



Ministry of Advanced Education

Quality Assurance Framework Workbook

Consultation Guide for Stakeholders

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Section I: Introduction to the Workbook

In April 2012, the Ministry of Advanced Education undertook a series of consultations on improvements to the quality assurance framework. In the first phase of the engagement process, a discussion paper outlining the proposed revisions was sent to all stakeholders inviting them to provide feedback on the goals and objectives of the framework. The Ministry is now in the second phase of engagement where input is requested on proposed changes to the provincial quality assurance framework.

The improvements to the current framework outlined in this workbook take into account previous reports on the quality of BC's post-secondary education system commissioned by the Ministry, stakeholder input from the first phase of engagement and best practices in quality assurance. The proposed enhancements are guided by the principles of equitable treatment, consistency in approach, transparency in processes, accountability to stakeholders, affordable and efficient for institutions, and effectiveness in assuring appropriate quality standards.

About this workbook

This workbook is a consultation guide for stakeholders who wish to provide input to the Ministry on changes to the provincial quality assurance framework. Information and questions in this workbook are intended to stimulate discussion and feedback. You are encouraged to bring your ideas, knowledge and advice to this process. Our aim is to ensure these consultations are transparent, accountable, and well-documented.

In order to assist the Ministry in reviewing submissions, please use this workbook to provide responses to the individual questions, as well as provide any additional comments you may have. We would greatly appreciate if individuals and organizations submit comments electronically by August 17, 2012. Please use the Send Workbook button on the front page or e-mail us at: AVED.QualityAssurance&SectorLabourRelationsBr@gov.bc.ca.

Hard copies may be sent to:

Ministry of Advanced Education
PO BOX 9883 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9T6

If you have questions about the workbook please contact Dorothy Rogers at (250) 356-5406 or via e-mail: AVED.QualityAssurance&SectorLabourRelationsBr@gov.bc.ca.

Thank you for your participation. We value your input and greatly appreciate your time and attention.

Instructions:

1. You must have Adobe Reader to fill out this workbook. It can be downloaded for free at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>
2. Save the workbook to a local drive.
3. Click on the textbox to provide a response.
4. Save the document if you wish to continue working on it later.
5. Save the final document before using the Send Workbook button or sending it to the e-mail address noted above.

Section II: Participant Information

All materials or comments received may be used and disclosed by the Ministry of Advanced Education or by the Province of British Columbia to assist in evaluating and revising the proposed options described in this workbook. This may involve disclosing materials, comments or summaries of them, to other interested parties or the public during and after the engagement period.

An individual who provides materials or comments and who indicates an affiliation with an institution or organization will NOT be considered to have submitted those comments or materials on behalf of the institution or organization so identified. Individuals who are submitting materials or comments on behalf of an institution or organization should identify as doing so.

Name: _____

Institution or Organization: _____

Address: _____

Comments are submitted on behalf of the noted institution or organization: Yes No

Section III: Discussion Questions

This section lists five categories where public input is requested. Readers are requested to provide feedback to questions throughout the workbook. The responses will be used to inform legislative as well as policy direction for the new framework.

A. Scope and Structure

Scope

It is proposed that the following types of institutions be covered under the provincial quality assurance framework to ensure quality assurance for the entire system:

- Public post-secondary institutions;
- Private post-secondary institutions (e.g., degree-granting, career training, and non-degree academic institutions);
- Private post-secondary theological institutions;
- Private language schools; and
- Aboriginal-controlled post-secondary institutes.

Question

1. Is there a compelling reason why any of the institutions noted above should not be covered under the provincial quality assurance framework? Please explain.

Structure and Stakeholder Representation

- (i) It is proposed that a single governance body be established in legislation to administer the quality assurance framework.
- (ii) It is proposed that stakeholder representation be a key component of the administrative structure.

Questions

2. What governance structure would be most effective given the diversity of post-secondary educational providers in BC?

3. What stakeholders should be represented in the governance structure and in what capacity?

4. What other types of qualifications should be taken into consideration in the governance structure (e.g., expertise in curricula development, public interest, etc.)?

B. Student Protections

Tuition Protection

It is proposed that all institutions have a mechanism to protect student tuition so that students have the ability to continue their studies in the event of institutional closure or cessation of a program.

- (i) Private institutions will provide security to protect students' tuition which will be refunded only in the event of institutional closure or cessation of a program.
- (ii) All institutions are expected to have refund policies that meet administrative fairness requirements.

Questions

5. Should private institutions provide security in the form of a bond, a fund, or a combination of the two? Please explain.

6. Should there be a consistent tuition refund policy across the entire system for all students? Please explain.

7. What other measures should be put in place to protect students' financial investment in education?

Student Complaint and Protection Mechanism

- (i) It is proposed that a complaint mechanism be established within the new organization for a third party arbitrator for unresolved disputes should a student not find adequate resolution after exhausting the institution's internal dispute processes.
- (ii) It is proposed that all institutions contribute to a fund that will cover timely financial recourse to all eligible students in cases other than institutional closure or cessation of a program. The fund will be managed by the new organization.

Questions

8. It is expected that all institutions have appropriate mechanisms for handling student complaints. In cases of unresolved disputes, what types of student complaints should not be addressed through the new organization?

9. In what cases, other than institutional closure or program cessation, should students be eligible to receive a partial or full refund of tuition paid (e.g., misleading advertising)?

Maintaining Student Records

It is proposed that all institutions retain student records for a specified number of years unless the institution ceases to operate.

Question

10. Should the retention period for student records vary depending on the type of program and length?

Please explain.

C. Accountability Mechanisms

Accountability mechanisms will ensure due process while respecting institutional policies and procedures in a differentiated system.

Proportionate Oversight

A risk-based approach is proposed where regulatory/review efforts are proportionate to the institution's level of risk. Institutions may move into a higher or lower category of risk depending on its track record.

- (i) It is proposed that the following factors be used to define an institution's level of risk: the institution's history of its teaching and research; its students' experiences; its financial status and capacity; its compliance and non-compliance with applicable legislation/regulations; its student financial assistance default rate; and its internal quality assurance mechanisms.

- (ii) It is proposed that the frequency of which institutions are periodically assessed be based on its track record in maintaining minimum quality standards. For example, the higher the level of risk, the more frequent and intensive the institutional and programs reviews will be.

Questions

11. What categories of risk should be included in the new structure? Please explain.

12. Do you agree that the factors listed should be used to determine an institution’s level of risk? Are there other factors that should be taken into consideration (e.g., student attrition rate, employment rate for applied programs)?

13. Using the categories you outline in response to Question 11, what should the relationship be between the risk category and an institution’s ability to provide different types or levels of education programs?

Organizational Review

- (i) It is proposed that an institution's level of risk will determine the balance of which institutional and programmatic reviews will be undertaken.
- (ii) It is proposed that all institutions, when proposing a program in an area that is outside its programmatic scope, where it does not have expertise, or have not already been approved for a program, be required to undergo an organizational review.

Question

14. Should the level of programmatic review be based on the cost and length of the program to reflect the level of student investment and the level of the credential? Please explain.

D. Expectations and Standards

Enhanced quality assurance expectations and standards for the system will be established and will be made publicly available.

Learning Outcomes

It is proposed that learning outcomes for all credentials be aligned with a qualifications framework. The framework will outline the expected knowledge, skills, and acquired competencies at each credential level and will provide the standards for each qualification type. All qualifications recognized through the qualifications framework will be quality assured.

Questions

15. What credentials or programs should be excluded from the qualifications framework? Please explain.

16. What outcome measures, as appropriate to program objectives, indicate student success?



Education Quality Assurance (EQA)

EQA provides a framework for promoting and protecting the BC brand.

- (i) It is proposed that criteria for EQA designation be strengthened and only institutions that have demonstrated a lower level of risk be eligible for designation.
- (ii) It is proposed that all EQA institutions be charged a fee for the designation.

Questions

17. Do you agree that EQA should only be granted to institutions categorized as being at a lower level of risk? Please explain.



18. Given the purpose of EQA, would it be beneficial to have EQA designation for different categories of institutions or programs? Please explain.



19. Should the term accreditation be used to replace or complement EQA designation? Please explain.

Reporting Requirements

Access to comprehensive information will help students make informed choices; provide information to stakeholders on the achievement of quality outcomes; and inform and be used to assess public policy.

- (i) It is proposed that core data be collected from all institutions and be made available to the public.
- (ii) It is proposed that government maintain an inventory of all programs offered at all institutions with the understanding that institutions are responsible for ensuring the information is updated and complete at all times.

Questions

20. What constitutes core data?

E. Approved Programs

Approved Programs

- (i) Approved programs may be subject to suspension or revocation:
 - upon recommendation by the quality assurance organization, or
 - if there is reason to believe the institution has discontinued the approved program, or
 - if it is deemed to be in the public interest.
- (ii) Approval is required if an institution wishes to extend, expand, reduce, suspend or terminate an approved program that gets a benefit from the Province (e.g., student aid designation).

Question

21. How long should an institution not be offering a program that has received approval before it is deemed to have been discontinued? Please explain.

Programs offered outside of BC

It is proposed that when a BC institution awards the credential for a program offered outside of the province, the program will undergo the provincial quality assurance process regardless of whether the program is offered at the BC campus.

Question

22. What factors should be considered when determining whether a program offered outside of BC by a BC institution should undergo the provincial quality assessment process?

F. Other Comments

Please provide any additional comments.

Section IV: Summary of Discussion Questions

1. Is there a compelling reason why any of the institutions noted above should not be covered under the provincial quality assurance framework? Please explain.
2. What governance structure would be most effective given the diversity of post-secondary educational providers in BC?
3. What stakeholders should be represented in the governance structure and in what capacity?
4. What other types of qualifications should be taken into consideration in the governance structure (e.g., expertise in curricula development, public interest, etc.)?
5. Should private institutions provide security in the form of a bond, a fund, or a combination of the two? Please explain.
6. Should there be a consistent tuition refund policy across the entire system for all students? Please explain.
7. What other measures should be put in place to protect students' financial investment in education?
8. It is expected that all institutions have appropriate mechanisms for handling student complaints. In cases of unresolved disputes, what types of student complaints should not be addressed through the new organization?
9. In what cases, other than institutional closure or program cessation, should students be eligible to receive a partial or full refund of tuition paid (e.g., misleading advertising)?
10. Should the retention period for student records vary depending on the type of program and length? Please explain.
11. What categories of risk should be included in the new structure? Please explain.
12. Do you agree that the factors listed should be used to determine an institution's level of risk? Are there other factors that should be taken into consideration (e.g., student attrition rate, employment rate for applied programs)?
13. What should the relationship be between the risk category and an institution's ability to provide education programs?
14. Should the level of programmatic review be based on the cost and length of the program to reflect the level of student investment and the value of the credential? Please explain.
15. What credentials or programs should be excluded from the qualifications framework? Please explain.
16. What outcome measures, as appropriate to the program objectives, indicate student success?
17. Do you agree that EQA should only be granted to institutions categorized as being at a lower level of risk? Please explain.
18. Given the purpose of EQA, would it be beneficial to have EQA designation for different categories of institutions or programs? Please explain.
19. Should the term accreditation be used to replace or complement EQA designation? Please explain.
20. What constitutes core data?
21. How long should an institution not be offering a program that has received approval before it is deemed to have been discontinued? Please explain.
22. What factors should be considered when determining whether a program offered outside of BC by a BC institution should undergo the provincial quality assessment process?