

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT - PHASE 1

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, post-secondary educational institutions, student associations, post-secondary education associations and professional groups as well as other stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the goals and objectives of the proposed quality assurance framework outlined in the discussion paper. In addition, the BC Jobs Plan Discussion Forum provided the general public with an opportunity to offer comments. Ministry staff also met with a small group of students in a half-day focus group.

Feedback was received from:

- 13 associations
- 12 post-secondary education institutions
- 21 posters on the BC Jobs Plan Discussion Forum
- 9 student participants in the focus group
- 2 agencies
- 4 individuals

We are pleased to share a summary of the main themes below.

We thank all those who have provided input. Your ideas and suggestions have informed further developments outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework Workbook. The workbook is a consultation document for stakeholders to provide feedback in the second phase of public consultations. We hope you will review it and continue your participation in this process.

SUMMARY

Written submissions

The issues that received the most comments were:

Engagement process

- Half of the respondents encouraged the ministry to further engage the system.

Governance structure

- There was general support for a single quality assurance body that operated at arms-length from government. Many stated the need to have the organization's structure reflect the diversity of the sector.

Stakeholder representation

- Many submissions expressed the need for stakeholder representation (i.e., institutions, employers and students) and that expert reviewers be part of the quality assurance organization whether it be in its governance board or its committees. In addition, stakeholder representation and expert reviewers were seen to be integral to drafting quality standards.

A differentiated system

- Submissions encouraged the ministry to allow for sector diversity by recognizing that different types of institutions have different missions, however, it was also stressed that all institutions should be treated equally and fairly.
- Submissions from private educational providers called for further integration into the public system, particularly the provincial credit transfer system.
- There was strong agreement that program learning outcomes should be defined at the institutional level. Institutions demonstrate that learning outcomes are achieved through the quality assessment process.

Reporting of data

- There was general support for the ministry to be a central repository of data that will be publicly available to students and the system. There was no clear indication of what data should be provided.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT - PHASE 1

BC Jobs Plan discussion forum

The engagement questions on the BC Jobs Plan was tightly focused and asked stakeholders what a quality education meant to them. Most respondents thought that the knowledge and skills acquired through post-secondary education was important as well as finding meaningful employment. Several respondents also noted the importance of keeping post-secondary education accessible.

Student focus group

The majority of the discussion focused on what information institutions should provide to students (including the transferability of credits) and the cost of post-secondary education. Students felt that institutions should focus on providing accurate information about programs (e.g., learning outcomes, additional fees, other credentials that may be needed, etc.) rather than providing marketing materials that present the program in the best light possible. They also noted that improvements could be made to better communicate credit transfer between institutions. Students raised the issue of accessibility and funding cuts to post-secondary education, noting that both impact the quality of the student experience.