



SIAST

SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

On Expanding Degree Granting Authority in Saskatchewan

A response from the Saskatchewan Institute of
Applied Science and Technology

This document provides SIAST's perspective on degree
granting authority in Saskatchewan including degree
standards and procedures as requested by the Ministry of
Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

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Introduction

As more and more Canadian provinces provide colleges¹ and other trainers with degree granting authority, Saskatchewan must consider its place in national and international education and its capacity in meeting the exponentially changing labour market needs of the 21st century. To date, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick have expanded degree granting authority to colleges and/or private institutions.

As cited by Atkinson (2011), in the Saskatchewan Regional College Review report, *Towards a New System*, “Canada’s transition to a knowledge based economy means that more jobs than ever require post-secondary education. The proximate cause is the changing shape of demand in labour markets. Occupations that require non-routine analytic and interactive tasks have grown substantially during the last four decades” (p.9). This shift to educated labour with requirements for more developed critical thinking and analytical skills suggests a rethinking of the educational system is needed. A closer look at degree granting authorities is both warranted and opportune.

In discussing access to degrees in the knowledge economy, Marshall (2004) notes, “as the degree has increasingly become the entry point to many jobs and professions, the response has been to increase the capacity of the traditional degree-granting system. That is, increase the supply of graduates holding the skills, knowledge and attributes traditionally associated with the degree credential in order to meet the legitimate workplace demands for these attributes” (p.77). Marshall (2004), the president of Mount Royal University, goes on to describe this as useful and necessary, and as “a healthy sign of a growing and advancing society” (p.77).

In the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration Plan for 2011-12, the investigation of broadening degree granting authority is a strategy designed to “support an excellent, innovative, accountable and accessible advanced education system that is responsive to learners’ needs and contributes to an innovative economy” (p. 1). SIAST believes that broadening the degree granting authority would not only support this strategy, it would also further other identified Ministry strategies:

- *To ensure a skilled workforce to meet existing and future labour market demand.*
- *To develop and implement a provincial strategy for First Nations and Métis people to increase participation and success in advanced education and the labour force.*
- *To support increased attraction and retention of newcomers to Saskatchewan. (p.1)*

SIAST supports the expansion of degree granting authority to provide Saskatchewan with the opportunity to be more competitive on national and international fronts, ensure a skilled workforce, promote Aboriginal participation through increased career laddering and allow all learners to continue specializing in their chosen career paths. SIAST proposes the expansion of degree offerings outside

¹ The term college will be used frequently throughout this document and will encompass both colleges and technical institutes.

universities in the province of Saskatchewan is a logical evolution toward meeting ministry goals, labour market demands and 21st century learning requirements.

On Current Practice: Why Expand Degree Granting Authority?

SIAST views extending degree granting authority to additional institutions as necessary for filling gaps in today's changing world of new technologies and new jobs. Marshall (2004) concurs when he notes, "In the 'knowledge economy', the increased knowledge expectations of many jobs and professions have resulted in a legitimate increase in the credentials required for various jobs. This has occurred in all areas, from the trades and technologies through to the professions such as nursing and accounting" (p. 77).

Traditional practice in education has focussed on a clear separation of technical/vocational career paths and university career paths. Learners typically choose one or the other. If they want a degree, they go to university. If they want a technical/vocational education, they would go to a college or institute and be forced to choose a certificate or diploma. As noted in the Brandon Sun editorial (April 25, 2009), "Unfortunately there hasn't been much of a middle ground. The choice was largely an either/or type of thing, both for students and employers".

More recently opportunities for college graduates to obtain degrees have improved through articulation agreements with universities. While SIAST has experienced some success in articulations, there is still much work to be done in the Saskatchewan post-secondary system related to enabling career laddering for learners. Many learners seeking career laddering opportunities receive limited transfer credit for prior learning from universities. Frequently, diploma graduates seeking advanced education from universities are not saving time or money and are not being recognized for a sufficient level of previous education.

Because universities do not specialize in a number of technical vocational fields, students may be required to leave the province to seek out further education in their chosen field of study. For example, a graduate from an addictions or radiation/imaging or technology program who may want further education at a degree level for promotions in their field (or other reasons) has no access to that specific training in Saskatchewan. As identified by Skolnik (2006), "There are many situations in which a degree is required for employment, or for licence to practice in particular occupations. In some employment settings a degree is necessary to qualify for a higher salary or promotion" (p.3). Skolnik (2003) also explains colleges often provide education and training programs in occupational fields "where there is no precisely corresponding university program. Particularly in those cases, articulation between the non-degree sector and the degree sector is problematic". Learners are required to take more generic degree programs and may find transfer credit to be minimal.

Access to degrees that provide more comprehensive and integrated knowledge in a college-based program discipline and more detailed knowledge in the associated specialty areas are in demand. For example, the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers recently indicated to SIAST their strong support of more in-depth training. The president of the association stated, "Given the complexities

being addressed in practice, something more comprehensive is clearly needed as an introduction to practice in addiction services” (Carole Bryant, written correspondence, April 20, 2011). The logical providers of this more in-depth programming are colleges with expertise in the field. This view is supported by Skolnik (2004) who describes occupational or career fields provided by colleges as being in the middle range of the labour force which have grown rapidly due to changes in technology and work. “The knowledge and skill requirements of the middle segment of the work force have continued to increase. In this way of looking at change, offering baccalaureate programs in select fields is consistent with the mission of colleges as preeminent providers of career education for the middle segment of the workforce” (p.43-44).

SIAST supports the expansion of degree granting with an understanding of and commitment to meeting their current mission and mandate. SIAST recognizes the importance of keeping their essential role as the primary public vocational and technical certificate and diploma granting institution in the province of Saskatchewan intact. As such, this would remain the core business for SIAST; degree offerings would complement the current array of programming. As Skolnik (2005) states, “Provincial governments have made very clear their expectations that the baccalaureate will augment rather than replace other functions” (p.65).

Through improved articulation agreements **and** expansion of credentialing, SIAST believes that labour market demands can be met more effectively. As stated by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) (2007), “As the majority of occupations today require higher skill levels, the ability to meet labour-market demands is critical to a country’s competitiveness and economic performance” (p.28).

Degree Standards

In 2007, the Council of Ministers Education, Canada (CMEC) developed a framework to create Canadian degree standards. The framework provides

- descriptions of degree categories,
- degree level standards with expectations of graduates,
- procedures and standards for new degree program quality assurance focussed on determining if degree level and program learning outcomes are being met from admissions through to evaluation, and
- procedures and standards for assessing new degree granting institutions to determine if the institution has administrative capacity and needed policies, practices and services in place.

SIAST supports the CMEC (2007) national framework that brings consistency and coherency to a Canadian degree. The standards for any credential must be defined in terms of the program design and outcomes related to the skills, abilities, capacity and knowledge expected of a graduate upon completion of the program. The CMEC (2007) definition and standards for a bachelor degree state:

The credential awarded for the bachelor’s degree is designed to acquaint the student with the basic conceptual approaches and methodologies of the principal discipline or disciplines that

constitute the program of study, to provide some specialized knowledge, and to nurture the capacity for independent work in the discipline/disciplines and field of practice. All bachelors' programs are designed to provide graduates with knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work.

The standards stipulate the demonstrable transferable learning skills and level of mastery of a body of specialized knowledge in six dimensions: 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge, 2. Knowledge of Methodologies, 3. Application of Knowledge, 4. Communication Skills, 5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge, and 6. Professional Capacity/Autonomy. (p. 2-3)

This definition and the associated standards of transferable learning skills provide a nationally accepted framework that is essential for Canadian educational institutions to adopt to ensure consistency. It is SIAST's position that it is critical to have this consistency to meet goals of facilitating credential mobility in Canada, quality assurance, a competitive workforce and international recognition of the credential.

The CMEC (2007) provides an enabling framework with sufficient flexibility for institutions in being able to meet standards while holding true to their mandate, mission and values. For this reason, SIAST believes the framework can meet the varied needs of credit granting institutions beyond those of traditional universities. Usher (2011) indicates the growth of quality assurance councils in several provinces has increased the accountability of institutions in the provision of degrees and made it "possible to judge academic standards in a relatively consistent way across institutions" (p. 4). It is the consistent academic standard that is critical for degree programs to be recognized regardless of the institution delivering the program.

Clearly the ability to grant degrees must go beyond program features only; the ability to develop and deliver programs isn't the only consideration of quality. SIAST believes the CMEC (2007) procedures and standards for program quality assessment and the standards for institutional capacity provide viable common benchmarks. See Appendix B for details in the complete CMEC report.

System Diversification versus Competition

Should institutions such as SIAST seek to offer applied degrees or baccalaureate degrees? As noted by Marshall (2004), there is no set standard Canada-wide for an applied degree as a separate entity nor is there a common understanding of applied degrees. The CMEC (2007) suggests that "special categories of applied degrees....will need to be articulated at the provincial/territorial level" (p.2). The CMEC (2007) has done significant work in defining a baccalaureate degree and establishing quality assurance and institutional requirements to be degree granting from a nation-wide perspective. They refer to four types of baccalaureate degree program designs: (a) broad education, (b) in depth study in academic disciplines, (c) applied focus and (d) professional focus.

While the CMEC (2007) does not specifically address a college degree, they include degrees that would fit well within college mandates – baccalaureates with an applied focus and, in some cases, those with a professional focus such as nursing. Baccalaureate degree programs with an applied focus are described as follows:

They blend theory and practice, with content selected to ensure mastery of the field of practice rather than to deepen knowledge in the discipline/disciplines for their own sake or as preparation for further study in the discipline. Even so, they may prepare students for further study depending upon the field and length and depth of the program; graduates may or may not require preparatory studies before entering graduate programs. While professional associations or accrediting bodies may set entry-to-practice standards for such programs, those standards are not normally obligatory for the institution. (p.3)

The focus on mastery in a field of practice aligns with technical/vocational programming. SIAST's view is that the province should strive to expand baccalaureate degrees rather than specifying a separate entity of applied degrees that do not articulate at a national level. This also supports the requirements for international students who have a strong preference and need for recognized degree programming.

The demand for credentialing changes, including the growing requirement for a baccalaureate level of education in many professions is supported by business and industry as shown by regulatory bodies that require increased knowledge and skill levels. In addition, increased emphasis on research is a growing need for supporting business and industry and for economic development. Skolnik (2004) discusses the maturation of colleges as indicated by changes from both the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) who in recent years have expanded institutional eligibility to colleges. "An indication of this maturation is the recognition by the research granting councils that colleges have the capacity to administer grants, scholarships, and fellowships" (p. 51). For example, there are specific programs from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and College and Community Innovation program (CCI) that specifically target colleges for their research expertise. Degree programs would allow opportunities for more in-depth research. For some programs, an additional criteria is that colleges be degree granting to support needed in-depth research (e.g.) SSHRC Institutional Grants program.

With an expansion of the baccalaureate degree-granting authority, institutions such as SIAST could respond autonomously to the demands for higher levels of education and programming for professional careers and research in specific fields of expertise. SIAST strongly urges expanding degree granting authority to allow for an increased focus in areas where baccalaureate programs have become or are becoming a necessary qualification and in technical/vocational areas where there is a significant requirement for more advanced technical or applied skills.

An additional consideration for expanding degree granting authority relates to under-represented populations in educational institutions. Colleges are more successful at attracting Aboriginal students. Statistics Canada (2008) reports that 19 percent of the Aboriginal population has a college credential, while only eight percent has a university degree. Expanding access to baccalaureate-level education through colleges provides an opportunity for more effectively reaching populations traditionally under-represented at universities.

The Canadian Council on Learning (2007) strongly supports the need for improved access for under-represented groups. In their report on post-secondary education, they indicate, "Canada must continue to improve access for qualified students from under-represented groups, such as students from low-

income families, students with disabilities, male students, immigrants, older adults and Aboriginal people” (2007, p. 15). They view colleges as a mechanism for this improved access. “The country’s networks of community colleges appear to be an equalizer. College students are proportionally represented across all income levels, while universities have a disproportionately low number of students from lower income households” (p. 16).

Because of the importance of the labour market to education, new degrees should be subject to a test of public interest. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education examines the fit of new degrees for the province and institutional readiness by examining four issues: fit with institution's mandate and academic/education plan, student demand, labour market demand and unwarranted duplication of degree programs. SIAST agrees with the identified criteria, with an addition of a regional demand, as essential components in determining new degrees in Saskatchewan and to verify public interest.

- **Fit with institution's mandate and strategic plans** – the degree must align with the institutional mandate and strategic plan. From the SIAST Act, SIAST’s mandate includes “academic, scientific, trade, technical, technological and vocational fields of education” (p. 4). SIAST programs are required to pursue the highest level of accreditation and the SIAST strategic plan, approved by the SIAST Board of Directors, proposes to “expand program credentialing to foster employment success” (p.15) ... Specifically, “SIAST will develop degrees in specialized areas of academic excellence.” (p.14). SIAST does not view the expansion of a degree granting authority as a competitive process for the province. In fact, based on SIAST’s first-qualified first-admitted (FQFA) policy in many programs, the expansion would also potentially serve a student body not currently able to access degrees in Saskatchewan. The focus of degrees would be niche areas of expertise not currently being served within the changing labour market.
- **Student demand** – there must be evidence of sufficient student demand and a specific target audience who would see gains from the degree program. Evidence that existing programs do not meet the need would be essential.
- **Labour market demand** – a need must be demonstrated by sector councils, regulatory bodies, professional associations, etc. An unmet demand would be identified by business and industry. The labour market must be supportive of a degree credential as necessary for advanced skills and be supported by industry recognition of the increased education.
- **Regional demand** – evidence of a specific regional demand that is not being met elsewhere would warrant investigation for potential degree granting authority. A Saskatchewan priority is to ensure access to programming for learners across the province.
- **Avoid unwarranted duplication of degree programs** - niche areas for expansion that can help to meet growing demands for a more qualified workforce should be targeted. Degree programs should focus in areas where a diploma does not meet a demand, other institutions are not meeting the labour demand, and/or existing degrees do not provide the same applied or

practical focus. Where institutions such as SIAST have expertise and capacity to deliver a degree and it is deemed to be the best use of system resources, the degree offering should be pursued and given serious consideration. As an example, Red River College offers a Nursing degree. The degree was approved for the college based on cost effectiveness, to enable diversity of supply and in recognition of the difference in philosophy of a more practitioner based program while meeting the national degree standard.

In 1980, Dennison provided insight into college roles. “Expectations of society are that colleges will display a continuing responsiveness to public interests, as reflected in new programs, reordering of priorities, and openness to community demands” (p. 21). Fifteen years later, Dennison (1995) echoed these thoughts and added that the future of colleges depends on “their ability to adapt to changing priorities and to demonstrate their contribution to economic renewal” (p. 7).

SIAST does not propose institutions be given degree granting authority to offer degrees for their own sake nor do they seek to lose their focus in certificate and diploma programming. SIAST believes they can better meet their mandate by providing degree credentials as well as certificates and diplomas as required by students and the labour market.

Quality Assurance

Quality starts from the initial identification of a need for a specific degree through to its delivery and ongoing assessment. According to Ken Webb, Vice President Academic and Research at Red River College, (April 28, 2011), the college is implementing degree programming from the perspective that the degree must be a complete and unified program. Inherent to that perspective is that a degree is not automatically a diploma with additional content added to it. The process used at Red River College is to start with the identified need for a degree and map out a program as determined through a comprehensive DACUM process involving business and industry. They would then “take the degree program and work backwards to identify certificate and/or diploma exits where appropriate” (Interview, April 28, 2011).

The CMEC (2007) definition of a degree supports the notion of a degree as its own entity. “Each bachelor’s-degree program must meet a substantial and common set of competency outcomes... to justify use of the bachelor’s-degree label” (p.2). The degree is designed to “ensure mastery of the field of practice rather than to deepen knowledge in the discipline/disciplines for their own sake” (p.3). SIAST supports this perspective of a degree as its own entity with mastery of practice as necessary to ensure a quality standard. This unified degree assists with mobility in Canada and recognition internationally.

For a standard of quality in a degree, a quality assurance process should be set up as a part of a Degree Granting Act. To date, provinces that have extended degree granting authority have set up or used existing external quality assurance groups: Degree Quality Assessment Board in British Columbia; Campus Alberta Quality Council in Alberta; Council on Post-Secondary Education in Manitoba; Post-Secondary Education Quality Assessment Board in Ontario; and Maritime Provinces Higher Education

Commission for both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island also has an Applied Degree Program Committee.

Most of these agencies operate at arm's length to the government, most have 11 members typically appointed by the government from various sectors including business, private and public post-secondary, students and/or the general public. Alberta includes two out-of-province members on their Council. The fundamental purpose of these agencies is to provide program quality assessment, examine institutional capacity and recommend program approval.

While SIAST supports the concept of an external quality assurance council or board with a secretariat, it is evident that the number of institutions in the province that would be requesting new degree programs would not require a full time agency to operate on degrees alone. The number of applications annually is anticipated to be reasonably small. To maximize efficiency, SIAST suggests that an entity be formed that would operate in a fashion similar to that of the previous Campus Saskatchewan with a mandate to review degrees for the province. The entity would exist at arm's length from the government and provide recommendations to the Ministry related to degree requests. Appointments to the agency would include public and private post-secondary, business and general public with expertise related to quality assessment.

Most of the current provincial quality assurance agencies that function in Canadian provinces require submissions to include program quality assessments and institutional capacity assessments as defined by CMEC (2007). SIAST believes CMEC (2007) provides a suitable guiding framework. The submission of a new program should include the following aspects:

- Preliminary discussion with the Ministry regarding intent to submit a new program to the Provincial Quality Assurance agency.
- Submission to the Quality Assurance Agency:
 - A new degree granting institutional capacity review for institutions requesting to offer a level of credential they have not offered before. The organizational review would include demonstrated capacity in the 11 areas in the CMEC (2007) framework (See Appendix B). Once an institution has demonstrated this capacity, it would be exempt for future credentials of the same level. However, the institution would be required to indicate no changes in the factors for institutional capacity have occurred or outline any changes since the initial submission.
- A new degree program quality assessment would occur for all program submissions including
 - Demonstration of fit with institutional mandate; market demand including level of input and consultations with business and industry, professional associations etc. and results; student demand; regional demand; and no unwarranted duplication.
 - Demonstrated capacity in the 10 areas in the CMEC (2007) framework (See Appendix B).
 - Financial and human resource requirements
 - Results of a peer review by at least one external educational institution with expertise in the level and content of the proposed program. The role of this institution is to submit their views regarding adequacy and appropriateness of content, sufficient industry

input, and any other aspects related to their expertise from having a similar program.
(This process is used in Manitoba).

- The Provincial Quality Assurance Agency would provide recommendations to the Ministry.

At any time in the process, the Provincial Quality Assurance Agency can and should call in outside experts for specific program expertise as needed. These experts would have subject related academic credentials and experience in relation to curriculum, teaching and learning and evaluation. SIAST supports a peer review by an external institution and/or an out-of-province expert reviewer advising to the Provincial Quality Assurance agency.

Funding Implications

With any new program initiatives, there are funding requirements. SIAST does not view the right to award a degree as a commitment to funding. Post-secondary educational institutions in Saskatchewan have processes for funding which SIAST believes should remain in place. When labour market needs identify a demand for new or additional programs, SIAST works jointly with the Ministry to determine options for funding. If the Ministry puts forth program requests, funds may be attached to the requests. In situations where SIAST identifies a need through the labour market, the initiative would be brought to the Ministry through regular meetings, submission of the Operations Forecast and Operating and Capital Plan.

Any identified program would need to meet the provincial agenda and institutional mandate and be submitted for funding with other initiatives. In some cases institutions could reallocate funding through rationalization or other like mechanisms. SIAST would propose that start-up costs could potentially be made available from net operating assets and ongoing funding would come from the institute through internal reallocations or externally from government. In some cases, capital may be made available through partnerships with business and industry.

Degree Granting Authority

CMEC (2007) has set out clear direction in terms of standards and procedures related to degrees in Canada. These standards assist provinces seeking to expand degree granting authority to public and private educational institutions if they can demonstrate they are able to meet specified parameters. The consistency afforded by the CMEC (2007) provides Saskatchewan with a standard and foundation for determining degree authority. A new Degree Granting Act should be developed outlining who can apply for degree granting status, any restrictions that may exist and processes associated to obtaining degree granting authority.

Not all provinces who have expanded degree granting authority allow private institutions to offer degrees. However, it is SIAST's view that if a Saskatchewan private training institution can meet all the same criteria and, if, provincial legislation outlines clear requirements to ensure financial security and protection for students, it should be considered under the degree granting authority. SIAST also believes that all public post-secondary institutions in the province should be eligible to apply. As such, each of

the following Saskatchewan Acts would need to be reviewed and amended as necessary to ensure they support a new Saskatchewan Degree Granting Act:

- The Private Vocational Schools Regulations Act
- The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act
- The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology Act
- The University of Regina Act
- The University of Saskatchewan Act

All institutions, including existing degree institutions, should be subject to some review and monitoring of degree offerings. However, SIAST supports the exemption status as outlined by the Minister of Advanced Education in British Columbia (2006) for the development of new degrees.

*Institutions with proven track records (ten years' history in enrolling students in programs at a particular degree level in British Columbia) and appropriate governance mechanisms in place may apply for "exempt status" at a specific degree level. For example, if an institution meets the ten-year prerequisite period for baccalaureate degrees **and** satisfies other criteria for exempt status, the institution could apply for exempt status in respect of new baccalaureate degrees.*
(p.1)

Institutions with an exempt status do not have to take new programs through the Degree Quality Assessment Board in British Columbia. SIAST would propose that the current degree granting institutions in Saskatchewan be provided with a similar exemption. Further investigation into a monitoring and review process which the Ministry could require of any program at any degree granting institution should be considered.

A Saskatchewan Authorized Degree

The question as to what constitutes a "Saskatchewan degree" is significant. SIAST recommends that to be a "Saskatchewan degree", it must be approved by the government based on: the five criteria as outlined in the previous section, *System Diversification or Competition*; quality of the programming; and quality of the institution. As to who can offer degrees, there are decisions regarding public and private institutions and out-of-province institutions. SIAST supports extending the authority to public and private institutions in Saskatchewan.

There are differing perspectives on the authority for out-of-province institutions from those provinces with Degree Granting Acts. In New Brunswick, to be government sanctioned, degree providers must operate from within the province. In Alberta and British Columbia, out-of-province providers may grant degrees providing they go through appropriate processes including ministerial approval and quality assurance approvals for programming and for institutional capacity. For example, in Alberta, the minister first examines the request to determine the fit of the program within the province in terms of demand and in terms of the existing system of institutions. If the degree is determined to fit, it will then go through the quality assurance process before going back to the ministry for a final decision.

SIAST proposes:

- To be a degree granting institution in Saskatchewan, the primary campus of the institution must reside in Saskatchewan and authority to grant degrees must be bestowed to the institution by the government of Saskatchewan. If an institution does not have a primary campus in Saskatchewan, they are considered to be out-of-province. (This is done in Manitoba).
- An out-of-province institution may **apply** to the Ministry for degree granting authority. The application would only be considered if existing capacity does not exist within the current provincial system and/or the program meets a high demand need that cannot be met from within. If the program was deemed to be viable from the out-of-province provider, the institution would be required to go through the quality assessment agency processes and return to the Ministry for final approval.

SIAST supports the process adopted in New Brunswick which recognizes electronic delivery of courses. In order for the government to certify the institution and quality of programs, certain conditions must be met related to degree granting authority.

From the Degree Granting Act in New Brunswick (2000):

In order to offer a New Brunswick degree, the institution must operate in the province. While this does not mean that it cannot offer courses in classrooms elsewhere or that students cannot register and take distance courses from outside New Brunswick, the institution's headquarters, administration, and operations must be located in New Brunswick. (Frequently Asked Questions, Section 7)

In today's world, many institutions offer degrees online or through other forms of distance education. Individuals can make personal choices on taking courses or programs through distance delivery methods. If the institution has no physical presence in the province, there is really no reason or process to limit their capacity to deliver. There is no inference of the degree or credential as being sponsored or supported by the province.

All "Saskatchewan degree" programs must meet the specified degree granting rules and should also pursue electronic courseware as part of delivery as viable. The CMEC (1999), challenges all governments and educational institutions to ensure quality post-secondary education and to strive for

- Diverse and comprehensive program and learning opportunities, including technology-related learning.
- Programs and services with a focus on maximizing the quality of programming and delivery.
- Post-secondary education systems that foster institutional and system change.

Concluding Comments

SIAST believes the expansion of the degree granting authority is an important and essential step in the evolution of Saskatchewan post-secondary education. The degree framework as set out by the CMEC (2007), with an emphasis on baccalaureate degrees, provides a solid foundation for institutions to integrate degree programming. The framework standards ensure both credibility and rigor. With input from business and industry, baccalaureate degrees with a practical focus can meet the demands of a changing labour market.

Across the country, more and more Canadian technical institutes are responding to professional certification demands and student pressure for increased academic programming by expanding the range of programming they offer. A baccalaureate degree in niche areas of any institution that meets the standards set out by the CMEC (2007) degree granting framework provides an expansion of access for students and makes it easier for graduates with technical/vocational or professional credentials to move up a career ladder.

The broadening of the degree granting authority will provide Saskatchewan with the opportunity to recognize increased requirements of our 21st century society for education and training at a degree level. It will encourage people into shortage areas and change a stigma long attached to technical/vocational training. SIAST's open admission policy of first-qualified first-admitted will present new avenues and access to degrees for a population largely not served within the province at this time.

Recently, SIAST has seen increasing enrolments in programs that are responsive to industry in meeting labour market needs. In the past four years, SIAST enrolments have climbed 30%. More and more students are making SIAST their institution of choice. By extending degree granting authority, the province can provide students and their future employers with a choice for advanced education at a degree level. The expansion of degree granting authority will help Saskatchewan's post-secondary system meet employers' expectations for a highly educated and well-credentialed workforce, and it will reflect a more contemporary approach to providing access and choice in post-secondary education.

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Appendix A Guiding Questions

Question 1. What constitutes a minimum standard for a bachelor's degree? What do you think of the CMEC definition of a Bachelor's Degree? How, in principle, could we know whether a degree is of sufficient standard to be considered a Bachelor's degree? What factors need to be considered? Are there specific institutional features or characteristics that degree-providers must have, and if so, what are they? Or is it only program-related features which must be judged?

Question 2. Should expansion of degrees include all types of degrees or only those of an "applied" nature that do not overlap with university programs? Should new degrees be subject to a test of "public interest" based on labour market demand or some other factor? Or should the awarding of degree-granting status simply be based simply on an evaluation of program content and instructional quality?

Question 3. Who should be given the responsibility to determine whether or not a degree is of sufficient standard? Should it be held within the ministry or should it be an independent body? What kinds of procedures should it follow? How could outside experts best be involved? Once a positive determination of quality has been made, what consequence follow?

Question 4. Should the right to award a degree have any funding implications? Does the right to offer a degree automatically confer a right to public funding for that degree? If it does not, how should the right to public funding be determined?

Question 5. In expanding degree granting power, should there be different standards for public institutions and private institutions? If a new degree-granting authority is set up, should it also have the responsibility to oversee new degrees proposed by the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan or are existing arrangements for quality assurance at these institutions sufficient?

Question 6. What kinds of rules should apply to out-of-province educational institutions? Is a "Saskatchewan degree" any degree delivered in the province, and if so, how would "delivery" be defined in an age of electronic course-ware? Does the location of the institution's head office or governing board (or that of its parent organization, in the case of a subsidiary) make a difference, and if so, what extra distinctions need to be made?

***Appendix B Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree
Education in Canada***

2007



Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)

Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada

Preamble

The primary reasons for endorsing the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework, Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment, and the Procedures and Standards for Assessing New Degree-Granting Institutions for government decisions relating to new degree programs and new degree-granting institutions are as follows:

- To provide assurance to the public, students, employers, and postsecondary institutions at home and abroad that new programs and new institutions of higher learning meet appropriate standards and that performance against the standards will be assessed by appropriate means
- To provide a context for identifying how degree credentials compare in level and standard to those in other jurisdictions, with a view to facilitating the search for continuous improvement, the education and training of an internationally competitive workforce, and international recognition of the quality of Canadian credentials
- To improve student access to further study at the postsecondary level by establishing a degree-level standards context in which policies on the transfer of credits and credential recognition may be developed and, in fairness to students who choose non-traditional providers, to focus discussion of credit transfer and credential recognition on the academic standards that the programs involved have met

Ministers responsible for advanced education, hereafter referred to as “ministers,” recognize that the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with postsecondary institutions themselves. Ministers also recognize that the academic integrity and governance autonomy of the individual institutions and programs must be protected and preserved.

In that context, ministers expect postsecondary institutions in each province/territory to be committed to working with other postsecondary institutions, transfer agencies, and governments, as appropriate, to develop, enhance, and maintain quality assurance standards and procedures that reflect best practices in quality assurance. At the same time, ministers also recognize that governments are responsible for assuring themselves and the public that appropriate forms of quality assurance are in place in all degree-granting institutions and that they have a particular responsibility to do so when new programs or new institutions are proposed that require their approval.

In consequence, ministers have adopted the following statement as a guideline to be employed in decision making relating to new degree programs and new degree-granting institutions within a province/territory. It contains three sections:

1. Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework
2. Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment
3. Procedures and Standards for Assessing New Degree-Granting Institutions

1. Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework

| A. Descriptions of Degree Categories | | | |
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| DESCRIPTION | BACHELOR'S DEGREE | MASTER'S DEGREE | DOCTORAL DEGREE |
| Program Design and Outcome Emphasis | <p>The credential awarded for the bachelor's degree is designed to acquaint the student with the basic conceptual approaches and methodologies of the principal discipline or disciplines that constitute the program of study, to provide some specialized knowledge, and to nurture the capacity for independent work in the discipline/disciplines and field of practice.</p> <p>All bachelor's programs are designed to provide graduates with knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work. That capacity may be demonstrated by the preparation, under supervision, of one or more essays, a terminal research paper, thesis, project, exhibition, or other research-based or performance-based exercise that demonstrates methodological competence and capacity for independent and ethical intellectual/creative work and, where relevant, the exercise of professional responsibility in a field of practice.</p> <p>Some bachelor's-degree programs are intended to provide a wide exposure to several disciplines, others to provide an in-depth education in one or more disciplines (often as preparation for graduate study), and still others to provide a blend of theory and practice that equips students for entry into an occupation or profession. Despite that diversity, each bachelor's-degree program must meet a substantial and common set of competency outcomes, as outlined below, to justify use of the bachelor's-degree label. The range of bachelor's programs includes</p> | <p>A master's degree program builds on knowledge and competencies acquired during related undergraduate study and requires more specialized knowledge and intellectual autonomy than a bachelor's-degree program. Much of the study undertaken at the master's level will have been at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline. Students will have shown some originality in the application of knowledge, and they will understand how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, and they will show independent capacity in addressing issues and problems.</p> <p>Research-oriented master's programs are typically for graduates of related undergraduate or professional programs in the field or students who have taken bridging studies to equip them for graduate study in the field; the focus is on developing the research, analytical, methodological, interpretive, and expository skills necessary for doctoral studies or for leadership in society. Some programs are thesis-based and require the student to develop and demonstrate advanced research skills under supervision. Others are course-based and require students to demonstrate the necessary research, analytical, interpretive, methodological, and expository skills in course exercises.</p> <p>Examples: MA programs in the humanities and social sciences, MSc programs</p> <p>Profession-oriented master's programs normally admit students holding baccalaureate degrees and provide them with a selection of courses and exercises intended to prepare them for a particular profession or field of practice or, if they are already involved in the profession or field, to extend their knowledge base and skills as professionals/practitioners.</p> | <p>A doctoral program builds on the knowledge and competencies in a field or discipline acquired during prior study, usually at the graduate level. Study at the doctoral level is at the forefront of an academic or professional discipline.</p> <p>Holders of the doctoral degree must have demonstrated a high degree of intellectual autonomy, an ability to conceptualize, design, and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding, and an ability to create and interpret knowledge that extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research or creative activity.</p> <p>Preparation for doctoral work may involve course work of varying lengths aimed at cultivating further conceptual depth or breadth. It may also involve written and oral examinations of knowledge and skills in aspects of the discipline prior to authorization to proceed to work on a dissertation.</p> <p>Research-oriented doctoral programs focus on the development of the conceptual and methodological knowledge and skills required to do original research and to make an original contribution to knowledge in the form of a dissertation. In some fields an internship or exhibition component may be required, but without diluting the significance of the dissertation as the primary demonstration of mastery.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Programs designed to provide a broad education as an end in itself.</i> They may also prepare graduates for employment in a variety of fields and/or for admission to second-entry professional programs. Examples: BHum (Humanities), General BA and General BSc degrees • <i>Programs designed to provide in-depth study in academic disciplines.</i> They normally prepare students for graduate study in the discipline(s) and for employment in a variety of fields. • <i>Programs with an applied focus.</i> They blend theory and practice, with content selected to ensure mastery of the field of practice rather than to deepen knowledge in the discipline/disciplines for their own sake or as preparation for further study in the discipline. Even so, they may prepare students for further study depending upon the field and length and depth of the program; graduates may or may not require preparatory studies before entering graduate programs. While professional associations or accrediting bodies may set entry-to-practice standards for such programs, those standards are not normally obligatory for the institution offering the program. • <i>Programs with a professional focus.</i> They are designed to prepare graduates to meet admission requirements and to be competent practitioners in the profession. Some of them are first-entry programs, others are second-entry programs (that is, they require some prior degree-level study or even a degree). They normally require periods of practical experience (apprenticeship, internship, articling, clinical, etc.). The capacity for independent professional work is demonstrated by academic and practical exercises, under supervision, followed by admission tests to the profession. Though considered to be bachelor's programs in academic standing, some professional programs yield degrees with other nomenclature. Examples: DDS (Dental Surgery), MD (Medicine), LLB, or JD (Juris Doctor) | <p>Example: MSW (Social Work)</p> | <p>Such programs lead to the award of the PhD. Examples: PhD (Psychology), PhD (Education), PhD (Music)</p> <p>Practice-oriented doctoral programs are of a more applied nature, relate to a professional or creative activity and, where there is an internship or exhibition requirement, may also require a dissertation. Doctoral programs with an orientation to practice typically involve more course work than doctoral programs with a more theoretical or disciplinary focus. Such programs lead to the award of a degree designation reflecting the field or discipline. Examples: EdD (Education), MusDoc (Music), PsyD (Psychology).</p> |
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| Preparation for Employment and Further Study | In addition to providing personal and intellectual growth, bachelor's programs, in varying degrees, may prepare students for entry into graduate study in the field, second-entry professional degree programs, or employment in one or more fields. | Graduates will have the qualities needed for either further study in the discipline or for employment in circumstances requiring sound judgment, personal responsibility and initiative, in complex and unpredictable professional environments. | Holders of doctorates will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, and innovation in tackling and solving problems. |
| Length of Program | Owing primarily to variations in pre-university studies among the provinces/territories, classroom instruction is typically six to eight semesters or more in duration (normally 90-120 credits, or the equivalent) and may be supplemented by required professional experience (e.g., supervised practica, internships, and work terms). | Master's programs vary typically from two to six semesters in duration, depending on the field and the speed at which individuals progress through requirements. | A doctoral program is typically three to six years in length, depending on the field and the speed at which individuals progress through requirements. |
| Admission Requirements | Admission normally requires, at a minimum, a secondary school or CEGEP diploma and/or university preparatory courses, a minimum grade-point average, and other program-specific requirements. Students lacking these credentials may be admitted on a part-time or probationary basis, with continuation subject to acceptable academic achievement. Second-entry programs normally require at least two or three years of completed degree-level studies or in some cases the prior or concurrent completion of another undergraduate degree. | Normally, an undergraduate degree with an appropriate specialization or an undergraduate degree with relevant bridging studies. | Normally, a master's degree with an appropriate specialization or a master's degree with appropriate bridging studies. |

B. Degree-Level Standards

The focus of the following degree-level standards is on the expectations of graduates at each degree. The standards stipulate the demonstrable transferable learning skills and level of mastery of a body of specialized knowledge in six dimensions: 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge, 2. Knowledge of Methodologies, 3. Application of Knowledge, 4. Communication Skills, 5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge, and 6. Professional Capacity/Autonomy. The shades of distinction between degrees are determined by the capacity of the graduate at each level to act competently, creatively and independently, and by their proximity to the forefront of a discipline and/or profession. Among other things, the degree-level standards are intended (a) to facilitate the assessment of credentials for broad purposes of credit transfer and credential recognition, (b) to provide clear learning-outcome standards to instructional and program designers, (c) as a broad framework for quality assurance purposes. The standards are intended to be cumulative — each degree level presupposes the accomplishment of an earlier one.

| | BACHELOR'S DEGREE | MASTER'S DEGREE | DOCTORAL DEGREE |
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| EXPECTATIONS | <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i> | <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i> | <i>This degree is awarded to students who have demonstrated</i> |
| 1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge | <p>(a) Knowledge and critical understanding in a field of study that builds upon their secondary education and includes the key assumptions, methodologies, and applications of the discipline and/or field of practice</p> <p>(b) Basic understanding of the range of fields within the discipline/field of practice and of how the discipline may intersect with fields in related disciplines</p> <p>(c) The ability to gather, review, evaluate, and interpret information, including new information relevant to the discipline, and to compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline</p> <p>(d) The capacity to engage in independent research or practice in a supervised context</p> <p>(e) Critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline</p> <p>(f) The ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline</p> | A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice. | A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice. |

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| 2. Knowledge of Methodologies and Research | <p>(a) An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to (i) evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques, (ii) devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods, and (iii) describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship in the discipline and on their relevance to the evolution of the discipline</p> <p>(b) The ability to review, present, and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to (i) develop lines of argument; (ii) make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts, and methods of the subject(s) of study; (iii) apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline; and (iv), where appropriate, use this knowledge in the creative process</p> | <p>A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that enables the graduate to</p> <p>(a) Have a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline</p> <p>(b) Have a capacity to evaluate critically current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence, and on the basis of that competence, have shown at least one of the following: (i) the development and support of a sustained argument in written form or (ii) originality in the application of knowledge.</p> | <p>A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that provides the graduate with the ability to</p> <p>(a) Conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems</p> <p>(b) Make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods</p> <p>(c) Produce original research, or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, and to merit publication</p> |
| 3. Application of Knowledge | <p>(a) The ability to use a range of established techniques to (i) initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts, and information; (ii) propose solutions; (iii) frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem; (iv) solve a problem or create a new work</p> <p>(b) The ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.</p> | <p>The capacity to (i) address complex issues and judgments based on established principles and techniques and (ii) apply an existing body of knowledge in the research and critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.</p> | <p>The capacity to (i) undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level and (ii) contribute to the development of academic or professional skill, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.</p> |
| 4. Communication Skills | <p>The ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, using structured and coherent arguments, and, where appropriate, informed by key concepts and techniques of the discipline.</p> | <p>The ability to communicate ideas, issues, and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.</p> | <p>The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas, issues, and conclusions clearly and effectively.</p> |
| 5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge | <p>An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability; an appreciation of the uncertainty and ambiguity of and limits to knowledge, and an appreciation of how this might influence analyses and interpretations.</p> | <p>A cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.</p> | <p>An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.</p> |

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| 6. Professional Capacity/ Autonomy | Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring (i) the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts, (ii) working effectively with others, and (iii) behaviour consistent with academic integrity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring (i) the exercise of initiative and of personal responsibility and accountability and (ii) decision-making in complex situations, such as employment (b) The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development (c) The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations (b) The intellectual independence to be academically and professionally engaged and current (c) The ability to evaluate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts |
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2. Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment

Procedures

1. The evaluation process is clearly defined. Its procedures and standards are publicly available. Its conclusions based on a rigorous and thorough examination of the proposed program are fair, consistent, and equitable.
2. Each proposed program is assessed in its entirety, including all majors and fields of specialization. Substantial additions to an existing program, such as new majors or fields of specialization, require a new evaluation.
3. Each proposed program is subject to review by an independent panel of experts with experience in the appropriate field of study and in the design and evaluation of programs. The composition of this panel may vary, but it should include a majority of senior academics.
4. The process includes the institution's written proposal, discussions with proponents of the institution, a site visit when necessary, a written report by the expert panel, and an institutional response to the report.
5. When possible and pertinent, the evaluation process includes an evaluation of student work with a view to determining whether stated degree level and program-learning-outcome standards are being met.
6. The process is based on a firm commitment by all the institutions in the jurisdiction to recognize its validity and its binding character.

Standards

7. The review includes evaluation against published standards that include at least the following commonly used elements:
 - 7.1 Degree Level – The degree level of the proposed program is in accordance with the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework.
 - 7.2 Academic Policies – The institution has published academic policies with respect to admission, promotion and graduation requirements, mature students, credit transfer and prior learning assessment, appeals, and academic dishonesty consistent with the level of the proposed degree program. It has established policies and procedures that outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded.
 - 7.2.1 Admissions – The institution has admissions requirements for the proposed program consistent with the postsecondary character of degree-granting organizations; ensures appropriate forms of assessment of prior learning for admission to programs; and can demonstrate that the criteria and processes

used to determine whether an individual can enrol in a program are set at a level that provides a reasonable expectation that the student can successfully complete the program, taking into account the support provided by the institution including appropriate probationary policies.

7.2.2 Promotion and Graduation – The institution has promotion and graduation requirements for the proposed program consistent with the postsecondary character of degree-granting organizations and the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework that allow for confirmation that a student is progressing normally through the program

7.3 Program Content – The content of the program, in both subject matter and learning-outcome standards, meets the degree-level standard in the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework. In addition, the program offers an education of sufficient breadth and rigour to be comparable to similar programs offered by other degree-granting institutions that meet recognized standards in the host province or territory and in other jurisdictions.

7.4 Program Delivery – The delivery methods should allow students to achieve the proposed learning outcomes at the degree-level standard. This should normally be measured by looking at whether the delivery methods are appropriate to the course content, the students involved, and the proposed learning outcomes; the effectiveness of the expertise and resources, both human and material, that support the program and its students; and the processes for students' feedback.

7.5 Governance – The management structures and methods of the program are well defined and permit delivery of the quality of education necessary for students to attain the learning outcomes.

7.6 Human Resources – The institution has sufficient and appropriately qualified resources, academic and otherwise, to deliver degree-level education, and satisfactory policies pertaining to faculty that address issues such as the protection of academic freedom; academic/professional credentials; the regular review of faculty performance; the means of ensuring that faculty knowledge of the field is current; teaching, supervision and student-counselling loads; and professional development of faculty. Staff resources must be sufficient to ensure the coverage required within the discipline for the proposed program.

7.7 Physical Resources – The institution is able to ensure student and faculty access to appropriate learning and information resources (such as library, databases, computers, classroom equipment, and laboratory facilities) and to an appropriate range of academic support services.

7.8 Credential Recognition – The proposed program's learning outcomes and standards are sufficiently clear and at a level that will facilitate recognition of the credential by other postsecondary institutions, employers, and professional bodies. Where appropriate, the program, courses, or curricular elements in it are designed to facilitate

credit transfer or credential recognition by other postsecondary institutions and by employers, both within the host province or territory and in other jurisdictions.

7.9 Regulation and Accreditation – For proposed programs leading to professions that are subject to government regulation, the learning outcomes and standards and other requirements for graduation take into account the requirements of the relevant regulatory or professional body.

7.10 Program Evaluation – The institution has a formal approved policy and procedure requiring the periodic review of programs to occur on a cyclical basis, normally not exceeding ten years. The policy and procedure includes assessment of programs against the degree-level standard in the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework and any program- or institution-specific standards for programs, and assessment of individual student work in the terminal stage of programs to determine whether the standards are being achieved by students. A program review procedure includes, at a minimum,

- (i) A self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators of the program based on evidence relating to program performance against the criteria stated above, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions
- (ii) An assessment conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution that normally includes a site visit
- (iii) A report of the expert panel assessing program quality and recommending any changes needed to strengthen that quality
- (iv) An institutional response to the recommendations in the report
- (v) A summary of the conclusions of the evaluation made publicly available.

3. Procedures and Standards for Assessing New Degree-Granting Institutions

Procedures

1. The evaluation review process is clearly defined. Its procedures and standards are publicly available. Its conclusions based on a rigorous and thorough examination of the institution are fair, consistent, and equitable.
2. The review of an institution includes an independent, expert panel composed of senior administrators and/or experts competent to provide an informed opinion on the quality of the unit or operation.
3. Where appropriate, the review includes an evaluation of the financial capacity of the institution to deliver and sustain its proposed programs appropriately.
4. The review includes written material, discussions with proponents of the institution, a site visit where appropriate, a written report by the expert panel, and an institutional response to the report.

Standards

5. The review includes evaluation against published standards that include at least the following commonly used elements:
 - 5.1 Mission Statement and Academic Goals – The institution has approved a mission statement and academic goals that identify the academic character and the aspirations of the organization, including the extent to which the applicant is committed to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge and service to the community or related professions. The institution has academic policies and standards that support the institution’s mission and academic goals.
 - 5.2 Governance – The institution has the legal characteristics and governance structure necessary to organize and manage an institution of higher learning. The structure normally includes a body competent to either make decisions or give advice in academic matters.
 - 5.3 Administrative Capacity – The institution has the capacity to manage itself in a competent way. It has capable administrative staff, policies with respect to strategic planning, an adequate information system to gather and analyze data needed for planning and decision-making, and procedures for the development of curricula and academic policies that include participation by academic staff and consultation with students.
 - 5.4 Faculty and Staff – The institution has policies with respect to the number and qualifications of the academic faculty and instructional staff, including provisions against fraudulent credentials; policies with respect to appointment, evaluation (including student evaluations), employment conditions, which include workload, promotion, termination, and professional development; and policies/practices with respect to research and/or scholarship. In addition, the institution has policies regarding appropriate human resource development and management.
 - 5.5 Information Services/Systems – The institution has available for students and faculty appropriate information services and learning resources to support the academic programs. The review normally considers how priorities are established with respect to their acquisition and the institution’s commitment to maintaining and supplementing them.
 - 5.6 Physical Plant – The institution has a physical plant and facilities including laboratories, classrooms, library, technology, and specialized equipment, appropriate to support degree programming in the program or programs it offers (or proposes to offer) or demonstrates the availability of adequate learning resources and learning support for students where alternate means of delivery are employed.

- 5.7 Ethical Conduct – The institution values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct, as demonstrated by the policies and practices by which it proposes to conduct its business and, if applicable, by its past performance within and/or outside of the jurisdiction.
- 5.8 Academic Freedom and Integrity – The institution maintains an atmosphere of academic freedom and intellectual independence: an atmosphere that not only promotes a full and balanced treatment of the commonly-held academic body of knowledge, theories, and opinions, but also encourages testing the limits of knowledge and communicating research findings and the implication of those findings to the academic community and beyond. Academic activity is supported by policies, procedures, and practices that encourage academic honesty and integrity and respect the ownership rights of the creators of intellectual property whether faculty, employees, or students. The institution has adopted formal ethical research standards as well as policies concerning the management of research funds. The institution has means and procedures for the enforcement of the above policies based on principles of natural justice.
- 5.9 Financial Stability – The institution demonstrates financial stability and sufficient financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that students can complete their programs; has a credible strategic and business plan; has procedures for a regular audit by an arm’s-length professional accountant of the institution’s financial methods, performance, and stability; and has methods to protect student financial investment in case the institution ceases activity.
- 5.10 Student Protection – The institution values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct in its relations with students through the availability of full, accurate, and truthful material regarding its mission and goals, history, governance, and academic structure; program and subject descriptions; faculty and administrators’ credentials; entrance requirements including credit transfer and prior learning assessment policies; clear and informative student enrolment agreements verifying student awareness of relevant policies; support services; payment requirements and refund policies; financial assistance; and transcript protection.
- 5.11 Dispute Resolution – The institution has policies for dealing with disputes between the organization and its students, the organization and its faculty, and between faculty and students, where complaints, grievances, and/or disputes of students, faculty, staff, and administration are dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice (fair and expeditious resolution of disputes with reasonable deadlines; full disclosure; the right to be heard in response to charges or complaints; a process for and an officer charged with reviewing disputes and examining the evidence; and provision for a final internal review by a body of persons [or a person] not involved in the dispute).

5.12 Periodic Review – The institution has a formal approved policy and procedure requiring the periodic review of all units and/or operations to occur on a cyclical basis, normally not exceeding ten years. The policy and procedure includes provisions for the assessment of programs according to standard 7.10 of the Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment.

The periodic review procedure includes at a minimum

- (i) A self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators based on evidence relating to program performance against the criteria stated above, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions
- (ii) An assessment conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution that normally includes a site visit
- (iii) A report of the expert panel assessing institutional quality and recommending any changes needed to strengthen that quality
- (iv) An institutional response to the recommendations in the report
- (v) A summary of the conclusions of the evaluation made publicly available