain relevancy to ensure that academic, social, and cultural needs are met, as well as the individual needs of learners.
- e. Tutor roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- f. Processes are included to help a tutor to understand, apply, and maintain boundaries, and to promote effective communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills.
- g. Information for referring students to other institutional resources along with material to help a tutor deal with situations outside of the tutor role (such as how to refer a student for health and wellness, appropriate referrals to institutional resources and services, and crisis intervention contacts) are included in the training materials.

### **STANDARD 4: TUTOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- a. The tutor training program is delivered by facilitators who are qualified and trained in delivering tutor training and in the use of tutoring methods and materials. Other staff or faculty engaged in the training have the competence and qualifications required to deliver training.
- b. Professional development for facilitators is supported and encouraged through the creation of professional development plans.
- c. The methods, resources, and responsibilities for delivering the training are identified. The rationale for how training modules are delivered is clear.  
E.g. In person, online, synchronously, asynchronously, in workshop format, in talking-circles format, etc.
- d. Tutor training is offered in a way that models the tutoring approach, such as a strengths-based, facilitative approach.
- e. Learning materials provide a curriculum overview and learning resources as well as assessment and feedback methods.
- f. The training program provides a focus on content and general problem analysis. Methods for engaging tutors with the content are identified. E.g., individually, in small groups, in large groups, in writing, orally, etc.
- g. Consequences, procedures and/or alternatives for a tutor who misses or falls behind in training or in submitting assessments are specified.
- h. The procedures, roles, and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the tutor training program are clear.

### **STANDARD 5: ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- a. The outcomes of the tutor training program are assessed according to the knowledge, skills and abilities to be demonstrated by the tutor. The outcome assessments take into account the standards to be measured against the range of assessment methods, scoring and reporting methods, feedback systems, and those affected by the learning and assessment.
- b. Reporting and communication systems are in place to support tutor progress.
- c. There is a clear method for monitoring and certifying the tutors' progress. Tutors receive a badge or certificate of completion that outlines the title and objectives of the training, level of achievement or competence.

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- d. Ways for tutors to reflect on their learning throughout the program are incorporated into their learning and development.
- e. Methods used to assess the learning outcomes for tutors are clear to the tutors and tutor trainers.
- f. The learning outcomes for tutors are aligned with the institutional needs analysis. A recording and/or reporting system is put in place for this.

## **STANDARD 6: PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- a. Program evaluations identify the scope, goals, rationale, criteria, methods and timing of the process(es) used. Regular monitoring and evaluation are carried out to determine if the tutor program is meeting its objectives.
- b. The program leader/admin, faculty, and staff set up systems to continually assess and improve the integrity, functionality and performance of the tutoring services and program needs.
- c. Data sets and reports are clear and transparent and describe the findings in light of the tutor program objectives.
- d. The results of evaluations are considered when improvements or changes are made to the tutor training and/or tutor program.
- e. Methods used to monitor the program and the tutor training are systematic, clear, and reportable.
- f. Learning outcomes are clearly identified, accessible, and compiled to assist in the ongoing development of tutors and/or to certify tutors as they achieve their competency levels.
- g. A range of methods are used to evaluate the tutor program, tutor training development, and learning outcomes with the evaluation and assessment methods being aligned with the needs analysis and processes for continuous improvement.
- h. Certification and/or acknowledgement is provided for facilitators and others involved in the program.
- i. Learner use of their learning outcomes are monitored and reported throughout the year.
- j. Reports clearly describe the results of evaluations, assessments, findings, and recommendations as these relate to the program or service objective.

## Bibliography

ISO 29993, First Edition 2017-08, Learning services outside formal education – Service requirements.

## Canadian Tutor Standards

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With great appreciation and gratitude to the inaugural Canadian Tutor Standards Accreditation Committee, 2022-23.

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