PEQAB

THE POST SECONDARY EDUCATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT BOARD
COMMISSION D'ÉVALUATION DE LA QUALITÉ DE L'ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

2017

Handbook for Private Organizations

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

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This *Handbook* is a guide for private 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 (PEQAB), 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.

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 Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA)
- the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS)
- the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC)
- the British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB)
- the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)
- the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assessment Board (SHEQAB)
- the accreditation criteria and procedures used by regional accrediting bodies in the United States
- the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and its European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

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 either of the then current versions of the Board's policies and criteria.

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

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board Secretariat
      900 Bay Street
      23rd Floor, Mowat Block
      Toronto, ON M7A 1L2
      Telephone: 416-212-1230
      Fax: 416-212-6620
      E-mail: *peqab@ontario.ca*
      Web: *http://www.peqab.ca*

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 Advanced Education and Skills Development 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
- advertise a program or part of a program of postsecondary study offered in Ontario leading to a degree conferred
- 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
- make use of the term "university" or any derivation or abbreviation of the word in advertising relating to an educational institution in Ontario.

The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development may refer applications for consent to PEQAB or to another accrediting or quality assurance body (as prescribed in regulation), reject an application without referral to PEQAB (or other body) according to prescribed circumstances and policy criteria, consider a prior quality assurance review as satisfying the requirement that the application be referred, and deem approval by such a body as satisfying the requirement that the Minister receive a recommendation.

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 Postsecondary Education Division, Postsecondary Accountability Branch, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

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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 was 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 were offered in Ontario. Under the *Degree Granting Act*, an Ontario-based institution required an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant degrees, offer programs leading to a degree, call itself a university, or 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 Advanced Education and Skills Development. The Act also sets out the responsibilities of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB), 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

PEQAB is a leader within Canada in setting the standards for the quality assurance of degree programs and institutions. PEQAB introduced the first qualifications framework in Canada in 2002. 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 are assessed to ensure that the knowledge and skills identified in the framework are being achieved.

Many countries, including those of the European Union, Australia, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and South Africa have, or are developing, such frameworks. The PEQAB framework is based on the best features of international frameworks, with modifications to suit the Ontario context.

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

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 (OQF) is the only framework in Canada that includes all postsecondary education credentials, from certificates to doctoral degrees.

In April 2007, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The *Statement* contains
- a Degree Qualifications Framework that describes the knowledge and skills expected of graduates holding degrees at the bachelor, master's, and doctoral levels
- standards and procedures for reviewing decisions to establish new degree granting organizations
- standards and procedures for reviewing proposals for new degree programs.

The framework and standards in this *Statement* 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)—an international network of approximately 200 organizations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education – and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group (CIQG) – a forum for postsecondary institutions, accrediting and quality assurance organizations, higher education associations, governments, businesses, foundations, and individuals to address issues and challenges for quality assurance in an international setting.

In addition, PEQAB has raised its international profile by
- publishing articles and presenting research findings on contemporary topics in quality assurance at national and international conferences
- engaging in collaborative research activities with international colleagues and well at Ontario postsecondary institutions.

PEQAB has played a leadership role in quality assurance in Ontario, in Canada, and internationally. Although 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 knowledge and skills necessary for employment and further study
- 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 Advanced Education and Skills Development concerning applications for ministerial consent under the terms of the Act and other matters pursuant to the Act referred to it by the Minister.

2.1   Responsibilities and Legislative Requirements

Under sections 5 and 7 of the Act, the Board is responsible for
- reviewing all applications referred 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 to comply with policy directions given by the Minister.

2.2   Vision and Values

A stronger Ontario through high quality postsecondary student learning outcomes.

To achieve its vision to inspire excellence in education through leadership in quality assurance and enhancement, the Board embraces as values, being
- accountable
- transparent
- impartial
- collegial
- dedicated to quality and continuous improvement
- grounded in research, evidence, and best practice.

2.3   Board Meetings

Organizations wishing to forward information or materials to the Board must do so through the Secretariat, the chief executive officer of which serves as secretary to the Board. Board meetings are held *in camera* and Board members respect the confidential nature of documents, information, and records, and restrict the use of this information to their work as Board members.

2.4   Secretariat

The Board is 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 external expert reviewers in understanding the Board's criteria and procedures to facilitate the comprehensive review of applications.

2.5   The PEQAB Website

The Board is committed to transparency and maintains the following on its website:
- 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)
- an 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
- information about applications, including portions of the application, the Board's recommendation and recommendation date, 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 BA in psychology, a BA in history, and a BSc in Biology constitutes three applications and requires three application fees (and three separate assessment fees, as outlined below).

In 2017, PEQAB introduced a new procedure for cluster reviews to reduce the costs and time for reviews of related programs. Colleges can now bundle closely related study programs in a cluster. For example, Bachelor of Commerce programs with different concentrations (such as Human Resources, Supply Chain Management or Accounting) could submit one application (see Submission Guidelines for instructions on what to include in bundled submission). All programs within the cluster are then reviewed by the same group of external expert reviewers with expertise in each of the programs. This procedure also makes it easier to account for the common features shared by many study programs.

The application fee is $5,000 per application. For cluster/bundled applications the fee is $10,000 of the application containing up to five degree programs and $15,000 for an application of five or more programs.

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, meeting or communication costs, and whether the applicant's response to the panel reports requires further assessment. Assessment costs will not normally exceed $7,500 for an organization review and normally range between $7,000 and $11,000 for an individual; program.

3.3   The Board's Procedures

This chapter of the *Handbook* includes a flowchart that outlines the process for reviewing an application for consent to offer a degree program (see pages 10 and 11). Chapters 4 and 5 describe the processes and standards for organization reviews and Chapters 6 and 7 for program quality reviews. The process for requests for other forms of ministerial consent (e.g., to use the term "university", addressed in Chapter 9) varies according to the complexity of the application.

3.4   Review Process

The Board receives the application, posts it on its web site, gives a deadline for public comment, and strikes an expert panel for the assessment, as appropriate. The applicant is then informed of the composition of the organization review panel and expert panel(s) and is advised of any site visit(s). A suggested agenda template for the PEQAB site visit pertaining to the program review can be found in **Appendix 11.1**. It is suggested that the organisation review site visit follow a similar format.

Any review panel undertakes the review in accord with the Board's detailed procedures (as per the *Guidelines for External Expert Reviewers*) and typically files its report within 15 days after the site visit. Applicants will normally submit to the Board their formal response to the panel report within 20 business days (4 weeks) of receiving it. Applicant representatives may notify their PEQAB of the need for an extension on any reasonable basis, including but not limited to, the unavailability of relevant staff to consult on the response, the complexity of the response, or the number of items requiring response.

3.5   Transparency of PEQAB Final Reports

Starting on September 15, 2017, PEQAB Final Report (which incorporated the short recommendation to the Minister that has been posted on the PEQAB website after the Minister has made a decision about consent and the detailed Background Report which was previously only shared with the Minister and Ministry) will be shared with the

- the applicant institution
- the expert external reviewers for that particular application and
- the Minister/Ministry immediately after the meeting at which the Board approves its recommendation to the Minister.

The PEQAB Final Reports will reflect the external expert reviewers' findings, the institutions' subsequent responses and commitments as well as the Board's final recommendation, providing greater transparency in terms of the Board's decisions and rationales, as well as greater opportunity for the applicant institution to improve the degree program.

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 panels, and to respond to any comment from a third party in accordance with section 3.7 below.

Applicants will normally submit to the Board their formal comments, if any, to the panel report within 20 business days (4 weeks) of receiving it. Applicant representatives may notify PEQAB of the need for an extension on any reasonable basis, including but not limited to, the unavailability of relevant staff to consult on the response, the complexity of the response, or the number of items requiring response.

3.7   Opportunity for Public Comment on Applications

At the time an application is submitted, the Board will post it on its website and indicate a deadline for comment on the application from interested parties. Those seeking further information about the application should address the applicant.

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

Type of Comment	PEQAB Procedure
comments bearing on the assessment of the application against the Board's criteria	transmit to the expert reviewers or organization reviewers, as appropriate, and the applicant for consideration
comments bearing on the Board's criteria or operations	transmit to the Board for consideration

Comments bearing on the assessment of the application against the Board's criteria should be submitted to the Secretariat and may be emailed to peqab@ontario.ca.

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 Advanced Education and Skills Development, and will be referred there if first received by the Board.

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.

The Board will post all applications on its website, as indicated above, and report on the status of each application including the status of "withdrawn." All materials and reports

received in relation to an application may be subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

3.10 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.

In general, the external expert panel reports are to be treated by the applicant as confidential to the applicant. This requirement of confidentiality should not be interpreted so as to limit the institution's internal consultations, either as regards the draft stage at which the institution's response is sought, nor at the final stage, at which the institution is implementing or revising the degree program in response to a new or renewed consent. Specifically it is PEQAB's expectation that panel reports are to be shared with all faculty, staff, students and administrators involved in the program review, so that the most informed response, at the draft stage, and the fullest implementation of conditions and commitments, at the final stage, can be delivered by the institution.

Board Members' Commitments

Members are committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in postsecondary education and adhere to PEQAB's values. Board members make decisions on the merits of each application referred to them, and consider the information provided in good faith and to the best of their abilities, not being concerned with the prospect of disapproval from any person, institution, or community. In addition, all members of PEQAB commit to the following.

Confidentiality

- Discussion in PEQAB meetings or committees is kept in confidence.
- Members do not discuss individual submissions outside the Board's deliberations.
- Members employed by a postsecondary institution do not represent their home institution.
- 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 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 or the Minister.
- Members refrain from communicating with the media regarding the deliberations or recommendations of PEQAB unless designated to do so by the chair.

Avoidance of 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 who have been, affected by a PEQAB decision.

Impartiality

- 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 as appropriate.

Commitment

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

Overview of Consent Process

1. Ministry
   - determines whether the application falls under the Act

2. Minister
   - decides, for each application that falls under the Act, whether and how to refer it to PEQAB

3. Secretariat
   - reviews the application
   - identifies potential review experts
   - posts the application on the PEQAB website

4. PEQAB
   - reviews the application
   - determines review strategy
   - appoints a panel

5. Expert Panel
   - reviews the submission against PEQAB standards and benchmarks
   - submits a written report to PEQAB

6. Secretariat
   - provides the report to the applicant for response
   - receives the applicant's response to the report

7. PEQAB
   - reviews the application, the panel report, the applicant's response and commitments made during the review process, and any additional information required to formulate a recommendation
   - submits a recommendation to the Minister and shares the PEQAB final report with the applicant and the review panel
   - posts the recommendation date on its website.

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 the decision about consent to the applicant

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

4. Process for Organization Review

All applications are first assessed against the Board's criteria for organizations. If the organization review results in a negative finding, the Board may decide not to proceed with a program quality review and forward its recommendation to the Minister.

4.1   Organization Review Committee

The Organization Review Committee (ORC) is a standing committee established by the Board to review the organizational soundness and capacity of private applicants.

Members of the Organization Review Committee are selected by the Board to reflect the several dimensions of consumer protection and organization quality, including but not limited to financial analysis, admission processes, registrarial functions, learning resources, and educational management. The Organization Review Committee may include persons with

- accounting certification and experience in corporate financial management
- experience in admissions/registrarial roles, including admissions policies and academic records management in a degree granting institution
- experience in managing learning resources
- senior management experience in a degree granting institution
- experience with professional, accrediting and regulatory bodies for higher education within and outside of Ontario.

4.2   Organization Review Panel

The Board strikes a panel from among the members of the ORC to review each application from a private organization. The organization review panel members must be free of any conflict of interest and be recognized by their peers for having a broad outlook, open mind, and sound judgement. Depending on the nature and complexity of the application for a private organization, the organization review panel will normally have between 1 and 3 members.

Organization Review Panel Report

The primary obligation of the organization review panel is to provide its best judgement on the capacity of the institution to offer the proposed program. To this end, the organization review panel is expected to assess applications against the criteria stated in Chapter 5. To assist in its deliberations, the panel may request from applicants any information in addition to that contained in the application.

Under the coordination of the panel chair, the organization review panel will develop a report that includes at least the following information:

- an assessment of the application against each of the Board's standards and benchmarks stipulated in Chapter 5
- an assessment of the sufficiency, reliability, and validity of the evidence provided by the applicant
- an assessment of evidence found during any site visit
- an evaluation, with reasons, of whether the proposed organization meets the Board's criteria.

4.3   Outcomes of Review

The Board's organization review process is most likely to result in an approval to proceed with a program quality review or, when an applicant failed to meet the Board's standards, a recommendation to the Minister to deny consent.

5. Organization Review Standards

All private applicants seeking ministerial consent must undergo an organization review. The purpose of the organization review is to assess the applicant's organizational character, financial viability, and student protection policies and practices against the following Board standards.

1. Mission Statement and Academic Goals
2. Administrative Capacity
3. Ethical Conduct
4. Academic Freedom and Integrity
5. Student Protection
6. Financial Stability
7. Dispute Resolution
8. Organization Evaluation

1. MISSION STATEMENT AND ACADEMIC GOALS STANDARD

The governing body has approved a mission statement and academic goals that identify the academic character and aspirations of the organization, including the extent to which the applicant is committed to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge and service to the community or related professions.

Benchmarks:

1. The organization has a clear, consistent and well-articulated statement of mission and academic goals.
2. Programs are clearly related to the applicant's mission and academic goals.
3. Resources are used to advance the mission.
4. Policies support the mission.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY STANDARD

The applicant has the legal characteristics, governance structure, and administrative capacity necessary to organize and manage a competent institution of higher learning.

Benchmarks:

1. The applicant's legal status is appropriate for its goals.
2. The organization has an appropriate governing structure, such as a legally constituted governing body that is responsible for managing the assets of the organization; 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.

3. The organization's reporting structure clearly indicates the relationship between the owners and the governing and managing bodies.
4. Governance and decision-making structures are clear, effective, and consistent with the organization's academic purposes.
5. The organization has
   a) qualified senior administrative staff, including a chief executive officer who is accountable to the governing body and whose full-time or major responsibility is the administration of the institution
   b) sufficient administrative staff with clear lines of administrative authority and accountability necessary to conduct the affairs of the institution in Ontario
   c) administrative capacity to effectively manage an institution of higher learning as demonstrated by co-ordinated business and academic plans detailing the commitment to the academic quality of program content and delivery.
6. Policies are in place that provide for succession planning.
7. Development of the curriculum, academic policies, and standards includes participation by qualified academic staff and consultation with students.

3. ETHICAL CONDUCT STANDARD

The applicant values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct.

Benchmarks:
1. The governing Board has produced an acceptable statement of the ethical standards relating to fair and honest business practices that will guide its conduct in the course of operations in Ontario and in other jurisdictions.

4. 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

c) demonstrates that the organization's curriculum development, content, and delivery procedures and practices ensure an academic environment in which

    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 that comprise the program of study is appreciated and fostered

    ii) both students and faculty are permitted and expected 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 online, 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).

5. 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 thorough, 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

e) individual descriptions of all courses in programs and their credit value.

4. The applicant has policies and procedures that protect student and consumer interests in the following areas:
   a) security of academic student records
   b) payment schedule of fees and charges
   c) student dismissal
   d) 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) student support and services
   m) tuition
   n) scholarships and other financial assistance
   o) payment of fees and charges
   p) withdrawals and refunds
   q) institutional closure
   r) where appropriate, supervision, preparation, and examination of theses/dissertations.
6. For courses and/or programs that incorporate blended, hybrid or online delivery, 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
   d) the kind of support and protection available to them.

6. FINANCIAL STABILITY STANDARD

The applicant demonstrates financial stability and the financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that students can complete the program.

Benchmarks:

1. The institution has the financial management procedures, resources and appropriate planning to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that students can complete the degree program.
2. The applicant's business plans address the applicant's future educational, enrolment, physical and fiscal growth in Ontario
   a) including two scenarios: most likely and worst case, projected over 5 years—see the Budget Template in the Submission Guidelines
   b) also including a budget narrative, providing context and a rationale for the most likely scenario in the Budget Template—telling the "story" of how the applicant intends to develop the proposed degree program over the next five years
   c) demonstrating the organization's commitment to academic quality of program content and delivery
   d) being credible.
3. Financial information contained in the business plan indicates that the organization has a financial base adequate to support activities consistent with its mission and educational objectives, and the required financial resources for start-up and ongoing operating costs associated with the delivery of the proposed program(s).
4. The institution demonstrates financial capacity sufficient to assure stability and the financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that the number of students assumed in the business plan can complete the degree program in the event that revenue falls short of the business plan or costs exceed the estimated allowances. (The financial information includes an audited financial statement[2] in the case of existing institutions, or a pro forma financial statement for newly established organizations.)
5. The institution has identified the source of funds to be invested.
6. The institution has a policy requiring the regular audit of the applicant's financial methods, performance, and stability by a qualified third-party accountant in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.
7. The institution subscribes to an annual reporting format that will permit the Board to assess whether the criteria described above are being met.

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[2] Audited or pro forma statements to be prepared by a qualified independent accountant (e.g., CA, CGA, CMA, or CPA)

7. DISPUTE RESOLUTION STANDARD

The applicant has policies for dealing with disputes between the organization and its students, and between faculty and students.

Benchmarks:

1. Institutional policies and procedures ensure that academic appeals, complaints, grievances, and/or other disputes of students, faculty, staff, and administration are dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
   a) Individuals have a right to a fair and expeditious resolution of disputes.
   b) Individuals have a right to know and understand the charges or complaints made against them.
   c) Individuals have a right to be heard in response to charges or complaints made against them, before any disciplinary decision is taken.
   d) Institutions have an obligation to deal with complaints or grievances according to clear and reasonable deadlines.
   e) Institutions have an obligation to establish and operate according to administrative processes that deal with disputes fairly and expeditiously at the informal level.
2. Students and employees are informed about and understand the policies and procedures for dispute resolution. To these ends, the organization's policies ensure that
   a) charges or complaints against an individual are stated clearly and in writing
   b) there is an administrative person(s) responsible for dealing with complaints, and to whom complaints may be directed, who may facilitate the informal resolution of disputes
   c) there is a process for reviewing disputes and examining the evidence
   d) there is provision for a final internal review by a body of persons not involved in the dispute in any way.

8. ORGANIZATION EVALUATION STANDARD

The quality of the operational and administrative aspects of the organization is assured by procedures for periodic evaluation that meet the requirements outlined below.

Benchmarks:

1. The applicant has a formal, institutionally approved policy and procedure for the periodic review of its operational and administrative policies and procedures embodying the following characteristics:
   a) organizational 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 organizational review that include

  i) assessment of the continuing adequacy of the organization's mission statement and academic goals to accurately identify the academic character and aspirations of the organization

  ii) assessment of the continuing adequacy of the organization's governance structure and qualified administrative capacity necessary to organize and manage a competent institution of higher learning with appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and in consultation with students

c) assessment of the organization's ethical conduct and businesses practices in its dealings with administrative, academic and support staff, students, regulators, suppliers, and the public in general

d) assessment of the continuing accuracy and completeness of the institution's public reports, materials, and advertising and the key information about the organization and determining that it is readily available to potential and current students

e) assessment of the organization's commitment to, and the continuing appropriateness of, its academic freedom and integrity policies in that they

  i) recognize and protect the rights of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge

  ii) clearly define the ownership of the intellectual products of employees and students

  iii) uphold formal ethical research standards

  iv) foster and enforce academic honesty

f) assessment of the continued financial stability of the organization and of the adequacy of its financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that students can complete the program with the stated learning outcomes

g) assessment of the continuing appropriateness of the organization's dispute resolution policies and practices.

2. The organization's review procedure includes

 a) a self-study
  A self-study undertaken, with student input, by administrators, faculty members, and staff of the organization based on evidence relating to organizational performance against the criteria stated above including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions.

 b) an Organization Evaluation Committee
  An organization evaluation committee struck by the senior administration to evaluate the organization's operational and administrative activities, policies and procedures based on

  i) the self-study

  ii) a site visit during which members of the committee normally meet with administrators, faculty members, students, graduates, and other relevant parties such as financial auditors, bankers, and critical service providers to gather information. A majority of the members must have relevant expertise in the degree granting environment, be from outside the institution and be free of any conflict of interest.

 c) the report of the Organization Evaluation Committee.
  The overarching purpose of the organization evaluation committee report is to assess the appropriateness and quality of the organization's operation, policies, and

procedures, and to recommend any changes needed to strengthen that quality. The report must be addressed to the senior administration and be shared with the academic council and governing Board, 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 the organization
   a) is aligned with the Board's requirements for such evaluation
   b) achieves its intended aim of continuous improvement of the organization.

6. Process for Degree Program Quality Review

6.1   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 BA or BSc 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 (e.g., international studies, 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.

6.2   External Expert Review Panels

The quality of each proposed degree program, or any part thereof, will normally be assessed by a panel of expert reviewers. The nature and complexity of the application will determine the number and nature of credentials, skill, and background of reviewers. The Board will select all expert reviewers.

The applicant may nominate qualified persons of whom the Board may choose one or more to serve on the expert panel. The Board has sole discretion, however, to select all expert reviewers 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 panel or panels of a size and nature appropriate to the application. Among the factors the Board will consider are whether the programs are new or are currently being offered by the applicant, and the degree of affinity among the proposed programs.

Criteria for Expert Reviewers

Expert reviewers will possess qualifications and personal qualities that engender the confidence of the Board, the Minister, the public, accrediting bodies, relevant regulatory bodies, and degree granting institutions. Specifically, external expert reviewers should demonstrate the following:

- 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 (an ability to function objectively and effectively), and sound judgement
- be free of any conflict of interest, in accordance with the Board's policy on conflict of interest for external expert reviewers
- have demonstrated skills in oral and written communication, preferably including experience writing formal reports to deadlines
- hold an advanced academic credential related to the subject area under review (normally at the terminal level in the field)
- possess required or desired professional credentials and/or related work experience of substantial depth and range
- have 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)
- have a record of active scholarship.

Expert reviewers 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, panel chairs will normally be experienced in the administration of higher education and will be experienced committee members who can function objectively and effectively as chair of an assessment committee.

Panel 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 a graduate committee, member of a scholarship committee, or member of a faculty or university graduate or research council or committee).

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

In establishing its roster of expert reviewers, 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
- postsecondary educational institutions outside Ontario.

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

Expert Panel Report

The primary obligation of the expert panel will be to provide its best judgement on the quality of the proposed program.

To this end, the panel will assess applications against the standards and benchmarks stated in Chapter 7. To assist in its deliberations, the panel may request from applicants any information in addition to that contained in the application.

Under the coordination of the panel chair, the members of the panel will develop a report that includes at least the following information:
- a review of
    o the application against each of the Board's standards and benchmarks stipulated in Chapter 5
    o the sufficiency, reliability, and validity of the evidence provided by the applicant
    o evidence found during any site visit
- a recommendation, with reasons, on whether the proposed or existing program meets the Board's standards and is of sufficient academic quality to be offered to the people of Ontario.

6.3   Board's Recommendation

The Board's process for reviewing applications for ministerial consent is most likely to result in either a recommendation to the Minister to grant consent (the Board may, in some circumstances, recommend certain conditions be attached to the consent) or, when an applicant failed to meet the Board's standards, a recommendation to the Minister to deny consent.

7. 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 reasonable consistency in the standards expected of all programs and that recognize some diversity in the manner of achieving those standards.

7.1 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 the following:

Bachelor Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
at least 25% (usually 30 full credits) of the program requirements	no less than 50% of the course requirements in terms of content and outcomes of the program as it is normally offered in public or accredited private institutions
	any program requirements, beyond the course work, which is standard in similar programs offered by public or accredited private institutions (e.g., a thesis and/or comprehensive examination)
those elements of a program 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.	

7.2   Standards and Benchmarks

The Board will review the quality of proposed degree programs in accordance with the following standards.
1. Degree Level
2. Admission, Promotion and Graduation
3. Program Content
4. Program Delivery
5. Capacity to Deliver
6. Credential Recognition
7. Regulation and Accreditation
8. Nomenclature
9. Program Evaluation

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 *Ontario Qualifications Framework*). These degree standards identify the knowledge and skills expected of graduates of bachelor, 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 bachelor 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 for immediate practice/employment in a field of practice, for further study in a discipline, or both, it must meet a substantial and common set of standards 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 with a more applied focus can be much subtler. This is usually evidenced by closer ties with industry or professional organizations (e.g., external advisory committees, research ties, formal partnerships, sponsorships), by the integration into the program of some practical elements (e.g., management, marketing, law, information science), and by offering programs 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 the Board's degree level standards for the degree offered.

Baccalaureate/Bachelor Degree

Depth and Breadth of Knowledge
a. A general knowledge and understanding of many key concepts, methodologies, theoretical approaches, and assumptions in a discipline
b. A broad understanding of some of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines
c. An ability to gather, review, evaluate, and interpret information relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline
d. Some detailed knowledge in an area of the discipline
e. Critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline
f. The ability to apply learning from one or more areas.

Conceptual & Methodological Awareness/Research and Scholarship
An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to
a. evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques
b. devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods.

Communication Skills
The ability to communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to non-specialist audiences using structured and coherent arguments.

Application of Knowledge
a. The ability to review, present, and interpret quantitative and qualitative information to
    i. develop lines of argument
    ii. make sound judgements in accordance with the major theories, concepts, and methods of the subject(s) of study
b. The ability to use a range of established techniques to
    i. analyze information
    ii. evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study
    iii. propose solutions
c. The ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.

Professional Capacity/Autonomy
a. The qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring
    i. the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making
    ii. working effectively with others
b. The ability to identify and address their own learning needs in changing circumstances and to select an appropriate program of further study
c. Behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.

Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and how this might influence their

analysis and interpretations.

Baccalaureate/Bachelor Degree: Honours

Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

a. A developed knowledge and critical understanding of the key concepts, methodologies, current advances, theoretical approaches, and assumptions in a discipline overall, as well as in a specialized area of a discipline

b. A developed understanding of many of the major fields in a discipline, including, where appropriate, from an interdisciplinary perspective, and how the fields may intersect with fields in related disciplines

c. A developed ability to
    i.   gather, review, evaluate, and interpret information
    ii. compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options, relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline

d. A developed, detailed knowledge of and experience in research in an area of the discipline

e. Developed critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline

f. The ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.

Conceptual & Methodological Awareness/ Research and Scholarship

An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in their primary area of study that enables the student to

a. evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques

b. devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods

c. describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship.

Communication Skills

The ability to communicate information, arguments and analysis accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to specialist and non-specialist audiences using structured and coherent arguments, and, where appropriate, informed by key concepts and techniques of the discipline.

Application of Knowledge

a. The ability to review, present, and critically evaluate quantitative and qualitative information to:
    i.   develop lines of argument
    ii. make sound judgements in accordance with the major theories, concepts, and methods of the subject(s) of study
    iii. apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analysis, both within and outside the discipline
    iv. where appropriate, use this knowledge in the creative process

b. The ability to use a basic range of established techniques to
    i.   initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts, and information
    ii. propose solutions

  iii. *frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem*
  iv. *solve a problem or create a new work*
c. *The ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.*

Professional Capacity/Autonomy

a. *The qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement, and other activities requiring*
  i. *the exercise of initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in both personal and group contexts*
  ii. *working reflectively with others*
  iii. *decision-making in complex contexts*
b. *The ability to manage their own learning in changing circumstances, both within and outside the discipline and to select an appropriate program of further study*
c. *Behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility.*

Awareness of Limits of Knowledge

An understanding of the limits to their own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity, and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analysis and interpretations.

Master's Degree

Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

A systematic understanding of knowledge, including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.

Conceptual & Methodological Awareness/Research and Scholarship

a. *A conceptual understanding and methodological competence that*
  i. *enables a working comprehension of how established techniques of research and inquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline*
  ii. *enables a critical evaluation of current research and advanced research and scholarship in the discipline or area of professional competence*
  iii. *enables a treatment of complex issues and judgements based on established principles and techniques*
b. *On the basis of that competence, has shown at least one of the following:*
  i. *the development and support of a sustained argument in written form*
  ii. *originality in the application of knowledge.*

Communication Skills

The ability to communicate issues and conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Application of Knowledge

Competence in the research process by applying an existing body of knowledge in the critical analysis of a new question or of a specific problem or issue in a new setting.

Professional Capacity/Autonomy

a. *The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring*
  i. *the exercise of initiative, and of personal responsibility and accountability*

ii. decision-making in complex situations, such as employment
b. The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development
c. The ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research
d. The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.

Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
Cognizance of the complexity of knowledge and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.

Doctoral Degree

Depth and Breadth of Knowledge
A thorough understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice, including, where appropriate, relevant knowledge outside the field and/or discipline.

Conceptual & Methodological Awareness/Research and Scholarship
a. The ability to conceptualize, design, and implement research for the generation of new knowledge, applications, or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the research design or methodology in the light of unforeseen problems
b. The ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, sometimes requiring new methods
c. The ability to produce original research or other advanced scholarship of a quality to satisfy peer review and to merit publication.

Communication Skills
The ability to communicate complex and/or ambiguous ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Application of Knowledge
The capacity to
a. undertake pure and/or applied research at an advanced level
b. contribute to the development of academic or professional skills, techniques, tools, practices, ideas, theories, approaches, and/or materials.

Professional Capacity/Autonomy
a. The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex situations
b. The intellectual independence required for continuing professional development
c. The ethical behaviour consistent with academic integrity and the use of appropriate guidelines and procedures for responsible conduct of research
d. The ability to appreciate the broader implications of applying knowledge to particular contexts.

Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
An appreciation of the limitations of one's own work and discipline, of the complexity of knowledge, and of the potential contributions of other interpretations, methods, and disciplines.

The program must also meet 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 equivalent,[3] six university or university/college courses at the Grade 12 level, a minimum average of 65%, and any additional requirements.
3. Mature students[4] are required to demonstrate 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

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[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 and who are at least 19 years of age on or before the commencement of the program in which they intend to enrol.

     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 degree[5] level study toward the degree program

   d) require in all cases a gap analysis of the program content and outcomes of the studies for which transfer credit is being awarded

   e) ensure that the degree level standard and all program learning outcome standards of the degree program are met

   f) 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, and brochures for potential students

   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 theses, 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[6]

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[5] Credits recognized for advanced standing must be earned at a postsecondary institution which is

a) a Canadian public university

b) an organization authorized to offer the degree program on the basis of an Ontario ministerial consent

c) 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

d) another institution acceptable to the Board.

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 provision should be made 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) 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%.

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[6] In the context of this benchmark, prior learning assessment only refers to the assessment of learning gained outside a traditional classroom (through work experience, volunteering, outside study, etc.) and excludes (and therefore allows) transfer credits and transfer agreements which may amount to more than 50% advanced standing.

3. PROGRAM CONTENT STANDARD

The program offers an education of sufficient rigor, 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[7]
   a) 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) is engaged and positioned to regularly comment on the currency of the curriculum in relationship to devel
   c) confirms the currency of the curriculum and, as appropriate, its relevance to the field(s) of practice
   d) endorses the program as represented in the application
   e) strives to achieve best practice.
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 bachelor programs have a breadth requirement that includes coherent and substantive non-core[8] offerings. This requirement informs the design of non-core courses

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[7] It is considered best practice that
- the PAC Chair be an external member of the committee
- the PAC have at least eight members
- the PAC Chair set the agenda
- the PAC meet at least twice a year
- institution/program staff serve as the secretariat to the PAC supporting the PAC with setting up meetings, booking times & spaces etc.
- PAC membership include representation from the relevant labour market and from the discipline/field of study
- PAC meetings be minuted

The PAC formally endorse the curriculum as part of the institutions Self-Study.

[8] 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.)

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and provides the basis of at least some of the assessment of student outcomes. The curriculum (core and non-core) contributes to the achievement of
a) critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, written and oral communication skills
b) knowledge of society and culture, and skills relevant to civic engagement.

7. The non-core curriculum provides
a) knowledge in at least two of the following:
   i)   humanities
   ii) sciences
   iii) social sciences
   iv) global cultures (including Indigenous cultures)
   v)   mathematics
b) more than introductory knowledge of the distinctive assumptions and modes of analysis of a discipline outside the core fields of study.
8. The curriculum reflects current knowledge in the core fields.
9. The curriculum reflects current knowledge in the fields represented in the non-core/breadth offerings.
10. In undergraduate programs, the balance of core and non-core/breadth studies is normally achieved as follows:
a) 20% of the program hours are in courses in the non-core curriculum[9]
b) at least one non-core course is a free elective.
11. 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.
12. Work experiences, internships, and field placements
a) are appropriate to the program
b) have articulated learning outcomes
c) identify an appropriate method for both instructor and employer/supervisor assessment leading to the assignment of a grade.
13. Research-focused graduate programs
a) provide sufficient opportunities and support for research and other scholarly activity
b) require student and faculty participation in the broader research community.
14. Where applicable, the curriculum reflects appropriate levels of Ontario and Canadian content.

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[9] An applicant may demonstrate through alternative approaches that the degree program meets the breadth/non-core requirements typical of such programs as offered at other postsecondary institutions. For example, undergraduate programs associated with accrediting bodies or other industry/professional regulatory bodies may depart from this norm, especially if meeting the 20% non-core benchmark would drive the total program to an extraordinary number of credit hours.

4. PROGRAM DELIVERY STANDARD

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

Benchmarks:

1. The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry to determine 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
   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 (including appropriate technological resources) to support the proposed delivery methods and to ensure their effectiveness.
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 ensuring that
   a) the program/course design and the course syllabus make appropriate provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction
   b) the 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, threaded discussions) are adequate.
7. The technology used to deliver courses, both pedagogically and administratively, is adequate to facilitate program delivery.
8. Faculty involved in course delivery are adequately trained for the delivery mode.
9. There are adequate resources and processes to acquaint faculty, students, and course designers with new software or systems as they are adopted for the delivery mode of the program.
10. Academic support services are appropriate to the delivery mode of the program.
11. An institution offering distance courses/programs ensures that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs.
12. Appropriate safeguards assure the authentication of student identity and the integrity of student work for online courses/programs. Policies and procedures assure the verification of student identity for coursework and examinations, and for the control of examinations, including but not limited to security, time limits, and the selection of proctors/invigilators.

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 strengths.
2. Development of the curriculum, academic policies, and standards includes appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and appropriate consultation with students.
3. 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.
4. The applicant provides for reasonable student and faculty access to learning and information resources (e.g., library, databases, computing, classroom equipment, laboratory facilities) sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind to support the program.
5. Students have access to an appropriate range of academic support services, (e.g., academic counselling, tutoring, career counselling, placement services).
6. 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 credentials and any required professional credentials claimed by faculty members
   c) fairly and consistently verify the equivalency of international credentials to those similarly named credentials offered by Canadian institutions
   d) require the regular review of faculty performance, including student evaluation of teaching and/or supervision
   e) identify the means of ensuring that faculty knowledge of the field is current
   f) support the professional development of faculty including the promotion of curricular and instructional innovation, as well as technological skills, where appropriate
   g) specify faculty teaching and supervision loads and availability to students.

Undergraduate Programs:
7. There are sufficient numbers of academic faculty and other staff to develop and deliver the program and to meet the demands of the projected student enrolment.[10]
8. All faculty[11, 12] teaching in the professional or main field of study and, where appropriate, acting as thesis supervisors and/or members of examining committees

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

[11] 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 to submit their CVs to the Board.

[12] Exceptions to any benchmarks pertaining to faculty must be

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) engage in a level of scholarship, research or creative activity sufficient to ensure their currency in the field.[13]

9. At least 50% of the students' experience in the professional or main field of study is in courses taught by a faculty member holding the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.[14, 15]

10. All faculty[16, 17] 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) engage in a level of scholarship, research or creative activity sufficient to ensure their currency in the field.[18]

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a) based on the absence of a related program credential in a university or other extraordinary circumstances
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.

[13] In assessing faculty members' currency and engagement with scholarship, research, or creative activity, the following may be considered, provided that these contributions are in a form (in a phrase adapted from Boyer) "subject to critical review and allowing use/exchange by other members of the scholarly community." In all cases, such contributions may take digital form. In general, the Board seeks evidence that faculty are intellectually engaged with developments in their fields, including but not limited to
• publishing and/or reviewing professional publications in their fields
• participation and/or presentations at provincial, national and international conferences, competitions, or exhibitions in their fields
• engagement with the scholarship of pedagogy in their fields
• participation in regulatory and accrediting association workshops, degree audits, or related work in their fields
• engagement in basic and/or applied research, labour market research, and/or related industry needs assessments
• application of conceptual knowledge to current practice in their fields, such as reports to industry or consulting work
• creative contributions to their fields through exhibitions or related forms
• development of case studies in their fields.

[14] Generally and in the context of a practicable schedule of teaching assignments, the percentage can be achieved if 50% of all faculty teaching core courses in the program hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline or if 50% of all core courses or all hours in core courses in the program are taught by faculty with a terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.

[15] The doctorate is normally the terminal academic credential in all fields or disciplines with the exception of certain fields 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
b) in a field/discipline that can be shown to be closely related in content
c) with a graduate level specialty in the same field/discipline.

[16] 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 to submit their CVs to the Board.

[17] 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
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.

[18] In assessing faculty members' currency and engagement with scholarship, research, or creative activity, the following may be considered, provided that these contributions are in a form (in a phrase adapted from Boyer) "subject to critical review and allowing use/exchange by other members of the scholarly community." In all cases, such contributions may take digital form. In general, the Board seeks evidence that faculty are intellectually engaged with developments in their fields, including but not limited to

11. At least 50% of the students' experience in the non-core areas is in courses taught by a faculty member holding the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.[19, 20]

Graduate Programs:

12. The applicant identifies the fields or specializations to be covered in the program.

13. 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.

14. At least 80% of the students' experience in the program is in courses taught by a faculty member holding the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.[21]

15. 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.

16. 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 other professional activity.

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 for further study.

- publishing and/or reviewing professional publications in their fields
- participation and/or presentations at provincial, national and international conferences, competitions, or exhibitions in their fields
- engagement with the scholarship of pedagogy in their fields
- participation in regulatory and accrediting association workshops, degree audits, or related work in their fields
- engagement in basic and/or applied research, labour market research, and/or related industry needs assessments
- application of conceptual knowledge to current practice in their fields, such as reports to industry or consulting work
- creative contributions to their fields through exhibitions or related forms
- development of case studies in their fields.

[19] Generally and in the context of a practicable schedule of teaching assignments, the percentage can be achieved if 50% of all faculty teaching non-core courses in the program hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline or if 50% of all non-core courses or all hours in non-core courses in the program are taught by faculty with a terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.

[20] The doctorate is normally the terminal academic credential in all fields or disciplines with the exception of certain fields 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

b) in a field/discipline that can be shown to be closely related in content

c) with a graduate level specialty in the same field/discipline.

[21] Generally and in the context of a practicable schedule of teaching assignments, the percentage can be achieved if 80% of all faculty teaching in the program hold the terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline or if 80% of all courses or all hours in courses in the program are taught by faculty with a terminal academic credential in the field or in a closely related field/discipline.

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 that 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 level[22]

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[22] 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
e) Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.
f) College of Naturopaths of Ontario, provided that a Naturopath may only use the title "doctor" in writing if the phrase "naturopathic doctor" immediately follows his or her name (e.g., Dr. Jane Doe, Naturopathic Doctor).

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*.

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b) nature of the degree[23]

c) discipline and/or subject of study.

9. PROGRAM EVALUATION STANDARD

The quality of the proposed program is assured by procedures for periodic evaluation that meet the requirements outlined below.[24]

Benchmarks:

1. The applicant has a formal, institutionally approved policy and procedure for the periodic review of programs that embody 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

         i. the program's stated learning outcome goals and standards

         ii. the degree level standard

         iii. the opinions of employers and students/graduates

         iv. 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

      viii) in the case of graduate programs, time to completion

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[23] There is a variety of ways to connote with nomenclature whether a degree is applied/professional or research-oriented. With the exceptions of Bachelor and Master of Applied Science, which connote research-oriented degrees, research-oriented degrees at the bachelor and master's level are normally of the form: *Bachelor/Master of [Faculty (Subject)]*, for example, Master of Arts (Psychology) or Bachelor of Science (Chemistry). Nomenclature for research-oriented doctoral degrees is normally *Doctor of Philosophy*.

The typical approaches to nomenclature for bachelor and master's degrees in applied/professional areas are

a) *Bachelor/Master in [Faculty (Subject)]*, for example, Bachelor of Technology (Information Technology)

b) *Bachelor/Master in [Applied Faculty (Subject)]*, for example, Bachelor of Applied Arts (Music Production)

c) *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.

[24] The following benchmarks are based on the criteria employed by Ontario public universities and Redeemer University College.

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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

k) assessment of individual student work in the terminal stage of the program that reflects exemplary, average, and minimally acceptable performance and 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
      i) the self-study
      ii) 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.[25]
   c) the report of the Program Evaluation 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

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[25] A conflict of interest policy similar to that of the Board should be implemented in selecting members of a Program Evaluation Committee.

a) is aligned with the Board's requirements for such evaluations
b) achieves its intended aim of continuous improvement of the program(s).

8. 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
      ii) has made a significant achievement for the public good at the Ontario, national or international level and/or
      iii) has achieved noted academic or professional eminence, at the Ontario, national or international level, taking particular account of the connection between the recipient and the institution.
   b) that 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.

9. 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.

9.1 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 that[26]

1. is legally authorized to grant degrees in Ontario or in another jurisdiction
2. has a charter or statute including the word "university" in the organization's title
3. has a mission and practice including the creation of knowledge through research and/or scholarly activity and the dissemination of knowledge through teaching, publication, and presentation
4. offers a comprehensive range of degree programs normally including, but not limited to, arts and science
5. 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. has policies and procedures for admission, promotion, and graduation of students comparable to the policies and practices of Ontario universities
7. 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

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[26] 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.

8. possesses a policy on faculty qualifications (hiring, retention, promotion, professional development, reward, termination) appropriate to the degree programs offered and to the mission of creating and disseminating knowledge
9. possesses or provides access to the learning resources (e.g., library, laboratories, equipment, research tools) appropriate to the range and level of programs offered and necessary for students to achieve the learning outcomes for the programs
10. has a governance system in which faculty members participate in decisions determining academic standards, that provides for appropriate student involvement and that 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).

9.2 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.

9.3 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 degree program quality review. 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.

9.4 University College

The phrase "university college" is used in different ways across Canada. In Ontario, most "university colleges" are institutions that 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 "university college" 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.

9.5   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
- 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."

9.6   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:

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

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, 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) and 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."

10. 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
e) written permission for the Board or its agents to consult the external expert reviewers or any professional, accrediting, or regulatory body named in the submitted documentation.

10.1 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
- evidence that the quality of the program will be maintained in Ontario.

10.2 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 external expert reviewers 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.

11. Appendices

11.1 PEQAB Site Visit: Suggested Agenda Template for Program Review

NAME OF APPLICANT

NAME OF PROGRAM - NEW PROGRAM/RENEWAL

Site Visit: DATE & LOCATION

Quality Assessment Panel Chair:
Quality Assessment Panel Subject-matter Expert:
PEQAB Representative:

Time[27]	Topics/Areas of Focus/Session	Participants
8:00 – 8:30am	**Welcome and Coffee**	
8:30 – 9:00	**Overview of the Agenda, Institution and School**	• Senior administration • Program coordinator and/or chair • Dean of the relevant faculty • Program Development and Quality Assurance
9:00 – 10:30	**Academic Program Overview/ Overview of Program Development, Content, Outcomes, and Delivery** including e.g., detailed discussion of curriculum, course outlines, work integrated learning experiences and bridge pathways (if applicable), institution's research capacity and academic pathways for degree graduates	• Program coordinator and/or chair, i.e. person(s) responsible for the oversight of the program • Dean(s) Maybe: • Research Services • Program Development and Quality Assurance
10:30 – 10:45	• **Break**	
10:45 – 11:30	**Meeting with current and past Students**	• Opportunity to meet with • current students and graduates (for program renewals)

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[27] All times and durations are approximate.

		• current students and graduates from related programs (for new programs)
11:30 – 12:15	**Program Currency and Relevance to the Field(s) of Practice**	Representatives of the Program Advisory Committee
12:15 – 1:00	**Working Lunch (panel only)**	
1:00 – 1:45	**Tour of Campus Facilities**	This tour may include a visit to the library, computing facilities, student support services and some classrooms and labs.
1:45 – 2:45	**Program Content and Delivery and Capacity to Deliver**	Meeting with Faculty
2:30 – 2:45	• **Break**	
3:00 – 3:45	**Institutional Support for Program and Program Policies** Including capacity to deliver supports to students and potential questions about the institution's polices as they pertain to the program	Participants may include representatives from 'enabling areas'/ ' support areas' such as • Student Services & Institutional Resources/ Student Affairs • Co-op Education and Career Services • Enrolment Services • Financial Aid and Student Awards • Marketing
3:45-4:15	**Academic Policy Review** Topics such as program quality assurance, academic freedom, student protection	• Program coordinator and/or chair • Dean of the relevant faculty • Program Development and Quality Assurance
4:15 – 4:45	**Panel Caucus (panel only)**	
4:45 – 5:00	**Concluding Meeting/ Exit Interview**	The same participants as in the 9am session

HOW TO USE THE TEMPLATE

Please note: Recently PEQAB Secretariat staff have observed some inconsistencies in the development of site visit agendas including but not limited to
• timing (length and order)
• topics of discussion (in relation to PEQAB standards), and
• attendees in the various discussions throughout the day.

This template, meant as a guide, is an attempt at fostering consistency amongst site visits and ensure site visits are using the time allocated as best as possible. It remains the role of the panel Chair to set the agenda in close collaboration with the applicant and to lead the site visit. The template is based on the experience of external expert reviewers and PEQAB staff and is intended to reflect what worked well during past site visits.

Suggestions

- **Content of sessions:** It is suggested to keep the topics/areas of focus as suggested above.
- **Timing (length and order):** While it is suggested to keep the approximate order and time allotments, the <u>length</u> of various sessions may vary from review to review as each review can raise different difficult issues. The order, apart from the opening and closing sessions, can vary and is often dictated by local needs.
    - o Some topics/sessions lend themselves well to being moved, e.g., switching the meeting with the PAC with the one with students, or changing the timeslot of the tour of the facilities.
    - o Some topics/sessions are more strategically placed and should not be moved if possible, e.g., the review of institutional support for the program and program policies should remain later in in the day to allow the panel to follow-up with senior management on any questions that may have been raised during the meetings with faculty or students.
    - o Some panels have had good experiences with moving either the meeting with students or the meeting with representatives of the PAC to the working lunch. These options should be discussed with the panel chair.
- **Samples of student work:** The review of samples of student work is only required for renewals. It is strongly suggested that the applicant distribute samples of student work to the reviewer(s) prior to the site visit to allow for a desk review in advance of the site visit. Where that is not possible, a minimum of 90 minutes will have to be found somewhere in the agenda for the subject-matter expert(s) to conduct this crucial task. <u>Note:</u> For programs with a significant studio component such as interior design it is suggested that, in addition to the desk review of written/drawn samples of student work prior to the site visit, time be set aside during the site visit to review further samples that are not easily evaluable electronically (e.g. exhibitions, models etc.)
- **Participants:** It is advised that the program coordinator and/or chair (i.e. person(s) responsible for the oversight of the program) be present in all sessions but the ones with PAC members, students and faculty members. Other participants noted are suggestions only. It is, however, important that, in addition to the assessment team, only faculty are present during the faculty session and that student sessions are attended by students only. Moreover, it is suggested that the applicant's administrators be excluded from the meeting with members of the PAC.

Other best practices

Applicant

- Presentations by the applicant should be kept at a minimum to allow for maximum amount of time for dialogue between the reviewers and the institution.
- Some discretionary elements (shaded in grey) are identified, e.g.,
    - o the policy review is only required if such review has not occurred at the institution for some time (review guidelines will identify this). Generally policy questions can be addressed as part of the *Institutional Support for Program and Program Policies* session.
- The concluding meeting should be kept short and the program coordinator/program chair and/or key faculty should be present or at least invited. The panel will give a high level summary of findings and, in addition to strengths, make the applicant aware of any major and minor weakness that will be raised in the report as per 'no surprises-policy'. The panel will usually also review its request for any additional material to be submitted. PEQAB staff will address the timelines for the remainder of the review process.

Panel

- Where possible, the panel chair and subject-matter expert(s) are encouraged to submit requests for additional information in advance of the site visit day. It is understood that the panel my see the need to require additional material during and after the site visit.

- It is also suggested that the panel try to find time to meet face-to-face before the site visit (e.g., for a working dinner the night before the site visit or for breakfast on the day of the site visit). This may help the panel to focus on key issues to discuss with the institution's leadership and program staff and to narrow concerns and emphases.
- The panel may want to consider holding an informal team meeting after the *Exit Interview* to discuss the next steps, including timelines and the approach to and distribution of responsibilities in writing the report. This meeting could become part of the official agenda if desired.
- For programs that require an assessment of breadth curriculum (usually conducted via desk review), it is suggested that the panel solicit from the breadth reviewer comments or concerns and bring these forward during the suitable sessions at the site visit.

PEQAB Secretariat Staff
PEQAB Secretariat staff attend coordinate and facilitate all site visits by external expert panels. In particular, Secretariat staff
- introduce the review panel and applicant at the various sessions
- actively facilitate discussion between applicants and institutions, as well as clarifying the Board's standards, benchmarks and broader policies.
- provide consultation and expertise on quality assurance and PEQAB's standards, benchmarks and processes at site visits
- keep track of additional material to be sent to the panel after the site visit
- outline the timelines and further steps in the program review.