

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

The Government of British Columbia is committed to ensuring the relevance and high quality of post-secondary education for all learners and the national and international recognition of British Columbia degrees. The purpose of the Degree Quality Assessment Board (the Board) is to advance the quality of degree programs and make recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training in respect of:

- Applications for consent under the *Degree Authorization Act* (DAA) from private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions;
- Degree program proposals from British Columbia public post-secondary institutions; and
- Applications for exempt status.

In conducting quality assessment processes or undertaking recurring audits of an institution's internal program review processes, the Board will be informed by government priorities and will address the following public policy objectives:

- Quality education in degree programs;
- Coherent and integrated post-secondary system;
- Post-secondary system that responds to the labour market needs of the Province; and
- Protection of the interests of learners.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The operations of the Board will be affordable, accountable, efficient and effective. The principles outlined below will inform and guide the relationship between the Board and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST).

Affordable

- The structure and operation of the Board will be affordable and reflect the policy objectives of AEST.
- The structure and operation of the Board will reflect the spending policies and accountabilities of government.
- The Board will ensure that its policies and practices do not impose costs on institutions that are greater than necessary to ensure quality degree programming in British Columbia.

Accountable

- The Board structure, operations and policies will be open and transparent.

Efficient

- The Board will pursue expeditious decision-making practices while supporting degree quality.

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Effective

- The Board will ensure that effective quality assessment processes and mechanisms are in place.

Board members will follow the Crown Agencies and Board Resourcing Office's (CABRO) General Conduct Principles for Public Appointees.

1) BOARD COMPOSITION

The Board is composed of up to 13 members appointed by the Minister, including a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

- a) Eleven voting members will be drawn from the following areas and possess the skills and experience outlined below:
 - i) Five individuals with experience in degree program review, as well as educational expertise within the public post-secondary degree granting sector;
 - ii) Two individuals with experience in degree program review, as well as educational expertise within the private post-secondary degree-granting sector;
 - iii) Two individuals from the business community reflective of economic development priorities in large and small industries and employers, regionally and provincially, with background or interest in post-secondary education;
 - iv) Two individuals from the general public;
- b) Two non-voting ex-officio members will also be appointed to the Board, including:
 - i) The Executive Director of the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer; and
 - ii) The Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for post-secondary quality assurance at AEST.
- c) A member may serve beyond their term expiration until such time that a new member has been appointed as their successor.

The Minister will appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair from among the members.

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2) DUTIES AND POWERS

a) The Board will

- i. Conduct quality reviews of applications for new degree programs, applications for use of the word “university”, and applications for exempt status, and other matters referred to it by the Minister, and make recommendations to the Minister on these applications and other matters;
- ii. Conduct assessments of new degrees at public post-secondary institutions regarding social and economic benefit; system coordination/program duplication; student demand and outcomes, and institutional mandate/capacity.
- iii. Review applications and make recommendations to the Minister with respect to renewals of consent for existing degree programs and use of the term “university” from private and out-of-province public institutions.
- iv. Monitor degree programs and institutional capacity at post-secondary institutions with consent under the *Degree Authorization Act*; provide advice and direction to institutions based on annual reports and advise the Minister as appropriate.
- v. Assess requests for degree and credential name changes and changes to consent.
- vi. Conduct periodic audits of internal degree program review measures based on information provided by public post-secondary institutions to ensure that rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes have been implemented;
- vii. Recommend to the Minister criteria that will apply for the purposes of giving or refusing consent/approval or attaching terms and conditions to consent;
- viii. Protect the integrity of the application and review process by maintaining confidentiality of individual submissions to the extent required or allowed by law;
- ix. Undertake research related to quality assurance and produce reports at the request of the Minister; and
- x. Perform other duties that may be requested by the Minister.

b) The Board may:

- i. Establish and maintain standing committees as appointed by the Chair.
- ii. Establish review committees and call upon subject experts, as required, to assist the Board in its review of applications;
- iii. Seek other advice, as it deems necessary, to assist the Board in providing recommendations and advice to the Minister; and

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- iv. Establish procedures for reviewing applications and other matters referred to it.

3) MEETINGS

- a) The Board will meet up to 10 times a year, or as required to fulfill the duties and responsibilities outlined herein.
- b) The Chair may call special meetings of the Board.
- c) Regular meetings and special meetings of the Board may be conducted in person or via teleconference, or other means approved by the Board.
- d) Meeting agendas and supporting materials will be circulated no fewer than seven calendar days prior to the scheduled Board meeting.
- e) Decisions of the Board will be arrived at through deliberation and consensus, whenever possible. The Board will establish its own voting procedures and may authorize voting to take place in person or by telephone, facsimile or other means approved by the Board.
- f) At a meeting of the Board, the presence of a majority of the sitting members of the Board will constitute a quorum.
- g) An act or thing done by a majority of the members of the Board present at a meeting, if the members present constitute a quorum, is deemed to have been done by the Board.
- h) A vacancy in the membership of the Board does not invalidate the Terms of Reference of the Board or impair the right of the members in office to act.

4) DUTIES OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

- a) The Chair of the Board will perform the duties outlined below:
 - i. Consult with the Minister or Deputy Minister, as appropriate, regarding these Terms of Reference.
 - ii. Provide leadership in guiding the Board and coordinating its activities in order to fulfill its advisory duties.
 - iii. Ensure timely and effective communications with other Board members, appropriate agencies and government.
 - iv. Appoint review committee members and subject experts, approve their terms of reference, and ensure appropriate reporting mechanisms of Board committees.
 - v. Ensure that there is an orientation program for new Board members and an ongoing development program for existing Board members aimed at increasing the Board members' familiarity with the Board's roles, duties and responsibilities.

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- vi. Provide reports to the Minister as required.
 - vii. Consult with the Secretariat regarding the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* concerning its collection, disclosure and use of information to ensure that it is consistent with government policy and legislation.
- b) The duty of the Vice-Chair will be to act as Chair of the Board if the Chair is unable to perform the duties/functions of the Chair.

5) SECRETARIAT

- a) The Board will have a Secretariat of AEST staff to provide administrative support to the Board, to process and monitor applications for Board consideration, and to work with applicants and prospective applicants to facilitate the application process.
- b) As directed by the Board, the Secretariat will undertake the research necessary to support the duties of the Board.
- c) The Secretariat will coordinate the agenda, information packages and related events for Board meetings.
- d) The Secretariat will follow standard government policies and procedures in carrying out its duties (e.g., records management, financial management, communications, and freedom of information and protection of privacy).

6) EFFECT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference do not affect, modify, limit or interfere with the responsibilities of any of its parties under law. In the event of any conflict between these Terms of Reference and any law, including the Act and its regulations, the law prevails. The Act and its regulations shall guide interpretation of the Terms of Reference.



Honourable Melanie Mark
Minister of Advanced Education,
Skills and Training

Date: February 1, 2018



Nicholas Rubidge
Chair, Degree Quality Assessment Board

Date: February 5, 2018