



HUMANIST CANADA

*Humanist Chaplain
Accreditation Program*

Prepared by the Humanist Canada
Chaplaincy Committee

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1. Foundation and Purpose

Preamble

Whereas all humans are spiritual beings insofar as they yearn for meaning, purpose, and connectedness in the world, and must contend with moral and ethical challenges and existential hardships related to death and loss; and

Whereas a large proportion of Canada's population is not affiliated with any religion or specific faith group, and furthermore may not believe in a supernatural God at all; and

Whereas spiritual caregiving fulfils a vital need for many Canadians during their lifetimes, regardless of worldview, and plays an important role within many of Canada's public institutions including military, healthcare, corrections, law enforcement, and education; and

Whereas secular spiritual caregivers are not widely available in these and other institutions and fall far short of proportionally fulfilling the needs of non-religious Canadians.

Establishment

Humanist Canada therefore establishes the Humanist Chaplain Accreditation Program (HCAP) outlined herein, for the accreditation, governance, and oversight of Humanist Chaplains in Canada, so that they will be enabled to provide professionally relevant, legitimate, and trustworthy spiritual support to Canadians in various institutions and organizations.

The Board of Directors of Humanist Canada has directed that the Humanist Canada Chaplaincy Committee (HCCC) be established to develop and maintain the HCAP, in accordance with the HCCC Charter.

Humanist Chaplains

Humanism is a secular philosophy based upon human dignity, compassion, ethics, rational thought, respect for the environment, and appreciation of the arts. Rooted in these values and a non-theistic worldview, Humanist Chaplains promote spiritual and emotional health and attend to existential issues in institutional settings, filling a role that has traditionally been the domain of religious practitioners. Unlike counsellors who book fixed appointments and develop courses of treatment, Chaplains often engage with their respective institutional population (soldiers, patients, inmates, students, employees) spontaneously in their own environment. They are either volunteers or are remunerated by the institution, and never by the client. Chaplains must be able to provide care and support to all, regardless of belief and worldview.

2. Chaplain Candidate Required Criteria

In addition to a fully accredited Humanist Chaplain, there is a Student Affiliate membership which is elaborated upon below. A checklist of requirements for an Accredited Humanist Chaplain and a Student Affiliate are specified in Annex A at the end of this document.

Student Affiliate

The Student Affiliate membership is intended for undergraduate or graduate students who have an interest in pursuing a career as a Humanist Chaplain but may be unsure about how to proceed in approaching a desired employing institution. This membership will facilitate the expansion of Humanist Chaplaincy by supporting aspiring Chaplains and endorsing them for sponsored educational opportunities by institutional employers. Furthermore, Student Affiliates will gain opportunities to learn from current Chaplains and to interact with the HCCC. This membership grants access to newsletters, conferences, and other special Chaplaincy-related events. Student Affiliates are not accredited Humanist Chaplains.

Humanist Chaplain

The HCAP requires that prospective candidates meet the following criteria to be considered for full Humanist Chaplain accreditation:

- a. Be a member of Humanist Canada (for at least one year).
- b. Actively pursue Humanism.
- c. Hold, or be seeking, a relevant position as a Chaplain in an institution or organization.
- d. Possess a relevant master's degree or equivalency.
- e. Submit an application package with substantiating documents, and successfully complete an independent study module and interview selection process.
- f. Demonstrate competence in: a. Knowledge of Humanism; b. Professionalism and Administration; c. Continuous Learning; d. Care and Support; and e. Secular Liturgies.
- g. Participate regularly in mentorship sessions and events hosted by the Humanist Canada Chaplain Professional Development Committee (HCCPDC), attending at least fifty percent of available engagements over a one-year period and receiving a favourable endorsement from HCCPDC.
- h. Complete Chaplain Training Course.

Minor exceptions to the above requirements may be considered on a case-by-case basis for unanimous approval of the HCCC.

a. Membership in Humanist Canada

Candidates for the HCAP must be members of HC in good standing and must have been members for at least one year prior to applying.

b. Active Humanism

Applicants to the HCAP must demonstrate that they are already active Humanists. Some examples of activities that would qualify include:

- Actively seek information and resources about Humanism and talk to people in the community. Ask questions and be introspective.
- Membership in and actively involved with a local or provincial Humanist group.
- Membership in and actively involved with a committee of Humanist Canada.
- Membership in and actively involved with a group or organizations whose principles or goals are in line with humanist values.

c. Applicable Position, Career, or Career Aspiration

Applicants to the HCAP must be on a viable path towards a relevant position in an institution such as the military, a hospital, nursing home, prison, school/university, police force, and/or humanist community, or already hold such a position.

The purpose of the HCAP is to enable qualified Humanist Chaplains to actively lend spiritual and emotional support to those who may need it in a given institution or organization. It shall not be used to bolster a private practice or to enhance credentials for another career. Humanist Chaplains must hold some relevant position, post, or job, either paid or volunteer, in which their Humanist Chaplain accreditation is put to use on a regular basis.

d. Education

Applicants for accreditation as Humanist Chaplains must possess a relevant master's-level degree from an accredited university. Student Affiliates must at a minimum be enrolled in a relevant undergraduate university program on an initial path towards a career as a Humanist leader.

Relevant degree fields may include but are not limited to: counselling, spiritual care, pastoral care, clinical psychology/psychology, psychiatric medicine/nursing, social work, divinity, theology/religious studies, ethics, cultural studies/anthropology, sociology, philosophy, or a combination thereof. The validity of any specific field of study will be considered by the HCCC on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the

candidate's career and life experiences. More flexibility will be granted for candidates with practical experience in spiritual care.

Despite some room for interpretation with respect to the field of study, the requirement of a master's-level degree is generally the minimum requirement for a professionalized Humanist Chaplaincy. While there are surely many capable secular spiritual care practitioners with varying levels of education, the HCAP is intended to grant a reasonable equivalency vis-à-vis the Chaplains of other faith groups who usually have achieved a Master of Theology or a Master of Divinity, or equivalent. Unfortunately, there is no clear equivalent degree in the secular domain, hence the flexibility granted above.

A certificate from the Canadian Association of Spiritual Care (CASC) is highly regarded and may be required when a relevant master's degree is not primarily focussed on counselling and spiritual care (ethics and other humanities, etc.).

Notably, some institutions or other employers may have more stringent and/or specific educational or degree requirements for their serving chaplains. This is beyond the control of Humanist Canada and aspiring Chaplains should ensure that their own educational path will fulfil the institutional requirements for their desired career. Nevertheless, HC expects (and will advocate) that any such requirements could be fulfilled via a non-religious program of study in order to be properly inclusive of Humanist Chaplains.

e. Application Submission

An application package will be made available for interested candidates which includes standard forms seeking biographical information and professional experience. There is a non-refundable application fee payable with the application submission, stipulated in Annex A at the end of this document. Further details about application requirements can be found in the next section.

f. Core Competencies

HCAP requires that accredited chaplains demonstrate competence in five key areas, below.

Applicants seeking accreditation will further hone these competencies with training and education but must demonstrate a solid foundation in the following five competencies:

i. Knowledge of Humanist Principles and Philosophy

Demonstrates a thorough understanding of humanist principles, such those articulated in the Amsterdam Declarations, the IHEU Minimum Statement on Humanism (1996), and A Secular Humanist Declaration (1980), and upholds these principles through their own words and actions.

ii. Professionalism and Administration

Possesses the skills and attitude of a competent professional and makes a positive impression as an ambassador for humanism. This includes but is not limited to exercising sound judgment, communicating clearly with others, being organized, and demonstrating proficiency with modern office productivity tools.

iii. Continuous Learning and Development of Self and Others

Models curiosity, a love of learning, and a drive for personal growth. Exemplifies constructive approaches to living meaningfully, ethically, and with purpose, thereby inspiring others to do the same. Seeks ongoing personal growth and development.

iv. Care and Support

Provides compassionate and caring support before, during, and following significant life events and crisis incidents. Possesses awareness and skills to listen actively and respond appropriately to issues related to loss, despair, conflict, life changes, end of life, moral and ethical dilemmas, and other human struggles. Offers spiritual approaches to contend with existential concerns related to meaning and connectedness. Adapts an inclusive approach that will meet the diverse needs of people across cultures and generations.

v. Secular Liturgies

Writes and delivers engaging speeches, presentations, and reflections. Is able to prepare holistic, inclusive rituals for life passages, special functions, services, events, and ceremonies. Inspires others to pursue introspection and personal reflection. Endeavours for approaches that build unity amongst all peoples. Works collaboratively with clients and professional colleagues of all backgrounds.

g. Humanist Canada Training

Humanist Chaplain training will be delivered to candidates who have successfully completed a formal interview. This training, which can be attended remotely, will further hone the core competencies described above.

3. Application

Humanist Chaplain Accreditation may be achieved in one of two ways:

A member of the humanist community who has recently practised spiritual care in an official professional capacity for more than 10 years and meets all other required criteria above may be nominated unanimously by the HCCC for accreditation. This provision exists especially with the intent of facilitating the accreditation of already qualified Chaplains at the inception of this program and it may be revised or revoked in the future.

Or, any other applicant must complete the application process by initiating an inquiry to hccc@humanistcanada.ca. Following an initial intake discussion with one or more members of the HCCC/HCCPDC to verify that requirements appear to be met and to ascertain potential mutual suitability, the applicant will be asked to provide details about their desired employing institution. If the applicant is deemed as likely suitable by consensus of the HCCC, along with a viable employment path, they will be invited to participate in regular HCCPDC mentorship sessions. Following a yearlong mentorship engagement, with an endorsement from HCCPDC, they will be invited to submit their formal application along with an application fee as per Annex A.

Required Documentation

The formal application is comprised of the relevant documents specified below, which must be prepared and submitted electronically to hccc@humanistcanada.ca:

1. Biographical Information Form, including personal particulars, and details of the desired employing institution;
2. Independent Study Module, which can be done at candidate's own pace and is provided with the initial application package;
3. Narrative Essay: Recounting your life journey as it pertains to humanism, and your motivation to serve as a chaplain. HCCC is interested in learning about you as a person: your family background, where you grew up, your commitments, and interests outside chaplaincy; your present family and personal support system. Also, please discuss how you imagine serving as a Humanist Chaplain;
4. Statements of Competence: candidates must demonstrate how they meet each of the five areas of competence outlined above;
5. Three letters of reference, one from each of the following recommenders:
 - a. A faculty member or academic advisor (if the candidate has been enrolled in an academic program within the last five years), OR a recent employer (ideally from within a related field), OR another professional reference; and

- b. A Humanist Canada Chaplain, OR a member of Humanist Canada in good standing; and
- c. Anyone of the candidate's choice who has known them for at least five years;
- 6. Academic certificates and transcripts from master's and doctoral-level degrees;
- 7. A signed Statement of Humanism, based on the IHEU Minimum Statement on Humanism; and
- 8. A Vulnerable Sector Check (request letter provided by HCCC).

Upon review of the submission, arrangements will be made for a formal interview by two members of Humanist Canada: a member of the HCCC, along with a currently accredited Chaplain. This interview will include some scenario-based elements.

Following the interview and deliberation by the interviewers, a successful candidate will receive accreditation as a Chaplain of Humanist Canada, or be enrolled as a Student Affiliate.

A candidate who is deemed unsuitable at any point during this process by a majority of the members of the HCCC will receive written notice.

4. Transition from Another Chaplaincy

Qualified Humanist Chaplains with substantive professional experience who no longer identify with the worldview/tradition that currently endorses their chaplaincy are welcome to apply through the aforementioned process.

The purpose of this provision is to bridge the careers of skilled Chaplains within their same institution, enabling them to continue their valuable work beyond their existing worldview affiliation. However, applicants seeking to transition must genuinely embrace Humanism and demonstrate its values.

As part of the transition process, candidates must clearly demonstrate their active involvement in Humanism and the steps they have taken to exemplify Humanist values. The interview, narrative essay, statements of competencies, independent study modules, and training will be used to gauge understanding and adherence. Their Humanist reference should also be able to substantiate their authentic interest in Humanist Chaplaincy. Furthermore, the preferred professional reference should be from their institutional employer.

Once a transitioning Chaplain candidate is deemed suitable for Humanist Chaplaincy, they will be paired with a mentor who is an accredited Humanist Chaplain.

5. Accreditation

A successful candidate who meets all Required Criteria will receive an Accreditation Certificate signed by the President of Humanist Canada and the Chair of the HCCC.

Newly accredited Chaplains will be paired with a more senior mentor for at least one year to readily access personalized support and guidance. They will also be invited to attend Chaplain group discussions organized by the HCCPDC.

Continued accreditation is conditional on maintaining an affiliation within a relevant institution or organization. An accredited Chaplain who is no longer affiliated with an institution must demonstrate a continuous effort to seek a new affiliation.

Chaplain Profile

All Humanist Chaplains shall be featured in a dedicated section of the HC website at www.humanistcanada.ca and shall maintain an up-to-date profile, proactively reporting any changes. At a minimum, this profile should include:

- A current professional-looking headshot;
- A brief narrative profile describing their current role as a Humanist Chaplain and other relevant details about their contributions to humanism (maximum 100 words); and
- URL to their professional website, employer site, or LinkedIn profile.

In addition to their public profile, Humanist Chaplains are required to proactively inform the HCCC of any changes to personal details including phone number, address, and employment details, within 60 days of any change.

Chaplains' Conference

The HCCC will host an annual Chaplains' Conference which will provide opportunities for Chaplain engagement and professional development. In-person attendance is preferable though it may be attended remotely. Accredited Chaplains must attend at least once every two years.

Professional Association Dues

Professional dues for fully accredited Humanist Canada Chaplains in paid positions are stipulated in Annex A, at the end of this document. Accredited Humanist Canada Chaplains in volunteer positions are not required to pay dues.

6. Ethics and Standards

An accredited Humanist Chaplain above all and at all times demonstrates respect for the dignity of others and is accountable in all their professional interactions within their institution, as well as with but not limited to: interactions with Humanist Canada, employers, their community, and any other relevant regulatory or professional organization to which they belong. Humanist Chaplains are also ambassadors to Humanism and shall not act in such a way that would discredit Humanism or Humanist Canada.

Furthermore, they are expected to:

- Work within their scope of practice, knowing when it is appropriate to make a referral or initiate a consultation.
- Articulate and maintain clear and appropriate professional boundaries.
- Demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to the diversity of individuals and their life experiences.
- Promote inclusive behaviour and advocate for diverse spiritual and cultural practices to meet the needs of all.
- Collaborate constructively with clients and colleagues of all faith groups, always upholding a respectful attitude about the worldviews of others.
- Articulate and demonstrate the importance and limits of confidentiality.
- Keep records in a manner appropriate to the circumstances and professional setting.
- Demonstrate awareness of occupational hazards and take preventative measures.
- Refrain from activities that could constitute, or appear to constitute, a conflict of interest (such as referring institutional clients to their own private practice).
- Demonstrate clear and concise professional communication, including written, oral, and electronic.
- Uphold secular Humanist values, including using secular liturgies and non-religious language when acting as an ambassador for Humanism.
- Engage collaboratively and foster community with other Humanist Canada Chaplains.

7. Complaints

Any person who is a witness to, or subject of, any questionable, unprofessional, unethical, or illegal conduct by an accredited Humanist Chaplain is asked to make a report to the HCCC via email at hccc@humanistcanada.ca, or by contacting a member of the HCCC (any criminal behaviour should be reported to relevant law enforcement authorities without delay). Any and all reports of misconduct will be taken seriously, investigated, and addressed in a timely fashion by the HCCC.

All documentation related to a complaint and subsequent investigative findings shall remain on file as long as the Chaplain is accredited by Humanist Canada and may be used in considering responses to any future complaints. These records will be maintained by the HCCC at the National Office of Humanist Canada and will not be disclosed to external parties except as required by law, or with the consent of the Chaplain in question.

Chaplain Review

The HCCC may conduct a Chaplain Review when allegations or evidence of misconduct arise. The HCCC may recommend that an ad-hoc committee be assigned to conduct the review, at the discretion of the Board of Directors. During the review, a Chaplain may be required to:

- Provide a written statement and any relevant documents or records (that are not confidential); and
- Be the subject of a personal interview by two members of the Review Committee, including at least one other chaplain.

The Review Committee shall judiciously weigh the particulars of the case and shall pursue one of the following resolutions:

- Close the file and issue a formal letter of decision to parties involved;
- Issue a letter of expectations, citing specific conduct that failed to meet the ethical standards expected of an accredited Humanist Chaplain and making recommendations to avoid similar issues in the future, including supervision; or
- Recommend to the Board of Directors that the Humanist Chaplain's accreditation be revoked and inform the Chaplain's employing institution.

8. Contact

Any questions about the Humanist Chaplain Accreditation Program may be directed to the Chair of the Humanist Canada Chaplaincy Committee at hccc@humanistcanada.ca.

ANNEX A – Checklist of Humanist Chaplain Accreditation Requirements

REQUIREMENT	Chaplain	Student Affiliate
HC Membership	✱	✱
Active Humanism	✱	✱
Applicable Position/Career	✱	Viable Career Path Planned
Education	Relevant Masters Complete	Enrolled in University
Initial Intake Discussion	✱	✱
Application Fee (paid once)	\$100	\$100
Independent Study Module	✱	✱
Complete Application File		
Biographical Info Form	✱	✱
Narrative Personal Essay	✱	✱
Competency Statements	✱	
Professional Reference	✱	
Humanist Reference	✱	
Personal Reference	✱	✱
Academic Cert/Transcripts	✱	Student ID
Vulnerable Sector Check	✱	
Core Competencies		
Knowledge of Humanism	✱	✱
Professionalism & Admin	✱	
Learning & Development	✱	
Care & Support	✱	
Secular Liturgies	✱	
Formal Interview	✱	
HC Chaplain Training	✱	
Memo of Understanding	✱	
Minimum Statement on Humanism	✱	✱
Annual Professional Dues	\$100 (n/c for volunteers)	n/c

