

**ORGANIZATION REVIEW**  
**Self-Study**

**CRITERIA**

**FOR**  
**ALL PRIVATE POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**  
**AND**  
**OUT-OF-PROVINCE PUBLIC**  
**POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS**

August 2016

### **Acknowledgements**

The Organization Review Self Study Criteria was established and published by the Minister of Advanced Education in November 2006.

This version, which outlines the criteria for undertaking an organization review self study, has been prepared with advice from stakeholders and quality assessment experts.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and the Degree Quality Assessment Board acknowledges with thanks the individuals and organizations that shared their experience and expertise.

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### **Modifications to Policies, Criteria, and Guidelines**

The board recommends to the Minister of Advanced Education policies, criteria and guidelines that will apply for the purposes of giving or refusing consent/approval or attaching terms and conditions to consent.

The Minister of Advanced Education reserves the right to modify policies, criteria and guidelines from time to time and will post current versions on the website.

It is the applicant's responsibility to use current policies, criteria and guidelines.

# ORGANIZATION REVIEW

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### ORGANIZATION REVIEW

The purpose of the organization review is to assess the institution's policies and practices against the established criteria to demonstrate that the institution has the capacity to deliver degree programs.

#### **When is an organization review required?**

All first time applicants by private post-secondary institutions and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions may be required to go through an Organization Review Self-Study. For subsequent applications by private post-secondary institutions and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions, the Degree Quality Assessment Board (the board) will assess whether an organization review should be required, and if so, whether any prior accreditations can be recognized as satisfying all or part of British Columbia's organization review criteria.

British Columbia public post-secondary institutions will not be required to undergo an organization review.

#### **How an organization review will be conducted**

If the board determines that an organization review is required, the board will select three external experts from the board's list of qualified external experts to review an applicant institution against the established organization review criteria. External experts may have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- senior management experience in a post-secondary institution;
- accounting expertise and certification with experience in corporate financial management;
- experience in the admissions and registrar functions at a post-secondary institution, including admissions policies and academic records management;
- experience in managing learning resources and/or infrastructure; and
- private sector consultants specializing in organization design and behaviour, or assessment and evaluation.

External experts appointed to an organization review must possess the following characteristics:

- have an advanced academic credential (normally at the doctoral level);
- be committed to quality assurance in post-secondary education;
- be recognized by their peers for having a broad outlook, open mind, and sound judgment;
- provide full disclosure and be free of any actual or perceived conflict of interest regarding an applicant/institution, in accordance with the board's policy; and
- have demonstrated oral and written communication skills, preferably including conducting reviews and writing formal reports to strict deadlines.

The institution making the application may provide their nominations for external experts to the board. The board takes the institution's suggestions under consideration, but reserves the right to make the final determination and will select the experts.

The board will advise the institution of the external experts selected to conduct the review. The cost of the external experts' site visit will be paid for by the institution being reviewed.

The external experts will contact the institution to arrange a site visit, during which they will assess whether the institution meets the organization review criteria. Following the site visit, the external experts will provide a written report to the board. The board will provide the external experts' written report to the institution for their response or comment.

The board will review the institution's application, the external experts' report and the institution's response to the external expert's report and determine whether the institution has demonstrated that the established organization review criteria have been met.

*Note: In conducting the organization review, external experts and/or the board will be guided but not limited by the organization review criteria outlined in this document.*

### **How an organization can prepare for an organization review**

As described previously, in conducting the quality assessment processes, the board may require institutions to undergo organization reviews to inform its assessment of an institution's degree program proposal. To prepare for an organization review by external experts, institutions will develop a self-study prior to making its degree program application.

During the self-study, institutions should refer to the organization review criteria when preparing their organization for review. It is the responsibility of the institution to make information available to the external experts that is necessary to determine whether the institution meets the organization review criteria.

### **Submission Guidelines**

The length of the submission may vary, but should be approximately 6,000 words (additional information may be added to the submission in the form of appendices). A submission for an Organization Review must provide information and discussion in a format that adheres to the order and headings below. The submission will be assessed in the following categories against criteria described in this document:

1. Organization Overview
2. Mission
3. Governance and Administrative Capacity
4. Financial Capacity, Facilities and Learning Resources
5. Faculty
6. Academic Policies and Standards
7. Student Policies and Services

*Note: It is the responsibility of the submitting institution to provide the external experts with the information they need to conduct the assessment.*

### **Previous Assessments**

The board is committed to an assessment process that is comprehensive, effective, efficient, objective and non-discriminatory. Private and out-of-province public institutions that have successfully undergone a previous quality assessment, such as institutional or program accreditation, and have authority to operate programs and confer degrees outside British Columbia, may choose to submit this documentation to the board for consideration. It is the responsibility of the applicant institution to put forward a rationale as to how previous assessments meet fully, or in part, the board's criteria.

The board has sole discretion to recognize the findings of another reviewing body in conjunction with its organization and/or degree program reviews. In making its determination of whether any previous assessment can satisfy all or part of its requirements, the board will consider how recent the review is, the credibility of the reviewing body, the criteria, standards and procedures used in the review, and the qualifications, standing and objectivity of the external reviewers involved. The board may also require a site visit and/or evaluation of institutional headquarters and operations in British Columbia to ensure that the basis for accreditation in other jurisdictions is applicable to operations British Columbia.

### **De Novo Institutions**

The board recognizes that for de novo institutions, it may be difficult to provide information required under the organization review on institutional structure and processes that may not yet be in place. In this situation, the board will look for a thorough planning process and evidence that the institution will have in place the institutional capacity, resources, facilities and personnel to meet the standards and criteria of the review.

In the case of de novo institutions, the board may recommend that specific terms and conditions be attached to ministerial consent to ensure that the institution develops appropriately.

### **Branch Locations and Collaborative Partnerships**

For institutions with headquarters in another jurisdiction that wish to operate a satellite or branch location in British Columbia or through a collaborative arrangement with another institution, the organization review will focus on the institution's operations in British Columbia and will include a review of how these operations vary or are the same as operations in the home jurisdictions. Additionally, the organization review will include a review of how the home jurisdiction will ensure that the branch operation or collaborative arrangement maintains quality.

Private and out-of-province public institutions should refer to Appendices 1 and 2 in the *Organization Review Self Study* for the:

- *Operational Guidelines for the review of Out-of-province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Branch Operations;* and
- *Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements.*

For institutions with headquarters in British Columbia that also wish to operate a satellite or branch location outside British Columbia and grant British Columbia degrees, the organization review criteria will be applied to operations both inside and outside British Columbia, as appropriate.

### **Governance and Ownership Information**

All institutions are asked to provide information on governance and ownership.

Out-of-province public institutions are asked to provide the basis on which they meet the definition of a public institution.

To fulfill its obligation to make informed recommendations to the minister, the board requires that the applicant disclose complete information regarding the owners, directors and/or officers of the institution, and any relationships that those persons may have with other post-secondary institutions and approval bodies governing those institutions.

### **Collection and Use of Personal Information**

The *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) applies to private and out of province public institutions. The purpose of PIPA is to govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by organizations in a manner that recognizes both the right of individuals to protect their personal information and the need for organizations to collect, use or disclose personal information.

In addition to other obligations, PIPA requires that organizations develop and follow policies and practices that are necessary for an organization to meet its obligations under PIPA. Good privacy practice often depends on the context in which personal information is handled and the expectations of the individuals interacting with an organization. As well, where student records are stored in a location outside of the province, the institution must demonstrate that they have policies in place to inform students that legislation from that out-of-province jurisdiction may apply. For more information regarding PIPA, please refer to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia at: <http://www.oipcbc.org/>.



## 1. Organization Overview

*The purpose of the Organization Overview is to provide the key information to enable an informed recommendation to the Minister regarding the Applicant as a corporate and legal organization.*

### 1.1 Organization Information

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Organization Information:***

- Key information about the organization, specifically including:
  - Full legal name of organization
  - Operating name of organization
  - Common acronym of organization (if applicable)
  - URL for organization homepage (if applicable)
  - Addresses for the head office, the main campus and all other operating sites, as well as telephone, facsimile, and email contact information
  - number of employees (faculty, administration and staff) indicating whether full-time or part-time
  - number of students enrolled, indicating whether full-time or part-time
  - written confirmation of the authorization of the representative of the applicant institution to enter into a binding application (including name, title, address, telephone and email address)
  - written confirmation of the authorization of the institutional contact person to represent the institution throughout the application process (include name, title, address, telephone and email address)

### 1.2 Corporate Structure and Legal Character

*To fulfill its obligation to make informed recommendations to the Minister, the Board will require that all institution applicants disclose information regarding the owners, directors and officers of the organization, and any relationships that owners may have with other post-secondary institutions and/or approval bodies governing those institutions. In addition, the organization will identify any instances of non-compliance with legislation governing those institutions and any relevant regulatory bodies. To enable this, all applicants will be required to provide written authority for the Board to enter into communications with third parties, including accrediting bodies.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Corporate Structure and Legal Character:***

- Key information about the organization, specifically including:
  - The dates of the organization's operation;
  - the organization's corporate structure;
  - the organization's legal status (sole proprietor, partnership, society, corporation);
  - the organization's legal character (e.g. articles of incorporation, bylaws, partnership agreements, charter, statutory authority or other documents) including documentation relevant to any relationship with parent, subsidiary or other corporate groups;
  - organization chart(s) identifying names and position titles of owners, officers and/or board members including contact information; and
  - name and qualifications of the senior educational and/or administrative officer.

- Key information about the owners, specifically including:
  - the name, address, telephone number, facsimile number and electronic mail address of:
    - all directors and officers of the institution;
    - all persons holding at least 10% ownership in the institution; (please indicate percentage ownership); and
    - legal counsel to the applicant for the purposes of the application for consent.
  - Name and location of any other business carried on with or associated with the applicant, including at any other location.

*(Non-profit/charitable organizations please provide the above information for the members of the governing body.)*

If the organization is incorporated, for all persons holding at least 10 percent ownership in the organization, please provide the following information:

- the nature of any other relationship those persons may have to the applicant (e.g. president, members of the governing body);
- the names and addresses of any other post-secondary organizations owned or controlled by such persons;
- the name and address of any body that has granted approval for those organizations' operation, or was responsible for oversight of the organizations; and
- a letter signed by the organization's legal representative that gives the Board the right to contact each of the approval bodies identified, and which instructs the approval body to release to the board any and all information relevant to the organization's compliance or noncompliance status with that body.

## **2. Mission**

### **2.1 Mission Statement and Academic Goals**

*The organization has a clearly articulated and published mission and academic goals statement, approved by the governing body, that identifies the academic character and the aspirations of the organization appropriate for a degree-granting post-secondary education institution that demonstrates the extent to which the organization is committed to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge and service to community or related professions. The organization has academic policies and standards that support the organization's mission and academic goals to ensure degree quality and relevance.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing the Mission Statement and Academic Goals:***

- Key information about the organization, policies and programs is published in its academic year calendar and/or is otherwise readily available to students and the public, specifically including:
  - the organization's mission and goals statement;
  - the organization's history and its governance and academic structure;
  - a summary of the organization's future plans for growth;
  - a description of the type(s) of programming currently offered;
  - a general description of each degree program (e.g., purpose, outcomes, length);
  - individual descriptions of all subjects/courses in these programs and their credit value;

- the academic credentials of senior administrators; and
- the academic credentials of faculty.
- Programs are clearly related to the organization's mission and goals.
- Appropriate academic policies are in place to support the organization's mission.
- Faculty qualifications are appropriate to the courses that the faculty are teaching.
- Resources are used to advance the organization's mission.

### **2.2 Institutional Evaluation and Effectiveness**

*The organization 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.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Institutional Evaluation and Effectiveness:***

- The periodic review procedure includes, at a minimum:
  - 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;
  - An assessment conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution that normally includes a site visit;
  - A report of the expert panel assessing institutional quality and recommending any changes needed to strengthen that quality;
  - An institutional response to the recommendations in the report; and
  - A summary of the conclusions of the evaluation made publicly available.
- The organization has a process for conducting student outcomes reviews that indicates:
  - enrolment;
  - student retention rates;
  - student learning outcomes;
  - student completion times;
  - student employment outcomes;
  - graduate satisfaction; and,
  - employer satisfaction.
- The organization has an accountability process in place (including appropriate reporting mechanisms) to account for the type and level of funding received from any public sources (e.g., tuition and ancillary fees, federal or provincial government funding).

### **2.3 Program Evaluation and Effectiveness**

*The organization has a plan, policies and processes in place for assessing the effectiveness of its educational programs and services, and for continuous growth and improvement.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Program Evaluation and Effectiveness:***

- Description of the organization's internal processes for developing and approving programs;
- Regular cycles of internal review are in place for all programs, including evidence of faculty participation in the evaluation of programs; and

- For programs where credentials are awarded externally or where industry standards require review, reports from any appropriate external review bodies which indicate that the organization meets or exceeds the standards.

### **3. Governance and Administrative Capacity**

#### **3.1 Governance and Administrative Capacity**

*The organization has the legal characteristics and the leadership, through a governance structure and administrative capacity, necessary to organize and manage a reputable, effective and high quality degree-granting institution in British Columbia. The structure normally includes a body competent to either make decisions or give advice in academic matters. 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 which include participation by academic staff and consultation with students.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Governance and Administrative Capacity:***

- The organization has an appropriate governing structure such as a governing board that is the legally constituted body responsible for managing the activities of the institution and maintaining the purpose, viability and integrity of the institution; achieving institutional policies and goals; selecting administrative leadership and providing the appropriate financial, facilities and human resources.
- The organization's reporting structure clearly indicates the relationship between owners, and governing and managing bodies.
- Governance and decision-making structures are clear and consistent with the institution's academic purposes.
- The organization has a qualified chief executive officer who is accountable to the governing board and whose full-time or major responsibility is the administration of the institution.
- The organization has sufficient and qualified senior administrative staff, with clear lines of responsibility, decision-making authority and accountability necessary to conduct the affairs of the institution.
- The organization is able to demonstrate how administrative policies and practices ensure that business practices and decisions support the academic integrity of programs and protect student interests.
- Development of curriculum, academic policies and standards includes appropriate participation by qualified academic staff, and appropriate forms of consultation with students.

### 3.2 Institutional Conduct

*The organization values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct as an administrative organization 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.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Institutional Conduct:***

- An acceptable statement by the governing board, administrative officers and other representatives of the organization, of the ethical standards relating to fair and honest business practices, including a policy on conflict of interest that will guide its conduct in the course of operations in British Columbia, and in other jurisdictions.
- A list and explanation of any instances of non-compliance by the organization with legislation governing those organizations such as the British Columbia Student Assistance Program (BCSAP), Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA); or other legislation such as the *Society Act*, *Company Act*, and *Securities Act*.
- Disclosure of any legal or administrative actions pending against the organization, or any of the owners, officers, administrators or instructors, by any law enforcement agency.
- The organization can demonstrate it has developed and implemented policies and practices that are necessary for the institution to meet its obligations under PIPA and any other legislation that may apply concerning the collection and use of personal information.

### 3.3 Dispute Resolution

*The organization has policies and procedures for dealing with disputes between the organization and its students, the organization and 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 and are fair, reasonable and effective.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Dispute Resolution:***

- The organization has policies and procedures through which students' academic appeals, complaints, grievances and/or other disputes are dealt with in accordance with the following principles of natural justice:
  - Individuals have a right to:
    - a fair and expeditious resolution of disputes with reasonable deadlines;
    - know and understand the charges or complaints made against them; and
    - be heard in response to charges or complaints made against them, before any disciplinary decision is taken.
  - Organizations have an obligation to:
    - deal with complaints or grievances according to clear and reasonable deadlines;
    - establish and operate according to administrative processes that deal with disputes fairly and expeditiously at the informal level; and
    - prior to registration, confirm that the information provided to students regarding policies and procedures pertaining to: (1) academic policies and standards; (2) student support and services and (3) withdrawal, dismissal and refund policies.

- Students and employees are informed about the policies and procedures for dispute resolution. To these ends, the institution's policies ensure that:
  - charges or complaints against an individual are stated clearly and in writing;
  - there is an administrative person(s) responsible for dealing with complaints, and to whom complaints may be directed and who may facilitate the informal and satisfactory resolution of disputes;
  - there is a process for and an officer charged with reviewing disputes and examining the evidence; and
  - there is a provision for a final internal review by a person, or body of persons, not involved in the dispute in any way.

#### **4. Financial Capacity, Facilities and Learning Resources**

##### **4.1 Financial Capacity**

*The organization demonstrates financial capacity sufficient to assure stability and the financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that the number of students assumed in the business plan can complete the degree program in the event that revenue falls short of the business plan or costs exceed the estimated allowances. The organization has a credible strategic and business plan, including procedures for the regular audit of the organization's financial methods and records, performance and stability by an arm's-length professional accountant, and has methods to protect student financial investment in the case of cessation of activity.*

##### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Financial and Management Capacity and Capability:***

- The organization must provide a credible short- and long-term business plan (at least five years) that includes a best case / worst case scenario that addresses the applicant's future educational, enrolment, physical and fiscal growth in British Columbia. The business plan should include the organization's academic, financial, facilities, marketing and human resource plans and should demonstrate that the organization has the administrative organization and capacity to effectively manage a degree-granting institution. The business plan should also detail the programs to be offered in British Columbia and demonstrate the organization's commitment to academic quality of program content and delivery.
  - Financial information contained in the business plan indicates that the organization has a financial base adequate to support activities consistent with its mission and educational objectives, and the required financial resources for start-up and ongoing operating costs associated with the delivery of the proposed program(s). The institution demonstrates financial capacity sufficient to assure stability and the financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that the number of students assumed in the business plan can complete the degree program in the event that revenue falls short of the business plan or costs exceed the estimated allowances. (The financial information should include an audited financial statement. For newly established organizations, a pro forma financial statement prepared by a qualified independent accountant [e.g., CA, CGA, CMA] should be available.)
- The organization has identified the source of funds to be invested.

- The organization has a policy requiring the regular audit of the applicant's financial methods, performance and stability by a qualified third-party accountant in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.
- The organization has evidence of methods to protect student financial involvement in the case of the cessation of activity.
- The organization subscribes to an annual reporting format that will allow the ministry to be assured that the criteria described above are being met.

### 4.2 Facilities and Equipment

*The organization has the facilities and equipment, including laboratories, classrooms, library, technology and specialized equipment, to support the educational objectives of a degree-granting institution and of the degrees offered (or proposed to offer) or demonstrates the availability of adequate learning resources and learning support for students where alternate means of delivery are employed.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Facilities and Equipment:***

- Description of the physical plant or facilities, including locations (at any campus or satellite operations);
- Evidence that the physical plant, equipment, technology and support services adequately support the organization's educational and student activities;
- Submission of any agreements with other institutions where resources and services are shared;
- The organization has safety and emergency preparedness policies that ensure a safe environment for students, faculty and employees, and that demonstrate the organization is prepared to respond to emergency situations and critical incidents.

### 4.3 Learning Infrastructure

*The organization has libraries and learning resources (physical and electronic) appropriate to its mission and objectives as a degree-granting institution. The organization 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 organization's commitment to maintaining and supplementing them.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Learning Infrastructure:***

- Evidence of reasonable student and faculty access to learning and information resources (such as library, databases, computing, classroom equipment and laboratory facilities) sufficient in scope, quality, currency and type to support students and faculty in the academic program(s) offered by the institution.
- Evidence of commitment to provide and maintain necessary learning and other resources specific to the program and to supplement them as necessary.
- Submission of any agreements with other institutions where resources and services are shared.
- If the institution is a branch or subsidiary of an out of province institution, the application should include a description of the methods and processes that will be used to transfer and maintain the philosophy and basic processes of the sponsoring institution.

## 5. Faculty

### 5.1 Faculty and Staff

*The organization has qualified faculty and instructional staff to achieve its mission and academic goals. The organization has policies with respect to the number and qualifications of the academic faculty and instructional staff, including provisions against fraudulent credentials, and 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 organization has policies regarding appropriate human resource development and management.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Faculty and Staff:***

- The organization has academic and other staff in sufficient numbers:
  - to develop and deliver the program (and in graduate programs, to develop and deliver each of the fields of specialization identified in the program);
  - to act as research supervisors, where appropriate; and,
  - to meet the demands of the projected student enrolment.
- The organization has full-time faculty in sufficient numbers to:
  - ensure quality standards are maintained;
  - ensure a high degree of consistency and continuity of curriculum development and delivery; and
  - to develop and deliver the program to develop and deliver each of the fields of specialization identified in the program;
- The academic credentials held by faculty are appropriate to the courses they are teaching.
- The organization has appropriate policies pertaining to faculty, including policies that:
  - define the academic/professional credentials required of faculty teaching all courses in the program, and where appropriate, serving as research supervisors and/or members of thesis/dissertation examining committees;
  - demonstrate that the organization's capacity for degree granting is supported by an appropriate balance between continuing or ongoing faculty appointments and temporary appointments;
  - require the institution to have an explicit policy of due diligence on hiring. For example, the organization has evidence on file of the highest academic and/or professional credential claimed by faculty members, supplied directly from the granting agency/institution to the organization;
  - require the regular review of faculty performance, including student evaluation of teaching and/or supervision;
  - identify the means of ensuring that faculty knowledge of the field is current through professional development, scholarship and research;
  - pertain to faculty teaching and supervision loads and availability to students;
  - support the professional development of faculty, including the promotion of curricular and instructional innovation, as well as technological skills, where appropriate; and,
  - clearly outline the duties and responsibilities, institutional reporting structure and performance standards.



### **6. Academic Policies and Standards**

#### **6.1 Academic Policies**

*The organization has academic policies and standards that support the institution's mission and educational objectives, and ensure degree quality and relevance. The organization has published admission, continuation and graduation policies consistent with the objectives of its programs.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Academic Policies:***

- The organization has appropriate academic policies to support its mission. For example, the organization has policies and procedures pertaining to:
  - admission requirements;
  - student withdrawal, dismissal and refund policies;
  - international students, including policies that ensure that international students meet program requirements for degree completion;
  - prior learning assessment;
  - entrance examinations;
  - other academic prerequisites;
  - methods of course delivery;
  - academic honesty;
  - intellectual property;
  - student support and services;
  - scholarship and other financial assistance;
  - grading;
  - appeals of grades;
  - student complaints and grievances; and
  - where applicable, supervision, preparation and examination of theses/dissertations.
- The development of curriculum and academic policies and standards includes appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and appropriate forms of consultation with students and external agencies.

#### **6.2 Admissions, Student Recruitment and Transfer**

*The organization has fair and ethical policies in place governing admissions and recruitment of students. The organization has a systematic method for evaluating and awarding academic credit and clearly defined criteria for evaluating student learning and awarding course credit, and provides students with regular progress reports. The organization has established policies and procedures that outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Admissions, Student Recruitment and Transfer:***

- Public reports, materials and advertising are produced in a full, accurate and truthful manner, and student recruitment policies follow fair business practices including the advertisement of transfer arrangements;
- Admission policies are consistent with the organization's mission and academic goals and with the level of preparation necessary for student success at the post-secondary level in

British Columbia, and are comparable to admission requirements for students entering similar degree programs at other degree-granting institutions in British Columbia;

- Policies for evaluating and awarding transfer credit are systematic and satisfy current program course requirements;
- Listing of any transfer arrangements with other institutions;
- Students are informed about the transfer credit arrangements currently in place; and
- Policies for requesting transfer credit are systematic and consistent with those established for institutions currently within the British Columbia Transfer System.

### **6.3 Policies on Academic Freedom, Honesty and Integrity**

*The organization maintains an atmosphere in which academic freedom exists and students and academic staff display a high degree of intellectual independence. The organization 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 implications 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 organization has adopted formal ethical research standards as well as policies concerning the management of research funds. The organization has means and procedures for the enforcement of the above policies based on principles of natural justice.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Policies on Academic Freedom, Honesty and Integrity:***

- A policy on academic freedom in which the applicant recognizes and protects the rights of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge and respects the right of individuals to communicate acquired knowledge and the results of research freely.
- When students or staff are asked to sign or adhere to a statement of faith and/or a code of conduct that might constitute a constraint upon academic freedom, a policy in which the institution:
  - notifies staff and students prior to employment or admission; and,
  - has adequate procedures in place to ensure the principles of natural justice are followed, in the event of alleged violations of any contractual arrangement concerning such required statement of faith and/or code of conduct.
- Appropriate policies pertaining to academic honesty and procedures for their enforcement.
- An appropriate plan for informing students and faculty about and ensuring their understanding of the policies and procedures concerning academic honesty.
- An appropriate policy on ownership of the intellectual property of employees and students.
- An appropriate policy on the management of research funds.
- Where appropriate, formal ethical research standards, as evidenced by policies on human research participants, the use of animals in research and the management of research funds.

## 7. Student Policies and Services

### 7.1 Student Protection and Awareness

*The organization 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 administrator’s credentials, and admission requirements, including credit transfer and prior learning assessment policies. The organization creates a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment that supports its mission and the learning growth and well-being of its students. The organization has clear and informative student enrollment agreements verifying student awareness of relevant policies, support services, payment requirements and refund policies, financial assistance and transcript protection.*

#### ***Criteria that will be used in assessing Student Protection and Awareness:***

- All academic and non-academic policies are clearly stated and publicly available on the organization’s website.
- Prior to registration, students are provided with and confirm in writing their awareness of policies and procedures pertaining to:
  - admission requirements;
  - student withdrawal, dismissal and refund policies;
  - international students, including policies that ensure that international students meet program requirements for degree completion;
  - prior learning assessment;
  - entrance examinations;
  - other academic prerequisites;
  - credit transfer arrangements for incoming students;
  - credit transfer arrangements and recognition by other institutions;
  - method of course delivery;
  - academic honesty;
  - intellectual property;
  - student support services;
  - scholarship and other financial assistance;
  - grading;
  - appeals of grades;
  - student complaints and grievances;
  - sexual misconduct – organizations that operate a student residence must establish written policies and procedures that address sexual misconduct<sup>1</sup>, including sexual misconduct prevention, and set out procedures for:
    - making a complaint or report of sexual misconduct involving a student; and
    - responding to a complaint or report of sexual misconduct involving a student.
  - supervision, preparation and examination of theses/dissertations (where applicable);
  - tuition refunds; and,

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the [Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act](#) for a definition of “sexual misconduct”.

- arrangements in the event of institutional closure or program termination, including the financial methods the organization has selected to ensure the repayment of unearned funds (pre-paid tuition and fees owing to students ).
- The student enrollment contract and related policies are consistent with the terms of conditions of ministerial consent.
- The organization has the capacity to ensure that academic records of students are secure.

### **7.2 Student Withdrawal, Dismissal and Refund Policies**

*The organization has policies and procedures for student withdrawal, dismissal and refund that are fair, reasonable and effective and can confirm the awareness of students of these policies and procedures.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Student Withdrawal, Dismissal and Refund Policies:***

- The organization has clearly articulated and published policies and procedures regarding student withdrawal, dismissal and refund and makes them available to its students.
- The organization has policies and procedures regarding student withdrawal, dismissal and refund.

### **7.3 Student Life/Support Services**

*The organization has the facilities, services and programs that provide support for students to be successful in their studies and to develop and grow in non-academic areas.*

***Criteria that will be used in assessing Student Life / Support Services:***

- The organization has clearly articulated and published definitions, policies and procedures regarding student financial assistance, and makes them available to its students.
- The organization has policies, procedures and staff to administer student financial assistance programs and to assist students.
- The organization has staff who are experienced in advising students on academic performance and employment opportunities.
- The organization has other support services that facilitate student success typical of post-secondary degree-granting institutions.

### Appendices

1. Operational Guidelines for the review of Out-of-province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Branch Operations; and
2. Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements.

## **Operational Guidelines for the Review of Out-of-Province Institutions operating in British Columbia through Branch Operations**

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The Organization Review Criteria state that “For institutions with headquarters in another jurisdiction that wish to operate a satellite or branch location in British Columbia or through a collaborative arrangement with another institution, the organization review will focus on the institution’s operations in British Columbia and will include a review of how these operations vary or are the same as operations in the home jurisdictions. Additionally, the organization review will include a review of how the home jurisdiction will ensure that the branch operation or collaborative arrangement maintains quality.” Unlike collaborative arrangements, the applicant seeking consent to offer degree programs as a branch operation of an out-of-province institution will control directly all aspects of the administration and delivery of the degree program.

In the context of the board’s review, the division of governance, policymaking and administrative authority, and influence over organizational culture, between the branch and central operations need to be understood. As well, assurance of the equivalency of academic standards and coordination of quality assurance mechanisms between branch and central operations is a concern. Drawing on the guidelines for assessing collaborative arrangements, principles for consideration in reviewing the relationship between branch and central operations is provided below.

### *Main campus*

The campus that is responsible for the central administration of a branch campus location.

### *Branch Campus (Institution seeking consent to offer degree programs in British Columbia)*

A branch campus is any location of an institution other than the main, but under the same corporate structure as the main campus, that:

- 1) is permanent in nature;
- 2) has a separate student body;
- 3) has a resident administration;
- 4) normally offers a full program leading to a degree; and,
- 5) is geographically separate from the main campus such that students may not easily avail themselves of educational and administrative services of the main campus.

### **1. Responsibility for, and equivalence of, academic standards**

- a) The academic standards of all degree programs provided through the branch campus are comparable to those of similar programs provided by the institution’s other campuses.
- b) A plan for regular program review consistent with practices of the degree-granting institution’s main operations exists, and encompasses programs offered in British Columbia.
- c) The degree-granting institution can demonstrate that student achievements in programs delivered through branch campuses in British Columbia are comparable to those of students in similar degree programs offered at the degree-granting institution’s main campus.

### **2. Assuring the quality of programs and degrees**

- a) The policies and procedures for quality assurance must be explicit and documented, and must clearly delineate the division of responsibilities and control between the branch campus and the main campus or central administration.
- b) The curriculum and delivery methodologies used for degree programs delivered by a branch campus are substantively the same as those used for similar degree programs at the main campus, and any differences must be clearly identified at the time Ministerial consent is requested.
- c) Where appropriate, consideration has been given to ensure the curriculum demonstrates reasonable levels of Canadian content (e.g. course in history, law, education).

**Operational Guidelines for the Review of Out-of-Province Institutions operating in  
British Columbia through Branch Operations**

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**3. Information for students, staff and faculty**

- a) Information given to faculty and staff of branch campuses, and to students registered in its programs, includes directions about the appropriate channels for concerns, complaints and appeals.

**4. Publicity and marketing**

- a) The branch campus retains effective influence to ensure the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the programs and degrees it offers, in particular when the information is published on its behalf. The branch campus must satisfy itself through active means that the public cannot be misled about the nature and standing of the degree programs offered in British Columbia.

**5. Policies, procedures and organizational culture**

- a) Branch operations are managed in accordance with the formally stated policies of the central administration.
- b) There are measures to ensure that the organizational culture of the main campus is transferred to the branch campus to a sufficient degree to ensure a culture appropriate to an institution offering their specific degree programs.
- c) There must be adequate safeguards against financial temptations that would compromise academic standards.

## Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements

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In order to assure that the quality of degree-programming offered in British Columbia through collaborative arrangements is maintained, the Degree Quality Assessment Board, in its assessment of degree program proposals, requests and reviews the collaborative agreements between partners. In reviewing agreements, documents and evidence provided by applicants, the Board is guided by the following guidelines. These guidelines may also assist applicants in preparing their submissions and negotiating collaborative arrangements.

### Definitions

#### *Degree-granting institution*

The institution that is seeking, or holds the Minister's consent, approval or authorization under an Act of the British Columbia Legislature to provide degree programs, and grant degrees.

#### *Collaboration Partner*

An institution that is authorized or accredited by a body that is recognized by the board, has entered into a collaborative arrangement to provide all or part of a degree program, where the degree is conferred by the degree granting institution.

#### *Collaborative Arrangement*

An agreement or partnership between a degree-granting institution and a collaboration partner whereby the collaborative partner provides administrative support and/or part of a program leading to a degree conferred by the degree-granting institution.

### **1. Responsibility for, and equivalence of, academic standards**

- a) The degree-granting institution is ultimately and solely responsible for the academic standards of all programs that lead to degrees granted in its name.
- b) The academic standards of all degree programs provided through a collaborative arrangement are equivalent to those of other comparable programs provided by the degree-granting institution.
- c) The degree-granting institution reviews regularly the extent to which programs and/or courses have achieved their intended objectives (i.e., meet the degree-level standards and expected student learning outcomes).
- d) A plan for regular program review consistent with practices of the degree-granting institution's main operations exists, and encompasses programs and/or courses offered in British Columbia through collaborative arrangements.
- e) The degree-granting institution is able to demonstrate that student achievements in programs and/or courses delivered through a collaborative arrangement are comparable to those of students in similar degree programs offered at the degree-granting institution's main campus.

### **2. Assuring the quality of programs and degrees**

- a) The degree-granting institution is accountable for the quality and standards of all programs and degrees granted in its name.
- b) The policies and procedures for quality assurance must be explicit and documented, and must clearly delineate the division of responsibilities and control between the degree-granting institution and the collaboration partner.
- c) The curriculum and delivery methodologies used for degree programs delivered by a collaboration partner should be substantively the same as, or of comparable quality to, those used for similar degree programs at the degree-granting institution's main campus, or a sound rationale for any differences must be clearly identified at the time Ministerial consent is requested.



## **Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements**

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- d) Where appropriate, consideration has been given to ensure the curriculum demonstrates reasonable levels of Canadian content (e.g. course in history, law, education).
- e) All faculty meet the minimum qualifications established by the degree-granting institution and those requirements must be comparable to the standard used for similar programs at its main campus.
- f) The degree-granting institution retains authority to approve faculty teaching in degree programs delivered through collaborative provision.
- g) There is appropriate provision for staff appointment, induction and development, to meet the requirements of the degree-granting institution for its degree programs.
- h) The degree-granting institution ensures that effective measures exist to review the proficiency of staff and faculty.
- i) The degree-granting institution determines the admission requirements for students entering a program under the collaborative agreement. Particular care needs to be taken with any arrangements for the assessment of prior and experiential learning.
- j) Program resources available for degree programs delivered under a collaborative arrangement must be clearly identified by the degree-granting institution at the time Ministerial consent is requested and must be adequate to achieve the stated desired outcomes of the arrangement.
- k) Any course transfer arrangements made between the partners inside or outside the degree program must be done through a written articulation agreement which outlines policies and procedures are in place to determine equivalency and that there is periodic review of those arrangements.

### **3. Student assessment requirements**

- a) The examination and assessment requirements for programs provided ensure that the academic standards and grading practices are equivalent to the same or comparable programs of the degree-granting institution.
- b) The degree-granting institution must ensure that the partner organization understands and follows the requirements for the conduct of assessments.

### **4. Degrees and transcripts**

- a) The issuing of degrees and transcripts must remain under the control of the degree-granting institution. The words and terms used on the degree certificate should be consistent with those used by the degree-granting institution for the same or comparable programs it provides.

### **5. Information for students**

- a) Information given by the partner organization or an agent to prospective students and to those registered in a program, about the nature of a program, the academic standards to be met and the quality of the program must be approved by the degree-granting institution. Such information clearly defines the nature of the collaborative arrangement and outlines the respective responsibilities of the parties.
- b) Information is monitored regularly by the degree-granting institution and updated as appropriate.
- c) Information includes directions to students about the appropriate channels for concerns, complaints and appeals.
- d) Information given to the student cannot mislead the student as to which institution he or she is enrolled in.

## **Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements**

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### **6. Publicity and marketing**

- a) Effective control over the accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to the programs and degrees for which a degree-granting institution has responsibility must be retained by the degree-granting institution, in particular when the information is published on its behalf. The degree-granting institution must satisfy itself through active means that this control is exercised consistently and fairly and that the public cannot be misled about the collaborative nature or about the nature and standing of the degree programs.

### **7. Policies, procedures and information**

- a) The commitment and support of both the degree-granting institution and the collaboration partner's central authorities must underpin any arrangement.
- b) Collaborative arrangements must be negotiated, agreed upon and managed in accordance with the formally stated policies and procedures of the degree-granting institution.
- c) The degree-granting institution ensures that the financial aspects of the arrangement are satisfactory to the Ministry of Advanced Education and that activities are costed and accounted for accurately and fully.
- d) There are measures to ensure that the organizational culture of the degree granting institution is transferred to the collaborative partner to a sufficient degree to ensure a culture appropriate to an institution offering their specific degree programs.
- e) There must be adequate safeguards against financial temptations to compromise academic standards.

### **8. Selecting a partner for collaboration**

- a) The degree-granting institution provides the rationale for its choice of partner.
- b) The degree-granting institution is satisfied that the partner is in good standing, financially stable, and that the institutional missions of both institutions are compatible with respect to the purposes of collaboration before entering into any agreement.
- c) The legal status of a partner organization and its capacity to contract with the degree-granting institution has been examined, together with its ability to provide the infrastructure and learning resources necessary to ensure the required quality and standard of the degree will be achieved, prior to entering into any agreement.

### **9. Selecting an agent**

- a) Where a degree-granting institution or its partner uses agents to broker or facilitate the collaboration, the degree-granting institution ensures that an agent's interests do not conflict with the institution's interests or that of the students recruited for the programs.
- b) In choosing an agent, the agent's financial standing and reputation should be considered by the degree-granting institution.
- c) There must be written and legally binding contracts with any agents involved with collaborative arrangements.

## **Operational Guidelines for Out-of-Province Institutions Operating in British Columbia through Collaborative Arrangements**

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### **10. Written agreements**

- a) There must be a written and legally binding agreement or contract between the degree-granting institution and the partner signed by the appropriate senior official in each organization, including:
  - The relationship between the degree-granting institution and the partner organization; and
  - The arrangements relating to individual degree programs and locations.
- b) The agreement must include termination and arbitration provisions and financial arrangements and must specify the respective responsibilities of the two parties for academic standards and quality. The residual obligations to students on termination of the agreement must be specified.
- c) The agreement must clearly delineate how funds collected from students are collected, dispersed and accounted for between the two parties.