Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board

Quality Assurance Review Process
Organizational Review Standards and Criteria

March 2024

SASKATCHEWAN
HIGHER EDUCATION
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Saskatchewan

The standards and criteria presented in this document are used by the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) to conduct quality assurance reviews of institutions seeking authorization to provide degrees pursuant to *The Degree Authorization Act*.

These standards and criteria were approved by the Minister of Advanced Education on October 16, 2023 and supersede the standards and criteria approved May 14, 2014. For further information, please contact:

SHEQAB Secretariat
1120 – 2010 12th Ave
Regina, Canada S4P 0M3
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The Saskatchewan Degree Authorization Process

On October 29, 2012, *The Degree Authorization Act* was proclaimed, *The Degree Authorization Regulations* were approved, and the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) was established.

The Act and Regulations establish the process by which new degrees become authorized in Saskatchewan. The process comprises the following three phases of activity.

Phase I – System Coordination Review

The System Coordination Review is conducted by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Its purpose is to ensure that a proposed new degree program is aligned with provincial needs and priorities and does not unnecessarily duplicate programming that is already available from other institutions in Saskatchewan.

Phase I begins with the submission of an *Application for Authorization*, in which the applicant institution must articulate the benefits of the proposed program to Saskatchewan, the anticipated demand for the program in the labour market, the institutional fit of the program, and program details such as the period of study, program capacity, tuition, courses and methods of delivery.

Each *Application for Authorization* is posted on the ministry's website for 30 days to enable other post-secondary institutions, professional and regulatory bodies, and the general public to view and comment on the proposed new program. The applicant institution is given the opportunity to respond to any feedback received during the posting process. The ministry then reviews the program relative to the criteria prescribed in section 8 of the Regulations and provides its findings, along with the public input and the applicant's response to public input, to the provincial Cabinet. Cabinet determines whether to refer the *Application for Authorization* to the SHEQAB for quality assurance review purposes.

The Phase I review process is conducted on an annual basis beginning May 1st. All *Applications for Authorization* submitted by April 30th are forwarded to Cabinet as a group so that Cabinet can consider all new degree proposals at one time, rather than sporadically throughout the year.

Phase II – Quality Assurance Review

When an *Application for Authorization* is referred to the SHEQAB, the Board first determines the type of quality assurance review required. The Board may decide that a **full review**, involving both an Organizational Review and a Program Review, is required. An **Organizational Review** assesses the capacity of the applicant institution to deliver the proposed program and determines if the institution's policies and practices meet approved quality assurance standards. A **Program Review** involves a more detailed look at the program itself.

Alternatively, the SHEQAB may decide on a **partial review**, which may consist of a Program Review only; a Program Review and certain elements of an Organizational Review; or certain elements of both a Program Review and an Organizational Review.

Based on the findings of the quality assurance review(s), the SHEQAB will recommend to the Minister of Advanced Education whether the program should or should not be authorized. The time required for the SHEQAB to conduct its reviews is not prescribed and will depend on many factors, including the nature of the proposed program, the preparedness of the applicant institution, and the availability of expert reviewers to conduct Organizational and Program Reviews on behalf of the Board.

Phase III – Authorization and Monitoring

If the SHEQAB recommends that a program be authorized, the minister can either issue or refuse the authorization. The minister may refuse the authorization with Cabinet approval. In such an instance, the applicant will be given an opportunity to appeal the decision. If the SHEQAB recommends that the program not be authorized, the minister must refuse the authorization.

When a program is authorized, there will typically be terms and conditions attached to the authorization. The ministry and the SHEQAB monitor authorized programs to ensure that institutions adhere to the terms and conditions of authorization and continue to meet quality standards. Cyclical reporting is part of the monitoring process.

The Organizational Review Process

An organizational self-evaluation is the first step in the organizational review process. Through the self-evaluation process, an institution will assess its policies and practices against the standards and criteria presented in this document. The institution will then present its findings to the SHEQAB in the form of an *Organizational Self-Evaluation Report*.

The *Organizational Self-Evaluation Report* will be reviewed and evaluated by the SHEQAB, at which point the institution may be asked to make revisions or provide additional information. The report will then be reviewed by a panel of external experts selected by the SHEQAB. The panel members conduct a site visit to the applicant institution and prepare an evaluative report for the Board's consideration.

The **standards** are the overall requirements that must be met; the **criteria** are the factors or means by which the Board and the external review panel will assess if the standards have been met. In conducting an organizational review, the SHEQAB and the external review panel will be guided, but not limited, by the criteria; other issues or questions may emerge during the course of a review and the institution may be requested to provide additional information.

NOTE: The standards and criteria apply to institutions seeking authorization for baccalaureate and graduate-level (e.g., master's and doctoral) programs. The standards and criteria specifically applicable to graduate programs are noted as such and are supplemental to all other standards.

Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework

In 2007, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) endorsed a *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* (the CMEC Statement). The CMEC Statement, to which Saskatchewan is a signatory, includes the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF), which describes the relevant characteristics of degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels, as well as procedures and standards for assessing new degree-granting institutions and proposed new degree programs.

Institutions seeking authorization for a baccalaureate level program must meet the *Quality Assurance Review Process Bachelor's Degree Level Standard*, which describes the characteristics of a bachelor's degree and stipulates the demonstrable learning skills and level of mastery required at the bachelor's level. Similarly, institutions seeking authorization for a graduate level program must meet the *Quality Assurance Review Process Graduate Degree Level Standards*, which describe the characteristics of master's and doctoral degrees and stipulates the demonstrable learning skills and level of mastery required at these levels. Both the bachelor and graduate degree level standards are consistent with the CDQF.

The standards presented in this document generally align with the Procedures and Standards for *New Degree Program Quality Assessment* presented in the CDQF.

Acknowledgements

The ministry and the SHEQAB wish to acknowledge, with thanks:

- the Government of British Columbia and the Degree Quality Assessment Board of British Columbia for allowing the use of its *Degree Program Review Criteria and Guidelines* to inform the development of the baccalaureate degree standards and criteria;

- the use of materials published by other provincial quality assurance agencies in Canada, including the Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board of Ontario, and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, in the development of the standards and criteria for graduate degree standards and criteria;

- the offices of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Regina and the College of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Saskatchewan for their assistance in the development of graduate degree standards and criteria; and

- the use of materials published by the Campus Alberta Quality Council pertaining to quality assessment standards for programs delivered in blended, distributed or distance modes.

Submission Guidelines for Applicants

The following guidelines are intended to assist applicant institutions with the preparation of a *Program Self-Evaluation Report*. Applicant institutions are encouraged to contact the SHEQAB Secretariat prior to commencing the self-evaluation process.

Relationship between Organizational Review Standards and Program Review Standards

Appendix A outlines the organizational and program standards used by the SHEQAB and shows how the two sets of standards align. When preparing for a Program Review, an institution that has already undergone an Organizational Review may be able to draw from materials prepared for the Organizational Review, particularly materials related to institutional and academic policies and procedures.

Appendix B is a list of policies that an applicant institution should have in place and be prepared to address during the course of an Organizational or Program Review. For ease of reference, the policies are cross-referenced with applicable standards. Institutions may wish to use the list as a planning tool or checklist to assist in the preparation of the *Program Self-Evaluation Report* and when preparing for the external panel review. Please note that the list is not definitive; external review panels and/or the SHEQAB may identify other operational areas/policies during the Program Review.

Length of Submission

Submissions should be complete and concise. A limit of 5,000 words is suggested to prevent the report from becoming too long and unmanageable for consideration by the SHEQAB and the external review panel.

Structure of Submission

The report should be structured to align with the numbering of the standards as follows:

1. Executive Summary
2. Program Review
3. Program Design, Content and Delivery
4. Program Resources
5. Faculty and Staff
6. Academic Policies, Admissions and Credit Transfer
7. Contingency Plans in the Event of Program Discontinuation
8. Credential Recognition and Nomenclature.

Pagination

For ease of reference, all pages within the submission (including appendices) must be numbered.

Saskatchewan Public Post-Secondary Institutions

Where requirements pertain to items that are governed by Saskatchewan legislation or fall under current government agreements and/or reporting requirements, institutions may simply reference the relevant section of the legislation or report(s). When referencing a report, please indicate the name of the document, its date of publication, and the relevant page number(s).

Use of Appendices

The use of appendices is encouraged to present supplementary information and/or information considered proprietary. For example, when providing information on policies, please include only a summary of the policies in the main body of the submission and attach full policies as appendices. Examples of proprietary information include referee letters; letters of support which contain personal information, such as individuals' names and addresses; and financial information. Appendices should be cross-referenced to the applicable standard(s) and criteria.

Use of Links

The use of links to information housed on an institutional website is permitted; however, they should be used carefully. The overuse of links can make it difficult to review the document. Ensure that links are active and a hard copy compilation of all linked documents is included with the submission.

Use of Previously Prepared Documents

If the institution has undergone a previous quality assurance review (e.g., for accreditation purposes), previously prepared documentation may be submitted for consideration; however, please ensure that materials are updated and formatted to adhere to these guidelines.

Electronic and Hard Copies

The *Program Self-Evaluation Report* should be submitted as an Adobe PDF document. In addition, one complete hard copy of the Report and all referenced documents (including linked documents and appendices) must be submitted to the SHEQAB Secretariat at the following mailing address:

Secretariat, Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB)
1120 – 2010 12th Ave
Regina, Canada S4P 0M3

Permission to Consult with External Agencies

Institutions must provide SHEQAB with written permission to consult with any professional, accrediting or regulatory body named in the submitted documentation. Permission should be provided in the form of a letter from the institution's legal counsel. (See Standard 1.2.)

Out-of-Province Applicants

An out-of-province applicant must specifically address how the provision of the proposed program will occur in Saskatchewan and identify any differences between Saskatchewan delivery and delivery in the home jurisdiction.

Release of Information

Submissions will be subject to the provisions of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and to any SHEQAB policies regarding the release of information.

1. Organizational Overview

1.1 Information about the Organization

To fulfill its obligation to make informed recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education, the SHEQAB requires that the application institution disclose information regarding corporate ownership, corporate structure and legal character.

> **Standard 1.1**
>
> The institution provides key information regarding its status as a corporate and legal organization, as appropriate.

Criteria:

a) Key information about the institution is provided, including:

- full legal name;

- operating name;

- common acronym (if applicable);

- website URL;

- addresses for the head office, the main campus, and all other operating sites, as well as telephone and e-mail contact information;

- legislation under which the institution operates;

- number of employees (faculty, administration and staff), including breakdown of full-time and part-time;

- list of faculty and staff collective bargaining units, as applicable;

- list of institutional memberships (e.g., Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), Polytechnics Canada, etc.); and

- number of students enrolled, including whether full-time or part-time and FLE (full load equivalent).

b) There is written confirmation indicating the authority of the representative of the institution to enter into a binding application (including name, title, address, telephone and e-mail address).

c) There is written confirmation indicating the authority of the institutional contact person to represent the institution throughout the application process (including name, title, address, telephone and e-mail address).

1.2 Corporate Structure and Legal Character

> **Standard 1.2**
>
> The institution discloses information regarding the owners, directors and officers of the institution, and any relationships that such persons may have with other post-secondary institutions and/or approval bodies governing the institution.
>
> The institution identifies any instances of non-compliance with legislation governing the institution and with any relevant regulatory bodies.

Criteria:

a) For <u>public and private institutions</u>, key information about the institution is provided, specifically including:

- dates of operation;

- corporate structure;

- legal status (sole proprietor, partnership, society, corporation);

- legal character (e.g., articles of incorporation, bylaws, partnership agreements, charter, statutory authority or other documents) including documentation relevant to any relationship with parent, subsidiary or other corporate groups;

- organization chart(s) identifying names and position titles of owners, officers and/or board members including contact information;

- name and qualifications of the senior educational and/or administrative officer;

- name and address of any body that has granted approval for the institution's operation, or was responsible for oversight of the institution (e.g., accrediting or regulatory body); and

- a letter signed by the applicant's legal representative that gives the SHEQAB the right to enter into communications with third parties, including accrediting/approval bodies identified above, and which instructs the approval body to release to the SHEQAB any and all information relevant to the institution's compliance or noncompliance status with that body.

b) For <u>private institutions</u>, key information about the owners is provided, specifically including:

- The name, address, telephone number, facsimile number and e-mail address of:

    o all directors and officers of the institution;

    o all persons holding 10 per cent or greater ownership in the institution (as well as the percentage ownership); and

    o legal counsel to the applicant for the purposes of the application for authorization.

- Name and location of any other business conducted with or associated with the applicant, including business at any other location (e.g., subsidiaries). Non-profit/charitable organizations must provide the above information for the members of the institution's governing body.

- If the organization is incorporated, for all person(s) holding 10 per cent or greater ownership in the organization, the following information must be provided:

    o the nature of any other relationship such person(s) may have with the applicant (e.g., president, member(s) of the governing body); and

    o the names and addresses of any other post-secondary institutions owned or controlled by such person(s).

Submission Guideline:

Refer to Part VII, section 20 of *The Degree Authorization Regulations* for definitions of "public educational institution" and "private educational institution".

2. Mission

2.1 Mission Statement and Academic Goals

> **Standard 2.1**
>
> The institution publishes a statement that clearly articulates its mission and academic goals. The statement identifies the academic character and the aspirations of the institution as a degree-granting institution and demonstrates the extent to which the institution is committed to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge and service to community or related professions.

Criteria:

a) The institution has a published mission statement, approved by the governing body, which clearly articulates its academic character and its aspirations with respect to providing degree- level education.

b) Key information about the institution, its policies and its programs is published in its academic year calendar and/or is otherwise readily available to students and the public, specifically including:

- the institution's mission and goals statement;

- the institution's history and its governance and academic structure;

- a summary of the institution's future plans for growth;

- a description of the type(s) of programming currently offered;

- a general description of each degree program (i.e., purpose, outcomes, length);

- individual descriptions of all subjects/courses in these programs and their credit value;

- the academic credentials of senior administrators; and

- the academic credentials of faculty.

c) The institution's programs are clearly related to the institution's mission and goals.

d) Resources are used appropriately to advance the institution's mission.

2.2 Institutional Review

Standard 2.2

The institution reviews all of its units and/or operations on a periodic basis normally not exceeding ten years.

Criteria:

a) The institution has a formally approved policy and procedures on periodic institutional review.

b) The periodic review procedure includes, at a minimum:

- a self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators based on evidence related to institutional performance, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions;

- an assessment, conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution, that will normally include:

   o a site visit;

   o a report by the external expert panel assessing institutional quality and recommending any changes needed to strengthen that quality;

   o an institutional response to the recommendations in the panel report; and

   o a publicly available summary of the conclusions of the evaluation process.

c) The institution has a process for conducting student outcome reviews that addresses:

- enrolment;

- student retention rates;

- student learning outcomes;

- student completion times;

- student employment outcomes;

- graduate satisfaction; and

- employer satisfaction.

d) The institution has an accountability process in place (including appropriate reporting mechanisms) to account for the type and level of funding received from any public sources (e.g., tuition and ancillary fees, federal or provincial government funding).

2.3 Program Review

Standard 2.3

The institution regularly assesses the effectiveness of its educational programs and services and demonstrates continuous growth and improvement.

Criteria:

a) The institution has a plan, policies and processes for developing and approving degree programs.

b) Regular cycles of internal review are in place for all programs, including evidence of faculty participation in the evaluative process.

c) For programs where credentials are awarded externally or where industry standards require review, reports are provided from any appropriate external review bodies that indicate the institution meets or exceed the industry standards.

d) The institution has a formal, institutionally approved policy and procedure for the periodic review of degree programs (i.e., formative and ongoing reviews and a summative review normally every five to seven years) against published standards, including the institution's own learning outcomes standards for the program, that has the following characteristics:

- A self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators of the program based on evidence relating to program performance, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions. For example, a self-study considers:

  o Involvement of students participating in the program or unit. In most cases, the self-study is student focused as it aims to assess the student experience and, in the case of academic programs, to assess the quality of teaching and learning;

  o the continuing appropriateness of the program's structure, admission requirements, methods of delivery, and curriculum relative to the program's educational goals and standards;

  o the adequacy and effective use of resources (physical, technological, financial and human);

  o faculty performance, including the quality of teaching and supervision and demonstrable currency in the field of specialization;

  o the continuing appropriateness of learning outcomes achieved by students/graduates to meet the program's stated goals, the degree level standards, and, where appropriate, the standards of any related regulatory, accrediting or professional bodies;

  o the continuing adequacy of the methods used for evaluating student progress and achievement to ensure that the program outcomes and degree level standards have been achieved; and

  o where appropriate, the graduate rate and the graduate employment rate, as well as the satisfaction levels of students, graduates, employers and the program's advisory board.

- An assessment conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution that normally includes:
    - a site visit;
    - a report of the external panel that includes recommendations for strengthening program quality;
    - the institutional response to the external panel's recommendations; and
    - a summary of the conclusions of the expert panel's evaluation, and the institutional response to the evaluation, both made publicly available by the institution.

Note that for programs subject to accreditation reviews, the accreditation review process does not supplant the external review required by this standard.

Submission Guidelines

- Indicate the policies/procedures that are planned for ensuring adequate depth, breadth and frequency of ongoing program review and assessment once the program has been implemented.

- Append copies of the formal, approved policy and procedures for periodic review of program(s) that address the program review elements described in the above-noted criteria.

3. Governance and Administrative Capacity

3.1 Governance and Administrative Capacity

Standard 3.1

The institution operates as a reputable, effective and high-quality degree-granting institution in Saskatchewan. Its structure includes a body competent to either make decisions or give advice in academic matters.

The institution is capably administered. Information gathering and strategic planning activities facilitate informed decision-making and include the participation of academic staff and consultation with students.

Graduate Degree Standard 3.1

The institution has in place policies, structures and mechanisms appropriate to graduate studies and research.

Criteria:

a) The institution has an appropriate governing structure, such as a governing board, that is the legally constituted body responsible for:

- managing the activities of the institution and maintaining the purpose, viability and integrity of the institution;

- achieving institutional policies and goals;

- selecting administrative leadership; and

- providing the appropriate financial, facilities and human resources.

b) The institution's reporting structure clearly indicates the relationship between owners and governing and managing bodies.

c) The institution's governance and decision-making structures are clear and consistent with the institution's academic purposes.

d) The institution has an appropriate process for the selection, evaluation and succession of governing board members.

e) The institution has a qualified chief executive officer who is accountable to the governing board and whose full-time or major responsibility is the administration of the institution.

f) The institution has sufficient and adequately qualified senior administrative staff, with clear lines of responsibility, decision-making authority and accountability necessary to conduct the affairs of the institution.

g) The institution can demonstrate how administrative policies and practices ensure that business practices and decisions support the academic integrity of programs and protect student interests.

h) The institution's curriculum development processes, academic policies and standards include appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and appropriate forms of consultation with students and external agencies, such as professional associations or licensing bodies.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

i) The institution has administrative structures and mechanisms appropriate to graduate programs, including a clear description of whom within the institution/unit will provide intellectual leadership for the development, implementation and improvement of graduate programs.

3.2 Institutional Conduct

Standard 3.2

The institution values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct in its administrative/business policies and practices.

Criteria:

a) The policies and practices of the institution, including its past performance within and/or outside of the jurisdiction, if applicable, reflect integrity and ethical conduct.

b) There is an acceptable statement by the governing board, administrative officers, and other representatives of the institution, of the ethical standards relating to fair and honest business practices, including a policy on conflict of interest that will guide the institution's conduct in the course of operations in Saskatchewan, and in other jurisdictions.

c) The institution has provided a list and explanation of any instances of non-compliance by the institution with legislation governing the institution, such as *The Private Vocational Schools Regulation Act, 1995*; *The Private Vocational Schools Regulations, 1995*; *The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act, 1985* and *The Saskatchewan Student Direct Loans Regulations*.

d) The institution has disclosed any legal or administrative actions pending against the institution, or any of the owners, officers, administrators or instructors, by any law enforcement agency.

e) The institution has developed and implemented policies and practices that are necessary for it to meet its obligations under *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and any other legislation that may apply concerning the collection and use of personal information.

3.3 Dispute Resolution

Standard 3.3

The institution deals with disputes between the institution and its students, the institution and its faculty, and faculty and students using policies and procedures that adhere to the principles of natural justice and are fair, reasonable and effective.

Criteria:

The institution has policies and procedures through which students' academic appeals, complaints, grievances and/or other disputes are dealt with in accordance with the following principles of natural justice:

- Individuals have a right to:

    o a fair and expeditious resolution of disputes within reasonable deadlines;

    o know and understand the charges or complaints made against them; and

    o be heard in response to charges or complaints made against them before any disciplinary decision is taken.

- The institution has an obligation to:

    o handle complaints or grievances according to clear and reasonable deadlines;

    o establish and operate according to administrative processes that handle disputes fairly and expeditiously at the informal level; and

    o confirm that information is provided to students prior to registration regarding policies and procedures pertaining to academic policies and standards, student support and services, and withdrawal, dismissal and refund policies.

- Students and employees are informed about the policies and procedures for dispute resolution. To these ends, the institution's policies ensure that:

    o charges or complaints against an individual are stated clearly and in writing;

    o an administrative person(s) is identified as being responsible for dealing with complaints;

    o a person(s) is identified to whom complaints may be directed and who may facilitate the informal and satisfactory resolution of disputes;

    o a process exists and an officer is charged with reviewing disputes and examining the evidence; and

    o provision is made for a final internal review by a person, or body of persons, not involved in the dispute in any way.

4. Financial Capacity, Facilities and Learning Resources

4.1 Financial Capacity

Standard 4.1

The institution is financially stable and has the resources to ensure that the number of students assumed in the business plan can complete the program in the event of revenue shortfalls or costs that are higher than estimated.

The short and long-term strategic/business plans of the institution are credible.

The institution's financial methods and records, performance, and stability are regularly audited by a professional accountant working at arm's length from the institution.

The institution ensures that students' financial investments are protected in the event of cessation of activity.

Criteria:

a) The institution has a credible short and long-term business plan (at least five years) that includes best case/worst case scenarios that address the institution's future educational, enrolment, physical and fiscal growth in Saskatchewan. The business plan should include the institution's academic, financial, facilities, student recruitment, marketing and human resource plans and related policies, and should demonstrate that the institution has the administrative organization and capacity as a financially sustainable degree-granting institution. The business plan should also detail the programs to be offered in Saskatchewan and demonstrate the institution's commitment to the academic quality of program content and delivery.

b) Financial information contained in the business plan indicates that the institution has a financial base adequate to support activities consistent with its mission and educational objectives, and the required financial resources for start-up and ongoing operating costs associated with the delivery of the proposed program(s). The institution demonstrates financial and resource capacity sufficient to provide a stable learning environment, and ensure that the number of students assumed in the business plan can complete the degree program, even when revenues fall short of the business plan or costs exceed the estimated allowances. The financial information includes an audited financial statement. For newly established institutions, a pro forma financial statement prepared by a qualified independent accountant (e.g., CA, CGA, CMA) is provided.

c) The institution identifies the source of funds to be invested.

d) The institution has a policy requiring the regular audit of its financial methods, performance and stability by a qualified third-party accountant in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

e) The institution shows evidence of methods to protect student financial investment in the case of cessation of activity.

f) The institution subscribes to an annual reporting format that will assure the minister that the criteria described above are being met.

4.2 Facilities and Equipment

Standard 4.2

The institution's facilities and equipment, including laboratories, classrooms, technology and specialized equipment, support its educational objectives. When alternate means of program delivery are employed, there are adequate learning resources and supports for students.

Graduate Degree Standard 4.2

The institution's laboratory, computer, studio, and/or creative facilities, as well as essential information resources, adequately support graduate faculty and students in their research.

Criteria:

a) A description of the physical plant or facilities, including locations (any campus or satellite operations), is provided.

b) The institution's physical plant, equipment, technology and support services adequately support the institution's educational and student activities.

c) Any agreements with other institutions, where resources and services are shared, are submitted.

d) The institution has safety and emergency preparedness policies that ensure a safe environment for students, faculty and staff; and is prepared to respond to emergency situations and critical incidents.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

e) Appropriate space is provided for graduate students.

Submission Guidelines for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

- Describe the research facilities available to the program (including laboratory, computer services, studio, and/or creative facilities).

- Describe the space available to graduate students, including office and laboratory, studio, and/ or computer facilities.

- Describe any additional resources that may be needed, including an estimate of resources needs and allocation over the next five years.

4.3 Libraries and Learning Resources

Standard 4.3

The institution's libraries and learning resources (physical and electronic) are appropriate to its mission and objectives. Information services and learning resources for students and faculty appropriately support the academic program.

Graduate Degree Standard 4.3

Information resources appropriately support graduate student work.

Criteria:

a) The institution provides reasonable student and faculty access to learning and information resources (such as library(ies), databases, computing equipment, classroom equipment and laboratory facilities) sufficient in scope, quality, currency and type to support students and faculty in the academic program(s) offered by the institution.

b) The institution is committed to providing and maintaining necessary learning and other resources specific to the program, and to supplement them as necessary.

c) Any agreements with other institutions, where resources and services are shared, are submitted.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

d) The institution has sufficient library resources, as evidenced by holdings ratios among other measures, and access to scholarly communications for graduate-level programs.

e) Information resources are adequate for the number of students enrolled and for the level of study.

Submission Guidelines:

Note: An Organizational Review normally considers how priorities are established with respect to the acquisition of information services and learning resources, and the institution's commitment to maintaining and supplementing them.

- Describe the institution's library and its services. Describe other information services available.

- Provide the name, position and qualifications of the person(s) who provide(s) or facilitate(s) library services, including media services.

- Explain how faculty and staff of the institution and program systematically and regularly evaluate library services to ensure they are meeting the needs of the program.

- Append any relevant documents such as library resources report(s).

- Append any agreements with other institutions where resources and services are shared.

5. Faculty

5.1 Faculty and Staff

Standard 5.1

Faculty and staff are qualified to achieve the institution's mission and academic goals. The institution's human resource development and management policies and practices are appropriate and effective.

Graduate Degree Standard 5.1 – Faculty Scholarship and Research

Faculty, as a group, provide intellectual leadership. In doctoral and research-oriented master's programs, the scholarly activity and intellectual atmosphere of the academic unit is based on the number and quality of significant publications or creative research output of the members and on the unit's continuing insistence on originality and excellence. In the case of programs in professional areas, there is a solid basis of appropriate scholarly or creative activities.

Criteria:

a) The institution has academic and other staff in sufficient numbers:

- to develop and deliver the program in each of the fields of specialization identified in the program;

- to act as research supervisors, where appropriate; and

- to meet the demands of the projected student enrolment.

b) The institution has full-time faculty in sufficient numbers to:

- ensure quality standards are maintained;

- ensure a high degree of consistency and continuity of curriculum development and delivery; and

- develop and deliver the program in each of the fields of specialization identified in the program.

c) The academic credentials held by faculty are appropriate to the courses taught.

d) The institution has appropriate policies pertaining to faculty, including policies that:

- define the academic/professional credentials required of faculty teaching all courses in the program, and where appropriate, serving as research supervisors and/or members of examining committees, project committees, review committees, etc.;

- demonstrate that the institution's capacity for granting degrees is supported by an appropriate balance between continuing or ongoing faculty appointments and temporary appointments;

- demonstrate there is due diligence on hiring and provisions to guard against fraudulent credentials (e.g., the institution has evidence on file of the highest academic and/or professional credential claimed by faculty members, supplied directly from the granting agency/institution to the institution);

- clearly address faculty appointment and employment conditions, including workload (e.g., duties and responsibilities; teaching and supervision loads; research and scholarship expectations; availability to students), promotion, termination and performance standards;

- describe the institutional reporting structure;

- require the regular review of faculty performance, including student evaluation of teaching and/or supervision;

- identify the means of ensuring that faculty knowledge of the field is current through professional development, scholarship and research;

- support the professional development of faculty, including the promotion of curricular and instructional innovation, as well as technological skills, where appropriate; and

- address an equitable, diverse and inclusive faculty culture.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

e) The intellectual engagement of the faculty, as a whole, is maintained through regular participation in scholarly activities, the validity of which has been verified by peer review. Most members of the unit are involved in ongoing research and publication of findings, or other scholarly activity as appropriate. The commitment to graduate students, as noted in Standard 7.2, requires a faculty involved in the scholarly life of the department and the institution.

f) Evidence of faculty accomplishment is demonstrated through peer review and critical analysis, with peer-adjudicated publication as the predominant way of assessing scholarly achievement in traditional disciplines. Grant success is another indicator. For some fields of study, evidence of professional achievement and intellectual leadership may be inferred from other scholarly or creative activities.

g) The institution has administrative structure and policies to facilitate the expectations in research and scholarship (e.g., sabbatical leaves, research leaves, in-house grants to support research, a system which supports research grant applications to external agencies, recognition of research time demands in the assignment of teaching loads, recognition of research output in salary rewards, etc.).

h) The institution has policies pertaining to comprehensive/candidacy examination requirements and thesis/dissertation oral examination committees and procedures, where applicable.

i) The scholarship, research and creative activities policies and practices of the institution were developed and administered under the direction of a representative committee.

j) The institution is committed to preserving the freedom of faculty in research, including the communication of results, and has an appropriate policy on the ownership of the intellectual products of employees and students.

k) The institution has appropriate policies and procedures related to ethical conduct and reviews, management of research funds, safety and biohazards, responsibility and accountability, use of human research participants, animal care and maintenance, technology transfer and commercialization, etc., that meet all applicable accreditation and/or agency standards and requirements.

l) As an organization offering graduate programs, the institution has a research culture within which graduate study can occur and which is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing high quality graduate programs. The institution has a clear commitment to a research philosophy which promotes the depth and breadth of knowledge, both within the field/discipline and also outside the field/discipline when necessary.

Submission Guidelines for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

- Demonstrate that a critical mass of research-active faculty exists, and, in the case of a research- based program, that a strong research focus exists within the unit, as evidenced by grants, publication, seminars, etc.

- In the case of research-based programs, demonstrate that the faculty has established long term supervisory capacity and supervisory committee membership.

6. Academic Policies, Admissions and Credit Transfer

6.1 Academic Policies

Standard 6.1

The institution's academic policies and academic standards support its mission and educational objectives and ensure degree quality and relevance.

Graduate Degree Standard 6.1

The institution's academic policies and standards are appropriate to graduate studies and research.

Criteria:

a) The institution has appropriate academic policies to support its mission and educational objectives (see Appendix B).

b) The institution has published admission, continuation and graduation policies that are consistent with the objectives of its programs.

c) The development of curriculum and academic policies and standards includes appropriate participation by qualified academic staff and appropriate forms of consultation with students and external agencies.

6.2 Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Credit Transfer

Standard 6.2

Student recruitment and admission activities are conducted in a fair and ethical manner.

Student learning is evaluated systematically and there are clearly defined criteria for the award of course credits. Students receive regular progress reports.

The transfer of academic credit adheres to clearly established policies and procedures.

Graduate Degree Standard 6.2

The program's admissions and progression policies enable recruitment, retention and recognition of high-quality students who have the capacity and preparation necessary to meet the challenges of the program and to successfully complete their degrees.

Criteria:

a) Public reports, materials and advertising are produced in a full, accurate and truthful manner; and student recruitment policies follow fair business practices including the advertisement of credit transfer arrangements.

b) Admission policies are consistent with the institution's mission and academic goals and with the level of preparation necessary for student success at the post-secondary level in Saskatchewan. They are comparable to admission requirements for students entering similar degree programs at other degree-granting institutions in Saskatchewan. They are also demonstrative of equity, diversity and inclusion and remove barriers to access.

c) Policies for evaluating and awarding credit transfer are systematic and satisfy current program course requirements.

d) Credit transfer arrangements with other institutions are listed.

e) Students are informed about the credit transfer arrangements currently in place.

f) Policies for requesting credit transfer are systematic and consistent with those established for institutions currently within the Saskatchewan post-secondary system.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

g) Admission to a master's or doctoral program requires either a recognized undergraduate or graduate degree with an appropriate specialization, or relevant bridging studies.

h) The institution expects those admitted to a graduate program to have achieved an academic standing in the previous degree (or equivalent) to enable success in the program. Students are required to maintain standards appropriate to graduate study in order to progress and graduate from the program.

6.3 Academic Freedom, Honesty and Integrity

Standard 6.3

The institution maintains an atmosphere in which academic freedom exists and students and academic staff display a high degree of intellectual independence.

The institution not only promotes a full and balanced treatment of the commonly held academic body of knowledge, theories and opinions, but also encourages testing the limits of knowledge and communicating research findings and the implications of those findings to the academic community and beyond.

Criteria:

a) A policy on academic freedom exists in which the institution recognizes and protects the rights of individuals in their pursuit of knowledge and respects the right of individuals to communicate acquired knowledge and the results of research freely.

b) In such cases where students or staff are asked to sign or adhere to a statement of faith and/or a code of conduct, or any other policy is implemented that might constitute a constraint upon academic freedom, a policy exists which requires the institution to:

- notify staff and students prior to employment or admission; and

- ensure the principles of natural justice are followed in the event of alleged violations of any contractual arrangement concerning such required statement of faith and/or code of conduct.

c) Appropriate policies and procedures exist pertaining to:

- academic honesty, including an appropriate plan for informing students and faculty about, and ensuring their understanding of, the policies and procedures concerning academic honesty and procedures for their enforcement;

- the ownership rights of the creators of intellectual property, whether faculty, employees or students;

- the management of research funds; and

- ethical research standards, as evidenced by policies on human research participants and the use of animals in research.

d) An appropriate plan is in place for informing students and faculty about, and ensuring their understanding of, the policies and procedures concerning academic honesty.

e) Policies are enforced based on the principles of natural justice.

7. Student Policies and Services

7.1 Student Protection and Awareness

Standard 7.1

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

Criteria:

a) The institution makes publicly available full, accurate, and truthful information regarding its mission and goals, history, governance and academic structure, programs and courses, and faculty and administrators' credentials.

b) Prior to registration, students are provided with, and confirm in writing their awareness of, policies and procedures pertaining to:

- admission requirements, including policies pertaining to prior learning assessment, credit transfer, entrance examinations and academic prerequisites;

- payment requirements;

- student withdrawal, dismissal and refund policies;

- international students, including policies that ensure international students meet program requirements for degree completion;

- methods of course delivery;

- academic honesty;

- intellectual property;

- student support services;

- scholarships and other financial assistance;

- grading;

- appeal of grades;

- student complaints and grievances;

- supervision, preparation and examination of projects (where applicable); and

- transcript protection.

c) Policies and procedures for student withdrawal, dismissal and refunds are fair, reasonable and effective.

d) The institution has the capacity to ensure that the academic records of students are secure.

In addition, private institutions must have:

e) a student enrolment contract (requiring the student's signature) that is clear, informative and consistent with ministry policy for enrolment contracts; and,

f) arrangements in the event of institutional closure or program termination, including the financial methods the institution has selected to ensure the repayment of unearned funds (e.g., prepaid tuition and fees owing to students).

Submission Guidelines:

- Consult Part VI of *The Degree Authorization Regulations* for requirements related to student transcripts.

7.2 Student Life, Student Support Services

Standard 7.2

The institution has the facilities, services and programs that support students to be successful in their studies and to develop and grow in non-academic areas.

Graduate Degree Standard 7.2

The institution has core faculty committed to the proposed graduate program(s) and to the intellectual life of graduate students through sustained participation in activities involving graduate students, such as seminars, colloquia, conferences, journal clubs, etc. The institution is committed to the timely program completion of its graduate students and to their financial support through such means as teaching assistantships, scholarships, bursaries, faculty research grants, research contracts.

Criteria:

a) The institution has clearly articulated and published definitions, policies and procedures regarding student financial assistance and makes them available to students.

b) The institution has policies, procedures and staff to administer student financial assistance programs and to assist students.

c) The institution has staff experienced in advising students on academic performance and employment opportunities.

d) The institution has other support services that facilitate student success, and that are typical of the support services provided by degree-granting institutions.

e) The institution demonstrates it has the expertise and resources in place to accommodate students with physical, mental health or other health-related challenges.

Supplementary Criteria for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

f) The institution has services, programs and activities appropriate to graduate level programming (e.g., seminars, colloquia, conferences, journal clubs, etc.) that support students to be successful in their studies.

g) The institution provides funding support for its graduate programs.

Submission Guidelines for Institutions Proposing a Graduate Program:

- Describe the services, programs and activities available to graduate students.

- Describe the extent and nature of graduate student financial support (e.g., teaching assistantships, scholarships, bursaries, faculty research grants, research contracts, etc.).

Appendix A - Overview of Organizational and Program Review Standards

Organizational Review		Program Review	
1.	Organization Overview 1.1 Information about the Organization 1.2 Corporate Structure and Legal Character	1.	Executive Summary
2.	Mission, Institutional and Program Reviews 2.1 Mission Statement and Academic Goals 2.2 Institutional Review 2.3 Program Review	2.	Program Review
3.	Governance and Administrative Capacity 3.1 Governance and Administrative Capacity (+ Graduate Std.) 3.2 Institutional Conduct 3.3 Dispute Resolution	3.	Program Design, Content and Delivery (+ Graduate Criteria)
4.	Financial Capacity, Facilities and Learning Resources 4.1 Financial Capacity 4.2 Facilities and Equipment (+ Graduate Std.) 4.3 Libraries and Learning Resources (+ Graduate Std.)	4.	Program Resources (+ Graduate Std.)
5.	Faculty 5.1 Faculty and Staff (+ Graduate Std.)	5.	Faculty and Staff (+ Graduate Std.)
6.	Academic Policies and Standards 6.1 Academic Policies (+ Graduate Std.) 6.2 Student Recruitment, Admissions and Credit Transfer (+ Graduate Std.) 6.3 Academic Freedom, Honesty and Integrity	6.	Academic Policies, Admissions and Credit Transfer (+ Graduate Std.) 6.1 Academic Policies 6.2 Admissions, Credit Transfer, and Prior Learning Assessment
7.	Student Policies and Services 7.1 Student Protection and Awareness 7.2 Student Life, Student Support Services (+ Graduate Std.)	7.	Contingency Plans in the Event of Program Discontinuation
		8.	Credential Recognition and Nomenclature
		9.	Commitment to Research and Scholarship (Graduate Std.)

Appendix B - Summary of the Policies Required of an Applicant Institution

Policy	Organizational Standard(s)	Program Standard(s)
	"**G**" denotes Graduate Standard and/ or Criteria	
Institutional		
Institutional Review	2.2	
Program Review	2.3	2
Strategic Planning	3.1	
Governance – selection, evaluation and succession of governing board members	3.1	
Intellectual leadership for graduate programs	3.1, **G**	
Consultative processes with students and external agencies	3.1	
Participation by academic staff in decision-making processes	3.1	
Ethical Conduct (business practices)	3.2	
Conflict of Interest	3.2	
FOIPP – Collection and use of personal information	3.2	
Dispute Resolution	3.3, 6.1	
Financial Audits	4.1	
Safety and Emergency Preparedness	4.2	
Academic Freedom	5.1, 6.3, **G**	5
Human Resource Development and Management	5.1, **G**	
Notification of Statement of Faith/Code of Conduct	6.3	
Natural Justice	6.3	
Contingency Plan for Program Discontinuation		7
Faculty	5	5
Numbers	5.1	
Appointments (balance between ongoing and temporary)	5.1	5, **G**
Institutional reporting structure(s)	5.1	
Qualifications/credentials	5.1	5, **G**
Due diligence on hiring	5.1	
Fraudulent credentials	5.1	
Duties and responsibilities	5.1	
Teaching, supervision and counseling loads	5.1, **G**	5, **G**
Expectations for research and scholarship	5.1, **G**	5, **G**

Policy	Organizational Standard(s)	Program Standard(s)
Performance standards	5.1, **G**	
Performance evaluation (including student evaluation of teaching and supervision)	5.1, **G**	5
Promotion	5.1	
Termination	5.1	
Currency of knowledge in the field	5.1	5
Professional development	5.1	5
Thesis/dissertation and oral examination committees	5.1, **G**	
Mentoring practices to enhance graduate supervisory skills		5, **G**
Research and sabbatical leaves	5.1, **G**	
Research output relative to salary rewards	5.1, **G**	
Comprehensive/candidacy examination requirements	5.1, **G**	
In-house grants to support research	5.1, **G**	
Support for research grant applications to external agencies	5.1, **G**	
Research and Scholarship		
Research culture	5	5, **G**, 9,**G**
Ownership of Intellectual Property (employees and students)	5.1, 6.1, 6.3, 7.1, **G**	
Ethical conduct	5.1, 6.3, **G**	9, **G**
Management of research funds	5.1, 6.3, **G**	
Safety and biohazards	5.1, **G**	
Responsibility and accountability	5.1, **G**	
Use of human research participants	5.1, 6.3, **G**	
Use of animals in research	5.1, 6.3, **G**	9, **G**
Technology transfer and commercialization	5.1, **G**	
Academic/Student	6, **G**, 7	6
Recruitment	6.2, **G**	6, **G**
Admission requirements, including:	6.2, **G**	6, **G**
• Credit transfer	6.2, 7.1, G	6, G,8
• Academic prerequisites	6.2, 7.1, G	
• Prior learning assessment	7.1	6
• Provisions for part-time study	7.1	6
• Re-admission after time expiry	7.1	6
• Continuous registration requirements	7.1	6
• Entrance/placement examinations	7.1	

Policy	Organizational Standard(s)	Program Standard(s)
• Direct Entry	7.1	6
• Mature students	7.1	6
Payment of fees	7.1	
Fee differentials	7.1	
Financial assistance, scholarships	7.1,7.2, **G**	
Assessment, progression and graduation requirements	6.2, **G**	
Grading; satisfactory standing	6.2, 7.1	
Dispute resolution; appeal of grades	3.3, 6.2, 7.1	
Student withdrawal, dismissal, and refunds	6.2, 7.1	
International students	7.1	
Methods of course delivery	7.1	3
Experiential learning agreements, work placements		3
Academic honesty	6.1, 6.3, 7.1	
Student support services	6.1, 7.1	
Supervision, preparation and examination of projects	7.1	
Employment of graduate students – teaching assistantships	7.2, **G**	
Faculty commitment to graduate students	7.2, **G**	
Transcript protection	7.1	
Technology-based delivery		3
Residency		6
Credential Recognition		8