



Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB)

Minutes of the Third Meeting held May 28, 2013 University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK

Board Members:	Grant Isaac (Chair); Ronald Bond (Vice-Chair); Karen Barnes; Marie Battiste; Robin Fisher; Irene Lewis; Mhairi (Vi) Maeers; William McLaughlin
Regrets:	Brett Fairbairn, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, University of Saskatchewan
Guests at the invitation of the Chair:	Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Advanced Education - for Agenda Item 7 Patti McDougall, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, University of Saskatchewan - for Agenda Item 2 Reg Urbanowski, Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education Linda Chelagat Chemmutut, Executive Intern, Deputy Minister's Office, Ministry of Advanced Education
Secretariat:	Patti Bateman Philip Cameron

1. Approval of Agenda

It was moved and seconded (Bond/Battiste) to approve the Agenda as presented, with the addition of an item regarding multiple degree applications, time permitting. CARRIED.

2. Welcome from the University of Saskatchewan

Patti McDougall brought greetings from the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) on behalf of Brett Fairbairn. She commented that the U of S values the mandate of the Board and looks forward to having opportunities for input as the Board proceeds with its work. She further noted the high level of interest at the U of S in learning outcomes and the potential for the development of a pan-Canadian approach to this form of assessment in higher education.

3. Approval of Minutes of the March 26, 2013, Meeting

It was moved and seconded (Barnes/Lewis) to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2013, meeting, as corrected. CARRIED.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes of the March 26, 2013, Meeting

a. Status of SHEQAB with respect to the FOIPP Act

Through consultations with the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, it has been determined that the SHEQAB should be considered a 'government institution' for the purposes of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the FOIPP Act). The Ministry of Advanced Education will now request that the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General amend *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulations* (the FOIPP Regulations) to include the SHEQAB in the list of *Board, Commissions, Crown Corporations and Other Bodies Prescribed as Government Institutions* in the Appendix of the FOIPP Regulations.

b. SHEQAB Code of Conduct

The Board reviewed an updated draft of the *SHEQAB Code of Conduct* (May 10, 2013).

It was moved and seconded (Battiste/McLaughlin) to adopt the Code with the wording of the statement on inclusivity to read as follows:

***"Members shall be sensitive to diversity, including Aboriginal peoples, age, gender, ability, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, family configuration and religion, that may affect the conduct of a review or decision."* CARRIED.**

c. SHEQAB Operating Principles

The Board reviewed an updated draft of the *SHEQAB Operating Principles* (May 10, 2013). It was agreed to further revise the *Operating Principles* to (i) include a statement that speaks to the Board's commitment to innovation and creativity where there is a demonstrated benefit to the learner; and (ii) include a cross-reference to the *SHEQAB Code of Conduct*. A final draft will be prepared for the Board's future approval.

d. Policy – Attendance of Guests at SHEQAB Meetings

The Board reviewed a draft policy (May 21, 2013) regarding the attendance of guests at SHEQAB meetings.

It was moved and seconded (Bond/Barnes) to approve the policy with the section on Key Principles revised to be consistent with changes made to the *SHEQAB Operating Principles*. CARRIED.

e. Decision-making Model

The Board agreed to adopt a consensus model as its preferred approach to decision making. Formal decisions will be recorded as a vote, with approval achieved by a majority (50% plus 1). The Chair will vote only in the event of a tie. Members will have the prerogative to record opposition if they wish. Given the relatively small size of the Board, abstentions will be permitted only in conflict-of-interest situations.

f. **Clarification of provisions in *The Degree Authorization Regulations***

Section 5 – Exempt from Application of Act

Section 5 enables educational institutions who are partnering with either the U of S or the University of Regina (U of R) to be exempt from the Act only if the educational institution has obtained permission to provide the proposed degree program in another jurisdiction and that permission has been obtained pursuant to legislation similar in nature to *The Degree Authorization Act*. At the January 15, 2013, meeting, the question arose as to how this provision would be interpreted relative to Ontario universities, since Ontario does not have legislation that is similar to the Act. It has been determined that Ontario universities, and possibly those in Quebec as well, would not be exempt from the Act pursuant to section 5, since section 5 explicitly requires previous authorization under similar legislation.

Section 16 – Expert Advisors

Section 16 provides the Minister with the discretion to contract with individuals whom the Board recommends to serve on expert panels for the purposes of conducting organizational and program reviews. At the January 15, 2013, meeting, the question was raised as to whether the approval of expert advisors could be delegated to the Board.

Presently, since the SHEQAB does not have budgetary authority, it cannot approve contracts with external experts. The Secretariat will further explore this matter to determine if there are mechanisms by which to ensure that the reviewers retained by the Minister are those who are recommended by the Board.

5. Professional Development

There was broad discussion regarding the many benefits of undertaking professional development activities both within and outside Saskatchewan. Key benefits include staying attuned to best practices and trends in quality assurance, networking, and establishing the SHEQAB's profile.

It was agreed that a situational assessment of Saskatchewan's post-secondary education needs would help inform the Board as it establishes its work priorities and professional development strategies. A presentation by Ministry staff on situational trends, demographics and the Saskatchewan post-secondary education landscape will be arranged for the Board's next meeting.

Due to the cost implications of professional development activities, the Board will prepare a proposal that articulates its professional development needs. The Secretariat will develop a draft for the Board's consideration at its next meeting, as well as further explore the issue of the Board's lack of budgetary authority.

6. Ministry Updates

a. New Applications for Authorization received by the Ministry

In April 2013, the Ministry received two applications from Briercrest College and Seminary; one for a Bachelor of Arts in English/English (Honours) and one for a Bachelor of Arts in History/History (Honours). The applications are currently in Phase I of the degree authorization process, which

includes a 30-day public consultation process concluding June 13, 2013. The Ministry will prepare its recommendations to Cabinet over the summer, with a Cabinet decision anticipated in the fall. The applications could potentially be referred to the SHEQAB for consideration at the Board's fall 2013 meeting.

It was noted that Briercrest has expressed interest in submitting multiple applications in the future. The feasibility of reviewing applications in 'batches', grouped according to common core curricula, was briefly discussed and the Board agreed that it would need to have a better sense of Briercrest's long-term degree-granting plans in order to assess the feasibility of a batched approach. The Ministry will ask Briercrest to submit a Degree Plan to clarify its intentions and provide the contextual framework for its degree-granting aspirations. Briercrest's Degree Plan will be provided to the Board to assist the Board in its considerations.

First Nations University of Canada (FNUUniv) has expressed interest in seeking authorization to offer its own degrees. FNUUniv is currently federated with the U of R and FNUUniv students graduate with U of R degrees. The academic integration associated with federation will lend more complexity to the application for authorization process.

b. Use of QA 'Seal' by the U of S and the U of R

The Board was informed that both the U of S and the U of R have expressed interest in developing a process that will enable them to use the QA 'seal of approval' as a marketing or branding tool. Since both institutions are exempt from *The Degree Authorization Act*, there is currently no defined role for either the Ministry or the SHEQAB with respect to the universities.

Related Canadian and international trends and practices were discussed, most notably Alberta's pilot project involving audits of its four universities, and the Council of Ontario's university assessment system. Potential issues related to the impact that a government oversight role would have on institutional autonomy were acknowledged.

The Board deferred a more fulsome discussion of this item to its next meeting. The Ministry will provide a background document to inform the discussion.

c. Amendments to *The Degree Authorization Regulations*

In the coming months, the Ministry will be proposing amendments to the Regulations to (i) clarify the nomenclature requirements for theological degrees; and (ii) expand the list of programs grandfathered to 2016 under section 3 of the Regulations. The regulatory amendment process will include consultations with the Saskatchewan post-secondary education sector and with British Columbia and Alberta under the terms of the New West Partnership Agreement. The process is expected to be complete by fall 2013.

7. Greetings from the Minister of Advanced Education

The Honourable Don Morgan brought greetings on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. The Minister spoke to the government's *Plan for Growth* and the significance of post-secondary education to the province's economic growth. The Minister highlighted the work of the provincial Aboriginal Task Force (<http://www.jointtaskforce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Joint-Task-Force-Final-Document.pdf>) and the important work that lies ahead in addressing the recommendations put forth by the Task Force.

8. SIAST Application for Authorization – Bachelor of Science in Psychiatric Nursing

The Board confirmed that the body of evidence produced during the 2011-12 case study with SIAST met its expectations in terms of comprehensiveness and rigour and that no additional quality assurance reviews were required. The Board was satisfied that it had discharged its duties pursuant to section 12(1) of the Regulations in conducting a full review of the applicant.

The Board determined that the proposed program did not offer the breadth of a Bachelor of Science degree but would more appropriately be characterized as a program with an applied focus on psychiatric nursing with the nomenclature 'Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing'.

It was moved and seconded (Fisher/Lewis) to recommend that the Minister consider authorization of the SIAST Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing program, subject to the following conditions, the first two of which are premised on residual concerns identified by the Interim Quality Assurance Board in its final opinion on the SIAST case study:

- 1. That SIAST provide the Board with a copy of its approved Academic Freedom policy and clarify whether the policy applies to students;**
- 2. That SIAST provide evidence that its External Program Review Policy addresses (i) the appointment of review panels that will conduct site visits as part of the program review process; and (ii) publication of the results of program reviews on SIAST's website;**
- 3. That SIAST develop and implement a strengths-based approach in dealing with the mental health of Aboriginal and other populations in the curriculum design and implementation, as appropriate; and,**
- 4. That SIAST begin to articulate program-level learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing program.**

CARRIED.

9. Priorities Going Forward

a. SHEQAB Annual Report

The Board is not required to submit an Annual Report since it has no financial accountability. Nevertheless, the Board sees value in periodically publishing a letter from the Chair to Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions presenting an update on Board activities and inviting input from the sector on issues of interest. The Secretariat will develop a draft for the Board's consideration.

b. Quality Assurance Standards for Graduate Degrees

Priority will be given to the development of standards and criteria for graduate (Master's and Ph.D. levels) programs. The Secretariat will seek input from the Deans of Graduate Studies at the U of S and at the U of R and will prepare draft standards for the Board's consideration at its next meeting.

c. Associate Degrees

There is a lack of clarity regarding what constitutes an Associate degree. The Secretariat will develop a Briefing for consideration at the next meeting.

10. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held in Regina in October, with the specific date to be determined.

11. Adjournment

It was moved to adjourn the meeting. CARRIED.