



# Expert Reviewer Handbook

A Guide to the Degree Quality Assessment Board's Expert Review Process

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## ***Introduction***

This handbook is intended to provide expert reviewers with a brief overview of British Columbia's (BC) Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) and key information required to successfully participate in the quality assessment process.

The guide is divided into seven sections: Introduction, Background and Legislation, Selection of Expert Reviewers, The Site Visit, Drafting the Report, Minister's Decision, and a Checklist for Expert Review Panels. Each section contains a number of subsections for easy navigation of the guide. A list of useful links to a number of Ministry websites is provided at the end of the guide.

Please review this guide prior to commencing the quality assessment review. Questions or concerns can be sent to the DQAB Secretariat at the contact information below:

*Degree Quality Assessment Board*  
*Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training*  
*835 Humboldt Street*  
*Victoria BC V8W 9H8*  
*Phone: (250) 356-5406*  
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## ***Background and Legislation***

In 2002, the BC Government made a commitment to increasing the number and range of degree programs in BC through the introduction of the *Degree Authorization Act* (DAA). The DAA, which came into force in November 2003, requires private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions to obtain consent from the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (the Minister) if they wish to do any of the following:

- Grant or confer a degree in British Columbia.
- Provide a program in British Columbia that leads to a degree that is conferred inside or outside British Columbia.
- Advertise a program offered in British Columbia leading to a degree that is conferred inside or outside British Columbia.

- Sell, offer for sale, or advertise for sale or provide by agreement for a fee, reward or other remuneration, a diploma, certificate, document or other material that indicates or implies the granting or conferring of a degree.
- Directly or indirectly make use of the word “university” or any derivation or abbreviation of the word “university” to indicate that an educational program is available.

Private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions that wish to use the word “university” in their name must either obtain consent from the Minister to do so under the DAA, or be authorized by a BC statute.

BC public colleges and institutes were granted the ability to apply to offer applied baccalaureate and master’s level degrees through amendments to the *College and Institute Act* in 2003. Under the legislation governing public post-secondary institutions, the Minister must approve all new degree programs public institutions wish to offer. By policy, the Minister refers these proposals to the DQAB for a quality assessment review.

### ***Degree Quality Assessment Board***

The DQAB is an advisory Board to the Minister. It is composed of up to 11 voting members appointed by the Minister, including a Chair and a Vice-Chair. The Board’s membership is comprised of two private post-secondary degree-granting sector representatives; three public post-secondary degree-granting sector representatives; one representative with background and/or experience as a public university faculty member or administrator; three representatives from the business community; one student representative; and one representative from the general public with specified expertise.

The Board also has three non-voting members: one representative with expertise in articulation and transfer arrangements; one representative from the private training sector; and one Ministry representative.

The DQAB was appointed by the Minister to assist in developing criteria for the purposes of granting or refusing consent under the DAA and to oversee the degree quality assessment process. The DQAB reviews and makes recommendations to the Minister on applications for:

- New degree programs and exempt status submitted by BC public post-secondary institutions and all degree programs submitted by private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions.
- Use of the word “university” submitted by private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions.
- Renewal of consent for existing degree programs and consents to use the word “university” from private and out-of-province public institutions.

The Board conducts organization reviews of private and out-of-province public institutions intending to offer degree programs in BC.

The DQAB recommends to the Minister policies, criteria and guidelines that will apply for the purposes of giving, renewing or refusing consent/approval<sup>1</sup> or attaching terms and conditions to consent.

More information on the role of the DQAB can be found at:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/board/welcome.htm>

### ***DQAB Secretariat***

The DQAB Secretariat provides administrative support to the Board, to process and monitor applications for the DQAB’s consideration, and works with applicants and prospective applicants to facilitate the application process.

The Secretariat is housed within the Ministry and follows standard government policies and procedures in carrying out its duties (e.g., records management, freedom of information and protection of privacy). A Secretariat staff member will be assigned to each proposal and will work closely with the institution and expert reviewers to provide the necessary documents and guidance required for the review process, and may attend the site visit to act as a resource to the expert review panel.

As directed by the Board, the Secretariat will undertake research activities to support the duties of the Board. It coordinates the agenda, information packages and related events for Board meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> BC Public institutions receive “approval” which does not have an end-date. Private and Out-of-Province Public institutions receive “consent” which is usually for a period of five years and renewable upon successful application to the DQAB.

As of September 2013, the DQAB Secretariat Staff are:

Dorothy Rogers	Director, Quality Assurance Unit
Rosalyn Kilpatrick	Education Officer
Dao Luu	Education Officer
Dawn House	Education Officer
Vicki Simmons	Senior Policy Analyst
Craig Mayer	Research Officer

Inquiries to the DQAB Secretariat, should be made at the contact information below:

Email: [DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca](mailto:DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca)

Telephone: 250-356-5406

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### ***Types of Applications***

The DQAB provides recommendations to the Minister on the following types of applications:

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#### ***Degree Program Application***

Any institution wishing to offer a new degree program in BC must first submit a program proposal to the DQAB and undergo a quality assessment process unless the institution has received approval for Exempt Status.<sup>2</sup>

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#### ***Exempt Status Application***

Institutions with proven track records (ten years of enrolling students in programs at a particular degree level in BC) and appropriate governance mechanisms in place may apply for “exempt status” at a specific degree level. An application for Exempt Status must demonstrate that the institution meets the prerequisite time period and has the necessary organizational capacity including rigorous ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes, both internal and external.

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#### ***Use of “University” Application***

Under the DAA, the use of the word “university” or any derivation or abbreviation of the word “university” to indicate that an educational program is available is restricted unless authorized by the Minister. The Minister will provide consent to private and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions to use the word “university” if satisfied

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<sup>2</sup> *The Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines state that when an institution has been granted exempt status at a certain degree level, proposals submitted for new degree programs at or below that level proceed directly to the Minister for approval following the 30-day public/peer review period, unless the Minister has concerns about the program and refers the proposal to the DQAB.*

that the applicant has undergone a quality assessment process and been found to meet the criteria established for use of the word “university.”

### ***Organization Review Self-Study***

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All private or out-of-province public post-secondary institutions applying for the first time are required to complete an Organization Review Self-Study, which is reviewed by the DQAB. The purpose of an 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. For subsequent applications, the DQAB will assess whether an organization review is required.

BC public post-secondary institutions are not required to submit an Organization Review Self-Study or undergo an organization review.

The purpose of an organization review is to ensure applicant institutions have the capacity to deliver degree programs. In conducting an organization review, the panel and the DQAB assess the applicant organization’s policies and practices against established criteria.

### ***Renewal for Degree Program and Use of “University” applications***

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A consent period for a degree program or for use of the word “university” for a private or out-of-province public institution is normally five years. However, the Minister can grant consent for any length of time up to and including five years. Prior to the expiry of a consent period the institution must submit an application for renewal of consent to the DQAB. The DQAB will review applications for renewal of consent and ensure that the application undergoes a process that assesses whether the institution or program has maintained, and will continue to maintain, quality standards.

### ***Peer and Public Comments***

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As part of the quality assessment process, submissions for new degree programs, applications for exempt status and applications for use of the word "university" are posted online for public review and comment. Each submission is open to public comment for 30 days from the date of posting and remains posted until the full review is complete. Institutions are asked to provide any proprietary information in appendices as these will not be posted online.

Applications from BC public institutions also undergo a 30-day peer/public comment period during which other BC public institutions are given the opportunity to view the



application and appendices and provide comments using the Post-Secondary Institution Proposal System. All comments are provided to the DQAB and expert reviewers by the Secretariat.

### ***Selection of Expert Reviewers***

After a proposal has been submitted to the DQAB Secretariat and verified for completion, the Secretariat will ask the applicant institution to nominate potential expert reviewers. While the DQAB will consider these suggestions, final determination of expert reviewers rests with the DQAB, which may suggest alternate or additional expert reviewers.

### ***Characteristics of Expert Reviewers***

Expert reviewers appointed to a review panel must possess the following characteristics:

- be committed to the principles and practices of 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.

### ***Degree Program Review Experts***

When necessary, the DQAB will appoint one or more qualified subject matter experts to review a degree program proposal against the established degree program criteria. Since the panel's main purpose is to conduct a quality assessment of a degree proposal, panels will normally meet the following specific criteria:

- an advanced academic credential related to the subject area under review (normally a terminal degree in the field);
- relevant academic experience in areas such as quality assessment (e.g., as appraisers for accrediting bodies or as reviewers of degree programs), curriculum design, teaching and learning, and administration; and
- any required or desired professional credentials and/or related work experience.

### ***Organization/Exempt Status/Use of “University” Review Experts***

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If necessary, the DQAB will establish a panel of qualified experts to review an institution’s application for exempt status or use of the word “university”, or to conduct an organization review. Expert reviewers 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.

### ***Determination of Review***

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The DQAB will normally determine a review panel (normally consisting of three experts) will conduct a site visit and assess the proposal. In some cases the DQAB may determine that a site visit is not necessary and that a desk audit is sufficient. In these cases, typically only one expert reviewer is selected and the review is conducted based on a thorough review of the proposal and any peer or public comments. As is the case for reviews conducted by a panel of experts, the completed Quality Assessment Report Workbook will comprise the final report to the DQAB (see Drafting the Report section for more information).

Once the DQAB has determined the type of review, the Secretariat will coordinate the review and provide the institution with the name(s) of the expert reviewer(s), as well as contact information for the panel chair.

### ***Role of Expert Reviewers***

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Expert reviewers are expected to provide advice to the DQAB by evaluating an institution’s proposal based on fulfillment of the Minister’s established criteria.

Expert reviewers will assess the institution's proposal and any necessary supporting documents, and participate in a site visit (if required by the DQAB). The panel's findings are provided to the DQAB in the form of the Quality Assessment Report Workbook.

The expert review and resulting report are an important element of the quality assessment process. However, in addition to the expert reviewer's report, the DQAB also reviews the proposal, and takes into account the institutional response when determining whether a proposal meets the established criteria. It is the DQAB, taking the expert reviewers' advice into consideration, that makes the final recommendation to the Minister.

### ***Role of Panel Chair***

Generally, the panel chair plans and assigns the activities of the panel, liaises with the institution regarding the agenda for the site visit, and drafts the report using the Quality Assessment Report Workbook template. While ultimately responsible for the report, the panel chair may divide the task of filling out the workbook amongst the other panel members.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

An actual or potential conflict of interest arises when an expert reviewer is placed in a situation in which his or her personal interests, financial or otherwise, or the interests of an immediate family member or of a person with whom there exists, or has recently existed, an intimate relationship, conflict or appear to conflict with the member's responsibilities to the DQAB, the Minister, and the public interest.

Expert reviewers should not have had any connection to the applicant institution within the previous two years, or for a period of up to three months following the completion of the review.

The DQAB's Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Guidelines are available online at the link below and are provided to reviewers by email.

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/board/conflicts-of-interest.htm>

### ***Remuneration***

The honorarium for serving on a panel is set in regulation as follows: the panel chair receives \$1,500 and the other panel members \$1,000, plus travel and related expenses

at government rates (see next section). Expert reviewers conducting a single-member desk audit will receive \$1,500, plus related expenses.

### *Travel and Expenses*

Expert reviewers are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and are expected to use the most economical mode of travel available. Please note that travel and accommodation expenses may only be claimed if the site visit takes place outside the reviewer's headquarters area (32 km from home or where they ordinarily perform their services).

Where applicable, the Secretariat will provide a Letter of Introduction to enable reviewers to qualify for government rates from accommodation and car rental providers. For a complete list of approved accommodations and current government rates visit the Business Travel Accommodation Listing website:

<http://www.pss.gov.bc.ca/csa/categories/accommodation/list-of-properties.html>

Expert reviewers must submit all travel and related expenses to the Secretariat using the expense claim form provided. A signed expense claim form is required even if no expenses are being claimed, as the claim form serves as the expert reviewer's invoice, which is required for payment. A description of expenses and original receipts, where applicable, must accompany the expense claim form. Please consult the Travel and Business Expenses Sheet for full details and reimbursement limits (see Documents and Procedures section for more information).

After the signed report workbook has been submitted, the Ministry will reimburse the participant for all approved expenses documented with original receipts (where required) within 30 working days of having received a completed claim form. The signed letter of agreement is also required for payment, but should have been signed and submitted to the Secretariat prior to the site visit. Expert reviewers should submit their claim form and original receipts to:

Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat  
Governance and Quality Assurance Branch  
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training  
PO Box 9883 STN PROV GOVT  
Victoria BC V8W 9T6

Or send via courier to:

Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat  
Governance and Quality Assurance Branch  
Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 835 Humboldt Street  
Victoria BC V8W 9T6

If original receipts are not required or if a reviewer does not wish to claim expenses, the claim form can be submitted via fax or email:

Email: [DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca](mailto:DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca)

Fax: 250-356-8851

**Important!**

- ✓ Please confirm with accommodation providers that the government rate is available prior to booking.
- ✓ Expert reviewers are not required to provide receipts for meals as these are reimbursed on a per diem basis.
- ✓ Expert reviewers may not claim meal expenses for other panel members, and all expert reviewers are therefore asked to pay for their own meal (even if panel members dine together).

***The Site Visit***

The site visit allows for the institution to elaborate upon its proposal and provides an opportunity for dialogue between the expert reviewers and key institutional representatives and with faculty and students, if necessary.

***Documents and Procedures***

Two or three weeks prior to the site visit, expert reviewers will receive the following required information and documents electronically:

- Program Proposal and Appendices
- Criteria and Guidelines
- Quality Assessment Report Workbook

- Contact Schedule
- Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Guidelines
- Travel and Business Expenses Sheet
- Peer or Public Comments (if applicable)
- Expense Claim Form

**Important!**

- ✓ Expert reviewers are asked to review the materials to ensure all documents have been received in their entirety.
- ✓ Expert reviewers are asked to sign their Letter of Agreement and return it to the Secretariat *prior* to commencing the assessment process and site visit (if a site visit is required).
- ✓ If expert reviewers determine the documentation provided is not sufficient, the panel chair is encouraged to request additional information from the institution prior to the site visit. If sufficient information to make an informed assessment is not provided, expert reviewers are asked to inform the Secretariat as soon as possible prior to the site visit.

The panel will have an opportunity to meet with institutional representatives who developed and will deliver the program (for degree program reviews). Panels also generally meet with senior administrators and key staff personnel. Typically site visits last the duration of one business day and include a variety of meetings and presentations. Institutions will often prepare a suggested agenda but, ultimately, the agenda is determined by the panel chair in consultation with the other panel members. In some instances, a representative from the Secretariat may attend a site visit as an observer and to serve as a resource to the panel.

The following are two examples of past site visit agendas.

### ***Sample 1 - Site Visit Agenda***

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<i>8:30 – 9:00</i>	<i>Private meeting of review panel</i>
<i>9:00 – 10:00</i>	<i>Presentations from senior leadership (President, VP Academic, Dean of Arts)</i>
<i>10:00 – 11:00</i>	<i>Presentation of proposal</i>
<i>11:00 – 12:00</i>	<i>Meeting with key faculty involved with the proposal</i>
<i>12:00 – 1:00</i>	<i>Lunch with faculty and/or administrators</i>
<i>1:00 – 2:30</i>	<i>Tour of facilities, including libraries, lab space, etc.</i>
<i>2:30 – 3:30</i>	<i>Meeting with students</i>
<i>3:30 – 4:00</i>	<i>Closing meeting with key faculty</i>
<i>4:00 – 4:30</i>	<i>Private meeting of panel to start drafting report</i>

### ***Sample 2 - Site Visit Agenda***

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<i>9:00 – 9:30</i>	<i>Private meeting of review panel</i>
<i>9:30 – 10:30</i>	<i>Introductions and overview presentation</i>
<i>10:30 – 10:45</i>	<i>Nutrition break</i>
<i>10:45 – 12:30</i>	<i>Work through criteria (standards 1-3) with institutional reps.</i>
<i>12:30 – 1:00</i>	<i>Working lunch – review panel only</i>
<i>1:00 – 1:30</i>	<i>Tour of facilities</i>
<i>1:30 – 2:00</i>	<i>Meeting with teaching faculty</i>
<i>2:00 – 3:00</i>	<i>Continue through criteria (standards 4-6)</i>
<i>3:00 – 3:15</i>	<i>Nutrition break</i>
<i>3:15 – 4:00</i>	<i>Continue through criteria (standards 7-9)</i>
<i>4:00 – 4:15</i>	<i>Wrap-up session: questions or comments from institution</i>
<i>4:15 – 5:00</i>	<i>Private meeting of review panel to start drafting the report</i>

### ***Room and Equipment Requirements***

To ensure the panel has sufficient time for in-camera discussions, the panel may wish to request a separate “break out” room that is available to the panel throughout the day. Alternatively, the panel can ask institutional representatives to excuse themselves from discussions in the main boardroom, as desired by the panel.

The Secretariat does not provide note-taking or equipment support for the expert review panel. Expert reviewers are asked to bring their own laptops and related equipment (extension cords, etc.) if desired, for use during the site visit. In the case of special requests, the review panel is encouraged to contact the institution as soon as possible.

### ***Refreshments***

Expert reviewers are encouraged to provide any special dietary requirements or preferences to the institution prior to the site visit. Most institutions will provide refreshments for the panel during nutrition breaks. Lunch is provided by the institution. Panel chairs are asked to notify the institution in advance of the site visit if the panel would prefer to have lunch at a nearby food outlet instead (and may claim this as an expense on their individual expense claim form).

Many panels have a “working lunch” without institutional representatives present in order to discuss key findings from the morning’s discussion, review any issues where additional information is required, and summarize and record preliminary findings.

### ***Drafting the Report***

Expert reviewers should be aware that the DQAB will take the expert reviewers’ report, institutional response, proposal and any peer or public comments into account before making its recommendation to the Minister. *As such, during and after the site visit, the expert reviewers are asked not to offer judgments or opinions concerning the likelihood of approval or consent.* The sole responsibility of the expert panel is to provide an assessment to the DQAB of whether the institution and/or the proposal meet the established criteria.

If the expert panel finds a proposal is not reflective of the quality of the proposed program, following discussions during the site visit, the panel chair can request the institution prepare an addendum to the proposal. The addendum should be submitted to the expert panel by a mutually agreed upon timeline (well within the two week



deadline for the report). The panel chair should include the addendum with the report workbook for consideration by the DQAB when making its recommendation.

### ***Completing the Quality Assessment Report Workbook***

The expert review panel records its assessment in the Quality Assessment Report Workbook (report or report workbook), which is formatted according to the established criteria and allows for consistency between panels. The workbook is intended to systematically guide the panel through its assessment of the proposal and provide a template for submitting the final report to the DQAB. The expert reviewer's report to the DQAB will consist of the workbook which is completed by the panel chair in consultation with the other panel members.

#### **Important!**

A good report will provide a thorough and systematic assessment of the proposal and (if applicable) subsequent information provided at the site visit. It should summarize the key findings of the assessment in the Overall Assessment section of the report template. The report should also give sufficient detail in narrative form to provide the DQAB the information it needs to make an informed recommendation to the Minister.

The following examples are taken from the Degree Program Review Workbook.

### ***Overall Assessment***

Each workbook begins with the Overall Assessment Worksheet, which is followed by a number of Standards Assessment Worksheets.

The Overall Assessment is intended to briefly summarize the panel's assessments as to whether the proposal satisfies the established criteria. Although it is the first worksheet in the workbook, it summarizes the Standards Assessment Worksheets, and should therefore be completed last.

The Overall Assessment consists of four parts:

Degree Program Review – Quality Assessment Report Workbook

<b>Overall Assessment</b>
---------------------------

**Program Information:**

*Applicant* \_\_\_\_\_

*Proposed Program Name:* \_\_\_\_\_



**Assessment Summary Table:**

Standard	Fails	Meets	Conditional
<i>1. Executive Summary</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>2. Degree Level Standard</i>			
<i>3. Credential Recognition and Nomenclature</i>			
<i>4. Curriculum/Program Content</i>			
<i>5. Learning Methodologies/ Program Delivery</i>			
<i>6. Admission and Transfer/Residency</i>			
<i>7. Faculty</i>			
<i>8. Program Resources</i>			
<i>9. Program Consultation</i>			
<i>10. Program Review and Assessment</i>			



**Summary:**



**Signed:**

Chair of the Quality Assessment Panel:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)



Quality Assessment Panel Members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name)

1. Program Information

Enter the required proposal information.

2. Assessment Summary Table

Check the box that corresponds to the panel's determination in each of the Standards Assessment Worksheets.

3. Summary

Summarize the panel's findings as to whether the proposal satisfies the established standards. If it is found that the proposal will meet the standards only if the applicant undertakes a specific action, indicate the conditions the panel determines must be satisfied. The panel may also identify and explain any significant divergence in the opinion of panel members in coming to a determination.

If the panel's determination was informed by other considerations that were not addressed by the standards and criteria listed in the Standards Assessment Worksheets, please note and explain.

4. Signature

Include the signature and printed name of each panel member. Electronic signatures and signature pages sent via fax or email are acceptable. An email from each of the panelists stating agreement with the contents of the report is the most secure and is acceptable.

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***Standards Assessment Worksheets***

The standards and criteria in the Standards Assessment Worksheets are taken directly from the Minister's established criteria that guide an institution's submission of a proposal.

Each Standards Assessment Worksheet has four parts:

**2. Degree Level Standard**

**Standard** 1

*The institution must demonstrate that the proposed program meets or exceeds the proposed degree level standard (refer to Appendix).*

**Determination of Quality Assessment Panel** 2

The Applicant:

fails to meet this standard  
 meets or exceeds this standard  
 meets this standard provided that the following requirements are addressed:

**Rationale for Determination:** 2

**Criteria for Assessing Satisfaction of Degree Level Standards**

Criteria	Comment
The program meets or exceeds specified learning outcomes (see appendix) and the institution demonstrates how the program meets the standard.	<span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px 6px;">1</span>

1. Standard

The Standard against which the proposal is assessed is provided.

2. Determination of the Quality Assessment Panel

State the panel’s findings as to whether the institution or program satisfies the standard. The panel may find that the proposal fails to meet the standard, meets or exceeds the standard, or meets the standard on the condition that specific requirements are addressed.

3. Rationale for Determination

Provide the rationale for the panel’s determination. In addition to providing the reasons for the panel’s findings, the rationale should

- a. list what types of evidence were considered (interviews with staff or students, documents, materials);
- b. briefly comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence presented; and

- c. identify and explain any significant divergence in the opinion of panel members in coming to a determination.

#### 4. Criteria for Assessing the Standard

Complete the table by commenting on whether the proposal meets the stated requirement, based on evidence provided by the institution. In some cases a “yes/no” answer could suffice, but expert reviewers are encouraged to elaborate on their findings to better assist the DQAB in making its recommendation to the Minister.

### ***Defining Assessment Categories***

For each standard the panel is asked to assess whether the proposal fails to meet; meets; or meets with conditions the established criteria. The following guidelines are provided to better assist expert reviewers in determining which assessment is appropriate:

#### ✓ ***Meets or Exceeds the Standard***

*The proposal meets the criteria without any revisions. As the criteria are minimum standards, expert reviewers can make suggestions to the DQAB, and the institution through the report, that may improve the proposal beyond the minimum standards indicated in the criteria. Institutions will not be required to implement these suggestions before or after receiving approval or consent.<sup>3</sup>*

#### ✓ ***Meets the Standard with Conditions***

*In some cases, the proposal may meet the established criteria if additional information is provided, or with specific steps that can be completed with reasonable ease by the institution (e.g. hiring an additional faculty member). The expert panel may provide advice to the DQAB and to the institution through the report that the proposal meets the criteria on the condition that specific actions are taken. The institution is expected to respond to any conditional requirements provided by the panel and the DQAB will take the panel’s advice and the institution’s response into consideration when making its recommendation to the Minister.*

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<sup>3</sup> BC public institutions receive approval, private and out-of-province public institutions receive consent. Consent is usually for a period of five-years, and is subject to a renewal process.

*This assessment should only be applied if the panel is confident the institution can meet or commit to meeting the conditions without extensive revisions to the proposal (e.g., examples of extensive revisions might include requiring the institution to address substantial weaknesses such as addressing major policy gaps or making sizeable course modifications) which would require an additional review by subject experts.*

✓ ***Fails to Meet the Standard***

*The proposal contains significant deficiencies to an extent that it fails to meet the established criteria. This assessment should be applied if the proposal has weaknesses that will require extensive time and resources on the institution's part to make the necessary changes to meet the standard. This could necessitate substantial revisions to the proposal and would likely require an additional review by subject experts.*

**Important!**

In providing an overall assessment of the proposal, expert reviewers are asked to keep in mind the following:

- A large number of conditional standards may have the cumulative effect of an overall assessment of fail, particularly if the required changes become so encompassing that the institution would not be able to make the changes without significant revisions to its proposal or within a reasonable time frame, or if there are questions about whether the institution has the ability (e.g. expertise and/or resources) to meet the required conditions.
- If there are a number of conditional standards, the panel should advise the Board whether it believes the institution will be able to meet the conditional requirements.

***Submitting the Report Electronically***

The report workbook is designed to be completed and submitted electronically to the Secretariat. All panel members must review and sign the final document before it is submitted. Emails from each of the panelists stating agreement with the contents of the report are acceptable.

Please submit the final report workbook to the Secretariat via the email address and/or fax number below:

Degree Quality Assessment Board Secretariat

Email: [DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca](mailto:DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca)

Fax: 250-356-8851

### ***Minister's Decision***

#### ***The Degree Quality Assessment Board Meeting***

Once the report workbook has been received, the Secretariat will forward it to the applicant institution. The institution has two weeks to submit a response to the report to the Secretariat.

Following the receipt of the institution's response, the Secretariat will place the proposal on the agenda for the next available DQAB meeting. The DQAB usually meets every 4-5 weeks in Vancouver.

The Secretariat will also provide the institution's response to the panel. The panel chair and an institutional representative are asked to be available usually via telephone on the day of the DQAB's meeting at which the proposal will be discussed. The panel chair is asked to review the institution's response in consultation with the panel, in order to provide any final remarks or clarification to the DQAB. The DQAB will only contact the panel chair during its meeting if there are additional questions or concerns prior to making its recommendation.

The Secretariat will contact the panel chair and the institution prior to the DQAB meeting date to confirm availability and contact details. Discussions with the panel chair and institution are normally limited to 30 minutes.

### ***Minister's Approval***

Once an application from a BC public institution has been reviewed by the DQAB, a recommendation is made to the Minister. The Minister may then approve or not approve a proposal. Approval does not expire and does not have an end date. The DQAB may make recommendations for improving a proposal.

### ***Minister's Consent***

Applications from private or out-of-province public institutions receive Ministerial Consent. Consent is usually for a period of five-years and must be renewed prior to its expiry date. The Minister may attach conditions to a consent which must be agreed to by the institution prior to consent being granted. The DQAB may also make recommendations for improving a proposal.

### ***Denial of Approval or Consent***

If the DQAB is not satisfied that the proposal meets the established criteria, the DQAB may recommend to the Minister that a proposal be denied. The Minister will take this advice into consideration and may decide consent or approval will not be granted, and may refer the proposal back to the DQAB for further review.

Once the Minister's decision is received, the Secretariat will inform the panel members via email and post the decision publicly on the Recommendations and Decisions website:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/recommendations-decisions.htm>

### ***Checklist for Expert Review Panels***

#### ***Before the Site Visit***

- Expert reviewers agree to serve on the review panel and commit to participating in a site visit on a date mutually agreed upon.
- Expert reviewers receive letter of agreement as well as all other required documents from the Secretariat.
- Expert reviewers sign the letters of agreement and return to the Secretariat.
- Expert reviewers read the required materials prior to the site visit.
- Expert reviewers notify the institution, through the panel chair, if any documents are missing or if they wish to receive further information so it can be provided prior to the site visit date.
- Panel chair liaises with the institution to set the site visit agenda.
- Panel chair will arrange a meeting or conference call for panel members to prepare for the site visit (*optional*).

#### ***During the Site Visit***

- Expert reviewers participate in the site visit meetings and presentations.



- Expert reviewers assess the institution and/or proposal based on the established criteria and ask questions, seek clarification, and request additional documents, if required, to assess the proposal based on the established criteria.
- Expert reviewers make notes and record preliminary findings.

### ***After the Site Visit***

- If desired, the panel chair will convene the panel for a meeting or conference call following the site visit to discuss preparing the report workbook. The panel chair may assign responsibility for certain sections of the workbook to each panel member.
- The panel chair and members prepare the report workbook and once complete, sign the report workbook signature page (emails from each of the panelists stating agreement with the contents of the report are acceptable.)
- The panel chair submits the report workbook electronically to the Secretariat at the contact information below.
- Approximately one week before the DQAB meeting at which the proposal will be discussed, the Secretariat will notify the panel chair of the meeting date and the time during which the panel chair is asked to be available. The panel is also provided with the institution's response to the report prior to the meeting.

*Please direct any additional questions or concerns to the DQAB Secretariat at the contact information below:*

*Email: [DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca](mailto:DQABsecretariat@gov.bc.ca)*

*Telephone: 250-356-5406*

## *Useful Links*

### Ministry Websites:

Degree Authorization Website:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/>

Degree Quality Assessment Board Website:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/board/welcome.htm>

Applications Under Review Website:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/institutions/underreview.htm>

Recommendations and Decisions Website:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/recommendations-decisions.htm>

### Criteria and Guidelines:

Degree Program Criteria and Guidelines:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/public/degree-program-criteria.htm>

Exempt Status Criteria and Guidelines:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/public/exempt-status.htm>

Private and Out-of-Province Public Institutions - Organization Review Self Study Criteria

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/private/criteria-org-review.htm>

Private and Out-of-Province Public Institutions - Use of the Word “University” Criteria and Guidelines:

<http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/private/criteria-university.htm>