

Handbook for Public Organizations

*Applying for Ministerial Consent under the
Post-secondary Education Choice and
Excellence Act, 2000*

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board

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**Handbook for Public Organizations:
Applying for Ministerial Consent under the
*Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000***

This *Handbook* is a guide for public organizations seeking a new or renewed consent of the Minister pursuant to the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*. It outlines the mandate of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, and its criteria and procedures for review of applications for consent to offer or advertise all or part of degree programs in Ontario or to use the term “university” in Ontario, referred to it by the Minister.

For instructions on what to include in a submission to the Board, consult the Board’s *Submission Guidelines*.

The preparation of this *Handbook* has benefited from the advice of stakeholders and the work of other accrediting and quality assurance bodies, including:

- the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS) and Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV);
- the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC);
- the British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB);
- the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC); and
- the accreditation criteria and procedures used by the regional accrediting bodies in the United States:
 - Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
 - New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 - North Central Association Higher Learning Commission
 - Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
 - Western Association of Schools and Colleges
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

We are also grateful to the many stakeholders and other interested parties who contributed their comments during the preparation of this *Handbook*.

Applicants should note that the Board may revise its documents from time to time, and the onus is on the applicant to ensure that it is using the most current version of the Board’s policies and criteria.

Inquiries about the Board’s criteria or procedures should be directed to:

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Applications for the Minister's Consent

Under the terms of the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*, the consent of the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is required for anyone seeking in Ontario, either "directly or indirectly," to

- grant a degree;
- provide a program or part of a program of postsecondary study leading to a degree to be conferred by a person inside or outside Ontario;
- advertise a program or part of a program of postsecondary study offered in Ontario leading to a degree conferred by a person in or outside Ontario;
- sell, offer 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;
- operate or maintain a university;
- use or be known by a name of a university or any derivation or abbreviation of a name of a university;
- hold oneself out to be a university; and
- make use of the term university or any derivation or abbreviation of the word in advertising relating to an educational institution in Ontario.

This guide addresses only the Board's criteria and processes for the review and recommendation of applications referred to it by the Minister. Inquiries about the application and consent process, the Act and its regulations, the activities subject to the Act, and the Minister's requirements, should be directed to the Universities Unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Quality Assessment in Context

Prior to 1983 there was no Ontario legislation preventing any organization from offering degree programs, granting degrees, or calling itself a university. Traditionally, degree-granting authority had been based in a royal charter or provincial statute.

From 1984 to 2001, the *Degree Granting Act*¹ set conditions under which degrees were granted and degree programs offered in Ontario. Under the *Degree Granting Act*, an Ontario-based institution required an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant degrees, to offer programs leading to a degree, to call itself a university, and to advertise using the word “university”. The *Degree Granting Act* also provided that an out-of-province institution required consent from the Minister to undertake similar activities in Ontario.

The *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* (the Act) permits the granting of degrees or operation of a university either by an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or with the consent of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Act also sets out the responsibilities of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board which makes recommendations to the Minister on applications for ministerial consent under section 7(3) (a) of the Act.

1.2 Provincial, National, and International Collaboration

The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) is a leader within Canada on setting the standards for the quality assurance of degree programs and institutions. PEQAB introduced the first qualifications framework in Canada in 2002. Many countries, including those of the European Union, Australia, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, South Africa, Singapore, and Russia have, or are developing, such frameworks. Qualifications frameworks are descriptions of the generic knowledge and skills each credential, or qualification (e.g., certificate, diploma, bachelor degree), is intended to achieve. They serve a number of purposes, including acting as a standard for quality assurance. The Board requires that samples of student work in the terminal phase of every program (e.g., theses, capstone projects) are assessed to ensure that the knowledge and skills identified in the framework are being achieved.

The PEQAB framework is based on the best features of such frameworks available internationally, with modifications to suit the Ontario context. After its release, the PEQAB degree framework was adopted, with minor modifications, for the review of undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Ontario public universities. Subsequently, the PEQAB secretariat led a ministry-wide initiative to develop a framework of all postsecondary qualifications offered in Ontario. The Ontario Qualifications Framework is the only framework in Canada that includes all postsecondary education credentials from apprenticeships to doctoral degrees.

At the national level, the PEQAB secretariat represents Ontario on the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS). Together with quality assurance representatives in other Canadian jurisdictions, the subcommittee monitors developments in degree granting and quality assurance, and shares best practice. In April 2007, Canadian Ministers of higher education endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*.

¹ *Degree Granting Act, 1983*, c.36, as rep. by *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*, c. 36

The *Statement* contains:

- a Degree Qualifications Framework which describes the knowledge and skills expected of graduates holding degrees at the Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral levels;
- the standards and procedures for reviewing decisions to establish new degree-granting organizations; and
- the standards and procedures for reviewing proposals for new degree programs.

The framework and standards have their origins in the PEQAB degree framework and standards.

PEQAB is also a key participant in international quality assurance, especially through its participation in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). INQAAHE is an international network of approximately 200 organizations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education. The main purposes of the Network are to collect, create, and disseminate information on current and developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement, and maintenance of quality in higher education. PEQAB, together with the Province of Ontario, hosted the 2007 annual meeting of INQAAHE in Toronto. The three-day conference was attended by more than 250 participants from 60 countries. In March 2009, Dale Patterson, PEQAB Chair, was elected to the Board of Directors of INQAAHE, and is its sole Canadian Director.

PEQAB has played a leadership role in quality assurance in Ontario, Canada, and internationally. Though the Board's roots are local, its work is consistent with the trend toward the harmonization of postsecondary educational standards manifest in other jurisdictions. By ensuring its standards reflect recognized practice, PEQAB:

- facilitates comparative quality assessment;
- facilitates lifelong learning by documenting the standards students have met and the outcomes they have achieved;
- facilitates labour mobility;
- facilitates credit transfer and recognition;
- fosters accountability by requiring institutions to articulate standards and outcomes;
- ensures graduates possess necessary knowledge and skills for employment and further study; and
- ensures that students and society are served by programs of assured quality.

2. THE POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT BOARD

Established in 2000, and continued under the *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* (the Act), the Board is composed of a chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, a vice-chair and up to nine other members appointed by the Minister. The Board makes recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning applications for ministerial consent under the terms of the Act and other matters referred to it by the Minister pursuant to the Act.

2.1 Responsibilities and Legislative Requirements

Under sections 5 and 7 of the Act, the Board is responsible for:

- reviewing all applications made under the Act for ministerial consent;
- creating expert review panels and committees;
- undertaking research to assist in the Board's work;
- providing recommendations to the Minister;
- addressing any other matter referred to it by the Minister.

In making its recommendations to the Minister, the Board establishes the criteria and processes for the review of applications. Pursuant to the Act, PEQAB criteria are required to be in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions; and comply with such policy directions as may be given by the Minister.

2.2 Vision and Guiding Principles

To achieve its vision to inspire excellence in education through leadership in quality assurance and enhancement, the Board embraces as guiding principles that it is:

- Accountable and responsive to the Minister and other stakeholders
- Transparent about its criteria and processes
- Collaborative, collegial, and consultative
- Standards based
- Encourages ownership and responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement
- Committed to evidenced based decision making
- Open to change
- Fair and ethical

2.3 Board Meetings

The following meeting procedures of the Board are of potential interest to applicants:

- Applicants wishing to forward information or materials to the Board must do so through the secretariat.
- Board meetings will be held *in camera*.
- Board members shall respect the confidential nature of documents, information and records received as Board members, and restrict the use of this information to their work as Board members.
- The manager of the secretariat serves as secretary to the Board.

2.4 Secretariat

The Chair and the Board are supported by a secretariat. Among other responsibilities, the secretariat undertakes research; drafts the Board's criteria, policies, and procedures; and coordinates the Board's

relations with Ministry officials and regulatory bodies. Each application for ministerial consent is managed by a member of the secretariat who assists the applicant and expert assessors in understanding the Board's criteria and procedures to facilitate the comprehensive review of applications.

2.5 The PEQAB Web Site

The Board is committed to transparency and maintains current information about the following on its web site:

- a list of current Board members, their terms of office, and brief biographies;
- the Board's mandate, meeting procedures, and policies;
- PEQAB publications (*Handbooks* and *Submission Guidelines*, annual reports);
- overview of the consent process;
- contact information for the PEQAB secretariat;
- information about relevant legislation, regulation, and pertinent contextual information (e.g., the *Minister's Guidelines and Directives for Applying for a Ministerial Consent*);
- links to national and international quality assurance bodies; and
- information about applications, including portions of the application, the Board's recommendation, and the Minister's decision.

3. PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Application Fee

As per the Minister's requirements, separate application and assessment fees shall be payable for each program or part of a program for which the Minister's consent is requested, including applications to renew existing consents. For example, a request for consent to offer degree programs leading to a B.A. in psychology, a B.A. in history, and a B.Sc. in Biology constitutes three applications and requires three application fees (and three separate assessment fees, as outlined below). The application fee is \$5,000 per application.

3.2 Assessment Fees and Charges

Applicants are responsible for paying the costs of assessment carried out by the Board. Applicants will be invoiced for the estimated cost of each assessment. A deposit in the estimated amount must be received prior to the commencement of assessment activities. The Ministry will invoice the applicant for the balance of any unpaid costs or refund any balance owing to the applicant. The Minister's decision will be announced to the applicant when all accounts are settled.

The charge for assessments varies with each application, depending on the number of reviewers; the length and complexity of the review; any associated travel, accommodation, and meeting or communication costs; and whether the applicant's response to the or quality assessment panel reports requires further assessment. Costs normally range between \$7,000-11,000 CDN for a program quality assessment.

3.3 The Board's Procedures

This chapter of the *Handbook* includes a flowchart that outlines the process for review of an application to offer a degree program (see page 12 and 13). Chapters 4 and 5 describe the procedures and criteria for program quality reviews. The process for requests for other forms of ministerial consent (e.g., to use of the term "university", addressed in Chapter 7) will vary according to the complexity of the application.

3.4 Disclosure

Applicants must disclose to the Board any and all information that the Board may require to carry out its evaluation and fulfil its obligation to make informed recommendations to the Minister.

The *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* makes it an offence to knowingly furnish false information in any application, statement or other documentation to be provided. If an applicant is discovered to have knowingly provided false information to the Minister or Board, the Board will recommend that the Minister deny the application for consent.

3.5 Ownership of Expert Reports

All reports prepared by the Board's assessors are the property of the Minister. The Board may include assessment reports and applicant comments in its recommendation to the Minister.

3.6 Opportunity for Applicant Comment

The applicant will have an opportunity to provide further information if the application is found to be incomplete; to comment on the report from any Quality Assessment Panels; and to respond to any comment from third parties in accordance with section 3.7 below.

Although applicants are urged to prepare and promptly submit their formal response to the quality assessment panel report, applicants have a maximum of three months to submit a response to the Board. If there is no response from the applicant, the application and report(s) will be considered by the Board at the first scheduled meeting following the deadline.

The applicant may request an extension of the deadline in writing. In the request to the Board, the applicant should state clearly the reason(s) for the delay and the date by which it expects to provide a response. The Board's decision on whether to grant a delay will be based on the extent to which the reason for the anticipated delay is outside of the direct control of the applicant.

3.7 Opportunity for Public Comment on Applications

At the time an application is posted, the Board will indicate a deadline for comment on the application from interested parties. Those seeking further information about the application should address themselves to the applicant.

Remarks bearing on the assessment of the application against the Board's criteria will be handled as follows:

- Comments bearing on the assessment of the application against the Board's criteria will be transmitted to the quality assessors or organization reviewers, as appropriate, for consideration.
- Comments forwarded to assessors or reviewers will also be forwarded to the applicant.
- Comments bearing on the Board's criteria or operations will be transmitted to the Board for consideration.

Remarks bearing on the assessment of the application against the Board's criteria should be submitted to the secretariat.

Unless requested to do so by the Minister, the Board does not consider matters related to public policy. Comments bearing on matters of public policy should be directed to the Universities Unit of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

3.8 Withdrawal of an Application

In the event that an applicant wishes to withdraw an application during the process, the applicant must send written notice to the Minister, with a copy to the Board.

Applicants are reminded that, regardless of whether an applicant withdraws, the Board will post all applications on its web site, as indicated above, and report on the status of the application. Regardless of whether the applicant withdraws, all materials and reports received in relation to an application may be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

3.9 Integrity of the Process

Applicant's Obligations

To protect the integrity and confidentiality of the application and review process, applicants should not attempt to discuss their applications with Board members. In response to an applicant's attempt to lobby Board members, the Board may cease its review of the application and notify the Minister accordingly.

Board Members' Commitments

Members are committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in postsecondary education and adhere to PEQAB's guiding principles. When considering applications referred to them, members make decisions on the merits of the application, and consider the information provided in good faith and to the best of their ability, not being concerned with the prospect of disapproval from any person, institution, or community. All members of PEQAB commit to the following:

Confidentiality

- Participation in PEQAB meetings or committees conducted *in camera* is kept in confidence.
- Members do not discuss individual submissions for review outside the Board's deliberations.
- Members employed by a postsecondary institution do not represent their home institutions.
- Members do not report to their home institution on confidential information of any type about another institution, nor do they report on decisions regarding their home institution unless those matters are in the public domain.
- Members respect the confidential nature of documents, information, and records received as Board members, and restrict the use of this information to their work as Board members.
- Members, at all times, adhere to the intent and requirements of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990* which applies to all information, material and records relating to, or obtained, created, maintained, submitted or collected during the course of a review.

Communication

- Members do not make public statements on any issues that are currently under consideration by PEQAB.
- Members refrain from communicating with the media regarding the deliberations or recommendations of PEQAB unless designated to do so by the Chair.

Personal Gain

- Members do not take improper advantage of information obtained through official duties as a PEQAB member.
- Members do not engage in conduct that exploits their position as a member.
- Subject to the Conflict of Interest Guidelines for Board Members, members do not accept money, awards or gifts from persons who may be, or have been affected by a PEQAB decision.

Fairness and Objectivity

- Members are sensitive to issues of gender, race, language, culture, and religion that may affect the conduct of a review or decision.
- Members deal with groups and persons, with staff, and with each other in a manner that reflects open and honest communication, respect, fair play, and ethical conduct.
- Members approach every application and every issue arising with an open mind, and avoid doing or saying anything to cause any person to think otherwise.
- Members are independent in decision-making.

Collegiality

- Members promote positive relationships among PEQAB members.
- Members demonstrate respect for the views and opinions of colleagues.
- Members share their knowledge and expertise with other members as requested and appropriate.

Commitment

- Members are available on a timely basis to attend meetings and adequately prepared for the duties expected of them.

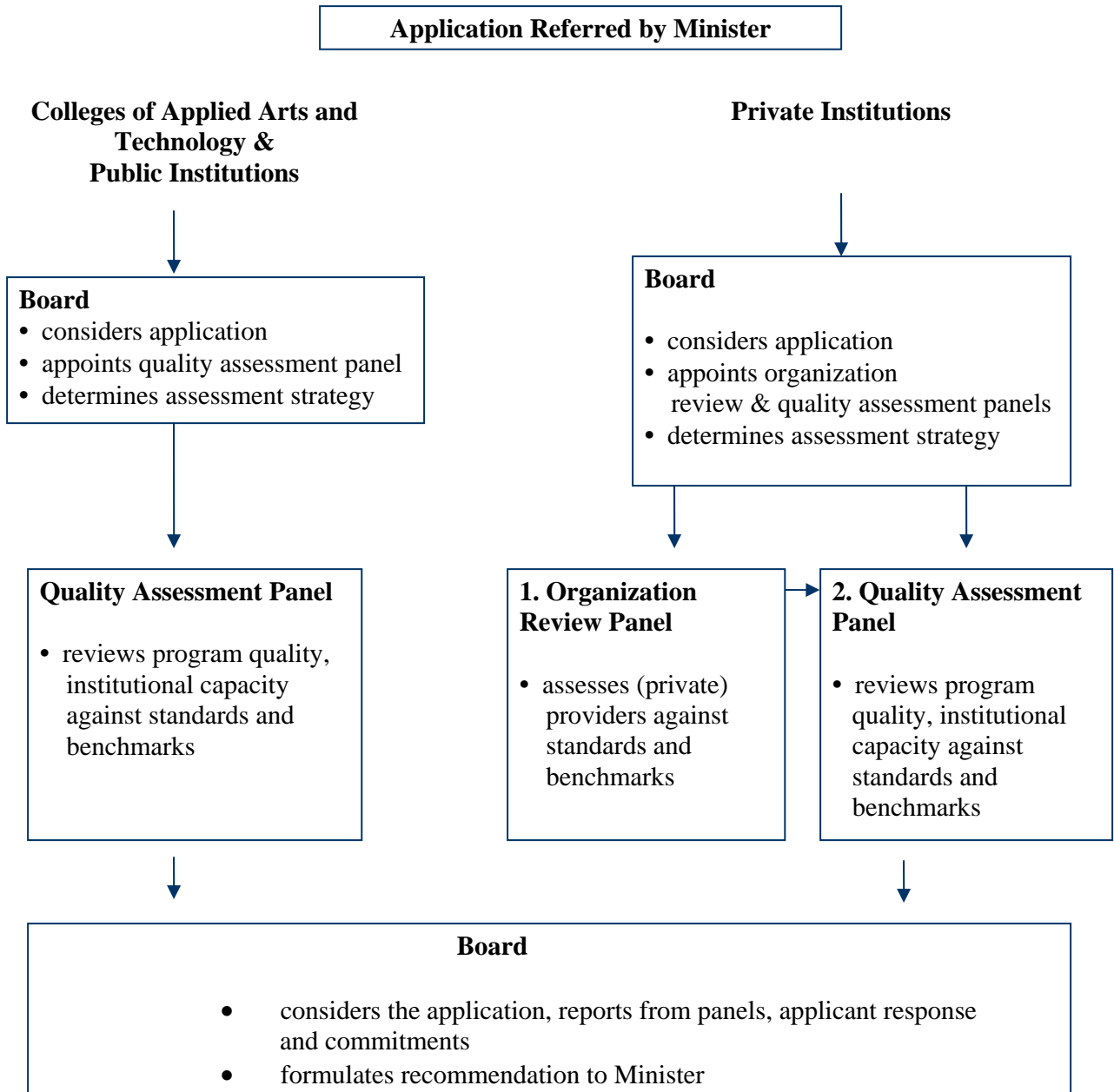
OVERVIEW OF CONSENT PROCESS

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1. **Ministry**
 - Determines whether the application falls under the Act
2. **Minister**
 - If the application falls under the Act, refers the application to PEQAB
3. **Secretariat**
 - Reviews the application
 - Identifies potential assessors for the Quality Assessment Panel
 - Posts the application on the PEQAB web site
4. **PEQAB**
 - Reviews the application
 - Appoints Quality Assessment Panel
5. **Quality Assessment Panel**
 - Reviews the submission against PEQAB criteria
 - Submits written report to PEQAB
6. **Secretariat**
 - Provides the report to the applicant for response
 - Receives applicant's response to the report
7. **PEQAB**
 - Reviews the application, report from expert panel, the applicant's response, and any additional information required to formulate a recommendation
 - Submits recommendation to the Minister
8. **Ministry**
 - Ensures all fees have been paid in full
9. **Minister**
 - Considers PEQAB's recommendation and any public policy or financial issues that may flow from the granting of a consent
 - Communicates decision about consent to the applicant

Following the Minister's communication to the applicant, the Board's recommendation and the Minister's decision are posted on the PEQAB web site.

OVERVIEW OF PEQAB PROCESS



4. PROCESS FOR DEGREE PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW

4.1 Degree Program

For the purposes of this *Handbook*, a degree program is a prescribed set of courses/studies that culminates in mastery of the bodies of knowledge and skills appropriate to the degree-level standard in the disciplinary field of study.

In bachelor programs in arts and science, where the B.A. or B.Sc. degree title is awarded, a program is considered to be the comprehensive body of studies required to graduate with a specialization in a particular discipline (e.g., history, political science, psychology, economics, religious studies, biology, chemistry) or in a particular interdisciplinary program, such as international studies or women's studies. In professionally oriented subjects, where the degree title is usually specific to the field (e.g., business, music, social work) the program is considered to be the comprehensive body of studies required to achieve that particular degree.

Graduate programs focus on a particular discipline or field of specialization within a discipline, and require more advanced and specialized knowledge, conceptual skill, independent research ability, and intellectual creativity than the degree programs that preceded them. In reviewing proposed doctoral degree programs, and, where appropriate, master's degree programs, the Board will expect the field(s) of specialization within a discipline to be identified and to see credible evidence of adequate strength in the proposed field(s) of specialization.

4.2 Quality Assessment Panels

The quality of each proposed degree program, or any part thereof, will normally be assessed by a Quality Assessment Panel (QAP). The nature and complexity of the application will determine the number and nature of credentials, and skills and background of quality assessors. The panel will normally consist of three members including the panel chair. The Board will select all quality assessors.

The applicant may nominate up to three qualified persons from whom the Board may choose one or more to serve on the QAP. The Board has sole discretion, however, to select all quality assessors for the application, without regard to the applicant's nominees.

When an applicant applies for consent to offer multiple programs, the Board will name a QAP or QAPs of a size and nature appropriate to the application. Among the factors the Board will consider are whether the programs are new or being currently offered by the applicant, and the degree of affinity among the proposed programs.

Criteria for Quality Assessors

Quality assessors will possess the qualifications and personal qualities to engender the confidence of the Board, the Minister, the public, accrediting bodies, relevant regulatory bodies, and degree-granting institutions. Quality assessors must:

- be committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in postsecondary education;
- be recognized by their peers for having a broad outlook, an open mind, and sound judgment;
- be free of any conflict of interest, in accordance with the Board's policy on conflict of interest for quality assessors; and
- have demonstrated skills in oral and written communication, preferably including experience of writing formal reports to deadlines.

The Board will seek to select as panel members highly qualified individuals who possess:

- an advanced academic credential related to the subject area under review (normally at the terminal level² in the field);
- any required or desired professional credentials and/or related work experience of substantial depth and range;
- relevant academic experience such as administration, teaching, curriculum design and/or quality assessment experience (e.g., as appraisers for accrediting bodies or as reviewers of degree programs); and who are
- active scholars, normally at the rank of associate or full professor.

Quality assessors of graduate program proposals will have experience in graduate teaching and, as appropriate, in graduate thesis supervision, or in the supervision of clinical or applied studies at the graduate level.

In addition to the qualities of panel members, QAP Chairs will normally be experienced in the administration of higher education; and be experienced committee members who can function objectively and effectively as chair of an assessment committee.

QAP Chairs for graduate program proposals will normally also be experienced in the administration of graduate programs (e.g., as chair of a department with graduate programs, graduate program coordinator, chair of the graduate committee, member of a scholarship committee, member of a faculty or university graduate or research council or committee).

The Board will strive to name QAPs that reflect an appropriate mix of academic/professional credentials and experience related to the field.

In establishing its roster of quality assessors, the Board may seek nominations of qualified individuals from the public and a wide variety of constituencies, including but not limited to the following:

- Ontario Council on Graduate Studies;
- Ontario universities and colleges;
- professional, accrediting and regulatory bodies within and outside of Ontario; and
- postsecondary educational institutions outside Ontario.

Suggestions for and self-nominations by qualified individuals are welcome.

Quality Assessment Panel Report

The primary obligation of the QAP will be to provide its best judgement on the quality of the proposed program. In cases where the applicant is seeking consent to offer part of a degree program, the QAP will provide its best judgement on the quality of the part program in the context of the whole program.

To this end, the QAP is expected to assess applications against the criteria stated in Chapter 5. The panel may request from applicants any information in addition to that contained in the application to

² The doctorate is normally the terminal academic credential in all fields or disciplines with the exception of studio disciplines where a master's degree in the field/discipline is more typical. The Board expects that the assessors will hold the terminal academic credential: (a) in the same field/discipline area as the proposed program area, or (b) in a field/discipline which can be shown to be closely related in content.

assist it in its deliberations.

Under the coordination of the panel Chair, the members of the QAP will develop a report that must include at least the following information:

- an assessment of the application against each of the Board's standards and benchmarks stipulated in Chapter 5;
- assessment of the sufficiency, reliability and validity of the evidence provided by the applicant;
- an assessment of evidence found during any site visit; and
- a recommendation, with reasons, on whether the proposed program meets the Board's criteria and is of sufficient academic quality to be offered to the people of Ontario.

4.3 Board's Recommendation

The following are the anticipated outcomes of the Board's process regarding its reviews of application for ministerial consent:

- recommendation to the Minister to grant consent (the Board may, in some circumstances, recommend certain conditions be attached to the consent); or
- recommendation to the Minister to deny consent.

5. DEGREE PROGRAM QUALITY REVIEW STANDARDS

All applicants seeking ministerial consent to offer a degree program or any part thereof must undergo a program quality assessment to determine whether the proposed program meets the Board's standards and benchmarks. In cases where the applicant seeks ministerial consent to offer a part of a degree program, the Board will assess the proposal in the context of the entire degree program.

Recognizing that there are several streams leading to bachelor and graduate degrees, including professional degrees at both levels, the Board has adopted standards that provide a reasonable consistency in the standards expected of all programs and that recognize some diversity in the manner of achieving those standards.

5.1 Minimum Proportion of a Complete Program an Applicant Must Offer

Applications for consent to offer part of a degree program will be assessed in the context of the complete program. In cases where the organization seeking consent for part of a program does not offer a complete degree program (e.g., offers degree completion or a degree based on recognition of prior credits), the Board's minimum requirements for the portion of the complete degree that an applicant must offer at the site from which the student is to receive the degree are:

- for a bachelor degree, at least 25% (usually 30 full credits) of the program requirements;
- for graduate and professional programs, the institution must offer:
 - no less than 50% of the course requirements in terms of content and outcomes as it is normally offered in public or accredited private institutions;
 - any standard non-course requirements of the program as it is normally offered by public or accredited private institutions (e.g., comprehensive examinations, academic reports, research projects and/or a thesis); and
- for both undergraduate and graduate programs, the elements of a partial program that the degree granting institution offers must be those that are designed to provide the student with the most critical advanced knowledge and skill requirements of the discipline at the relevant degree level - that is, the terminal rather than the introductory or medial segments of the program.

5.2 Standards and Benchmarks

The Board will assess the quality of proposed degree programs in accordance with the following Board standards:

1. Degree Level
2. Admission, Promotion, and Graduation
3. Program Content
4. Delivery Method
5. Capacity to Deliver
6. Credential Recognition
7. Regulation and Accreditation
8. Nomenclature
9. Program Evaluation
10. Academic Freedom and Integrity
11. Student Protection

1. DEGREE LEVEL STANDARD

The Board's four degree standards and the knowledge and skills expectations under each of these comprise the Ontario standard for degree programs (see the insert: *Ontario Qualifications Framework*). These degree standards identify the knowledge and skills expected of graduates of Bachelors, Master's, and Doctoral degree programs in Ontario.

The degree descriptions and the knowledge and skills identified in the standard are intended to capture the most generic aspects of the respective degree levels. Each of the degree levels, however, applies to an extremely broad spectrum of disciplines and program types.

For example, some general and honours/specialist baccalaureate degrees are in fields that are practice oriented while others are more theoretical and research based. Whether a program is intended to prepare an individual either for immediate practice/employment in a field of practice or for further study in a discipline, it must meet a substantial and common set of outcomes that have historically been, and continue to be, critical to and shared by both types of programs within a degree-level educational environment.

At the master's and doctorate levels, the differences in program content and outcomes between the research-oriented degrees and those which have a more applied focus can be much subtler. This is usually evidenced by closer ties with industry or professional organizations (such as external advisory committees, research ties, formal partnerships, and sponsorships), by the integration into the program of some practical elements (such as management, marketing, or law, information science), and by offering these in a manner that develops and reinforces communication and team skills through working in real or simulated occupational or professional environments. These degree levels are intended to provide increasingly higher levels of knowledge and skills in a discipline and the ability to apply these in any and all relevant occupational, professional and academic environments.

The program must meet one of the Board's degree level standards (for the standard, please consult the insert: *Ontario Qualifications Framework*):

- Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Degree Standard;
- Baccalaureate/Bachelor's Honours Degree Standard;
- Master's Degree Standard;
- Doctoral Degree Standard;

and the following **Benchmarks**:

1. The program meets or exceeds the degree level standard and the applicant demonstrates how the program meets the standard.
2. Assessment of individual student work in the terminal stage of the program, that reflects exemplary, average, and minimally acceptable performance, demonstrates that the degree-level standard has been achieved.

2. ADMISSION, PROMOTION, AND GRADUATION STANDARD

Admission, promotion, and graduation requirements are consistent with the postsecondary character of degree-granting organizations.

Benchmarks:

1. Admission requirements are appropriate to the learning outcome goals of the program and the degree level standard.

2. Admission to a bachelor program normally requires at a minimum an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or equivalent³, six university or university/college courses at the Grade 12 level, a minimum average of 65 per cent, and any additional requirements.
3. Mature students⁴ have demonstrated academic abilities equivalent to those of Ontario high school graduates, verified by successful completion of courses at the postsecondary level or an entrance examination.
4. Admission to a master's program normally requires a recognized undergraduate degree, equivalent to the four-year honours degree standard identified in the PEQAB degree level standard and the Ontario Qualifications Framework, in an appropriate specialization, or relevant bridging studies, with a high level of performance in the prerequisite studies.
5. Admission to a doctoral program normally requires a recognized master's degree in an appropriate specialization, or relevant bridging studies, with a high level of performance in the prerequisite studies.
6. Where any type of advanced standing into the program is proposed, policies and procedures pertaining to bridging requirements, advanced standing, credit, and credential recognition:
 - a) have as a principal criterion that the credits accepted for admission to a degree program are in proportion to the affinity with and/or applicability to the specialist content of the program and other curricular requirements;
 - b) are fair (award credit where credit is due), reasonable (do not award credit where none is due), and consistent;
 - c) identify the bases on which such decisions are made, including:
 - i) the minimum acceptable grade or achievement level;
 - ii) the requirements for comparability of program content of earlier studies with that of the proposed program;
 - iii) the procedures for determining the credit to be awarded;
 - iv) the procedures that students will follow when requesting credit and appealing transfer of credit decisions;
 - v) the limit on the number of credits that will be awarded for prior degree⁵ level study toward the degree program;
 - d) for undergraduate programs, the limit on the number of credits that will be awarded for prior diploma level study, with and without affinity⁶, toward the degree program (excluding any work experience/internship requirements) such that the advanced standing to be awarded does not exceed:
 - 67 % credit for a 3-year degree program from a completed 3-year diploma program;
 - 53 % degree level credit for a 3-year degree program from a completed 2-year diploma program;
 - 65 % degree level credit for a 4-year degree program from a completed 3-year diploma program;
 - 40 % degree level credit for a 4-year degree program from a completed 2-year diploma

³ For credentials earned in Quebec, applicants should have a Secondary V diploma and at least one year (minimum 12 academic courses) in a CEGEP academic diploma program, with subjects at stated levels relevant to the degree program.

⁴ Mature students are applicants who have not achieved the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or its equivalent, who are at least 19 years of age on or before the commencement of the program in which they intend to enrol.

⁵ Credits recognized for advanced standing must be earned at a postsecondary institution which is (i) a Canadian public university, (ii) an organization authorized to offer the degree program on the basis of an Ontario ministerial consent; (iii) an organization that has the legal authority to grant degrees, is accredited by a recognized accrediting body where relevant, applies quality assurance policies to programs consistent with the program evaluation policy requirements of the Board, and is a member of a recognized association of degree-granting institutions; or (iv) another institution acceptable to the Board.

⁶ Course affinity is based on similarity of course content and the level of learning outcomes.

- program;
 - e) require in all cases a gap analysis of the program content and outcomes of the studies for which transfer credit is being awarded;
 - f) ensure that the degree level standard and all program learning outcome standards of the degree program are met; and
 - g) identify any requirements for bridging studies that facilitate entry into the proposed program.
7. For a degree completion arrangement a detailed gap analysis demonstrates the academic integrity of the degree program and that the degree level standard and degree program learning outcomes are met.
 8. Applicants proposing to award credit for learning that takes place outside formal postsecondary educational institutions:
 - a) have policies and procedures pertaining to prior learning assessment, which must include at a minimum:
 - i) key principles informing the prior learning assessment;
 - ii) methodology used for portfolio assessment, and examination challenge for credit;
 - iii) policies on credit limits, appeals, and confidentiality;
 - iv) assessment documents, guidelines, brochures for potential students; and
 - b) demonstrate that:
 - i) credit will be awarded only for learning and not for experience.
 - ii) credit will be awarded only for degree-level learning.
 - iii) the determination of competence levels and credit awards will be made by academic experts in the appropriate subject matter.
 9. The institution:
 - a) does not offer any credits for “life experience”, unless that experience is assessed for its appropriate learning value to the specific degree program;
 - b) does not waive comprehensive examinations, academic reports, research projects and/or thesis, if these are standard requirements of the program;
 - c) does not award advanced standing for more than 50% of the total number of the credits of the program based on prior learning assessment;
 - d) requires that at least 50% of the individuals enrolled in a program at any given time are actively taking required elements of that program.
 10. Administrative procedures for assessing advanced standing include the following elements:
 - a) Credit awards and their transcript entries are monitored to avoid giving credit twice for the same learning.
 - b) Policies and procedures applied to assessment, including provision for appeal, are fully disclosed and prominently available.
 - c) All personnel involved in the assessment of learning should receive adequate training for the functions they perform, and there is provision for their continued professional development.
 - d) Advanced standing decisions are regularly monitored, reviewed, and evaluated to ensure their ongoing validity for the degree program.
 11. Promotion and graduation requirements are consistent with the learning outcome goals of the program and include:
 - a) policies governing academic remediation, sanctions, and suspension for students who do not meet minimum achievement requirements;
 - b) a grading system that is easily understandable, meaningful and convertible to students, other postsecondary institutions, and potential employers, whether expressed as letter grades, percentages or grade points;

- c) regardless of the grading scheme, acceptable performance corresponds to student work that demonstrates the degree level standard has been achieved.

Undergraduate:

- d) minimum overall average acceptable achievement for progression (across all degree requirements, including the breadth and discipline-related requirements), is not lower than the level typically designated by C- or 60 - 62%;
- e) minimum overall average acceptable achievement in discipline-related requirements for progression in the program not lower than the level typically designated by C- or 60 - 62%;
- f) a higher level of overall achievement expected in the core discipline(s) of study than the overall average;

Graduate:

- g) minimum acceptable achievement for courses and other requirements applicable to the accumulation of credit toward the degree not lower than the level typically designated by B- or 70 - 72%.

3. PROGRAM CONTENT STANDARD

The program offers an education of sufficient rigour, breadth, and depth to achieve the knowledge and skills identified in the degree level standard.

Benchmarks:

1. The program ensures an appropriate balance of theory and practice.
2. The Program Advisory Committee
 - a) membership includes experts in the field external to the organization; and for degrees in applied and professional areas of study, employers and representatives from industry and professional associations;
 - b) confirms the currency of the curriculum, and as appropriate, its relevance to the field(s) of practice;
 - c) endorses the program as represented in the application.
3. Learning outcomes in the subjects/courses enable graduates to meet or exceed the requirements:
 - a) for graduates from similar programs in Ontario and other jurisdictions;
 - b) of the field(s) of study and/or practice;
 - c) of any relevant professional or accrediting body.
4. All courses provide exposure to increasingly complex theory at the degree level and, in applied or professional courses, and where otherwise appropriate, the application of that theory to practice and the demands of practice in the field(s).
5. Time allotments assigned to the program as a whole and to its components are appropriate to the stated learning outcomes.
6. All baccalaureate programs have a breadth requirement that includes coherent and substantive, non-core⁷ offerings. This requirement informs the design of non-core courses and provides the basis of at least some of the assessment of student outcomes. The non-core curriculum contributes to the achievement of:

⁷ Non-core courses are those that contribute to knowledge in fields unrelated to the main field(s) of study. Core courses are those that contribute to the development of knowledge in the main field(s) of study. The main field(s) of study is the field(s) identified in the degree nomenclature. Core courses can be in the main field(s) of study, or in related fields. (e.g., psychology, history, and statistics are different fields of study. Because the field of psychology uses the scientific method as one of its methodological approaches, statistics would be a core course in a psychology degree program. Statistics is not related to scholarship in history, however, and would not be a core course in a history degree program.)

- a) the development of critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, written, and oral communication skills;
 - b) more than introductory knowledge in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, global cultures, and/or mathematics;
 - c) knowledge of society and culture, and skills relevant to civic engagement; and
 - d) a more than introductory knowledge of the distinctive assumptions and modes of analysis of a discipline outside the core field(s) of study.
7. The curriculum reflects current knowledge in the core field(s).
 8. The curriculum reflects current knowledge in the fields represented in the non-core/breadth offerings.
 9. In undergraduate programs, the balance of core and non-core, or breadth, studies is normally achieved as follows:⁸
 - a) no more than 80 per cent of the program hours are in courses in the core or main field(s) of study (all required elements in theory, practice, and corollary disciplines); and
 - b) some courses outside the core or main field of study are free electives.
 10. The type and frequency of student assessments demonstrate the achievement of the stated learning outcomes and provide appropriate information to students about their achievement levels.
 11. Work experiences, internships, and field placements:
 - a) are appropriate to the program;
 - b) have articulated learning outcomes; and
 - c) identify an appropriate method for joint instructor and employer/supervisor assessment leading to the assignment of a grade.
 12. Research-focussed graduate programs
 - a) provide sufficient opportunities and support for research and other scholarly activity; and
 - b) require student and faculty participation in the broader research community.
 13. Where applicable, the curriculum reflects appropriate levels of Ontario and Canadian content.

4. DELIVERY METHOD STANDARD

The delivery methods support achievement of the expected and actual learning outcomes.

Benchmarks:

1. The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether courses and the program (whether delivered using traditional, web facilitated, blended, hybrid, or online methods) are achieving the intended learning outcomes.
2. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes.
3. Assessment of the delivery methods includes consideration of
 - a) their quality and effectiveness;
 - b) standardized and regular feedback from students;
 - c) provisions for pre-registration and ongoing academic advising;
 - d) policies concerning interventions for poor student progress; and
 - e) availability and suitability of technical and other supports;
4. Delivery methods are appropriate to course content and design.
5. The institution has the expertise and resources to support the proposed delivery methods and to ensure their effectiveness.

⁸ An applicant may demonstrate through alternative approaches that the degree program meets the breadth/non-core requirements.

6. The delivery methods contribute to and enhance the creation of academic community among students and between students and faculty. For online learning elements, this includes that the
 - a) program/course design and the course syllabus make appropriate provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction; and
 - b) technologies used to achieve interactions among faculty and students (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions) are adequate.

Online Delivery:

7. Where a program is offered in both the classroom and online, there is a clear and integral relationship between those responsible for electronically offered course(s)/program and the classroom-based academic structure.
8. The responsibility for program quality remains with the applicant institution. Accordingly, consortial and other agreements:
 - a) reflect that the applicant institution(s) shares responsibility for all aspects of program delivery, including but not limited to ongoing oversight of the curriculum and program design decisions; responsibility for financial, human, and physical resources; resource upgrading; setting the qualifications and training required of faculty and staff; ensuring data integrity and students' privacy;
 - b) include clearly defined performance expectations concerning all aspects of program delivery, including but not limited to those matters identified in (a);
 - c) specify the conditions for the termination of the contract between the parties;
 - d) include provisions to ensure quality control of all aspects of program delivery; and
 - e) ensure the financial arrangements among the parties to the consortial and other agreements provide for adequate participation and management by the applicant institution.
9. Policies pertaining to technology-, computer-, and web-based learning modes of delivery ensure:
 - a) student and faculty preparation and orientation to existing and new technologies;
 - b) adequate resources and processes to acquaint faculty, students, and course designers with new software or systems as they are adopted;
 - c) regular opportunities for ongoing professional and course development for faculty and others responsible for program development;
 - d) reliable, sufficient, and scalable course- management systems to meet current and projected needs, including:
 - i) a robust and secure technical infrastructure, providing maximum reliability for students and faculty; and
 - ii) emergency backup provisions;
 - e) accessible technical assistance for students and faculty for all hardware, software, and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the program;
 - f) 24 hrs per day, 7 days per week access to secure online databanks for web-delivered courses;
 - g) well-maintained, current and appropriate hardware, software, and other technological resources and media; and
 - h) risk assessment and planning that includes:
 - i) a disaster recovery plan to ensure consistency of operational capacity;
 - ii) back-up and storage technology protocols; and
 - iii) a requirement for historical logs and physical documentation of exceptions, breaches, capacity usage, upgrades, workarounds, bolt-ons etc.
10. Appropriate safeguards assure the authentication of student identity and the integrity of student work for online courses/programs. Policies and procedures assure:

- a) the security of students' confidentiality and privacy when conducting assessments and evaluations, and in the dissemination of results;
- b) the secure destruction of personal data when it is no longer needed; and
- c) the verification of student identity for coursework and examinations, and for the control of examinations, including but not limited to security; time limits; the selection of proctors/invigilators; and the requirements for, and weighting of, evaluations conducted face-to-face.

5. CAPACITY TO DELIVER STANDARD

The applicant has the legal characteristics, governance structure, and administrative capacity necessary to organize and manage a competent institution of higher learning and the capacity to deliver the quality of education necessary for students to attain the stated and necessary learning outcomes.

Benchmarks:

1. The program is appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and strength.
2. The applicant's legal status is appropriate for its goals.
3. The applicant provides for an appropriate governing structure, such as a governing body that is the legally constituted body responsible for managing the assets of the organization and maintaining the purpose, viability, and integrity of the institution, achieving institutional policies and goals, selecting administrative leadership, and providing the appropriate physical, fiscal, and human resources.
4. The applicant has the administrative capacity to manage effectively an institution of higher learning, as demonstrated by coordinated business and academic plans detailing the commitment to the academic quality of program content and delivery.
5. Development of the curriculum, academic policies, and standards includes appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and appropriate consultation with students.
6. The applicant makes a commitment in its budgets and policies to provide and maintain the necessary learning, physical, technological, human, and other resources for the program, and to supplement them as necessary.
7. The applicant provides for reasonable student and faculty access to learning and information resources (such as library, databases, computing, classroom equipment and laboratory facilities) sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind to support the program.
8. Learning resources are available online to students in online courses/programs. If not all appropriate resources are routinely available online, the institution has made appropriate and adequate arrangements to provide them to online students.
9. Students have access to an appropriate range of academic support services, (e.g., academic counselling, tutoring, career counselling, and placement services).
10. Policies pertaining to faculty:
 - a) define the academic/professional credentials required of present and future faculty teaching all courses in the program;
 - b) require the applicant to have on file evidence, supplied directly to the applicant from the granting agency, of the highest academic credential and any required professional credential claimed by faculty members;
 - c) require the regular review of faculty performance, including student evaluation of teaching and/or supervision;
 - d) identify the means of ensuring that faculty knowledge of the field is current;
 - e) support the professional development of faculty including the promotion of curricular and instructional innovation, as well as technological skills, where appropriate; and

- f) identify faculty teaching and supervision loads, and availability to students.

Undergraduate:

11. There are sufficient numbers of academic and other staff to develop and deliver the program and to meet the demands of the projected student enrolment.⁹
12. All faculty^{10,11} teaching in the professional or main field of study and, where appropriate, acting as thesis supervisors, and/or members of examining committees:
 - a) have, where relevant, professional credentials and related work experience;
 - b) hold an academic credential at least one degree higher than that offered by the program in the field or in a closely related field/discipline;
 - c) no fewer than 50 percent of the faculty hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline¹²; and
 - d) engage in a level of scholarship, research, or creative activity sufficient to ensure their currency in the field.
13. All faculty teaching non-core courses:
 - a) have, where relevant, professional credentials and related work experience;
 - b) hold an academic credential at least one degree higher than that offered by the program in the field or in a closely related field/discipline;
 - c) no fewer than 50 percent of the faculty hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline; and
 - d) engage in a level of scholarship, research, or creative activity sufficient to ensure their currency in the field.

Graduate Programs:

14. The applicant identifies the fields or specializations to be covered in the program.
15. There are sufficient numbers of academic and other staff to develop and deliver the program and the designated fields in the program, and to meet the demands of the projected student enrolment.¹³
16. No fewer than 80 percent of the faculty teaching in the program hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.
17. All faculty acting as thesis/dissertation supervisors and/or as members of examining committees hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.
18. Faculty members have substantial records of scholarly contributions to the field/discipline and demonstrate their ongoing contribution to the advancement of the field/discipline through peer-reviewed research/scholarship, exhibitions, or professional activity.

⁹ The required minimum faculty and staff members will depend upon the method of delivery, enrolments, and the complexity and variety of specializations.

¹⁰ To satisfy the following benchmarks, and in compliance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the applicant has obtained the written consent of individual faculty members or others to submit their CVs to the Board.

¹¹ Exceptions to any benchmarks pertaining to faculty must be:

- a) based on the absence of a related program credential in a university or other extraordinary circumstances; and
- b) justified in writing with specific reference to the Board's Capacity to Deliver standard and approved by the President, or, on explicit delegation, the applicant's senior academic officer. The signed document must be kept for review at the time of any request for renewed consent.

¹² The doctorate is normally the terminal academic credential in all fields or disciplines with the exception of studio disciplines where a master's degree in the field/discipline is more typical. The Board expects that the faculty will hold the terminal academic credential: (a) in the same field/discipline area as the proposed program area, or (b) in a field/discipline which can be shown to be closely related in content, or (c) with a graduate level speciality in the same field/discipline.

¹³ The required minimum faculty and staff members will depend upon the method of delivery, enrolments, and the complexity and variety of specializations.

6. CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION STANDARD

While meeting particular needs, the program is designed to maximize the graduates' potential for employment and promotion in their field and further study.

Benchmark:

1. Documented consultations with employers, relevant occupational groups, professional associations, and other postsecondary education organizations indicate the credential will be (for new programs) or is (for existing programs) recognized for purposes of employment and further study.

7. REGULATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARD

Programs leading to occupations which are subject to government regulations are designed to prepare students to meet the requirements of the relevant regulatory and/or accrediting body.

Benchmark:

1. Documented consultations with the relevant regulatory and accrediting body(ies) indicate the credential will be recognized for purposes of employment and further study.

8. NOMENCLATURE STANDARD

The program nomenclature reflects the postsecondary education achieved, facilitates public understanding of the qualification, and assists students, employers, and other postsecondary institutions to recognize the level, nature and discipline of study.

Benchmarks:

1. The degree title conveys accurate information about the
 - a) degree level¹⁴;
 - b) nature of the degree¹⁵; and

¹⁴ The title "Doctor" may refer to the credential that results from successful completion of a program of study that meets the standards of either a doctoral degree or a health-related professional degree (e.g., Doctor of Medicine or Doctor of Dental Surgery). The latter professional degrees may or may not be at the doctoral level in terms of academic degree-level requirements.

In the context of the delivery of health services, use of the title "Doctor" is regulated in Ontario under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*. In this context, only members of the specified professions are entitled under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* to use the title "Doctor":

- a) College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
- b) College of Optometrists of Ontario;
- c) College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
- d) College of Psychologists of Ontario; and
- e) Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

The Board will not normally support proposed degree nomenclature with "Doctor" in the title unless the proposed program meets the Board's criteria and standards for (a) the doctoral degree, or (b) a degree at another level designed to satisfy the educational requirements specified for membership by the regulatory colleges entitled to use the word "doctor" under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.

¹⁵ There are a variety of ways to connote with nomenclature whether a degree is applied/ professional- or research-oriented. With the exception of Bachelor/Master of Applied Science, which connotes research-oriented degrees, research-oriented degrees at the bachelor and masters level are normally of the form: *Bachelor/Master of Faculty (Subject)*, for example, Master of Arts (Psychology) or Bachelor of Science (Chemistry). The level of study at the bachelor level can be further differentiated as "Honours" for research-oriented degrees. Nomenclature for research-oriented doctoral degrees is normally: *Doctor of Philosophy*.

The typical approaches to nomenclature for bachelor and masters degrees in applied/professional areas are:

1. *Bachelor/Masters in Faculty (Subject)*, for example, Bachelor of Technology (Information Technology);

- c) discipline and/or subject of study.

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9. PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARD

The quality of the proposed program is assured by procedures for periodic evaluation that meet the requirements outlined below¹⁶.

Benchmarks:

1. The applicant has a formal, institutionally approved policy and procedure for the periodic review of programs embodying the following characteristics:
 - a) program reviews at regular intervals, normally not exceeding five to seven years. The first such evaluation should occur before a request for renewal of ministerial consent;
 - b) criteria for program reviews that include:
 - i) assessment of the continuing consistency of the program with the organization's mission, educational goals, and long-range plan;
 - ii) assessment of the learning outcome achievements of students/graduates by comparison with:
 - 1) the program's stated learning outcome goals and standards;
 - 2) the degree-level standard;
 - 3) the opinions of employers, students/ graduates; and
 - 4) the standards of any related regulatory, accrediting or professional association;
 - c) where appropriate, assessment of (i) graduate employment rates, (ii) graduate satisfaction level, (iii) employer satisfaction level, (iv) student satisfaction level, (v) graduation rate, (vi) the default rate on the Ontario Student Assistance Program or other student loan plan, (vii) student retention rates and, in the case of graduate programs, (viii) time to completion.
 - d) assessment of the continuing relevance of the program to the field of practice it serves, including evidence of revisions made to adapt to changes in the field of practice;
 - e) assessment of the continuing appropriateness of the method of delivery and curriculum for the program's educational goals and standards;
 - f) assessment of the continuing appropriateness of admission requirements (i.e., achievement level, subject preparation) for the program's educational goals and standards;
 - g) assessment of the continuing appropriateness of the program's structure, method of delivery, and curriculum for its educational goals and standards;
 - h) assessment of the continuing adequacy of the methods used for evaluating student progress and achievement;
 - i) assessment of the efficient and effective utilization and adequacy of existing human, physical, technological, and financial resources;
 - j) indicators of faculty performance, including the quality of teaching and supervision and demonstrable currency in the field of specialization; and

2. *Bachelor/Masters in Applied Faculty (Subject)*, for example, Bachelor of Applied Arts (Music Production); or

3. *Bachelor/Master of Subject*, for example, Bachelor of Interior Design, Master of Social Work.

Applied/Professional Doctoral degrees are normally of the form: *Doctor of Subject/Profession*, for example, Doctor of Business.

¹⁶ With amendments to reflect the learning outcomes orientation of the Board's statements, the following benchmarks are based on the criteria employed by Ontario public universities and Redeemer University College. See UPRAC Audit Guidelines, "Methodology for the audit of undergraduate program reviews", 1998-02-05, and OCGS By-laws, and Procedures Governing Appraisals, 2001-08.

- k) assessment of individual student work in the terminal stage of the program, that reflects exemplary, average, and minimally acceptable performance, demonstrates that the degree-level standard has been achieved.
- 2. The program review procedure includes:
 - a) A Self-Study
A study undertaken, with student input, by faculty members and administrators of the program based on evidence relating to program performance against the criteria stated above, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions.
 - b) A Program Evaluation Committee
A committee struck by the senior administration to evaluate the program based on (a) the self-study and a site visit during which members of the committee normally meet with faculty members, students, graduates, employers, and administrators to gather information. A majority of the members must be senior academic peers (both scholars and administrators) with relevant expertise from both outside the institution and internal to the institution but outside the program, and free of any conflict of interest.¹⁷
 - c) The Report of the Committee
The overarching purpose of the Program Evaluation Committee report is to assess program quality and recommend any changes needed to strengthen that quality. The report must be addressed to the senior administration and shared with the academic council, governing board, faculty members and students in the program, together with a plan of action responding to the recommendations in the report.
- 3. The implementation of the policy and procedures for the periodic review of programs is
 - a) aligned with the Board's requirements for such evaluations; and
 - b) achieves its intended aim of continuous improvement of the program(s).

10. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INTEGRITY STANDARD

The applicant maintains an atmosphere in which academic freedom exists and in which students and academic staff are expected to display a high degree of intellectual independence. Academic activity is supported by policies, procedures, and practices that encourage academic honesty and integrity.

Benchmarks:

- 1. The applicant has a policy on academic freedom that recognizes and protects the rights of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge without fear of reprisals by the applicant or by third parties, and the right of individuals to communicate acquired knowledge and the results of research freely.
- 2. When students or staff are required to adhere to a statement of faith and/or a code of conduct, the applicant:
 - a) has a policy that ensures staff and students are notified of the requirement prior to employment or admission;
 - b) has procedures in place to ensure that the principles of natural justice are followed in the event of alleged violations of any policy or contractual arrangement concerning any required statement of faith and/or code of conduct; and
 - c) demonstrates that the organization's curriculum development, content, and delivery procedures and practices ensure an academic environment in which

¹⁷ A conflict of interest policy similar to that of the board should be implemented in selecting members of a Program Evaluation Committee.

- i) a full and balanced treatment of the commonly-held, academic body of knowledge, theories, and opinions with respect to the various individual subjects and general discipline areas which comprise the program of study is appreciated and fostered; and
 - ii) both students and faculty are expected and permitted to engage in an open dialogue with and about these various theories and opinions.
3. The applicant has appropriate policies pertaining to academic honesty and procedures for their enforcement.
4. The applicant provides an appropriate plan for informing students and faculty about and ensuring their understanding of the policies and procedures concerning academic honesty.
5. The applicant has an appropriate policy on the ownership of the intellectual products of employees and students.
6. The applicant upholds formal ethical research standards. Where the applicant conducts research in Ontario that involves the management of research funds, the use of animals in research, or human research participants, the policies of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and/or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada will govern the research.
7. There are appropriate policies and procedures concerning compliance with copyright law;
8. Where courses/programs are delivered using online delivery, the institution has appropriate policies and procedures to address copyright and intellectual property issues (e.g., digital rights management and the use of object learning repositories).

11. STUDENT PROTECTION STANDARD

The applicant values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct in its relations with students.

Benchmarks:

1. Public reports, materials, and advertising are produced in a full, accurate, and truthful manner.
2. Recruitment policies follow ethical business practices.
3. Key information about the applicant's organization, policies, and programs is published in its academic year calendar and is otherwise readily available to students and the public, specifically including:
 - a) the organization's mission and goals statement;
 - b) a history of the organization and its governance and academic structure;
 - c) a general description of each degree program (e.g., purpose, outcomes, length);
 - d) the academic credentials of faculty and senior administrators; and
 - e) individual descriptions of all subjects in programs and their credit value.
4. The applicant has policies and procedures that protect student and consumer interests in the following areas:
 - a) the resolution of students' academic appeals, complaints, grievances, and/or other disputes;
 - b) security of academic student records;
 - c) payment schedule of fees and charges;
 - d) student dismissal; and
 - e) withdrawals and refunds.
5. Prior to registration, students are provided with and confirm in writing their awareness of policies (and procedures) pertaining to:
 - a) admissions;
 - b) credit transfer arrangements for incoming students;
 - c) credit transfer arrangements with and recognition by other institutions;

- d) entrance examinations;
 - e) prior learning assessment;
 - f) grading;
 - g) the ability of international students admitted to the program to meet program requirements for degree completion;
 - h) method of course delivery;
 - i) academic honesty;
 - j) intellectual property rights;
 - k) student dismissal;
 - l) dispute resolution;
 - m) student support and services;
 - n) tuition;
 - o) scholarships and other financial assistance;
 - p) payment of fees and charges;
 - q) withdrawals and refunds;
 - r) institutional closure;
 - s) where appropriate, supervision, preparation, and examination of theses/dissertations.
6. For courses and/or programs that incorporate web-facilitated, blended, hybrid, or online delivery¹⁸, potential students are fully informed about:
- a) the technological requirements of participation and the technical competence required of them;
 - b) the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in an anytime/anywhere environment;
 - c) any additional costs, beyond tuition and ancillary fees, associated with e-learning aspects of course/program delivery; and
 - d) the kind of support and protection available to them.

6. HONORARY DOCTORATE REVIEW CRITERIA

The Minister's consent is required to award honorary degrees. The following criteria will guide the Board's assessment of applications to award honorary doctorates.

1. The institution has acceptable policies on the selection of recipients for an honorary doctorate, including
 - a) that the recipient:
 - i) is not required to pay a fee for the award;

¹⁸ **Traditional Delivery:** Classroom based teaching with assignments and activities which students pursue independently of each other. **Web Facilitated Delivery:** Web resources and technologies are used to facilitate what is essentially a face to face course. May use web pages and course management systems (CMS) to post syllabi, readings, and assignments. **Blended/Hybrid Delivery:** Course blends online/e-learning and face to face delivery. Substantial parts of the content are delivered online and discussions, team projects and activities are used for learning. The number of face to face sessions is decreased as the volume of online activity increases. **Online Delivery:** A course where all or almost all of the content is web-based with no or a very small number of face to face meetings. Delivery methods included in the "online" category include multimedia, video conferencing, social networking, web-based learning management system (LMS), and/or learning objects.

- ii) has made a significant achievement for the public good at the Ontario, national, or international level; and/or
 - iii) has achieved noted academic and/or professional eminence, at the Ontario, national, or international level, taking particular account of the connection between the recipient and the institution.
- b) administrative and academic staff and students of programs offered pursuant to a consent are among those eligible to make nominations for an honorary award.
2. Unless the honorary doctorate is being awarded posthumously, the recipient is to be in attendance at the convocation or other public event at which the honorary degree is awarded.
 3. The nomenclature of the award reflects recognized practice and its honorary nature.
 4. The applicant has the authority to award one or more earned doctorates.

7. CRITERIA FOR THE USE OF “UNIVERSITY” AND “UNIVERSITY COLLEGE”

Ministerial consent is required to:

- operate or maintain a university;
- use or be known by a name of a university or any derivation or abbreviation of a name of a university;
- hold oneself out to be a university;
- make use of the term “university” or any derivation or abbreviation of the word in advertising relating to an educational institution in Ontario.

Unless stated otherwise in the ministerial consent, a consent to use the word “university” in a name, in advertising, and in promotional activity does not confer any right to offer degree programs.

In preparing recommendations to the Minister on applications for consent to use the terms “university” and “University College”, the Board will employ the following criteria.

7.1 University

In accord with “educational standards recognized in Ontario and in other jurisdictions”, the following criteria are generally related to the practices of universities in Ontario and university systems in major North American jurisdictions.

A university is a legally constituted academic organization:¹⁹

1. which is legally authorized to grant degrees in Ontario or in another jurisdiction;
2. whose charter or statute includes the word “university” in the organization’s title;
3. whose mission and practice includes the creation of knowledge through research and/or scholarly activity and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, publication, and presentation;
4. which offers a comprehensive range of degree programs, normally including but not limited to arts and science;
5. which normally offers programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and has appropriate curriculum design and degree-level learning outcome standards for each program offered leading to the respective degrees;
6. which has policies and procedures for admission, promotion, and graduation of students comparable to the policies and practices of Ontario universities;
7. which constitutes a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance, as evidenced by systems for internal and/or external quality assessment reviews of academic programs and operations;
8. which possesses a policy on faculty qualifications (hiring, retention, promotion, professional development, reward, and termination) appropriate to the degree programs offered and to the mission of creating and disseminating knowledge;
9. which possesses or provides access to the learning resources (library, laboratories, equipment, research tools, etc.) appropriate to the range and level of programs offered and necessary for students to achieve the learning outcomes for the programs; and

¹⁹ In Ontario, comprehensive degree-granting institutions are known as universities. In other jurisdictions, “college” is often used to describe primarily undergraduate degree-granting institutions. For the purposes of assessing the applications of such colleges to operate as universities in Ontario, the criteria set out here will apply.

10. which has a governance system in which faculty members participate in decisions determining academic standards, and which provides for appropriate student involvement, and which is committed to principles and practices of academic freedom and responsibility consistent with those adopted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

7.2 Subsidiary of a University

When a university that meets the criteria stated above wishes to extend its activities into Ontario through a legally separate agency, such as a wholly owned subsidiary company or corporation, that subsidiary operation will be considered to be a private applicant.

7.3 A New University

There are two ways to establish a new university in Ontario – a statute of the Ontario legislature or ministerial consent. This passage relates only to proposals for new universities requiring ministerial consent.

The criteria stated above describe a university in a state of mature operation and are not meant to screen out new institutions but to indicate the directions in which they must tend to justify use of the name “university”. Recognizing that new universities will start with a proposal rather than with an established operation, the Board will assess a proposal for a new university in terms of how well its plans, commitments, and potential capacity meet the criteria stated above for a university. In addition, the Board will review the proposal in light of its standards and procedures for organization review. Each proposed program will be required to undergo a program quality assessment. The Board may recommend that conditions be attached to a ministerial consent to ensure that the institution develops appropriately in the context of the plan and other documents submitted as part of the application.

7.4 University College

The phrase “university college” is used in different ways across Canada. In Ontario, most “university colleges” are institutions which hold degree-granting powers but have suspended those powers in favour of participating in the programs and degrees of established universities. There is one independent university college (Redeemer University College) which began as a religious college and has broadened its mandate to include secular programs in the arts and sciences.

Thus, Ontario practice has confined the title to those institutions that are active participants in universities or to an institution that has met the salient criteria for a university but has a narrower range of programs and a special mission.

7.5 Federated/Affiliated University College

An application from a college affiliated with an institutional member of the Council of Ontario Universities to use the title “university college” may be recommended on two conditions:

- if its mission and policies make it an academic component of the university with which it is federated or affiliated, as demonstrated in the federation or affiliation agreement; and
- if the university in whose life the college participates supports the title “university college”.

A college that does not offer degree programs will not be recommended for the title “university college”.

7.6 Independent University College

An application from a degree-granting institution that aspires to be known as a “university college” will

be recommended on two conditions:

- that it shares the salient characteristics of a university as defined above, with justifiable modifications; and
- that it undergoes an organization review with a positive outcome. In addition, each program to be offered by the university college must undergo a program quality assessment.

University colleges offering bachelor programs must normally demonstrate a reasonable breadth in the range of disciplines offered to students, e.g., programs in the humanities, social sciences, mathematical, and/or natural sciences.

The more specialized or focused missions of university colleges may take a variety of forms. These include but are not limited to (by way of illustration only): a particular range of programs, sometimes with an integrated or interdisciplinary thrust; a greater emphasis on undergraduate programs; a particular stress on the quality or nature of the teaching environment (while continuing to require and support scholarship); a living-learning environment designed to meet the needs of a particular group (e.g., women) or permeated by particular values (e.g., faith-based values).

Recognizing that it may need to assess proposals for new university colleges, the Board will assess proposals to create a new university college in terms of how well its plans, commitments, and potential capacity meet the criteria for an independent “university college”.

8. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR ASSESSMENTS

The Board acknowledges the potentially unique circumstances facing applicants that have, within the past two years, completed a thorough program or institutional evaluation with another quality assurance body. Applicants in these circumstances may ask the Board to recognize the findings of a recent assessment in the formulation of its recommendations to the Minister.

The onus is on the applicant to request that the Board recognize all or part of any relevant, prior review. In its request, the applicant must submit the following information:

- a) a complete consent application in accord with the Board's *Submission Guidelines*;
- b) documentation of the requirements (criteria, standards, and procedures) of the assessment that occurred within the two years prior to the submission to the Board;
- c) an analysis of the overlap in requirements of the Board and the previous assessment;
- d) the complete reports resulting from the previous assessment; and
- e) written permission for the Board or its agents to consult the assessors or any professional, accrediting, or regulatory body named in the submitted documentation.

8.1 Recognition of Prior Assessments

The Board has sole discretion to recognize the findings of another assessment. The Board must be satisfied that the prior review examined the program against standards and benchmarks similar to those established by the Board. The Board will also consider:

- how recently the review occurred;
- the credibility of the reviewing body;
- the criteria, standards, and procedures used in the assessment;
- the qualifications, standing, and objectivity of the external reviewers involved; and
- evidence that the quality of the program will be maintained in Ontario.

8.2 The Recognition Process

The Board expects applicants wishing to have prior assessments considered to adduce all relevant evidence. The Board will review and assess the nature and adequacy of any recent prior reviews or assessments in the light of the criteria and procedures outlined in this *Handbook*.

If the Board finds that the prior assessment meets all of its standards and procedural requirements, the Board will normally recognize the outcome of that prior assessment as satisfying its requirements.

If the Board finds that the prior assessment meets only some of its standards and procedural requirements, the Board will normally recognize the relevant portions and ask its assessors to address the remaining matters.

If the Board finds that it would not be appropriate to recognize and use any of the findings of a prior assessment, the Board's review will proceed through its normal process.