ON-LINE NON-DEGREE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS
Overview and Proposal Guidelines

Overview

Prior to 2003, review of new non-degree proposals by public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia was directed by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) (formerly the Ministry of Advanced Education) through its Non- Degree Program Review (NPR) process. In 2003, following consultation with the post- secondary system, the government announced the creation of a new on-line Post-secondary Institution Proposal System (PSIPS) that would allow for a peer consultation process.

The PSIPS peer review process engages post-secondary system and partners through the use of technology. In this process, the ultimate decision with respect to the implementation of new non-degree program proposals rests with the institution's Board of Governors. Key features of the process are on-line peer consultation that affords all institutions the opportunity to offer comments, and provisions for monitoring by the Ministry after program implementation.

The primary objectives of the on-line program review process are to ensure that:
- the provincial post-secondary system continues to develop and offer high quality non-degree programming, through the benefits of peer consultation;
- institutions become aware of program developments at other institutions;
- institutions have autonomy and flexibility in the development of new programs;
- institutions become aware of program eligibility for student financial assistance; and,
- the Ministry fulfils its responsibilities for quality programming throughout the system by monitoring the process as needed.

Institutions developing proposals (the proponent institutions) for system-wide review are requested to follow the proposal format, which is outlined in the next section, "Proposal Guidelines", in order to ensure a consistent system-wide approach that will assist in the ease of review, and to ensure that all key issues relating to developing program proposals are addressed.

Presidents of the proponent institutions are responsible for determining when to begin the peer consultation; normally, this will occur after a review by the Education Council, and before a review by the Board of Governors. Presidents may wish to consult with the Education Council Chair before posting a proposal that has not been reviewed by the Council. Individual institutional processes, timing issues, the type of program, and the quality of the proposal should be taken into account when making the decision to put the proposal forward for peer consultation.

The peer consultation is achieved on-line through the PSIPS website: http://sam.educ.gov.bc.ca/servlet/page?_pageid=55&_dad=sam&_schema=SAM. General information about the on-line PSIPS process, including the guidelines, is publicly available at http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/degree-authorization/. However, the rest of the website

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information, including institutional proposals and feedback on proposals, is password protected and limited to the contact person at each institution, and the Ministry.

The website, using an electronic distribution list, notifies all contact persons in other institutions (the reviewing institutions) when a new non-degree program proposal is posted on the web. All reviewing institutions are invited to participate by posting feedback on the website within 30 calendar days. In some cases, reviewing institutions will have faculty or departments that have a significant interest in a proposal, and will participate fully in commenting on the proposal. In other circumstances, institutions may not respond or comment.

It should be noted that the peer on-line consultation process is in addition to any preliminary consultations that may have already occurred with other public post-secondary institutions during the actual development of the program proposal.

Institutional presidents are responsible for identifying the appropriate contact person for the on-line non-degree PSIPS process, and for ensuring that this information is kept current for the website. In most cases, it is expected that the senior instructional officer will fulfill this role. Responsibilities include:
- Proponent Institution: the contact person is responsible for ensuring that the president has formally endorsed the program for the review process; and, for coordinating an institutional response, as appropriate, to feedback received from other institutions after the peer consultation process.
- Reviewing Institution: the contact person is responsible for forwarding the proposal to the appropriate faculty member for review; and, for authorizing and posting formal institutional comments on the website.

Comments and feedback posted on the website for institutional proposals will be available to contact persons at reviewing institutions.

Proponent institutions are requested to consider all formal feedback and recommendations from the system (i.e. posted on the website), although the final decision regarding how the proponent institution proceeds with implementation rests with the Board of Governors of that institution.

Proponent institutions are requested to post at the earliest opportunity their response to the peer consultation and their decision with respect to next steps. The results may take various forms depending on the nature of the comments received, including a revised proposal, or a summary of the comments received. Additionally, when (or if) the program is implemented, institutions are also requested to indicate this information on the website.

The posting of these results, including implementation timing, is an important step that will signal the process is complete for a particular proposal, and will allow other institutions to be aware of the status of proposals after having the opportunity to comment. In addition, StudentAID BC in AEST may use the implementation results as a reference in considering requests for student financial assistance for new non-degree programs.

(See Appendix 1 for a flowchart of the PSIPS New Program Review Process.)

<u>Proposal Guidelines for Proponent and Reviewing Institutions</u>

All public institutions are expected to participate in the on-line non-degree program review process for new non-degree *credit* programs, *except* for certificate programs that do not "ladder" into diploma programs. Eligible programs include:
• New fields of study
• New credentials, including post-baccalaureate and post graduate certificates and diplomas
• Options developed in existing programs that will be recognized on students' transcripts
• Major program revisions that warrant an internal review or institutional approval. Determination about what constitutes a major program revision is left up to the institution.
• Programs originally established as credentials offered outside the province, but are later offered within the province by a British Columbia institution.

This process is not required for certificate programs that do not ladder into other credentials. However, if the institution wants to ensure that students are eligible to apply for student financial aid, the certificate must be approved by the institution's Education Council, and must meet all other program eligibility requirements outlined under StudentAid BC's "Program eligibility and program code search" at:
http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/schoolofficials/welcome.htm.

To ensure a standard, system-wide approach to the review of non-degree proposals, submitted proposals should contain the following:

1. Electronic Covering Letter from Institutional President
2. Executive Summary
3. Institutional, Program, and Credential Identification
4. Program Description
5. Curriculum
6. Program Consultations and Evaluation
7. Admission and Transfer
8. Other

Below is a brief summary of the contents of each section suggested for organizing non-degree program proposals. In some cases, the need for sub-sections will be self-evident:

Executive Summary
• Summarize the purpose of the proposal; and
• Outline the key objectives and outcomes of the proposed program in one or two pages.

Institution, Program and Credential Identification
• Identify the institution awarding the credential. If the program has been jointly developed and the credential to be jointly awarded, please indicate at this point and briefly state the contributions and roles of each institution.
• Provide the title of the program.

- State the credential that will be awarded to program graduates (see Appendix 2 for current credential definitions and guidelines on credential nomenclature).
- Provide the rationale for the credential.
- If the proposal includes a credential that is new to the institution or the provincial system, proponents should first consult with other institutions that may be affected, and with the Ministry. An outline of these consultations should be included in the proposal.
- Provide the name, title, phone number, and e-mail address of the institutional contact person in case more information is required.

Program Description
- State the goals and objectives of the new program, and describe how it will contribute to the mandate and future plans of the institution.
- Identify the specific student audience(s) for this program and include the following:
  - Evidence that this student audience is not currently being served with existing offerings in the region of the institution
  - Evidence of student demand
  - Anticipated annual enrolments for the program
- Where appropriate, provide a list of programs that exist at some of the other British Columbia institutions that may contain similar content, or have similar objectives. Explain how the institution has satisfied itself that there is not unnecessary duplication in the system.
- Outline the anticipated time commitments for students to complete the program (in years or semesters).
- Provide evidence of labour market demand. This information will vary depending on the circumstances and could range from a comprehensive labour market study to an informal survey consisting of letters of support from potential employers. This section should include a discussion regarding the anticipated employment destination for graduates from the proposed program, and the current labour market supply in the occupational area(s).

Curriculum
- Describe the skills, knowledge, attitudes, or other attributes students will develop from the new program.
- Describe the program/course structure.
- Where appropriate, identify the provincial, national, and/or international certifications and standards achieved in the new program. If the program proposal is aimed at putting students into practice, and that practice requires a license for which the students qualify directly from the program (or from an examination directly after the program), the institution should indicate whether they are in contact with the appropriate accrediting body, and whether or not they are seeking accreditation.

Program Consultations and Evaluation
- List the other provincial post-secondary institutions consulted about the proposed program and provide details of the discussions such as key areas of discussion, dates, and individuals involved.
- AEST should be consulted on:

*Health-related programs***:** The provincial government is the key employer in the health field, and as such, it is important that AEST be consulted with regard to the development/implementation of non-degree programs in this field. AEST works with post-secondary institutions to respond to British Columbia's Health Human Resources (HHR) Plan with health program expansion, and therefore needs to endorse any related proposals prior to implementation.

- Provide a list and summary of the nature of all other consultations, including professional associations, municipal councils, employers, post-secondary institutions in other jurisdictions, trade groups, etc. Include any written comments in an appendix.
- If applicable, describe the composition of the industry advisory committee created for the program. Describe how the committee will help ensure the program remains up-to-date and meets employer and student needs in future years.
- State whether or not the program meets the program eligibility requirements as outlined under StudentAid BC's "Program eligibility and program code search", at: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/studentaidbc/schoolofficials/welcome.htm.
- Indicate what policies and procedures are planned for ensuring program quality and evaluation once the program has been implemented.
- Have safety and other risk management factors been addressed where appropriate?

Admissions and Transfer
New program proposals should include:
- a plan to ensure students' ability to access the program through transfer-in of credits from other post-secondary institutions (course to course or block/program transfer), including reference to any possible transfer from high school courses and programs;
- a description of how students will be able to transfer out of the proposed program into other programs within the same institution or at another institution; and,
- a determination of whether students will be able to ladder into related degree-level programs.

Other
- Include any additional information not addressed in the sections above that may be helpful in better understanding the major components of the proposal.

In completing the program proposal, each institution is to decide the depth and breadth of information to be provided. Institutions should review the Ministry monitoring process before finalizing proposals to ensure that these issues have been addressed in their package.

Proposals for revisions or enhancements of an institution's existing program may not require responses in all sections. In such cases, the proponent institution may choose to give very brief responses, or simply to indicate that a question or issue is "not applicable" to the proposal. To facilitate the process, institutions should use conventional curriculum and industry terminology when describing their program proposals. It is also suggested that submissions should not exceed 20 pages; additional or detailed information may be included as appendices.

The Non Degree Template is available for download in the Guidelines/Templates section of PSIPS.

Ministry Monitoring Process

<u>**Overview**</u>

The Ministry has established a mechanism to monitor the PSIPS On-line Non Degree Program (NPR) process as part of AEST's accountability in ensuring a high quality post-secondary system that responds to the social and economic needs of the province.

The Ministry is interested in two main areas:

1. *Institutional monitoring*. This will involve a review to determine adherence to the NPR guidelines, such as ensuring that institutions have submitted all new and significantly revised credit programs to the website for peer consultation. The Ministry considers that such monitoring is important given the shift from a Ministry approval process to a peer consultation, with final program approval resting with the Board of Governors at each institution.

2. *Proposal monitoring*. This will involve an assessment of the quality of individual new programs in the post-secondary system. It should be noted, however, that the Ministry is not interested in making educational judgments that should be made by the appropriate institutional faculty and administrators. Instead, the Ministry is interested in ensuring that sound evidence and documentation illustrates that judgment has been made to ensure quality programs, and that programs are geared to providing a responsive, relevant and integrated post-secondary system.

There is no intent to review all institutions or all proposals within a given period of time. Rather, the Ministry will initiate reviews as needed, either on a random basis, or in the event that issues arise in the system necessitating a review. In addition, StudentAid BC, within AEST, may review programs as needed for student financial assistance eligibility purposes. These reviews may be carried out by Ministry staff, contractors, or by a group of system-level officials.

The Ministry will work closely with institutions selected for monitoring. Results of the monitoring process will be confidential for the institution(s) involved. The Ministry's response to institutions after monitoring will depend on the findings. Since institutional Boards of Governors are ultimately responsible for making determinations with respect to program implementation, it is expected that the responses will be directed to them.

As and when appropriate, AEST will post on the website general results of the monitoring process to provide the system with an update on how well the new on-line NPR is functioning. Specific institutions and programs will not be referenced.

<u>Ministry Monitoring Process</u>

The following highlights the areas that will be considered in the two kinds of monitoring process. It should be noted, however, that the factors considered may vary from the following list depending on the circumstances. For example, the approach taken when monitoring a proposed program that requires approval of a recognized accrediting body will be different from monitoring a program without such a requirement.

1. *Elements of Monitoring Institutions*

Has the institution submitted all eligible proposals for the on-line PSIPS non-degree review?

Has the institution used the spirit of the PSIPS NPR guidelines proposal format?

Has the institution taken note of, and where appropriate, adopted the formal suggestions made by colleagues in other institutions which were posted on the website during the peer consultation process?

If the institution has not adopted these suggestions, has it documented why it has not done so?

If the institution implements the program, has it been implemented as stated?

Has the institution established a process to evaluate the success of the program after a reasonable point in time?

2. Elements of Monitoring Program Proposals

Program Relevance

Does it appear that the institution has adopted the appropriate credential for the program, based on the generally accepted standards for British Columbia?

Is there evidence that the institution engaged in a consultation process appropriate for the program proposed?

If industry-specific standards or training guidelines exist, have they been incorporated into the program?

If applicable, was an industry advisory committee created to assist with program development?

Program Responsiveness

Is there evidence that regional and/or provincial labour market demand for this program has been established?

Is there evidence that student demand for this program has been established?

Is there evidence that the education/training provided in the program is commensurate with its goals and the kinds of jobs graduates may expect upon finishing the program?

Curriculum Quality

Has the proposal received endorsement from the institution's Education Council on the educational components of the program?

Have the learning environment and methodologies been developed so as to achieve the intended outcomes for the program?

Where appropriate, does the proposal incorporate national, provincial and/or industry standards?

System Rationalization

Where applicable, were consultations held with other institutions that offer similar programs in the same region or catchment area?

If the proposed program appears to be a duplication of existing programs in the region, please explain the features, such as diversification or waitlists, that justify offering it.
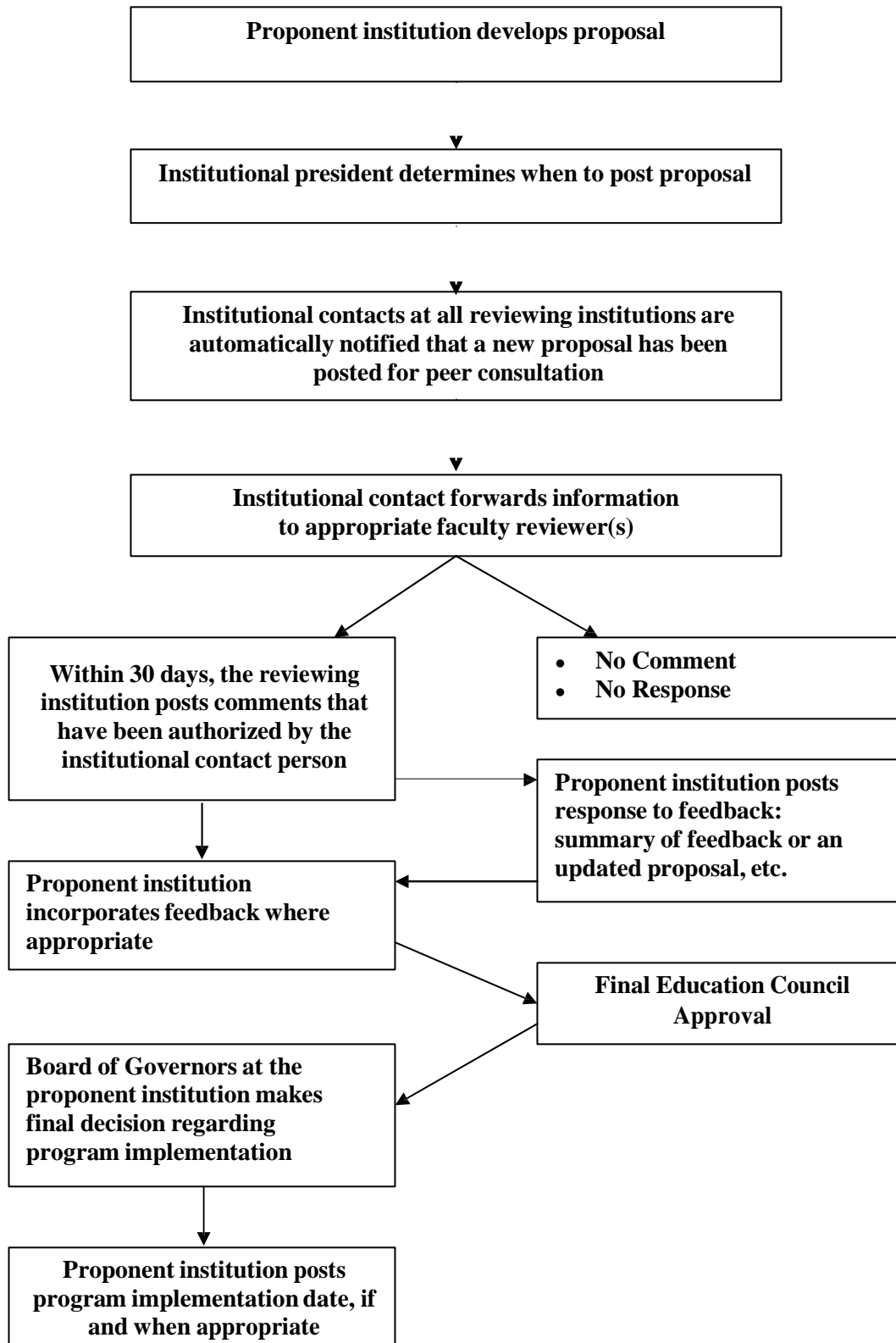
System Coherence

Is there evidence that the proposal deals with the articulation of the program with:
- high school courses and programs?
- other programs at the institution?
- other post-secondary programs across the province, including the transferability of credits towards a related degree level program?

Appendix 1 – Online New Program Review Process

The flow chart below outlines the steps in the PSIPS NPR Process model for a peer consultation of non-degree program proposals.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Proponent institution develops proposal        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Institutional president determines when to post proposal │
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                          ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Institutional contacts at all reviewing institutions are │
│   automatically notified that a new proposal has been │
│          posted for peer consultation                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Institutional contact forwards information        │
│       to appropriate faculty reviewer(s)              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
            ↙                              ↘
┌──────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Within 30 days, the      │    │ • No Comment             │
│ reviewing institution    │    │ • No Response            │
│ posts comments that      │    └──────────────────────────┘
│ have been authorized by  │
│ the institutional        │    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ contact person           │───▶│ Proponent institution    │
└──────────────────────────┘    │ posts response to        │
            ↓                     │ feedback: summary of     │
┌──────────────────────────┐    │ feedback or an updated   │
│ Proponent institution    │◀───│ proposal, etc.           │
│ incorporates feedback    │    └──────────────────────────┘
│ where appropriate        │
└──────────────────────────┘    ┌──────────────────────────┐
            ↘                     │ Final Education Council  │
             ↘                    │        Approval          │
              ↘                   └──────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐           ↙
│ Board of Governors at the │◀─────────
│ proponent institution     │
│ makes final decision      │
│ regarding program         │
│ implementation            │
└──────────────────────────┘
            ↓
┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Proponent institution     │
│ posts program             │
│ implementation date, if   │
│ and when appropriate      │
└──────────────────────────┘
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Appendix 2 – Credential Nomenclature

While the British Columbia public post-secondary system does not have a uniform credentialing scheme, the following set of provincial credential names and definitions are generally recognized in the system:

Certificate - Certificate programs usually involve one year or less of study.

Advanced Certificate - The Advanced Certificate is offered to students who already have a at least a certificate and complete additional specialized courses.

Diploma - The diploma normally involves two years of study in a career, technical, or academic program.

Associate of Arts Degree and Associate of Science Degree - These Associate Degrees are two-year transfer credentials offered by Colleges and University Colleges in British Columbia. They consist of two years of prescribed study in university transferable academic courses.

Advanced Diploma or Post Diploma - The Advanced Diploma or Post Diploma is awarded following an additional year of study after graduation from at least a two-year diploma program.

Post Baccalaureate Diploma - The Post Baccalaureate Diploma involves one or two years of specialized study in a certain discipline following the completion of a Bachelor's degree. (If circumstances warrant it, institutions can waive the degree prerequisite.) This credential is sometimes also called *Post-Graduate Diploma, Post-Degree Diploma and Graduate Diploma.*

To ensure system consistency under the non-degree peer review process, institutions planning to diverge from these generally accepted credentials definitions should first consult the Ministry.