PEQAB

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
Commission d'évaluation de la qualité de l'éducation postsecondaire

Report of the PEQAB Self-Study: Internal Review of the Board and Secretariat

At the Board's meeting of January 19th, 2010, the Board considered the secretariat's report of the self-study and accepted the recommendations contained in this report.

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Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
2009 Self Study

Introduction

To ensure the rigor and transparency of its criteria and processes, and in preparation for an external review of the agency, the secretariat undertook, on behalf of the Board, a self-study on all aspects of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board's (PEQAB/the Board) operations during its first seven years. This is a report of that review. The report is structured so as to facilitate an analysis of the Board's operations against its legislative mandate, and the benchmarks established by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as reflected in its Guidelines of *Good Practice in Quality Assurance*.

The report begins by describing the context of PEQAB's work. It then considers PEQAB's legislative mandate, governance, and resources. Its criteria and processes are considered, as well as its obligations for transparency. The Board's practices and policies regarding continuous quality assurance of its own activities are reviewed, and the report concludes with a summary of the Board's contributions to quality assurance in Ontario; Canada; and internationally.

Chapter 1: Context

Degree Granting and Quality Assurance in Canada

The degree granting landscape has changed considerably in Canada and internationally in the past 20 years, in ways that raise issues relating to student protection; quality assurance; credit transfer; and credential recognition.

In Canada, many of the changes have occurred within the publicly assisted college and university sectors. In the past two decades, several provinces, including Ontario, have developed "hybrid" public colleges that offer both diploma and degree programs. One province, Alberta, has defined college and institute "applied degrees" as separate from other undergraduate degrees. Another province, British Columbia, offers two-year "associate degrees". Most degree providers have also adopted more flexible forms of delivery, whether in the form of satellite operations or distance delivery/home study formats. In some cases, publicly assisted universities in Canada offer programs in other provincial and international jurisdictions.

Other changes in the degree granting environment have included greater private sector participation. Five provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia[1]) permit new private degree granting institutions. In both public and private sectors, there has been a steady growth in degree programs customized for particular occupations or employers.

[1] Nova Scotia's legislation was very recently changed, and the province is still developing the regulations that will govern provision of degrees by the private sector.

Trends toward opening jurisdictions to outside providers; the expanding need for access to higher education; and concerns about unscrupulous providers has led to an increasing awareness and concern on the part of the public, students, employers, postsecondary institutions, and government, in Canada and elsewhere, of the need for quality assurance of programs and institutions.

The activities of unscrupulous providers contribute to a general scepticism about the ability of quality assurance agencies to adequately safeguard students and the reputations of legitimate providers. British Columbia, for example, recently addressed two cases of disreputable degree providers. Despite a strong and swift response, both the Chinese and Indian governments warned their citizens against studying in Canada as a consequence. [2,3]

Uncertainty about the features of new degree programs and providers has led, for example, some universities to refuse to recognize the new Ontario college degrees in applied areas of study because the awarding institutions are not members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). AUCC is a national advocacy organization of the public universities whose membership criteria are said, in the absence of a Canadian framework or mechanism for quality assurance, to be a proxy for US-style accreditation.

In response to these recent changes in degree granting and the challenges they present to students, postsecondary education institutions, and governments, several Canadian organizations have recently advocated for a national body that would be responsible for the accreditation of postsecondary programs or institutions. AUCC has been approached a number of times to assume the role of national accreditor. Claire Morris, president of AUCC has stated that AUCC does not intend to expand its activities to include accreditation.[4] AUCC recognizes that, as an advocacy body it cannot also serve as an accrediting agency.

Advocates of a national system argue that such a body will simplify the portrait of Canadian degree granting and assure international students and governments that quality is a Canadian preoccupation. Whether the issues are solved with a national accreditation approach or by other means, these are compelling issues that Ontario and other provinces will have to confront and resolve.

Degree Legislation in Canada

One indication that there have been recent and significant changes in degree granting in Canada is given by the number of provinces that have made revisions to their acts which govern degree granting. Of the nine provinces[5] that have such legislation (all but Saskatchewan), all but one province (Newfoundland) has revised its legislation in the last seven years.

There is significant variation in the provisions of provincial degree granting legislation in:

- the range of activities governed;
- whether and how the regulated activities are defined;

[2] The British Columbia Degree Assessment Board had reviewed and recommended one of the institutions. In that case, the organization had not abided by the conditions of its authorization. In the other case, the institution was operating unlawfully.

[3] Millar, E. Education scams could damage public universities' reputation. Will new funding to attract international students address China's concerns about private colleges operating illegally? Mar 28, 2007; Millar, E. Beware of Canadian degree mills, Indian media warns. Macleans.ca, Apr 13, 2007.

[4] Charbonneau, L. Provinces push new degree guidelines. University Affairs: Aug-Sep 2007

[5] The Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut do not have degree granting legislation.

- whether organizations other than those with a provincial statute can operate in the province;
- the penalties for contravening the provisions of legislation;
- whether the legislation establishes a quality assurance process or agency for the review of organizations and/or programs;
- the provisions, if any, governing the responsible Minister's decisions to approve organizations to operate; and
- the regulation making authority provided in the legislation.

Degree Granting and use of "University"

All provinces regulate the provision of degree programs,[6] and eight regulate the use of "university" (the exceptions are New Brunswick and Nova Scotia). Alberta and Manitoba are the only provinces to explicitly regulate honorary degrees, although Ontario regards, as a matter of interpretation, honorary degrees as being included in the broader category of "degree".[7]

Out-of-Province Providers with an Act of the Legislature

Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are the only provinces to enable institutions to operate in the province if authorized by an act of the legislature in another province. Nova Scotia indicates in its legislation that the institution must be a public institution. Neither province imposes additional scrutiny or requirements on out-of province institutions authorized by a provincial act. Quebec's legislation enables institutions that are authorized by an act of the legislature in another province to operate for a fixed time, at the discretion of the Quebec government.

Provisions governing Decisions for Granting Consent or Designation of the Governor in Council

The legislation of three provinces, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, include provisions pertaining to the decision to grant or designate degree granting authority. In Alberta, the Minister may approve a degree program offered by an Alberta public institution following a recommendation from the Campus Alberta Quality Council. Following a recommendation for a program offered by a private organization, the Minister may recommend it to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council (LGC) for approval. The LGC may approve the program and designate the provider.

The British Columbia Minister must publish the criteria for his or her decision to grant or deny consent and, if consent is granted, for attaching terms and conditions to the consent. The Minister may grant consent to offer a program if he or she is satisfied that the program has undergone a quality assessment, and the applicant has met security and transcript provisions.

Ontario's Minister must be satisfied that the applicant has met security and transcript provisions, and may not grant or deny consent until the PEQAB has made a recommendation on the application. According to the *Minister's Guidelines for Applying for a Ministerial Consent*, the Minister will consider, as a criterion in relation to each consent application, any broader Ontario government policy or financial issues that may flow from the giving of a consent.

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[6] Saskatchewan has no legislation that pertains specifically to degree granting, however, there are provisions in the *University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995* and the *University of Regina Act* that no other educational institutions may grant degrees (other than theological degrees), and, in the *University of Regina Act*, that no other institutions may use the word "university".

[7] Other provinces have not needed to take a position on the matter of honorary degrees as no unauthorized organizations have attempted or requested to offer them.

Private Institutions

No territories and seven provinces have legally authorized, private, independent (not affiliated with provincial public universities) degree granting institutions. Eight provinces (the exceptions are Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island) permit the establishment of private institutions on a basis other than an act of the provincial legislature (e.g., ministerial consent, designation by the Governor in Council), yet as the following table summarizes, not all of these provinces have enabled degree granting institutions through these bases.

Table 1: Overview over Degree Granting in Canada

Province	Permits Establishment of Private organizations	Private Institutions in the Province		Legal Basis Identified for Establishing Degree Authority (in addition to an act of the provincial legislature)	
		Pursuant to an act of the legislature	Pursuant to Consent or Designation	Consent or designation of Governor in Council	Act of legislature of another Canadian Province
British Columbia	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Alberta	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Saskatchewan	No	✓	No	No	No
Manitoba	✓	✓	No	No	No
Ontario	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Quebec	✓	No	No	✓ (for institutions with acts in other Canadian provinces)	No
New Brunswick	✓	✓	✓	✓	No
Nova Scotia	✓	No	No	✓	✓
Prince Edward Island	No	✓	No	No	No
Newfoundland	✓	No	No	✓	✓

Although most provinces permit the establishment of private organizations through the designation of the Minister or Governor in Council, only four provinces have developed explicit criteria and processes for this activity: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and New Brunswick.

Establishment of, or Referral to, Quality Assurance Agency

The degree granting legislation of two provinces (Alberta and Ontario) establish quality assurance agencies for the review of degree programs and use of the term “university”. British Columbia’s legislation does not identify the quality assurance process or agency to undertake reviews, but does require that programs/applicants undergo a quality assessment process. New Brunswick’s regulation requires organizations wishing to be designated to undergo review by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC).

Degree Quality Assurance in Canada[8]

Approaches to quality assurance vary considerably across the country. Degree quality assurance agencies with a mandate that overlaps with PEQAB's include British Columbia's Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB); the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC); and the MPHEC. These agencies (presented first in the summary of Canadian agencies that follows), like PEQAB, are responsible for the review of degree programs offered by private and public out-of province institutions. Unlike PEQAB, these agencies are also responsible for the review of programs offered by provincial, publicly funded universities.

British Columbia

Degree authorization is derived from a number of statutes in British Columbia. Pursuant to the

- *University Act*, public universities require the Minister's approval to offer new degree programs;
- *College and Institute Act*, the Minister may designate applied bachelor degrees at public colleges, and applied bachelor and masters degrees at public university colleges and provincial institutes; and
- *Degree Authorization Act*, private and out-of-province public organizations may apply for the Minister's consent to offer degree programs or use the term "university".

Unless an institution is exempt (see below), the Minister requires all proposals to offer a degree or use the term university to be reviewed by the DQAB. (Unlike Ontario, regardless of the provider, degrees in divinity are exempt from review.) The DQAB recommends policies, criteria and guidelines to the Minister for the purposes of giving or refusing consent or approval, or attaching terms and conditions to consent. The DQAB and its secretariat are also responsible for the overall management of applications for consent, approval, and exempt status.

British Columbia legislation permits institutions to apply for exemptions from the requirement that their programs be reviewed by DQAB. Exemption is granted after a successful review, and requires at a minimum that the institution has been granting degrees at a particular level for a minimum of ten years in the province of British Columbia, appropriate governance structures, and satisfactory policy pertaining to ongoing, internal quality assurance.

Exemptions are granted for particular degree level offerings, i.e., an institution with exempt status for bachelor degrees would not be exempt from the requirement that DQAB review its Masters and Doctoral degrees. In addition, institutions with exempt status bypass the DQAB review but must, like non-exempt institutions, prepare a full submission for public review.

Public review is the initial phase of program review in which the submission is posted on the ministry web site and comments are invited from interested stakeholders (i.e., other degree granting organizations, industry, accrediting bodies, and so on). If, after the public review stage the Minister has concerns about a program proposed by an institution with exempt status, it may then be referred to DQAB for review.

With very minor modifications, the DQAB criteria for program and organization review, and

[8] In the following overview, reference is made to the alignment of PEQAB standards with those of other Canadian quality assurance agencies. This refers to the alignment of program and organization standards only, and not those for the establishment of a university or university college. PEQAB is the only agency in Canada to specify the requirements for "university" or "university college", and the alignment of PEQAB requirements with national practice is addressed in another section.

the use of "university" are those of Ontario's PEQAB, including a recent version of PEQAB's Degree Level standards.

Alberta

The *Post-secondary Learning Act* governs degree granting in Alberta and established the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). All new programs proposed by public universities, colleges and technical institutes, and private institutions must be approved by the Minister of Advanced Education. (Unlike Ontario, regardless of the provider, degrees in divinity are exempt from review.)

Degree approval begins with a review of the proposal by the Advanced Education department for system coordination. Ministry staff determine whether there is a need for the program and how it fits with other programs currently offered in the post-secondary system. If that review is positive, the Minister refers the proposal to CAQC for review.

The CAQC is an arms-length body that reviews proposals to offer degree programs and makes recommendations to the Minister on program quality and the organization's capacity to deliver. Like the Ontario PEQAB and the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS) processes, proposals are reviewed by the CAQC against its standards using external reviewers. CAQC criteria include program and institutional requirements, and have integrated the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) *Ministerial Statement on Degree Quality Assurance*, including the *Canadian Degree Qualification Framework*, the *Procedures and Standards for Assessing New Degree-Granting Institutions* and *Procedures and Standards for New Degree Program Quality Assessment*, into its review criteria. The CMEC framework and standards for degree and institution assessment were derived from the criteria used by PEQAB.

In addition to reviewing new programs, CAQC also has responsibility for monitoring organizations' compliance with quality standards and the conditions of approval.

New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island

MPHEC reviews and approves all new degree programs proposed by public universities (and programs which involve changes to more than 25% of the program, and any program terminations as well), and degrees offered by private institutions in New Brunswick.

MPHEC coordinates two kinds of reviews for public universities: OCGS- or PEQAB-like reviews of new programs, and UPRAC[9]-like audits of institutional policies and procedures to assure ongoing quality of existing programs, services and other functions. New programs are reviewed on the basis of student demand, social, scholastic, and economic need, evidence of consultation of institutions with similar programs, the involvement of peers and experts in program development, learning, physical and human resources, and the anticipated outcomes and objectives.

The initial stage of the review requires that the proposal be posted on the MPHEC web site and comments received from interested stakeholders. If there are no serious comments pertaining to the proposal received from stakeholders, MPHEC staff conduct the review and recommend approval. If there are concerns raised by stakeholders that are not resolved to staff satisfaction, the proposal will be referred to the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) -MPHEC Academic Advisor Committee for in-depth assessment.

The AAU-MPHEC Academic Advisor Committee may request additional information or

[9] The Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee

refer the program to an expert(s) who may or may not conduct a site visit. Once issues are resolved, or the Committee is satisfied that no resolution is possible, it forwards its recommendation to MPHEC.

The commission reviews the recommendation of the Advisory Committee and reviews the program within a policy framework

- to ensure interprovincial cooperation and collaboration;
- to avoid unnecessary program duplication;
- to ensure particular provincial policies goals are addressed; and
- policies that require health-related programs to be reviewed by another provincial body prior to an MPHEC review.

Audits of institutional policies and procedures to assure ongoing quality of existing programs are required on a seven-year cycle. The committee reviews the institution's quality assurance policies, the results of its quality reviews, and the process for addressing the recommendations for improvement identified during quality assurance activities.

New Brunswick Private Providers

The *Degree Granting Act, 2001* in New Brunswick, which permits the provision of degree programs by private providers, includes a provision that MPHEC *could* be asked to coordinate the assessment.[10] The review of proposals from privates has four phases: Business New Brunswick (the New Brunswick government's economic development department) conducts review of financial viability and stability, and the market viability of the business plan. If satisfactory, MPHEC conducts a study of the governance, policies, planning and financing of the program. If satisfactory, MPHEC conducts an external review of the suitability and quality of the program, its objectives, structure, institutional appropriateness, resources, and anticipated outcomes and their relevance. Finally, the Minister recommends to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the applicant has met the necessary requirements.

MPHEC's assessment standards were created by surveying those in use in other Canadian provinces, adopting those requirements where appropriate, and creating additional requirements as needed. Many PEQAB standards were adopted by MPHEC, although most of the benchmarks, which articulate the minimum thresholds to be achieved, were not[11]. The standards address the full range of matters related to program and institutional quality including faculty qualifications, numbers, and scholarship in the field, curriculum and other requirements, learning and physical resources, policies for admission and graduation, faculty hiring and development, degree standards, procedures for institutional and program review, administrative capacity and structure, and policies pertaining to research, intellectual property, academic freedom, faculty hiring and development. The MPHEC also considers economic and social need, and student demand in its assessments of proposals.

The review of degree proposals from private providers in New Brunswick includes an assessment of the program against degree level standards. These degree level standards are those of the Ontario PEQAB, and are a version that was in use in Ontario prior to their revision that was done in collaboration with the OCGS and the Ontario Council of Vice-Presidents Academic (OCAV).

Saskatchewan

The University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, the only institutions in the

[10] New Brunswick currently refers proposals to offer degrees to MPHEC.
[11] MPHEC did not adopt other benchmarks; rather, it has very few benchmarks.

province that can grant degrees (other than theological degrees), are responsible for the quality of new and existing programs.

Manitoba

The *Degree Granting Act* governs degree granting in Manitoba. In Manitoba, only organizations exempted from the provisions that prohibit degree granting, either by regulation or by an act of the legislature, may provide degree programs in the province.

All degree programs offered by Manitoba's public universities are reviewed by the Council on Post Secondary Education (COPSE). The submission provides information about human and financial resources; curriculum; rationale for the program; admission requirements; credit transfer; prior learning assessment and recognition opportunities; market demand, whether the program is available elsewhere in the province, and at least two written academic peer reviews. The COPSE review considers whether the program is unnecessarily duplicative and whether there are market demand/ employment opportunities for graduates.

The mandate of COPSE was recently expanded to include the quality review of degrees in applied areas of study. Details on the degree initiative and the new COPSE mandate have not yet been released.

Québec

The Conference of Rectors and Principals (CREPUQ) coordinates two forms of quality assurance for public institutions. New degree program proposals are submitted to a committee coordinated by CREPUQ. Program reviews are similar to the OCGS or PEQAB process, and include that the university prepare a submission which is then evaluated by a panel of experts (and typically involves a site visit). Like the OCGS or PEQAB process, CREPUQ criteria address the full range of matters related to program and institutional quality including faculty qualifications; numbers and scholarship in the field; curriculum and other requirements; learning and physical resources; policies for admission and graduation; faculty hiring and development; and degree standards.

Ongoing quality assurance of existing programs follows a UPRAC-like audit process. Pursuant to criteria established by CREPUQ (and voluntarily agreed to by Quebec universities), universities are reviewed at least once every ten years. The review must include external expert review and address the following: curriculum; program objectives; human, physical, and learning resources; admission requirements; student assessment; and relevance of the program to the university's mission, the other universities in Quebec, and social need. Like the UPRAC requirements, universities must have policies and procedures in place to address recommendations for improvement that are included in the external reviewers' report. The reports of external reviewers are public and posted on the CREPUQ web site.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador do not have degree granting legislation or a degree quality assurance agency. Memorial University is the only university in Newfoundland and Labrador, and its senate has responsibility for program approval and quality assurance.

Yukon

The Yukon does not have degree granting legislation or a quality assurance agency. Yukon College is the only explicitly authorized provider of degree programs in the Yukon. The Yukon (along with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut) is involved in the development of the University of the Arctic (a circumpolar initiative involving countries within the Arctic Council to develop an international network of universities, colleges, and other organizations committed to higher education and research in the North).

Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories has no degree granting legislation or systems of degree quality assurance. The Northwest Territories (along with the Yukon and Nunavut) is involved in the development of the University of the Arctic (as described above).

Nunavut

Nunavut recently tabled legislation which would enable the government to establish degree granting organizations. There are no systems of degree quality assurance in the territory and none is anticipated. Although there are currently no degree granting institutions in Nunavut, some organizations have agreements with degree granting institutions located in southern Canada, and Nunavut (along with the Yukon and Northwest Territories) is involved in the development of the University of the Arctic (as described above), colleges, and other organizations committed to higher education and research in the North. Nunavut is also dealing with significant degree and diploma mill activity and is reviewing its policy with respect to requirements for postsecondary education institutions to operate in the jurisdiction.

Degree Granting and Quality Assurance in Ontario

Overview of the Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000

Degree granting in Ontario is regulated by the *Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000,* (PSECE Act; the Act), proclaimed in 2001. The PSECE Act is the core component of Ontario's degree quality framework. The Act sets the parameters for how degree authority is obtained in the province (by an act of the legislature or Minister's consent), the student protection conditions attached to organizations that offer degrees pursuant to a consent (e.g., financial security and access to transcripts), the requirements for quality assurance of degree programs (all applications for consent must be referred to PEQAB for review and recommendation), and the mechanisms to address organizations that contravene the act (fines and imprisonment).

Prior to the current PSECE Act, from 1984-2000, the *Degree Granting Act* (DGA) was in force in Ontario. Under the DGA, private and public out-of-province organizations could, and did, seek the Minister's consent to offer degree programs.[12] In determining whether to grant a consent under the DGA, the criteria considered by the Minister included one quality measure (whether the organization was accredited in its home jurisdiction) and several factors related to societal need:

- whether a publicly assisted university was offering, during the period for which the consent was requested, the same course of study and degree, in a manner and form consistent with the articulated and confirmed needs of the specific client group;
- whether the proposed degree program was similar to one leading to the awarding of a certificate or diploma by a college of applied arts and technology in Ontario;
- identifiable need for graduates in a specific field that were met by the program;
- employment surveys;
- letters of support; and
- duration of the need.

While the DGA was in effect there were routine consultations with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), to solicit comments on an application for consent, particularly to

[12] Private in-province institutions could not seek consent.

determine whether member institutions were planning to offer the same program of study as the applicant.[13]

Several inter-related factors inspired the need for legislative change in 2000:

- increasing interest on the part of degree providers in other jurisdictions to offer programs in Ontario;
- the development of the internet and other technologies that facilitate delivery of degree programs across borders;
- increasing demand for degree level education;
- reduced funding to traditional, public universities that contributed to the rise in cross border provision of education and increased recruitment of international students, in part, to increase revenues;
- increasing graduate mobility, both to and away from Ontario, to exploit changing labour markets;
- new agreements on international trade in goods and services, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), that require consistently applied, explicit and transparent criteria for decisions about which organizations may or may not offer degrees in Ontario; and
- interest on the part of the government in opening Ontario to other providers to increase access to degree programs and reduce the costs to taxpayers.

Key Features of the PSECE Act

Key features of the PSECE Act include that:

- all organizations require either an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or the consent of the Minister to offer a degree or use the term "university";
- the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) may apply for consent to offer baccalaureate degrees in applied areas of study;[14]
- all organizations not empowered by an act of the Ontario legislature to offer degrees are able to seek consent;
- the Minister must refer all applications for consent to PEQAB;
- the Minister may not grant or deny consent until he or she has received a recommendation from PEQAB;
- the Minister is required to be satisfied that private applicants have adequate student protection measures in place, specifically access to transcripts and security before giving consent;
- enforcement mechanisms were strengthened by establishing an inspection process and the powers of the inspector, and increasing the level of fines significantly;
- PEQAB, created in 2000, was continued and made responsible for the review of applications for consent.

Regulations under the Act:

- differentiate between public and private institutions;
- impose additional requirements on private applicants (e.g., financial protection for student tuition fees); and
- establish provisions for the protection of student interests by guaranteeing student access to transcripts and protecting tuition fees through trust fund and security (e.g., bond requirements in the case of private institutions).

[13] In cases where there might be duplication, a consent might still be granted if the applicant served a different group of students (e.g., part-time, mature) or the program had other features that distinguished it from the program offered by the university.

[14] CAATs could not offer degrees prior to 2001.

Additional requirements are imposed on consent holders through the Minister's terms and conditions of consent. The terms and conditions of consent include that:

- the program be offered in conformity with PEQAB standards;
- all commitments made during the course of the PEQAB review be honoured;
- the program not change during the consent (except to maintain currency);
- the organization provide extended access to transcripts; and
- additional requirements vary depending on whether the consent holder is a CAAT, public, or private organization.

In order to be granted consent, applicants must accept these terms and conditions.

Pursuant to the Act, an application for consent is required to:

- grant a degree;
- provide a program or part of a program of post-secondary study leading to a degree to be conferred by person inside or outside Ontario;
- advertise a program or part of a program of post-secondary study offered in Ontario leading to a degree to be conferred by a person in or outside Ontario;
- sell, offer for sale or provide by agreement for a fee, reward or other remuneration, a diploma, certificate, document or other material that indicates or implies the granting or conferring of a degree;
- operate or maintain a university;
- use or be known by a name of a university or any derivation or abbreviation of a name of a university;
- organizations to hold themselves out to be a university; and
- make use of the word university or any derivation or abbreviation of the word university in any advertising relating to an educational institution in Ontario.

Because the Minister's terms and conditions of consent do not permit a consent holder to change a program (unless it is to maintain the currency of the curriculum) an application for Ministerial consent is required when consent holders wish to change the program in any way (e.g., eliminate or add an admissions requirement, add online delivery, alter assessment strategies, and so on).[15]

All activity related to degree granting in Ontario, either direct or indirect, is subject to the provisions of the Act. Direct and indirect activities associated with providing a program or part of a program of post-secondary study leading to a degree, whether the degree is to be granted by a person in or out of Ontario, include but are not limited to:

- providing lectures, tutorials, seminars, exam invigilation, or any other academic support(s);
- providing a permanent presence in Ontario which provides or facilitates regular and ongoing recruitment activities on behalf of a degree-granting institution;
- providing academic advising; facilitating admission of students, collecting fees or tuition, or any other administrative support; or
- providing classroom space, computer, library facilities, or other resource(s).

Degree Providers in Ontario

Ontario degree providers fall into one of three categories: publicly assisted organizations with an act of the Ontario legislature; private organizations with an act of the Ontario legislature; and consent holders. Consent holders can be private organizations (in or outside the province); public organizations (in or outside the province), and CAATs.

[15] Please note, the Board has recommended that the Minister handle curricular changes at CAATs by having colleges submit proposed changes directly to PEQAB rather than as a consent amendment.

Publicly assisted organizations with an act of the Ontario legislature

There are 20 publicly funded degree granting institutions in Ontario: 19 universities and the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD). Each institution has an act of the Ontario legislative assembly. Most of these institutions are authorized by their acts to confer any and all degrees.[16] Almost all affiliates/federates of public universities also have acts of the legislature which provide degree-granting authority. Part of the affiliation agreements include that the secular degree-granting powers of the affiliate/federate are held in abeyance during the agreement, and all degrees are granted by the university.

Private organizations with an act of the Ontario legislature

Seventeen institutions (predominantly religious) have obtained private acts of the legislature giving limited degree-granting authority. All private acts that provide degree authority to organizations provide restricted degree authority, primarily to award non-secular degrees.

Since the proclamation of the PSECE Act, the policy on the Minister's support of private bills has included that he/she will not support:

- new private legislation unless institution has had consent in place for two consecutive consent periods (ten years); and
- amendments to existing private legislation unless the legislation has been in place for ten years and the PEQAB reviews and recommends the proposed amendment(s).

Overview of Degree Quality Assurance

Quality assurance has long been viewed by the traditional degree-granting sector (public universities in Canada, and universities and colleges in the United States) as of central importance. Accrediting bodies in the US have been in existence for over 100 years. The oldest degree quality assurance agency in Canada, created in 1968, is the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS).

Ongoing quality improvement is regarded by the traditional degree granting sector as a central, institution-wide activity to ensure the ongoing relevance of programs to the university's mission, the adequacy of resources, currency of curriculum, level of scholarship of faculty, and so on. These are still fundamental goals of quality assurance, but recent changes in degree granting have escalated the need for rigorous systems of quality assurance.

Extensive changes have occurred in degree granting in a relatively short period of time. Increasing demand and rising costs for degree level education have led to the development of:

- new kinds of degrees (e.g., the degrees in applied areas of study for which diploma-level curriculum had been sufficient);
- new providers (e.g., public colleges that traditionally delivered certificate and diploma-level curricula; for-profit degree-granting organizations that specialize in niche, high demand areas of study such as business and teacher certification; and partnerships between public Ontario universities and American private universities);
- new modes of program delivery (e.g., delivery by web-facilitated methods, delivery of module-based curriculum rather than credit- or course-based; and
- a sharp increase, internationally, in the proliferation of fraudulent education-related activity in the form of:

[16] There are two exceptions: OCAD is permitted to award two undergraduate and three graduate degrees; and Algoma University, Ontario's newest university created in 2008, provides restricted authority, with unrestricted authority to be proclaimed in the future.

- degree mills (either fraudulent organizations that sell "degree" credentials with no intended educational value, or educational organizations with program requirements so substandard as to not warrant the award of a degree); and
- accreditation mills (intentionally fraudulent organizations that purport to verify the quality of an institution or program).

As a result, processes pertaining to the approval of programs and providers, as well as for credible, transparent quality assurance have become central concerns not only for traditional providers, but also for governments, employers, students, and the general public.

Publicly assisted Universities with an act of the Ontario legislature

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) coordinates the quality assurance activities of the publicly assisted Ontario universities. There are currently separate systems in place for the review of undergraduate and graduate programs.[17]

Quality Assurance of Undergraduate Programs: UPRAC

Each university is responsible for assuring the quality of its new and existing undergraduate programs. The universities' procedures and policies for quality assurance are audited by COU's Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC) on (approximately) a seven year cycle. The UPRAC is a committee of the Ontario Council of Vice-Presidents, Academic (OCAV), an affiliate of COU. OCAV is composed of the Vice-Presidents, Academic of each university that is a member of COU.

The UPRAC process does not directly review programs at Ontario public universities - it audits the university's policies and procedures for reviewing the quality of its own programs and ensures that these policies and practices conform to the *Guidelines* prescribed by UPRAC. The goals of the audit process are to ensure:

- that programs are regularly reviewed using credible and effective practices; and
- continuous improvement of programs.

The UPRAC Review and *Audit Guidelines* identify the policies and practices that should be in place at the university to ensure ongoing quality and improvement. The *Guidelines* establish that the university's practices for internal review:

- include a self-evaluation by the program's faculty on the strengths and weaknesses of the program;
- include in the self-study matters related to program and institutional quality, including faculty qualifications and numbers; curriculum; learning and physical resources; policies for admission and graduation; faculty hiring and development; and degree standards;
- require that students, at least one external reviewer, and faculty from outside the program area be involved in the review; and
- result in a report with recommendations for improvement that is presented to senate and the board of governors.

The UPRAC audits are conducted by teams of experts appointed by UPRAC. Members of the audit team are senior academics who have also had senior administrative roles in a university. The audit team's responsibility is to ensure that the university's policies and practices meet the UPRAC guidelines. To prepare for the audit, universities prepare an audit brief that details the university's policies and practices for quality assurance, addressing at least all matters identified in the UPRAC *Guidelines*. The audit panel:

- reviews the brief and a sample of three or four of the institution's internal quality assurance reviews;
- conducts a site visit, during which it will meet with senior administration and

[17] COU will soon establish a single system of degree quality assurance.

representatives (including students) of the three or four programs whose reviews were selected for audit; and
- prepares a report for the UPRAC which includes an assessment of the practices against the UPRAC *Guidelines*, and any recommendations for change.

Copies of the auditors' reports are sent to the Minister and shared with all Ontario universities. One year after the publication of the report, the institution is required to indicate through the auditors to the OCAV and the Minister how it has responded to the auditors' recommendations.

Two of PEQAB's standards, Program Evaluation (for all applicants) and Organization Evaluation (for private applicants), draw heavily from the UPRAC *Guidelines*.

Graduate programs: OCGS

The OCGS Appraisal Committee is responsible for the review of new and existing graduate programs and uses a direct review approach, i.e., the Council selects the assessors and conducts the program quality assessment against the OCGS requirements. The Appraisal Committee, responsible for the review of graduate programs, has 28 members nominated by the graduate deans of Ontario public universities (the deans nominate their own senior graduate faculty). The Committee is subdivided into four multidisciplinary appraisal subcommittees.

The OCGS appraisal process is one of the earliest and most rigorous program appraisal systems in the world, and is held in high regard internationally. Unlike the audit process for undergraduate programs, OCGS contracts an independent expert panel to review each graduate program against its requirements. OCGS criteria address the full range of matters related to program quality including faculty qualifications and scholarship, program curriculum and other requirements, learning and physical resources, policies for admission and graduation, faculty hiring and development, and degree standards.

The current process[18] for the review of new program proposals and periodic review of existing programs (reviewed on a seven year cycle) is as follows:
- The university graduate program area prepares a brief according to OCGS guidelines. The submission includes information on curriculum, faculty CVs, library holdings, other resources (e.g., computers, space), grants, students, completion rates, theses and dissertations, and so on.
- The submission is reviewed for completeness by the OCGS secretariat.
- The Appraisal Committee identifies additional questions (if any) for external reviewers.
- The Appraisal Committee appoints external reviewers. Normally, two expert peer reviewers are appointed, one of whom will likely have been nominated by the university.
- The external reviews conduct a desk audit of brief and then conduct a two-day site visit. On the site visit, reviewers verify that the program area has the resources required to mount and sustain the program, and interview senior administration, faculty, and students.
- The external reviewers prepare a report against OCGS guidelines.

The OCGS Appraisal Committee receives the reviewer's report and prepares its own report for the Ontario Council of Graduate Deans. The report includes a recommendation of either good quality, good quality with report (indicating that the program requires improvement), or not approved. All universities voluntarily agree that programs will not commence if a

[18] The OCGS appraisal and UPRAC audit processes recently underwent external review. The COU is implementing many of the recommendations for change made by the review team.

recommendation of "not approved" is received, and ministry program approvals process will not fund a graduate program that has not received a recommendation to commence.

PEQAB has analysed the OCGS requirements for alignment with the PEQAB criteria and recognizes a successful OCGS review as satisfying its criteria.

External Review of COU Quality Assurance Processes

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) recently undertook an external review of its quality assurance processes. The COU is implementing many of the recommendations for change made by the review team, headed by Dr. Richard Van Loon, including that:

- there be a central body that monitors and is responsible for the overall integrity of the process and its application in the institutions;
- the system be transparent both with respect to processes and results;
- quality assurance be supported by clear, complete, widely available and universally applied guidelines;[19]
- the processes for graduate and undergraduate programs be essentially the same, subject to different degree standards and guidelines for reviewers;
- the system examine results (student learning and development in accord with degree standards) as well as inputs (resources applied to the programs);
- the system not inherently advantage one institution or type of institution over another; and
- the quality assurance system itself be subject to regular assessment.

Highlights of the external review are summarized as follows. Several bases for revising the existing quality assurance (QA) systems were identified:

- the same quality can be achieved with a streamlined, less complex system;.
- the current process takes much of the responsibility for quality assurance away from the individual institutions and tends to separate it from quality improvement;
- the current approach discourages innovation and impedes international partnerships;
- because of its focus on programs, the current system does little to encourage quality assurance efforts in other areas of university life;
- under a new system, OCGS can spend more time on the broader issues of graduate education rather than managing the appraisal process; and
- the new system will be more similar to other jurisdictions.

The report addresses the review of publicly funded institutions in other jurisdictions, and finds that:

- none of the QA processes that it has reviewed have appraisal committees that use expert reviewers;
- many other QA systems waive or expedite the review of new programs for established providers (provided they have internal procedures conforming to guidelines set by the body responsible for QA);
- all systems use the same process for graduate and undergraduate programs; and
- no other system requires a full review of external partner universities.[20]

In addition to maintaining quality and streamlining the process, it is expected that the new structure will permit the new agency secretariat an excellent overview of the operations of Ontario universities. The secretariat will be able to play a role in finding innovative practises which can be usefully shared among Ontario universities.

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[19] PEQAB was noted in the report as having clear and transparent criteria and processes.

[20] This may be the case for the public institutions themselves, but is not a requirement that is necessarily waived by provincial governments.

The report recommends the following appraisal structure and process:

- establishment of the Ontario Universities Degree Quality Assurance System (OUDQAS), a body overseen by Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV), which will be responsible for both graduate and undergraduate programs;
- establishment of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee of Ontario (HEQACO) to manage the quality assurance of programs;
- establishment of two 4-6 member Appraisal Committees (senior academics or academic administrators from Ontario) responsible for the final recommendation to OCAV, one for graduate and one for undergraduate;
- establishment of a 10-member Ontario Universities Quality Audit Panel (OUQAP) to conduct the periodic audits of university quality assurance processes; and
- a similar process in place for review of both undergraduate and graduate programs.

The report recommends that all new programs be subject to review (currently, only new graduate programs are reviewed), and re-review:

- new programs will be subject to an external review similar to the current OCGS process. In addition, universities will be required to post the Committee's report and their response on the university web site;
- subject to a change in government policy, partners from outside Ontario in joint programs with Ontario universities should not be required to undergo separate assessment provided they operate in a jurisdiction with an accepted (as judged by OCGS) quality assurance system;
- programs to be re-reviewed no later than 6 years after launch;
- each university would be subject to periodic audit;
- ongoing quality assurance in Ontario universities will be subject to audit by the (to be established) OUQAP, a panel consisting of approximately 10 current or retired senior faculty with academic administrative experience, reporting through the HEQACO to OCAV;
- because QA within institutions may focus on departments or academic units rather than individual programs and would be broadened to include academic support functions, the current UPRAC guidelines will be expanded and reworded during implementation; and
- (subject to development) audits of institutional quality assurance will follow conventional steps:
    - the university will prepare a brief;
    - the document will be submitted to those members of the audit panel;
    - the reviewers will also take a sample of three or four of the institution's internal quality assurance reviews and examine the process and procedures followed;
    - the audit report and the university's response will be available on the university's web site and the OUDQAS web sites and will be transmitted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU); and
    - universities will be required to file an update on progress against any required improvements after three years and this too will be published.

Regular review of COU's quality assurance system itself will take place at least every seven years and follow the normal steps:

- critical self-study;
- external appraisal by expert reviewers;
- report to and response from the system, including plans for improvement and a follow up of progress against the recommendations after approximately three years; and
- material to be made available on the web site (and filed with the ministry).

The report recommends that the period review of the quality assurance system be undertaken under the auspices of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) but that the review panel itself be expert in the application of quality assurance procedures and in the delivery of higher education programs.

Private Institutions with an act of the Ontario legislature

Private institutions with an act of the legislature are not required to undergo any quality assurance. These are the only degree programs in the province not to be subject to quality assurance reviews.

Consent Holders

Pursuant to the Act, the Minister refers all applications to PEQAB for review and recommendation. The Board's criteria and processes will be addressed at length throughout this report. To summarize the process, the Board reviews the application against relevant criteria and makes a recommendation to the Minister on the quality of the program and the organization's capacity to deliver it. In the decision to grant or deny consent, the Minister considers the Board's recommendation and any public policy or financial matter flowing from the granting of a consent. Should the Minister decide to grant consent, consent holders must meet regulatory requirements and additional terms and conditions of consent imposed by the Minister. The terms and conditions of consent include that the program may not change during the consent (except to maintain currency), the organization must provide extended access to transcripts, and additional requirements that vary depending on whether the consent holder is a CAAT, a public organization or a private organization.

Chapter 2: The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board

Established in 2000, and continued under the Act, PEQAB is composed of a Chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, and a Vice-chair and not more than nine other members appointed by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Board members have a mix of backgrounds and expertise. Some members have experience in the university and college sectors and others are experienced in private sectors.

Legislative Mandate

As described in detail in the earlier section pertaining to the Ontario context, all degree granting, and the use of "university", in Ontario is governed by the PSECE Act.

Mandate and Requirements

Pursuant to the Act, PEQAB's mandate is to:

- review applications for ministerial consent to offer a degree program or use the term "university" and provide recommendations to the Minister on the academic rigour and organizational soundness of the applicant;
- make recommendations to the Minister on other matters referred to it by the Minister; and
- perform such other duties as may be prescribed.

Pursuant to the Act, PEQAB, in making its recommendations to the Minister:

- establishes its own criteria and processes for the review of applications; and
- establishes panels of academic peers and professionals to review the applicant organization (private applicants only) and the quality of proposed degree(s) (all applicants).

PEQAB has the authority to establish the criteria for its reviews, subject to two restrictions: criteria are required to:

- be in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions; and
- comply with such policy directions as may be given by the Minister.

Members

Dale Patterson (Term: 25-Apr-2009 to 24-Apr-2011), a business and community leader, is the first Chair of the PEQAB. Mr. Patterson, a graduate of York University, is Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund. Currently Mr. Patterson serves on the Board of Directors of several professional, private and non-profit organizations, including the Toronto Biotechnology Initiative, the Canadian Venture Capital Association and is the founding Chair of the Biotechnology Council of Ontario. In 2006, he received the Toronto Biotechnology Initiative Volunteer Recognition Award. Mr. Patterson was elected in 2009 as a Director of the Board of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

Maureen J. Morton (Term: 01-Jun-2007 to 31-May-2010), obtained her LLB from the University of Toronto in 1989. She is a business law lawyer specializing in Technology Law since her call to the Ontario Bar in 1991. She practised with Fasken Martineau DuMoulin LLP until 1994 when she joined Lerners LLP where she practised until her appointment by Autodata Solutions Company in February 2000 as Vice President, Legal Affairs followed by her appointment as Senior Vice President, Legal Affairs of Autodata Solutions Company in 2008. Ms. Morton has sat on the Board of Directors for several not-for-profit organizations and is currently a member of the Board of Directors and Vice Chair of the TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario.

Richard Barham (Term: 01-Jul-2007 to 30-Jun-2010) retired, has a Master's degree from the University of Otago (NZ) and Ph.D. from the University of Alberta. He has held academic appointments at the University of Otago, the University of Alberta, and the University of Guelph where he was a former Department Chair and subsequently Dean of the College of Family and Consumer Studies. He has served two terms as an Auditor of the undergraduate program reviews conducted by the Council of Ontario Universities, and was a Member of the COU Quality Assurance Transition/Implementation Task Force from May 2008 to October 2009.

Jane Blackwell (Term: 01-Dec-2005 to 30-June-2011) has a Masters of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and a Masters of Business Administration from Athabasca University. As of May 2008, Jane retired after 35 years as a faculty and project leader at Northern College in Kirkland Lake, Ontario. As a leader in community development, Jane has facilitated workshops and meetings for groups within the college, from the local and regional communities, from across the province and in international settings. She has served as college program review agent, program co-ordinator, evaluator for the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and project officer at the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Materials Joining Innovation Centre (a not-for-profit organization helping industry solve welding and material joining problems) and of the Kirkland and District Community Development Corporation

(one of 24 Community Futures Development Corporations in Northern Ontario funded by FedNor and Industry Canada).

Ashok Dalvi (Term: 01-Jul-2008 to 30-Jun-2011) Ph.D. (Metallurgy and Materials Sc) from McMaster University, is a member of the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum as well as the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum and a registered Professional Engineer in the Province of Ontario. Until recently, he served as the Director of Process Engineering and Strategic Studies at Vale Inco Limited, a major base metal company based in Canada. Currently, he is President of Dalvi Associates Inc., an independent company based in Ontario, consulting in base metals strategies. He has worked internationally in the fields of process R & D, project management and strategic studies.

David Leyton-Brown (Term: 01-Jul-2007 to 30-Jun-2010), is the Master of Calumet College and a Professor of Political Science at York University. Previously, he served as Executive Director of the OCGS, and as Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York University, and has been President of the Northeastern Association of Graduate Schools.

Robert Gordon (Term: 23-Nov-2009 to 22-Nov-2012) Dr. Robert (Squee) Gordon has spent more than 45 years in public education, including seven as President of Dawson College in Montreal, and 25 as President of Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto. He holds an Honours BA in History; a Master's Degree in Modern British History; a Master's Degree in Educational Administration; a Master's Degree in Public Administration; a Doctorate in Educational Administration; and several honorary doctorates. As well as having a long history of service to numerous boards and committees, including Chair of the Ontario Technology Fund; President of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges; President of League for Innovation in the Community College; Chair of the Committee of Presidents of Ontario; President and Chair of the Board of the Corporation of Bishop's University ; Leader-in-Residence of the Council for Emerging Leaders of the Conference Board of Canada; Dr. Gordon is also a recipient of the Order of Ontario.

Richard Pinnock (Term: 01-Jul-2007 to 31-Dec-2009) MBA from York University, Bachelor of Commerce from McGill University, a member of the Institute of Corporate Directors, is originally from Quebec. He is currently the Managing Director of INROADS/Toronto, a Not-for-Profit organization that provides leadership training and summer internship opportunities for Canada's top Visible Minority and Aboriginal university students. He has 20 years strategic marketing and communications experience working with Purolator Courier, The Royal Canadian Mint, and ClientLogic (an ONEX Company). His volunteer and community outreach efforts have helped thousands of minority students and adults. His personal mission is "to help all Canadians achieve their full potential".

Patricia M. Rowe (Term: 01-Jul-2007 to 31-Dec-2009) is Professor Emeritus of Psychology and a former Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Waterloo. She currently serves as an Auditor of undergraduate program reviews conducted through the COU, and has been an assessor of proposals to PEQAB. As an Associate of the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education, she has conducted research on the effects of work experience on the early careers of new graduates.

Meetings

PEQAB normally meets monthly for 2-4 hours to:

- review applications for consent;
- formulate recommendations to the Minister;

- appoint quality assessment panels;
- consider the criteria, processes, and policies for the review of applications;
- consider self evaluation materials (e.g., annual reports; annual surveys);
- discuss other matters related to degree granting, quality assurance, and the ministry;
- consider correspondence and other matters.

Governance

Vision Statement and Guiding Principles

The Board held a retreat on November 23, 2009, to identify its vision and guiding principles. Members adopted the following as the PEQAB vision: **Inspiring excellence in education through leadership in quality assurance and enhancement.**

Members adopted the following as PEQAB's guiding principles:
Accountable and responsive to the Minister and other stakeholders
Transparent about criteria and processes
Collaborative/collegial/consultative
Standards based
Encourage ownership and responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement
Evidenced based decision making
Open to change
Fair and ethical

Terms of Reference

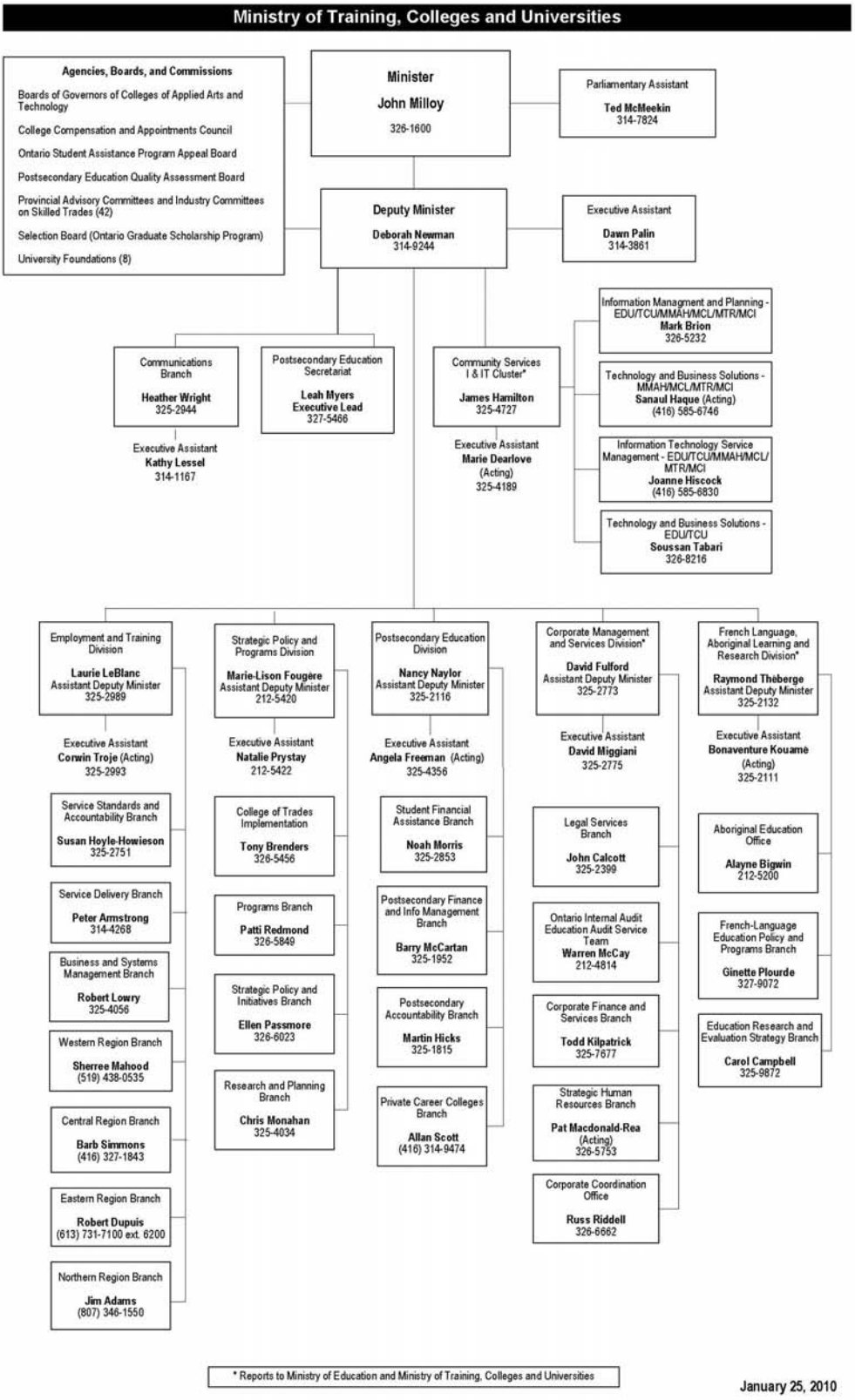
In addition to the legislation, the Board's operational, administrative, financial, auditing, and reporting relationships and arrangements are governed by a Terms of Reference (ToR) with the Minister. The figures on the following pages reflect the administrative structure of the Board and ministry, and the reporting relationships of the Board Chair.

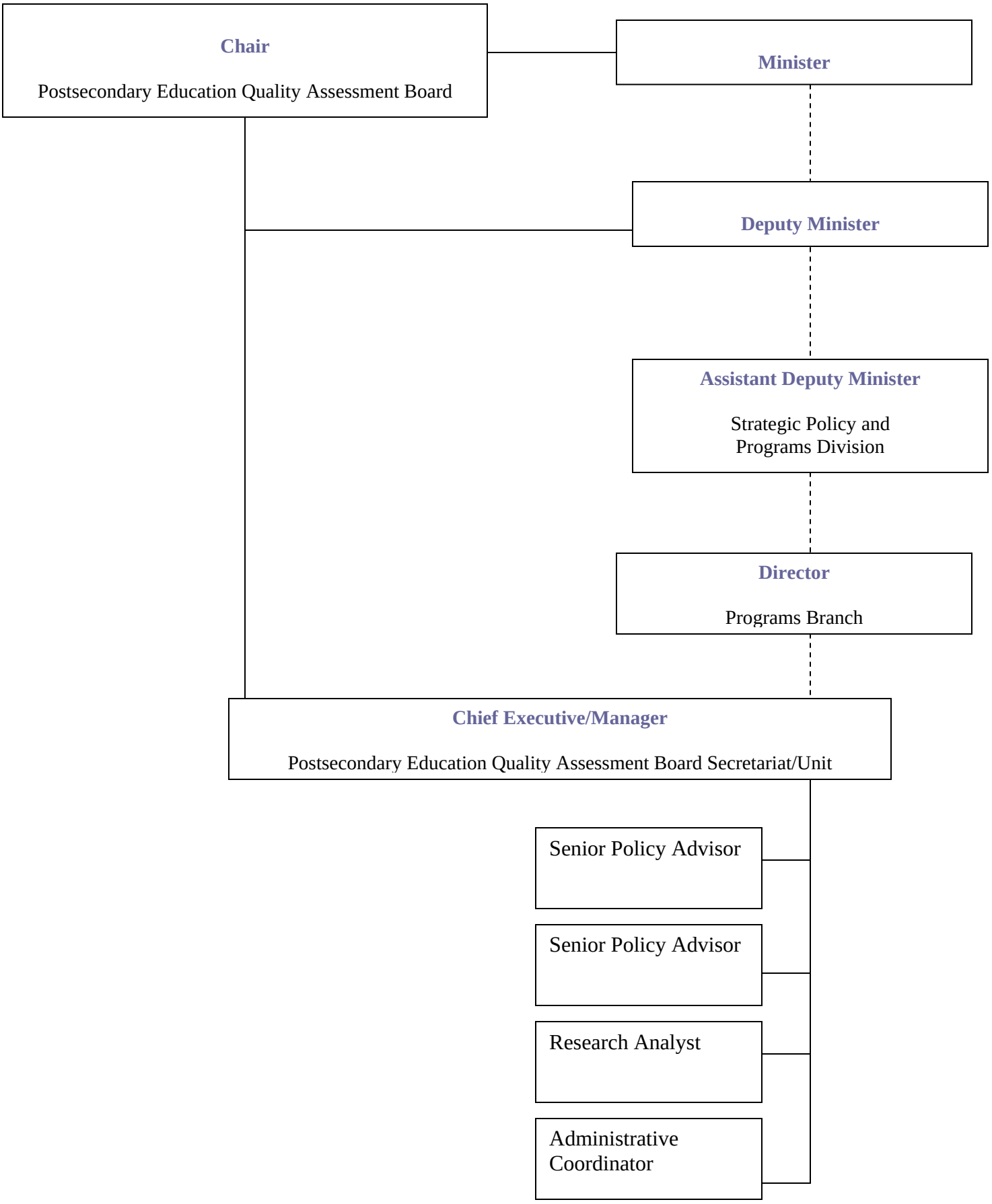
Roles and Responsibilities

Minister
The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is accountable to the Legislature for the Board's fulfilment of its mandate, its compliance with government policies, and for reporting to the Legislature on the Board's affairs.

The Minister:
- recommends to Management Board of Cabinet (MBC) the establishment and elimination of the Board and any change to the Board's mandate that needs corresponding change to its constituting instrument;
- reports and responds to the Legislative Assembly on the affairs of the Board;
- reports and responds to Cabinet on the Board's performance and compliance with the government's operational policies and Board policy directions;
- when appropriate or necessary, takes action or directs/recommends that corrective action be taken in respect of the Board's mandate or operations;
- informs the Board's Chair of the government's priorities and broad policy directions for the Board;

- consults, as appropriate, with the Chair and others, on significant new directions and/or when the government is considering regulatory or legislative changes for the Board;
- recommends to MBC the provincial funding to be given to the Board; and
- directs that a periodic review of the Board be conducted and makes subsequent recommendations to MBC.




Chair
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
Minister
Deputy Minister
Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Policy and Programs Division
Director
Programs Branch
Chief Executive/Manager
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board Secretariat/Unit
Senior Policy Advisor
Senior Policy Advisor
Research Analyst
Administrative Coordinator

Deputy Minister

The Deputy Minister is accountable to the Minister for monitoring the Board on behalf of the Minister while respecting the authority of the Board and, where warranted, to identify needs for corrective action and recommend to the Minister ways of resolving issues. The Deputy Minister is also accountable for advising the Minister on the establishment, elimination, consolidation, acquisition and operation of the Board and advising the Minister on meeting assigned ministerial responsibilities with respect to an agency. The Deputy will negotiate with the Board Chair with respect to the ToR as directed by the Minister.

Assistant Deputy Minister

- establishes a framework for reviewing and assessing Board reports;
- advises the Minister on Board documents submitted to the Minister for review and/or approval;
- advises the Minister on meeting assigned ministerial responsibilities with respect to the Board;
- undertakes reviews as directed by the Minister;
- co-operates with any periodic review directed by the Minister or MBC;
- monitors the Board on behalf of the Minister while respecting its authority, and where warranted, identifies needs for corrective action and recommends to the Minister ways of resolving issues;
- negotiates with the Chair of the Board a draft ToR for the Board as directed by the Minister;
- consults the Chair, as needed, on matters of mutual importance, including any services provided by the ministry, MBC directives and ministry policies;
- meets with the Chair as needed or directed;
- seeks feedback from the Chair on the performance of the Manager[21]; and
- provides administrative, financial and other support to the Board as specified in the ToR with the Board.

PEQAB Chair

The Chair is accountable to the Minister for the performance of the Board in fulfilling its mandate and for carrying out the roles and responsibilities assigned to the Chair by Management Board Directives, the constituting instrument, and the ToR. The Chair:

- keeps the Minister informed of issues or events that may concern the Minister in the exercise of the Minister's responsibilities; provides leadership to the Board in fulfilling its mandate;
- serves as spokesperson for the Board;
- ensures development of performance measures for the Board and monitors its performance;
- recommends financial needs for inclusion in annual requests for Board funding;
- co-operates with any periodic review directed by the Minister or MBC;
- directs that corrective action be taken if needed;
- makes decisions on Board governance consistent with the ToR for the Board; and
- provides Board advice and recommendations to the Minister, as well as the Board's annual report.

Chief Executive/Secretariat Manager

PEQAB is supported by a full-time secretariat. The Manager of the secretariat is appointed under the *Public Service Act*, and for Board-related matters, reports to the Chair. The core responsibility of the Manager is to support the Chair and the Board in carrying out the

[21] "Director" in Terms of Reference. The position of Director was eliminated in 2008 and replaced by the position of Manager.

Board's duties. (The ToR assigned these responsibilities to a Director of the Secretariat. The responsibilities of the Director were assigned to a Manager when the position of Director was eliminated in 2008.)

The Manager:

- supports the Board in fulfilling its mandate;
- provides day-to-day management of the secretariat;
- recommends policies and procedures to the Board;
- communicates on the role of the Board and its operations to prospective applicants, stakeholders and others;
- manages relationships with applicants, major stakeholders, professional licensing and accreditation bodies, and similar bodies in other jurisdictions; and
- ensures that the Board is fair, transparent, efficient, and credible.

Secretariat Staff

Secretariat staff are accountable to the Manager. The secretariat is comprised of four ministry staff who draft the Board's criteria and processes, and manage applications for consent.

The secretariat's ongoing activities in support of the Board include:

- monitoring the degree environment for
  - domestic and international developments in curriculum, technology, and other relevant program or institutional characteristics (e.g., requirements for inclusion of liberal arts/general education requirements in undergraduate degrees);
  - experience in other jurisdictions that may be relevant to improving the board's criteria (e.g., degree mill activity in the United States and other jurisdictions);
- participating in interjurisdictional quality assurance activities (e.g., the CMEC Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS), attendance at and presentations to quality assurance and related conferences, participating in or assisting in the establishment of regional networks to share best practice, inter-agency information exchanges);
- developing and maintaining relationships with other quality assurance agencies in Ontario and other jurisdictions.
- drafting criteria and processes;
- monitoring quality assurance agency's criteria and processes to ensure PEQAB criteria and processes reflect best practice (e.g., in the level and nature of training that assessors should receive; secretariat involvement in quality assessment panel site visits to applicant organizations);
- undertaking necessary research;
- drafting and maintaining PEQAB *Handbooks*, *Guidelines*, and *Assessor Workbooks*;
- management of applications, which includes:
  - a review of each application to:
    - ensure the application is complete;
    - determine whether the application requires expert review, or a recommendation to grant or deny consent can be formulated by the board without expert advice (e.g., applications for a name change to "university college" for "college" affiliates of Ontario public institutions; applications that clearly do not meet the board's standards; applications that contain false information); and
    - identify any special issues or features that require additional attention during the course of the review;
  - identifying potential assessors for the review of the application;
  - recommending a quality assurance strategy for the application;
  - contracting with and instructing the assessment panel;
  - clarifying standards and procedures as appropriate;
  - attending quality/organization site visits (as circumstances permit);

- reviewing the panel report and ensuring it conforms to expectations;
- securing the applicant's response to the Quality Assessment Panel (QAP) report;
- preparing materials for the board's consideration; and
- preparing board communications to the Minister.

PEQAB Expert Panels

The Board seeks advice from experts on applications for consent. Panels provide reports to the Board and are accountable to the secretariat Manager.

1. Organization Review Committee (ORC)

The Organization Reviewers is a standing committee established by the Board to review the organizational soundness and capacity of private applicants. The Board strikes a panel from among the members of the ORC to review each application from a private organization.

Organization Reviewers 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. Organization Reviewers may include persons with:

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

Organization Reviewers must be free of any conflict of interest and be recognized by their peers for having a broad outlook, open mind, and sound judgment.

Responsibilities of the Organization Review Panel (ORP)

Depending on the nature and complexity of the application for a private organization, the ORP will normally have between 1-3 members. Under the coordination of the ORP Chair, the panel develops a report that includes at least the following information:

- an assessment of the application against each of the Board's standards and benchmarks for organizations;
- an assessment of the sufficiency, reliability and validity of the evidence provided by the applicant; and
- a reasoned recommendation to the Board.

The Board provides the ORP with guidelines for writing the report and ensuring that the panel has considered all of the relevant standards and benchmarks.

2. Quality Assessment Panel (QAP)

Unlike the ORP, which is a standing committee that reviews all applicant organizations, a unique QAP is appointed to each program review. Depending on the nature and complexity of the application, the QAP will normally have between 2-3 members.

The Board selects highly qualified individuals as quality assessors who possess:

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

QAPs are appointed to reflect an appropriate mix of academic/professional credentials and experience related to the field.

Chairs of QAPs for graduate program proposals normally must also be:
- an active scholar, normally at the rank of full professor;
- currently/recently involved in graduate teaching and, as appropriate, in graduate thesis supervision or in graduate clinical or applied studies supervision;
- experienced in the administration of graduate programs (e.g., as chair of a department with graduate programs, graduate program coordinator, chair of the graduate committee, member of an OGS/SSHRC/NSERC/MRC scholarship committee, member of a faculty or university graduate or research council or committee); and
- an experienced committee member who can function objectively and effectively as chair of an assessment committee.

Responsibilities of the QAP

Under the coordination of the Panel Chair, the panel develops a report that must include at least the following information:
- an assessment of the application against each of the Board's standards and benchmarks;
- an assessment of the application in terms of any additional matters raised by the Board;
- assessment of the sufficiency, reliability and validity of the evidence provided by the applicant;
- an assessment of evidence found during any site visit, resulting from the Panel's research, or submitted to the Panel by other parties; and
- a recommendation, with reasons, on whether the proposed program meets the Board's criteria and is of sufficient academic quality to be offered to the people of Ontario.

The Board provides the QAP with guidelines for writing the report and ensuring that the panel has considered all of the relevant standards and benchmarks.

Reviews and Recommendations to Date

Consent Holders

At the time of writing[22], PEQAB has reviewed, or is in the process of reviewing, 366 applications for the Minister's consent to offer a program, use the term university, amend an existing consent, or renew a consent. These applications are summarized in Table 2 on the following page.

Other Matters Referred to PEQAB

The Act enables the Minister to refer other matters to PEQAB for advice. In 2004, the (then) Minister asked PEQAB's advice on the terms and conditions of consent, which require that consent holders deliver a program in accord with what was recommended by PEQAB. The Minster specifically asked for a recommendation on the kinds of changes to a program that can be made by the applicant during the life of a consent and the kind of changes that should require an amendment to the consent. PEQAB's advice was incorporated into the Minister's Standard Terms and Conditions of Consent, and into policy decisions on when a new consent is required.

[22] December 6, 2009.

Table 2: Number of applications that PEQAB has reviewed, or is in the process of reviewing:

Type of Institution	# of Institutions	# of Completed Applications	# of Withdrawn Applications	# of Applications under Review	# of total Applications Received
Private	23	41	9	8	**58**
Public In-Province	7	80	2	0	**82**
Public Out-of-Province	9	22	4	13	**39**
CAAT	21	172	1	14	**187**
Total	60	**315**	**16**	**35**	**366**

Chapter 3: PEQAB Criteria and Processes

PEQAB Processes

When an application has been referred to PEQAB by the Minister, the application proceeds through a series of steps. In general ministry staff determine whether the application is complete and includes:

- the required fee ($5000);
- the applicant's acknowledgement of and agreement to the parameters of consent, and permission to verify any aspect of the application; and
- a submission according to the PEQAB *Guidelines*[23].

When an application has been referred to PEQAB:

1. *Secretariat*

- reviews the application and confirms its completeness; identifies issues for the Board's; and identifies potential expert reviewers for assessment panel;
- posts the application on the PEQAB web site and provides a 10-week period for the review of comments from the public[24]; and
- receives any stakeholder comment and forwards to assessors and applicant for response.

2. *PEQAB*

- considers application and any matters requiring additional scrutiny;
- determines assessment strategy; and
- appoints and instructs the ORP and QAP (for private applicants) or the QAP only (for public and CAAT applicants).

3. *ORP*

- the panel of expert reviewers prepares a report against Board guidelines and submits it to the secretariat.

[23] This may be determined in consultation with the PEQAB secretariat.
[24] This was a 30-day period; however, the OCAV requested a longer review period. For full programs, the period was increased to 10 weeks. Applications for program changes are posted for the 30-day period.

4. *Secretariat*

- reviews the report for conformity to *Report Guidelines* and instructions from the Board;
- forwards the report to the applicant for response; and
- receives the applicant's response and seeks clarification when required.

5. *PEQAB*

- considers the ORP report and the applicant's response to the matters raised in the ORP report;
- requests more information if needed or refers response of applicant back to the panel for additional comment; and
- if satisfied with the organization review, proceeds to Quality Assessment.

6. *QAP*

- the panel of expert reviewers prepares a report against Board guidelines and submits it to the secretariat.

7. *Secretariat*

- reviews it for conformity to *Report Guidelines* and instructions from the Board;
- forwards the report to the applicant for response; and
- receives the applicant's response and seeks clarification when required.

8. *PEQAB*

- considers the reports from expert panel(s);
- requests more information if needed or refers response of applicant back to the panel for additional comment;
- considers the application, reports from expert panel(s), the responses of the applicant to the panel(s) report, stakeholder comment, commitments made by the applicant, and any additional information; and
- formulates its recommendation to the Minister.

Once the PEQAB recommendation has been provided, ministry staff identify any financial or policy considerations for the Minister's consideration. Finally, the Minister considers the recommendation of PEQAB and any financial or policy considerations that may flow from the granting of consent, and makes the decision to grant or deny consent.[25]

PEQAB Criteria

PEQAB has the authority to establish the criteria for its reviews, subject to two restrictions: criteria are required to

- be in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions; and
- comply with such policy directions as may be given by the Minister.

PEQAB has published criteria for the review of organizations, programs, the use of "university" or "university college", and guidelines for nomenclature. Its criteria are published in its *Handbooks* and *Guidelines* for CAATs, public, and private applicants.

[25] In all but six cases, the Minister has made the decision regarding consent that was recommended by the Board.

In brief, PEQAB subjects private applicants[26] to two reviews: Organization and Program. These normally occur in sequence, but may, at the request of the applicant, proceed concurrently.

The overarching goals of the Organization Review are to assess the applicant's "organizational character and student protection policies and practices". PEQAB has eight standards against which it assesses the organization:

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

For each standard, the Board identifies benchmarks that identify the threshold the applicant must meet to achieve the standard, and/or the evidence required to support a demonstration that the applicant can meet or exceed the standard.

PEQAB Standards for Program Review: All Organizations[27]

All applicants, public[28], private, and CAATs, are subject to a program review. The overarching goals of the Program Review are to assess academic rigour of the program, its degree level, and the applicant's capacity to deliver the program. PEQAB has eight standards against which it assesses programs proposed by public organizations:

1. *Degree Level*
2. *Admissions, Promotion, and Graduation*
3. *Program Content*
4. *Program Delivery*
5. *Capacity to Deliver*
6. *Credential Recognition*
7. *Regulation and Accreditation*
8. *Program Evaluation*

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[26] Pursuant to *Ontario Regulation 279/02: Consents under the Act*, private applicants are those that are "not a public institution".

[27] The program review standards vary slightly among the handbooks for the public, private, and CAAT applicants. Organization review requirements that are essential to the program (Academic Freedom and Integrity, and Student Protection) are included in the program review criteria for public and CAAT applicants because these applicants are not subject to an organization review. In addition, there are some program criteria that apply only to CAAT applicants as a result of a directive to PEQAB from a former Minister (that there is a demonstrated economic need for the program, that the raise in credential from a diploma to degree is warranted, and that the programs do not duplicate those offered by the public university system).

[28] Pursuant to *Ontario Regulation 279/02: Consents under the Act*, public applicants are those that are

- receive regular and ongoing operating funds from a government for the purpose of providing post-secondary education;
- governed by a body the majority of whose members are appointed by elected or government-appointed officials; or
- listed in the Schedule to the regulation;

For each program standard, the Board specifies benchmarks that identify the threshold the applicant must meet to achieve the standard, and/or the evidence required to support a demonstration that the applicant can meet or exceed the standard.

Additional requirements for CAATs

The Minister has provided policy direction to the Board on the CAAT degrees. The policy direction, communicated when the degrees were introduced in 2001, included that:

- the degrees offer an education of sufficient breadth and rigour to be comparable to similar programs offered by institutions that meet recognized standards in Ontario or in other jurisdictions;
- the colleges have the capacity to achieve the intended educational outcomes;
- there is an economic need for the programs;
- the programs not duplicate programs normally offered by universities in Ontario, taking into account both program content and delivery;
- the programs include an appropriate work experience;
- the Board determine whether the college's proposal to offer an applied degree results in the unwarranted raising of credentials in a particular field, or among similar programs across the college system.

Accordingly, PEQAB has two additional standards for CAATs: *Non-Duplication* and *Economic Need* which incorporate the policy direction.

As part of the Board's self-study, it has undertaken a review of its criteria. To date, the Board has considered its requirements for: program nomenclature; institutional and program evaluation; internet delivery; ethical standards; honorary doctorates; program advisory committees; program content standard; breadth; and the term "university" and "university college".

Recommendations: ***That the Board***

- ***undertake a comprehensive review of all of its criteria to ensure it reflects standards recognized in Ontario and elsewhere; and***
- ***review and release new versions of its Handbooks for Applicants; Submission Guidelines; Quality Assessor and Organization Reviewer Report Guidelines.***

Chapter 4: Transparency of Criteria, Procedures, and Activities

The Board has an obligation to be transparent about its criteria and processes to the public, applicants for the Minister's consent, and other stakeholders.

Obligations

The Board's obligation to be transparent derives from three sources:

- ToR between the PEQAB Chair and the Minister;
- International agreements (NAFTA, and the Lisbon Convention); and
- Principles of administrative fairness.

Terms of Reference

The Board's mandate, operational, administrative, financial, auditing, and reporting relationships and arrangements are governed by a ToR between the PEQAB Chair and the Minister.

Among the "outcomes or benefits to the Minister and clients of the Board" identified in the ToR, the Board is expected to "[develop] and [disseminate] information on the Board and its operations, including but not limited to a website". Other requirements specified in the ToR relevant to the issue of transparency and public disclosure are as follows:

- the Manager[29] of the Board's secretariat "communicates on the role of the Board and its operations to prospective applicants, stakeholders and others", and "ensures that the Board is fair, transparent, efficient, and credible";
- "following the Minister's decision and announcement on an application, the Board will post on its website the Board's recommendation and report to the Minister, including any reports[30] from experts appointed by the Board to review the application"; and
- "the Board will submit its annual report to the Minister within 90 days of fiscal year end[31]. The Minister will make the annual report public." [32]

International Agreements

NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is an agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States to implement free trade in goods and services. The agreement applies to trade in education. One of its provisions, transparency and fairness, requires that all laws, rules, regulations, policies, procedures, administrative rulings, and other measures are made public. Pursuant to NAFTA, all the criteria and processes that pertain to the review of applications for consent (as well as the grounds for granting denying, suspending or revoking a consent) should be available to all applicants. That is, the "rules of the game" must be transparent and known to the parties from the start.

The Lisbon Convention

In 1990 Canada ratified the *Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*. One of the terms of the convention is that signatories publish information with respect to the legally authorized credentials offered in its jurisdiction. As an obligation of ratification, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada established the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC). The information maintained there is useful to the governments, employers, students, and postsecondary institutions of Canadian jurisdictions and other nations as they struggle to make judgments about the legitimacy of Canadian credentials.

It was hoped that such national lists provided by the signatories to the Lisbon Convention would simplify the level of analysis required in order to accept or reject foreign credentials, but such has not proven to be the case. Because there are countries that are known to routinely provide legal authority to degree mills, government-sponsored lists are no longer regarded as sufficient in and of themselves to determine the legitimacy of credentials. Increasingly, interested parties now consider both the issue of legal authority and the mechanisms of quality assurance in place in the jurisdiction that issued the credential. The

[29] While the ToR charges the Director of the secretariat with these responsibilities, the responsibilities of the Director were assigned to the Manager when the position of the Director was eliminated in 2008.
[30] The Board does not post these reports.
[31] Fiscal year end is March 30th of each year.
[32] The Board publishes the annual report on its web site.

Board's transparency in this regard contributes to the protection of the reputation of an Ontario degree.

Principles of Administrative Fairness

The principles of administrative fairness require that all institutions be treated in a fair and consistent manner. Transparency of the Board's operations, procedures, and criteria is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring fairness.

Publicizing the Board's Requirements and Operations

The Board's main vehicles for public disclosure are the PEQAB web site and its publications (including handbooks, submission guidelines, and annual reports).

PEQAB Web Site

The PEQAB web site publishes:

- Board member biographies;
- the Board's mandate, meeting procedures, and policies;
- publications (handbooks and guidelines for applicants; annual reports);
- Information about applications under review and completed;
- overview of the consent process;
- information about relevant legislation, regulation, and pertinent contextual information (e.g., the *Minister's Guidelines and Directives for Applying for a Ministerial Consent*);
- role of the secretariat;
- Frequently Asked Questions;
- contact information;
- any other information pertinent to applicants, consent holders and quality assessors, such as policy decisions that have been made in relation to the PSECE Act; and
- links to national and international quality assurance bodies.

The Board has made several improvements to its web site since its inception, as a consequence of annual surveys and other feedback. To date, there have been three major versions of the web site, each with a different corporate image. The most recent, launched in January 2009, incorporated feedback received from applicants, assessors and ministry staff.

Publications

Publications currently posted on the Board's web site include:

- Annual Reports;
- *Handbooks* and *Submission Guidelines* for private, public, and CAAT applicants;
- *Quality Assessment Panel Report Guidelines and Workbooks*;
- *Organization Review Panel Workbook for Private Organizations*;
- the renewal handbook used by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology to prepare for renewal of CAAT consents in 2006-07;
- *Application for Renewal of Consent*; a renewal handbook for Public Institutions, Private Institutions, Ontario Colleges; and
- *Self-Evaluation Process: A Guide*.

Annual Reports

Pursuant to the ToR, the Chair of the Board submits an annual report to the Minister, which at a minimum will contain the following information:

- discussion of performance targets achieved/not achieved and of action to be taken;[33]
- analysis of the Board's operational performance;[34]
- names of appointees, including when each was first appointed and when the current term of appointees expires;
- a report on expenditures attributed to Board members; and
- a summary of applications received, pending and approved.

In addition, the ToR commits the Board to submit its annual report to the Minister, who will make the annual report public by June 30th. [35]

Except for performance targets, the Board has met its obligation for content. In addition to the required information, the Board publishes the Board's mandate and commitment to quality and transparency, and information about members of the secretariat in all annual reports. Most annual reports have also included highlights and/or summaries of the annual survey. [36]

Handbooks and Guidelines

The secretariat routinely solicits and receives feedback on the Board's handbooks and guidelines. In response to feedback, and as a consequence of the evolution of the Board's criteria and practices, these publications (for new programs) have undergone at least three significant revisions since 2001.[37] At the conclusion of the internal review, these handbooks and guidelines and the publications pertaining to renewal, will in all likelihood be released in a new edition.

Board Recommendations, Expert Reports, and Minister's Consents

As per the ToR, "the Board will post on its website the Board's recommendation and report to the Minister, including any reports from experts appointed by the Board to review the application". The Board posts its recommendations to the Minister and the Minister decisions on consent on the PEQAB web site. In consultation and with the agreement of the Minister[38], however, the Board does not publish reports on applications from its expert reviewers or the Board's background reports to the Minister (in which it summarizes the expert reports and other pertinent finding of the Board's review). The Minister agreed that publication of these materials might:

- jeopardize the integrity of the expert reports to the Board (experts may experience pressure to be less frank in their reports were they to be published); and
- undermine public confidence in some of the province's public institutions, as the majority of applications for Ministerial consent are submitted by CAATs.

Recommendation: ***That the Board develop an explicit communications and publications strategy.***

[33] The Board does not set performance targets.

[34] Information about operational performance that the Board discloses includes:
- Results from an annual survey completed by applicants, consent holders and assessors;
- A message from the Chair and the Director, the focus of which varies from year to year;
- Information about geographical origins of applications and assessors;
- Names of all quality assessors, their credentials, and institutional affiliations; and
- Data on Board recommendations made during the fiscal year. (Data for the 2007/2008 fiscal year were not available).

[35] Deadlines have not been met since the 2005/2006 publication.

[36] No survey was undertaken in 2007/2008.

[37] It is not possible to state how many revisions or to capture the extent of revisions from version to version. The record of publications is incomplete in this regard.

[38] Former Minister Diane Cunningham.

Chapter 5: Criteria for Continuous Quality Assurance of PEQAB

There is substantial and increasing discussion concerning continuous quality assurance of quality assurance agencies themselves. It is regarded as good practice for quality assurance agencies to review their missions and objectives; the efficiency and effectiveness of their approach to quality assurance; the consistency of implementation of criteria and procedures; and to ensure that criteria and procedures remain relevant to institutional, agency, and where appropriate, government, objectives.

The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education articulates, through the INQAAHE *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance*, standards and processes that are relevant to internal and external reviews of quality assurance agencies. As per INQAAHE requirements, an internal or external review should determine whether the quality assurance agency:

- "[H]as a system of continuous quality assurance of its own activities that emphasises flexibility in response to the changing nature of higher education, the effectiveness of its operations, and its contribution towards the achievement of its objectives;
- [C]onducts internal self-review of its own activities, including consideration of its own effects and value. The review includes data and analysis; [and]
- [I]s subject to external reviews at regular intervals. There is evidence that any required actions are implemented and disclosed."

According to the *Guidelines*, sources of evidence that the benchmarks have been achieved would include:

1. Quality assurance policy/system/activities/plans;
2. Internal feedback;
3. Self reviews (such as the current self study);
4. External feedback from institutions or other stakeholders;
5. Reports from external reviews; and
6. Use of feedback from reviews for improvement.

The following sections discuss the Board's practices and policies for continuous quality assurance against INQAAHE expectations.

Quality Assurance Policies, Systems, Activities, Plans

The Board does not have a comprehensive strategy for its own continuous quality assurance. As will be described in a later section, the Board currently has two primary vehicles for continuous improvement: annual surveys and informal feedback. The Board measures itself annually, via a survey of applicants and assessors, on its expected outcomes; the appropriateness and clarity of its standards and benchmarks; and the level of satisfaction with the review process, the secretariat, and the QAP. The secretariat also receives informal feedback from applicants and assessors on a regular basis.

Recommendations: ***That the Board***
Develop a comprehensive strategy for assuring its own continuous quality; and
Develop a standard for ongoing quality assurance, including objectives and expected outcomes, against which it can review itself.

Internal Feedback

Anecdotally it can be reported that the secretariat receives regular feedback from Ministry staff about PEQAB's operations, procedures, and criteria. With the exception of the 2009 survey, there has neither been a systematic collection of internal feedback, nor documentation of the Board's response to that feedback.

Recommendation: ***That the Board include, as part of its comprehensive quality assurance strategy, a requirement to collect, track, and respond to internal feedback.***

Self-Reviews

The Board has not conducted a previous comprehensive and systematic internal review. The 2009 self study is the first of its kind.

Recommendation: ***That a comprehensive internal review be an explicit requirement of the Board's comprehensive strategy for continuous quality assurance.***

External Feedback from Institutions and other Stakeholders

Since 2002, the Board has been conducting annual surveys of applicants, consent holders, and assessors, measuring an increasing number of aspects of its activities.

Performance Measures

The ToR with the Minister identify the Board's performance measures. Performance measures identified in the ToR include the "level of satisfaction among applicants for degree-granting status, existing degree-granting institutions, students and potential students, international jurisdictions, and taxpayers that the Board's:

- assessment standards are rigorous and academically sound;
- assessors are recognized as qualified to assess applications against the Board's standards; [and]
- review process is fair and transparent."

The Board's multi-year targets identified in the ToR state that "[t]he majority of interested parties will state the Board's assessors are qualified … [and] the Board's process is fair and transparent". In addition, the *Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive* obligates the Agency's Chair to "develop performance measures and targets for the agency", and to "monitor the performance of the agency".

The surveys are the sole means for determining whether the performance measures and multi-year targets have been achieved, and are a foundation piece of the Board's own ongoing quality assurance. To date, the annual client satisfaction surveys have been mainly driven by the Board's performance measures as outlined in the ToR. They could, however, also measure other matters (such as the applicants' and the assessors' knowledge about the roles of the Board, the secretariat, and other quality assurance agencies). In addition, key Ministry staff, who have relationships with PEQAB, and current and previous Board members could be included among survey respondents.

Survey Procedure

There has been procedural variation among the surveys, for example, in the groups of respondents; the time of year when the survey was conducted; and the ways in which questions were structured.

- Respondents have consistently included applicants, potential applicants, and assessors. In some years, unsuccessful applicants were included in the survey. Since 2005, only those individuals and institutions that submitted or reviewed an application in the previous fiscal year were invited to respond.
- The time of year when the surveys were conducted has varied, from spring in some years, to fall or summer in others. The time of year may have an impact on response rates, particularly, if surveys are sent out during holiday periods, or at the beginning of a semester.
- The surveys have asked all respondents to comment on and rate the Board's assessment standards, fairness, and transparency; the quality of assessors; and the secretariat staff professionalism. In addition to the preceding core matters addressed in all surveys, feedback has also been intermittently sought on the following issues:
  - any major challenges with the review;
  - recommendations for assessor workshops; newsletter and international conference topics; and revisions to the quality assessor report guidelines;
  - any benefits derived from their experience as assessor that had an impact on the quality of academic and administrative aspects of their home institutions; and any other valuable learning experience from their role as an assessor;
  - estimates for the costs and the staff involved in the development of an application; and
  - recommendations for the improvement of the review process, the web site, and the amount and nature of feedback from the secretariat.

Information Management

Because the records are incomplete, it is difficult to use the surveys as a tool to accurately assess the Board's performance over the past seven years. There has not been a consistent information protocol implemented as part of a comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy. Survey data are presented in all annual reports (except for 2007/08); however, the responses to the surveys, the raw data, and detailed analysis of the data have not been preserved for all surveys.

Currently, some information about survey findings is based on corporate memory and partial information that was available through survey reports and other sources. To populate the appended table, for example, data from the 2004 survey were drawn from the Board's annual report, as it was the sole source of information about the survey findings.

In addition, the analyses of the survey findings appear to be limited. Few records are available concerning suggestions made by respondents for improvements to the Board's criteria, processes, and publications. There are no reports available for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 survey, and those reports that are available (e.g., for 2007 and 2008) do not contain a conclusion, nor do they detail possible improvements. Moreover, the publication of the results have frequently been limited to extracting testimonials or high level messaging communicated through the annual reports.

Despite incomplete records and the variations addressed above, there is some indication that the overall level of client satisfaction is high. For example, since 2006, over 90% of respondents answered that that the Board's standards and benchmarks are appropriate and

understandable; and reflect the most essential information. Consistently over 90% of respondents find that the secretariat staff is competent, respectful, and helpful; and are satisfied with the feedback from the secretariat regarding completeness of the application, the status of the application, and other issues. In addition, most applicants found suggestions of the assessment panel worth implementing, while assessors were mostly satisfied with the quality of discussions with the other panel members, quality assurance panel reports, and responses from the applicant. Considering all surveys, the average satisfaction rate for performance is 87% for the Board, 92% for the secretariat, and 91% for the QAP. Respondents to the annual survey have, however, also consistently identified the clarity of handbooks, submission guidelines, and the Board's procedures as areas that could be improved.

While formal records in this regard are not kept, there are a number of examples showing that the Board is responsive to the suggestions received through its surveys and informal feedback. Based on feedback received through the annual surveys, the handbooks and guidelines have undergone significant revisions. The Board has made several improvements to its web site since its inception, as a consequence of annual surveys and other feedback. Most recently, a new web site was launched in January 2009, incorporating feedback received through a survey from applicants, assessors and Ministry staff. In addition, several topics for a quality assurance conference were solicited in the 2006 survey, and the INQAAHE conference themes were based on these suggestions. It appears, however, as though several suggestions from respondents, including some that reoccurred several times, have not been addressed. For example, the assessor forms have, been identified in the 2006, 2007, and 2008 survey as being "unduly complex and detailed", and it was suggested that the forms be simplified. In addition, respondents to the 2006, 2007, and 2008 survey described the standards and benchmarks as "too detailed" and "containing overlap", and suggested that the standards and benchmarks be abridged and made more comprehensible.

In summary, several shortcomings in the present survey strategy have been identified:

- surveys are underutilized, and limited to assessing the Board's performance measures as outlined in the ToR;
- there are variations in the:
  - composition of respondents, and the experiences respondents are surveyed on;
  - time of year when the surveys are conducted; and
  - questions asked (from year to year, and from respondent to respondent);
  - which makes it is difficult to generalize the experience reflected in the results to the boarder population of Board stakeholders, and to compare results from year to year.
- incomplete records of the surveys, the results obtained from them, or improvements made in response to them.

Apart from performance measures as specified in the ToR, there are no formulated goals and objectives for the survey process, and, hence, no survey strategy based upon these goals. Currently, there is also no strategy for including questions that are specific to a certain fiscal year, and there are no established benchmarks for evaluating changes in overall performance over time.

Recommendations: ***That***

- ***the annual survey be aligned with a more comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy;***
- ***the annual survey be administered and analyzed by an independent party; and***
- ***a strategy and procedure be developed for reporting survey findings, responding to issues identified by respondents, and preserving these for the record.***

2009 Comprehensive Survey

In 2009, as part of this internal review, a comprehensive survey was undertaken by a third party. The survey consisted of two main components:

- Qualitative interviews with key ministry staff who had responsibilities for or relationships with PEQAB; current and previous Board members; and unsuccessful applicants; and
- A quantitative survey of consent holders, assessors, and quality assurance agencies in other provinces.

Provided below is a summary of some of the survey findings.[39]

Qualitative Interviews

As part of the qualitative survey, key ministry staff; current and previous Board members; and unsuccessful applicants were interviewed about their involvement with PEQAB and the secretariat, and suggestions for improvements.

Ministry Staff

In addition to the matters identified above, key Ministry staff were questioned about:

- Their knowledge of PEQAB's mandate;
- The clarity of PEQAB's mandate, and any additional information needed regarding PEQAB's operations;
- The clarity of the secretariat's role and services; and
- The evolution of processes and criteria.

Results

- Staff felt relatively confident that the mandate of the Board was clear to them, but also that the Board's mandate was not always clear to stakeholders, particularly for out-of-province and private institutions;
- Some staff also felt that there was a lack of clarity about the roles of the Board and the secretariat; and
- Most staff felt that the emphasis might have moved toward trying to improve the efficiency of the process, and determining which institutions might require more rigor and which less.

Current and Previous PEQAB Members

In addition to the questions about the secretariat, and suggestions for improvements, current and previous PEQAB members were also asked to comment on:

- Recruitment to the PEQAB;
- Orientation processes and materials;
- Board processes, process gaps and improvements, and comparisons of other boards to PEQAB; and
- The role of assessors, and quality of assessment reports.

Results

- Most current and previous PEQAB members stated that they were recruited through existing Ministerial or academic connections;
- Most PEQAB members felt generally positive about the orientation material; however, many found it somewhat dense, hard to search, and not detailed enough with regards to

[39] It should be noted that the survey reports almost 200 pages of results.

their actual role; and suggested that the orientation for new PEQAB members should be more structured, comprehensive, and include both written and verbal briefings;

- All PEQAB members felt:
  - that the processes have remained fairly consistent. Suggestions for process improvements were made, particularly with respect to renewal of consent; openness to innovative programs; and non-urban environments; and
  - they understood the roles of the assessors and most were generally satisfied with assessor reports; and
- PEQAB members expressed that the current secretariat has provided process improvements, was seen to be extremely efficient, and to be providing excellent services. The lack of sufficient resources for the secretariat was, however, identified as an ongoing concern.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Lastly, unsuccessful applicants were questioned about:

- Their knowledge of, and overall satisfaction with PEQAB's processes;
- Their views about application processes; and
- Suggestions for improvements.

Results

- Most unsuccessful applicants correctly understood the role of the Board, but the interaction between the QAP and the Board was less clear;
- There was some concern that private institutions are being scrutinized more than other applicants; and
- It was suggested that assessors could be more open to alternative service delivery solutions and more aware of special circumstances specific to some applications, especially for private institutions, and remote areas.

Quantitative Surveys

Consent Holders and Assessors

The quantitative surveys asked consent holders and assessors questions pertaining to:

- Their knowledge about parties responsible for the application and review process;
- Their satisfaction with the secretariat;
- The clarity, consistency, appropriateness, and fairness of the Board's standards and Benchmarks;
- The relevance, clarity, and usefulness of handbooks and guidelines, or (as appropriate)
- the QAP report guidelines and workbooks;
- Their satisfaction with specific elements of the review process, such as quality of the report, or the site visit; and the benefit of the review process to institutions; and
- Any suggestions for the standards and benchmarks; the review process; and the Board's and secretariat's communication, processes, and procedures.

In addition, consent holders were asked about the amount and type of applications they had submitted; other quality assessment agencies they had used; and the knowledge they have about the roles of the QAP. The assessor survey, on the other hand, also included questions related to:

- Their background; the amount and type of applications previously reviewed for the Board; and assessments they had conducted for other quality assurance agencies;
- Any orientation or briefing they had received;
- Their knowledge about Board materials used by applicants to prepare applications; and
- Their awareness of other quality assurance agencies.

Results (Consent Holders)

- There appeared to be a lack of clarity regarding the roles of various players in the review process;
- The majority of consent holders:
  - were satisfied with the secretariat in all respects;
  - were positive about the standards and benchmarks, with the exception of procedures for renewal;
  - expressed that the handbooks and guidelines were clear, but could use improvement; and
  - were generally satisfied with the review. One area of dissatisfaction was the time it took to review applications; and
- Many consent holders suggested a simplification and streamlining of the consent processes, especially for renewal of consent, was desirable.

Results (Assessors)

- Assessors appeared to be clear about the roles of various players in the review process;
- There were high ratings of services of the secretariat;
- Assessors found the report guidelines and workbook to be clear and easy to use;
- Perceptions of the site visits and the review process were generally favourable; and
- It was suggested that the orientation for new assessors should be more structured, comprehensive, and include both written and verbal briefings.

Quality Assurance Agencies

The survey of quality assurance agencies included questions about:

- Their composition, recruitment practices, and responsibilities in the quality assurance processes;
- The type, number, and outcome of applications reviewed;
- Any variations regarding the treatment of different applicant institutions;
- Their knowledge about PEQAB; and
- Their interaction with other quality assurance agencies.

Results

- There was a high degree of overlap between the different quality assurance agencies in their roles and responsibilities in the quality assurance process;
- All quality assurance agencies had looked at more than ten applications in the past year, most of which were approved;
- Although all quality assurance agencies were aware of PEQAB, no one was familiar enough to be able to make specific comparisons; and
- These quality assurance agencies seem to be more involved in national and international exposure through conferences than PEQAB.

Recommendations: ***That***

- ***the 2009 Comprehensive Survey be used to inform the design of the annual survey; and***
- ***a comprehensive survey be conducted every five to seven years as part of the Board's ongoing survey strategy.***

Reports from External Reviews

Most strategies for comprehensive and continuous quality assurance emphasize two components; a self-assessment, based on a set of predetermined criteria; and an external review carried out by a team of experts.

The evaluation of quality assurance agencies has gained increasing interest by many stakeholders; including especially by quality assurance agencies themselves as they strive to establish credibility.[40] Quality assurance agencies that are members of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), for example, require a regular positive external evaluation in order to maintain recognition as a full member.[41]

To date the Board has not been externally evaluated. External evaluation is a final and important aspect of a continuous quality assurance strategy. To conform to best practices; to maintain its national leadership in quality assurance; and to ensure that Board continues to implement its standards and benchmarks in a fair, full, and consistent manner, the Board intends to subject itself to an external evaluation at the conclusion of the internal review.

Recommendation: ***That the Board include in its comprehensive strategy for ongoing quality assurance a requirement for cyclical external evaluation.***

Use of Feedback from Reviews for Improvement

As noted in the previous section, the Board has not been yet externally evaluated.

Recommendation: ***That the Board include in its comprehensive strategy for ongoing quality assurance a requirement for the use of feedback from its external evaluations.***

Chapter 6: PEQAB's Contributions to Quality Assurance

PEQAB has played a leadership role in quality assurance in Ontario; Canada; and internationally. Ontario, through PEQAB, is a leader within Canada on setting the standards for the quality assurance of degree programs and institutions. PEQAB introduced the first qualifications framework in Canada, which has been adopted with minor modifications by Ontario's publicly assisted universities, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, as well as the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Its program and organization review criteria have been adopted by Degree Quality Assessment Board, and the standards articulated in the *CMEC Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* have their origins in PEQAB standards. Internationally, PEQAB is an active participant in the INQAAHE.

Qualifications Frameworks

PEQAB introduced the first qualifications framework in Canada. Qualifications Frameworks are descriptions of the generic knowledge and skills each credential/ qualification (e.g., certificate, diploma, bachelor degree, etc.) is intended to achieve. They serve a number of purposes (described below), including their original and primary purpose as a standard of quality assurance. Many countries, including those of the European Union, Australia, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Ireland, South Africa, Singapore, and Russia have or are developing qualifications frameworks.

In 2002, PEQAB began assessing applications from the CAATs and other applicants to offer

[40] For example, a pre-conference workshop entitled "External review of quality assurance agencies" took a place at the INQAAHE Conference held in Toronto in 2007.
[41] INQAAHE does not have this requirement.

degree programs. Aware of its legislative mandate to use criteria for the assessment of programs that are "in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions", and aware that qualifications frameworks were being used increasingly in international quality assurance, PEQAB recognized the need to include a qualifications framework among its criteria for the review of degree programs. While it was developing a distinctly Ontario framework, PEQAB first used the Quality Assurance Framework of the Quality Assurance Agency of the United Kingdom.

In 2003, PEQAB released its degree qualifications framework. The framework was based on the best features of those frameworks available internationally, with revisions to suit the Ontario context. The PEQAB degree framework has been subsequently adopted, with minor modifications, by:

- UPRAC, the subcommittee of the COU responsible for auditing the policies and procedures in place Ontario public universities for the review of undergraduate programs (described earlier);
- OCGS the subcommittee of the COU, responsible for reviewing Masters and Doctoral programs offered by Ontario public universities (described earlier);[42]
- British Columbia's DQAB, responsible for the review of degree programs offered by public universities and colleges, and private and out-of-province public institutions[43];
- the MPHEC, responsible for the review of degree programs offered by public universities in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, and private degree granting organizations wishing to offer degrees in New Brunswick; and the PEQAB degree standards were the origin of the
- CMEC *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* (see below).

The PEQAB secretariat led the ministry initiative to develop a framework of all postsecondary qualifications offered in Ontario. In September 2007, Ontario released the Ontario Qualifications Framework. It is the only framework in Canada that includes all postsecondary education credentials from apprenticeships to degrees (other provincial frameworks, based on the PEQAB degree framework, include degree credentials only). The developments of similar frameworks that include all postsecondary qualifications are being considered by the governments of British Columbia and Alberta.

Like similar frameworks found in other jurisdictions, the Ontario Qualifications Framework contains the generic knowledge and skills that each postsecondary education credential/ qualification (e.g., certificate, diploma, bachelor degree, etc.) is intended to achieve.

All degrees offered by Ontario publicly funded universities or pursuant to a consent of the Minister of Training, College and Universities are assessed against the degree standards articulated in the framework.[44] All agencies responsible for the review of degree programs in

[42] There were two modifications made to PEQAB degree standards by the OCGS and UPRAC. 1. Where PEQAB had two categories of expectations of knowledge and skills for Depth and Breadth of Knowledge (Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Inside the Field of Study; and Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Outside the Field of Study), COU collapsed these categories into one: Depth and Breadth of Knowledge. The liberal arts, or breadth component, became a benchmark within the new category, rather than a separate expectation at the category level. 2. Two other PEQAB categories were collapsed. The expectations in one category (Level of Analytical Skill) were included in another (Application of Knowledge). PEQAB re-adopted the standards as modified by OCGS and UPRAC.

[43] The PEQAB degree framework that was adopted by DQAB was the original PEQAB framework. PEQAB's framework, as indicated above, has been revised since that time.

[44] The only degrees offered in Ontario that are not assessed against the framework are those offered by private institutions pursuant to an act of the legislature. There is no requirement that degrees offered pursuant to a private act of the legislature be assessed against the framework or any other quality assurance

Ontario use the qualifications framework as a component of the review of programs:

- PEQAB for review of all applications for consent to offer all or part of a Bachelor, Masters, or Doctoral program
- UPRAC, the subcommittee of the COU responsible for auditing the policies and procedures in place Ontario public universities for the review of undergraduate programs; and
- OCGS, the subcommittee of the COU, responsible for reviewing Masters and Doctoral programs offered by Ontario public universities.

Council of Ministers of Education Canada Quality Assurance Subcommittee

As described in more detail in a later section, the PEQAB secretariat, along with other members of Ontario ministry staff, has been an active participant in the CMEC QAS. In consultation with provincial and national stakeholders, the QAS drafted the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The standards for the review of programs and organizations and the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework, as indicated earlier, have their origins in the standards of Ontario's PEQAB.

In addition to Part (c), which continues as an active aspect of the QAS mandate and is discussed below on the section pertaining to national accreditation, the QAS also:

- discusses issues arising from the implementation of the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada;*
- suggests ways to increase confidence in each jurisdiction's quality assurance system and improve mutual recognition of credits and credentials between jurisdictions in Canada;
- monitors developments in quality assurance in other countries and makes suggestions to maintain the currency of the ministerial statement;
- promotes discussions of quality assurance issues and good practices of quality assurance across the Canadian higher education field;
- works closely with such stakeholders as the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and representatives of public and private degree-granting institutions operating in Canada;
- undertakes research reports; and
- reports annually to ministers and deputy ministers through the Postsecondary Assistant Deputy Ministers (PSADM) Committee.

CMEC Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada (2007)

In April 2007, CMEC announced the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* which contains degree-level learning outcome standards and quality assurance procedures reflecting best practice in Canada and abroad. The statement contains three elements:

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

The degree framework and program and organization standards are based on PEQAB standards.

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criteria. For a detailed discussion of this matter, see the section titled "Excluding Private Providers: Considerations".

The aims of the framework and standards, identified on the CMEC web site, are to:

- "provide assurance to the public, students, employers, and postsecondary institutions at home and abroad that new programs and new institutions of higher learning meet appropriate standards and that performance against the standards will be assessed by appropriate means;
- provide a context for identifying how degree credentials compare in level and standard to those in other jurisdictions, with a view to facilitating the search for continuous improvement, the education and training of an internationally competitive workforce, and international recognition of the quality of Canadian credentials;
- improve student access to further study at the postsecondary level by establishing a degree-level standards context in which policies on the transfer of credits and credential recognition may be developed and, in fairness to students who choose non-traditional providers, to focus discussion of credit transfer and credential recognition on the academic standards that the programs involved have met."

In addition to Ontario, five provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) have implemented the CMEC Statement.

Recommendation: ***That PEQAB lead discussions with Canadian counterparts to establish a Canadian Quality Assurance Network.***

Participation in the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies of Higher Education

Dale Patterson, the Chair of PEQAB, is a one of eleven Directors of the INQAAHE. He is the sole Canadian member of the INQAAHE network. INQAAHE collects and disseminates information on current and developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement and maintenance of quality in higher education.

In April 2007, PEQAB and the Government of Ontario co-hosted the INQAAHE conference in Toronto, April 2007. The conference was attended by 265 registrants representing 57 countries. Ninety-four different delegates from 32 countries made presentations at the conference topics relevant to the conference themes:

- Outcomes and Theory of Quality Assurance;
- Quality Assurance and Accountability of Quality Assurance Agencies;
- Legitimacy and Efficiency of National Systems of Quality Assurance; and
- International Quality Assurance.

The INQAAHE conference coincided with the release of the CMEC *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*, and it was distributed widely.

INQAAHE has a number of regional associations:

- Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)
- European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA)
- Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network)
- Iberoamerican Quality Network
- Eurasian Education Quality Assurance Network
- Association of African Networks
  African Quality Assurance Network
- Association of Accrediting Agencies in Canada (AAAC)
- The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE)

Despite the variability in quality assurance practices among provinces in Canada, and among states in the United States, there is no representation from North American degree quality assurance agencies among the regional associations. The need for regional networks to share best practices, harmonise standards (where appropriate), and enhance credit and credential recognition is pressing. The need is all the more pressing in Ontario, where PEQAB is obligated by legislation to establish criteria that reflect standards recognized here and elsewhere.

Collaboration with other Quality Assurance Agencies

The Board strives, within fiscal and resource constraints, to maintain close collaborative relationships with other quality assurance agencies. The INQAAHE identifies activities, through the INQAAHE *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance*, relevant to collaboration between quality assurance agencies. According to the *Guidelines*, indicators of effective collaboration include staff exchanges; reviews of decisions; and joint projects.

The Board operates in the context of a national and international dialogue about quality assurance standards and practices. Since its inception, the PEQAB secretariat has been engaged in on-going discussions with other quality assurance bodies in Canada, including:

- British Columbia's Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB);
- Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC); and
- The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC);

as well as ministry officials responsible for degree legislation in all provinces and territories.

In 2004, the secretariat hosted a workshop among all Canadian jurisdictions interested in degree quality assurance to share best practices and discuss challenges. At the conclusion of the first meeting, which was co-hosted by Alberta and British Columbia and attended by ministry officials in other jurisdictions, the participants agreed that they would establish a committee to monitor ongoing issues in degree quality assurance. The committee was then adopted (at the same meeting) as a Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS) of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education. The QAS now reports through the Postsecondary Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee.

The mandate given to the QAS was to consult with stakeholders and to draft

a. a degree qualifications framework describing the general learning outcome competencies expected of degree holders at each level, with a view to articulating threshold degree standards and enabling credentials to be mapped against one another;
b. standards for quality assurance reviews of sufficient rigour to generate the confidence of all stakeholders that the standards in the degree qualifications framework and any other standards for programs are met in practice; and
c. a pan-Canadian approach to the external validation of the quality of programs based on a. and b.

The QAS accomplished the mandate given in a. and b., and CMEC Ministers endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* in April 2007. The mandate given the QAS in c. was deferred, and the subcommittee was given a general mandate to monitor the degree quality assurance environment and report on developments, emerging trends, and issues.

The CMEC QAS has held one additional face-to-face meeting (in 2006) and the group meets by teleconference at least three times per year. The Chief Executive has monthly teleconferences with members of the QAS that share mutually relevant concerns (the Directors of the DQAB; CAQC, and MPHEC) to share information on developments and issues in their respective jurisdictions.

In 2008, the QAS organized a national symposium on degree quality assurance to focus discussion on important issues facing quality assurance in Canada and abroad. The symposium was an invitation-only event and attracted almost 100 representatives from various government bodies and stakeholder groups from across the country. It provided an excellent forum to explore the challenges and opportunities facing quality assurance standards and procedures, both nationally and in a global context.

Provincially, beginning in 2004, PEQAB undertook discussions with the quality assurance bodies responsible for the review of programs at Ontario publicly assisted universities: the UPRAC and OCGS. The purpose of the discussions was to assess the feasibility of harmonizing the degree standards used to review all degree credentials in the province. At the conclusion of those discussions, UPRAC and OCGS adopted, with minor revisions, the PEQAB standards.

Internationally, PEQAB has been closely involved with the work of INQAAHE. PEQAB became a member of INQAAHE in 2003, and its secretariat Director was elected to the Board of INQAAHE Directors in 2004 (to 2006). In March 2009, the PEQAB Chair was elected, for a period of two years, to the Board of Directors of INQAAHE, where he holds the position as treasurer. The Chair ran on a platform of international collaboration and harmonization, and a commitment to lead work on accreditation mills and distance education.

PEQAB, together with the Province of Ontario, hosted in 2007 the biennial conference of the INQAAHE in Toronto. The three-day INQAAHE conference in Toronto was attended by more than 250 participants from 60 countries, and covered several major themes including:

- Outcomes and Theory of Quality Assurance;
- Quality Assurance and Accountability of Quality Assurance Agencies;
- Legitimacy and Efficiency of National Systems of Quality Assurance; and
- International Quality Assurance.[45]

The PEQAB Chair and secretariat leadership have, with the exception of 2008, submitted travel requests to attend the INQAAHE conference and (and fora) each year since 2003. One such travel request has been approved.

PEQAB also maintains ties with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities that recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA conferences and seminars cover issues of central relevance to PEQAB, ranging from emerging international developments, changes in international quality assurance practices, to degree mills, accreditation mills, and private, for-profit degree organizations. The PEQAB Chair and secretariat leadership have submitted travel requests to attend the CHEA conferences and workshops since 2002 (with the exception on 2008). Two such travel requests have been approved.

[45] Five pre-conference workshops were held ranging from peer evaluation site visits to a presentation from the Word Bank on establishing regional networks of quality assurance agencies.

PEQAB's legislated mandate is to develop criteria for the review of applications that are "in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions". In order to fulfil this mandate, to contribute to Ontario's international profile in postsecondary education quality assurance, and to maintain its leadership in quality assurance, PEQAB must maintain awareness of evolving academic standards and quality assurance practices in other jurisdictions. Collaboration with other quality assurance agencies and attendance at conferences plays a central role in PEQAB's ability to meet its mandate. Such collaboration provides an opportunity for PEQAB leadership and secretariat staff to:

- acquire information and expertise in domestic and international trends and developments in degree granting that cannot be accessed elsewhere;
- communicate Ontario's commitment to quality in postsecondary education;
- contribute to Ontario's international profile in the rapidly growing field of quality assurance; and
- participate in shaping the international quality assurance agenda.

Participation in national and international conferences and forums presents a valuable opportunity for PEQAB to establish networks and relationships with key individuals in degree quality assurance and regulation, maintain existing ones promote quality assurance activities in Ontario to the broader world; and gather information about trends and practices in degree quality assurance not available elsewhere. Participation is a priority for the secretariat and it will work toward greater participations as time allows. Secretariat staff have been fully engaged by the day to day management of applications, the development of materials for the Board, and contributing to ministry policy development and does not have the opportunity to participate in the broader quality assurance community at the level it should.

Recommendations: ***That***

- ***the Chair and secretariat regularly attend the conferences/fora of INQAAHE, CHEA and other quality assurance agencies;***
- ***the secretariat participate in staff exchanges with other quality assurance agencies;***
- ***the secretariat meet face-to-face regularly with the DQAB, CAQC, and MPHEC secretariats to share best practice;***
- ***the secretariat demonstrate leadership in its contributions to the CMEC QAS;***
- ***accurate and complete records of collaborative activities, communications, and achievements be maintained by the secretariat.***

Chapter 7: Summary of Recommendations

PEQAB Criteria

- *That the Board*
  - *undertake a comprehensive review of all of its criteria to ensure it reflects standards recognized in Ontario and elsewhere; and*
  - *review and release new versions of its Handbooks for Applicants; Submission Guidelines; Quality Assessor and Organization Reviewer Report Guidelines.*

Transparency of Criteria, Procedures, and Activities

- *That the Board develop an explicit communications and publications strategy.*

Criteria for Continuous Quality Assurance of PEQAB

- *That the Board*
  - *develop a comprehensive strategy for assuring its own continuous quality;*
  - *develop a standard for ongoing quality assurance, including objectives and expected outcomes, against which it can review itself; and*
  - *include, as part of its comprehensive quality assurance strategy, a requirement*
    - *for cyclical, comprehensive internal review;*
    - *to collect, track, and respond to internal feedback;*
    - *for cyclical external evaluation;*
    - *for the use of feedback from its external evaluations; and*
    - *that a comprehensive survey of stakeholders be conducted every five to seven years.*
- *That*
  - *the 2009 Comprehensive Survey be used to inform the design of an annual survey;*
  - *the annual survey be*
    - *aligned with a more comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy; and*
    - *administered and analyzed by an independent party; and*
  - *the Board develop a strategy and procedure for reporting survey findings, responding to issues identified by respondents, and preserving these for the record.*

PEQAB's Contributions to Quality Assurance

- *That*
  - *the Board lead discussions with Canadian counterparts to establish a Canadian Quality Assurance Network;*
  - *the Chair and secretariat regularly attend the conferences/fora of INQAAHE, CHEA and other quality assurance agencies; and*
  - *the secretariat*
    - *participate in staff exchanges with other quality assurance agencies;*
    - *meet face-to-face regularly with the DQAB, CAQC, and MPHEC secretariats to share best practice;*
    - *demonstrate leadership in its contributions to the CMEC QAS; and*
    - *maintain accurate and complete records of collaborative activities, communications, and achievements.*

Addendum: Material changes to background materials since January 2010

Following are significant updates to the background materials discussed in the 2009 self-study.

PSECE Amendments

The PSECE Act was amended in June 2008. Key amendments include:

- Clarifying the application of the Act by defining key terms (e.g., educational institutions, degree, distance education and indices of physical presence);
- Strengthening the enforcement provisions;
- Allowing the Minister to
  - refer applications for consent to PEQAB (as is currently done), or to another recognized quality assurance body (as may be 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; and

Some changes have been immediately implemented (e.g., using definitions), while others will be introduced through regulations, which are under development. In the meantime, all applications must be referred to PEQAB, and the Minister must make his decision following receipt of PEQAB's recommendation.

Governance

Terms of Reference with the Minister

The Board's operational, administrative, financial, auditing, and reporting relationships and arrangements are governed by a Terms of Reference with the Minister (ToR). Recent changes in the *Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive* will require that PEQAB negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister and to update the ToR.

Board Members

Since the drafting of the Board's self study a number of changes occurred to the composition of the Board:

- Patricia M. Rowe, Richard Pinnock, and David Leyton-Brown's terms as Board members expired;
- Maureen Morton and Richard Barham we reappointed;
- Dianne Kieren was appointed as a new Board member.

Currently, the Board consists of Dale Patterson (chair), Maureen J. Morton (vice chair), Richard Barham, Jane Blackwell, Ashok Dalvi, Robert Gordon, and Diane Kieren.

Chief Executive/Manager

Dr. Virginia Hatchette, who was a founding member of the Board's secretariat and later worked as a senior policy advisor for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, was appointed in November, 2008 as senior manager, PEQAB unit. Dr. Hatchette is both directly accountable to the Board and, as senior manager, PEQAB unit, she also reports

to the director of the programs branch of the strategic policy and programs division. In order to more accurately reflect the role that the senior manager plays in supporting the Board and representing Ontario nationally and internationally, Dr. Hatchette's title was subsequently amended in summer, 2010 to include chief executive, PEQAB Secretariat.

Secretariat Staff

As of November 1, 2010, the members of the secretariat staff are:

Chief Executive	Virginia Hatchette, PhD
Senior Policy Advisor	Charlotte McCloskey, MBA
Senior Policy Advisor	Naomi Silver, MPA
Research Policy Analyst	Janna Luettmann, MPPA
Administrative Coordinator	Rosaria Cioffi

Board Budget

All applications for consent are subject to a $5,000 application fee, which contributes to general revenues and not the Board. The Board has a budget of approximately $50,000 per year to cover Board member's honoraria, catering of Board meetings, and travel expenses of those members not from the Toronto area who attend in person.

Annual Budgets for the Board in $

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Per Diems & Services	38,775	48,675	45,525	37,100	36,500	33,368	43,699	35,039	53,042
Travel	16,107	12,465	13,736	6,910	15,470	10,376	15,001	12,653	6,200
TOTAL	54,882	61,140	59,261	44,010	51,970	43,744	58,701	47,693	59,243

Application Fees and Assessment Costs

Separate application and assessment fees are payable for each application. The application fee, determined by the ministry, is $5,000. This fee is deposited to general revenues, and does not contribute to the Board's budget.

Applicants are responsible for paying the costs of the assessments carried out by advisory panels (quality assurance panel for all applicants, and organization review panel for private institutions only). The applicant must provide a deposit in the amount of the estimated assessment costs. The charge for an assessment varies with each application, depending on the number of reviewers, the length and complexity of the review, and associated travel, accommodation, and meeting or communication costs, and whether the applicant's response to the or quality assessment panel reports requires further assessment. In general, the costs will not normally exceed $ 7,500 for an organization review and $12,000 for a program quality assessment.

The honorarium for panel members has not changed since the Board's inception in 2001. Ordinarily the panel members receive an honorarium for 3 days at $750 per day. The panel

chair receives the same daily honorarium as panel members but is paid for an additional day for coordinating the assessor team and for writing the report. In addition, panel members and chairs will have their reasonable out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed for the following expenses incurred: hotel charges including taxes and gratuities; automobile rentals; kilometerage for use of personal automobiles; air fare; rail fare; taxi fares; bus fares. Travel must be by the most economical means. The ministry issues a refund to the applicant if its estimate of the assessment costs was too high, or charges the applicant for the balance of any unpaid costs.

New Ontario University Quality Assurance Process

For many years there were separate systems in place for the review of undergraduate and graduate programs offered by Ontario public Universities. The procedures that governed internal quality reviews of undergraduate programs were audited every 5-7 years by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC), a subcommittee of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). The OCGS Appraisal Committee, responsible for the review of graduate programs, had 28 members nominated by the graduate deans (the deans nominated their own senior graduate faculty). The Committee was subdivided into 4 multidisciplinary appraisal subcommittees.

The process for the review of new program proposals (which could not commence until approved by OCGS) and periodic review of existing programs (reviewed on a 7 year cycle) were as follows (**note the similarities with PEQAB processes**):

- University program area prepared a brief according to OCGS guidelines (includes information on curriculum, faculty CVs, library holdings, other resources (e.g., computers, space), grants, students, completion rates, theses and dissertations, etc.)
- Brief was reviewed for completeness by OCGS secretariat
- Appraisal Committee identified additional questions (if any) for external reviewers (normally 2 reviewers)
- Appraisal Committee appointed external reviewers (which will likely have been nominated by university)
- External reviewers conducted a desk audit of brief, conducted a 2 day site visit (to see resources, interview senior administration, faculty, students), and prepared report against OCGS guidelines
- Appraisal Committee received reviewer's report and prepared report with recommendation
- Appraisal Committee made recommendation to the Ontario Council of Graduate Deans [recommendations of either good quality, good quality with report, or not approved (program cannot commence if latter recommendation received)].

New Appraisal Structure and Process: Quality Council

- The Quality Council, a body overseen by Ontario Council of Vice Presidents, Academic (OCAV), is responsible for both graduate and undergraduate programs
- A similar process is in place for review of both undergraduate and graduate programs Council Chair is Dr. Sam Scully (**note: Dr. Scully is a PEQAB organization reviewer**)

Review of Internal Quality Assurance Policies (IQAs)

- All universities are required to develop their policies and procedures for internal quality assurance
- The Quality Council will review and approve the policies

- The university quality assurance process must be transparent and comprise all the normal steps of quality assurance (**note the alignment with PEQAB Program Evaluation standard**):
  - self-study by the program, unit or function involved
  - review by external experts with recommendations
  - a response to the expert's report by the unit under assessment
  - consideration of the self-study, experts' report, and unit response by a university wide committee
  - preparation by the program or unit of plans to implement the quality improvement recommendations
  - follow up and monitoring by the university wide committee to ensure that the plans are implemented.

Review of new programs

- New programs will be subject to an external review similar to the former OCGS process.
- Partners from outside Ontario in joint programs with Ontario universities will not be required to undergo assessment by the Quality Council provided they operate in a jurisdiction with an accepted (as judged by the Quality Council) quality assurance system.
- Partners from within Ontario will be reviewed by the Quality Council, regardless of the quality assurance processes to which the partner has been subjected. (**Note: this includes PEQAB**)

Second review of programs

- Programs to be re-reviewed no later than 8 years after launch.
- The review will be in accord with guidelines established by the Quality Council and reviewed by the committee responsible for new programs.

Periodic Audit of the University

- Ongoing quality assurance in Ontario universities will be subject to audit by the Quality Council.
- Audits of institutional quality assurance will follow conventional steps:
  - the university will prepare a brief;
  - the document will be submitted to an audit committee;
  - the reviewers will take a sample of three or four of the institution's internal quality assurance reviews and examine the process and procedures followed;
  - periodic Audit of the Quality Council.

Regular review of the Quality Council itself will take place at least every seven years and follow the normal steps (**notice the alignment with PEQAB commitments for internal and external review**):

- critical self-study;
- external appraisal by expert reviewers;
- report to and response from the Quality Council, including plans for improvement and a follow up of progress against the recommendations after approximately three years.

Appendix: Glossary of Acronyms

Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU)
Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC)
Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)
Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs)
Conference of Rectors and Principals (CREPUQ)
Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)
Council on Post Secondary Education (COPSE)
Degree Granting Act (DGA)
Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB)
European Network of Quality Assurance/European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee of Ontario (HEQACO)
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)
International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)
Lieutenant Governor-in-Council (LGC)
Management Board of Cabinet (MBC)
Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD)
Ontario Council of Vice-Presidents, Academic (OCAV)
Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS)
Ontario Universities Degree Quality Assurance System (OUDQAS)
Ontario Universities Quality Audit Panel (OUQAP)
Organization Review Committee (ORC)
Organization Review Panel (ORP)
Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, (PSECE Act; the Act)
Postsecondary Assistant Deputy Ministers (PSADM)
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB)
Quality Assessment Panel (QAP)
Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS)
Terms of Reference (ToR)
Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC)