



February 13, 2019

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to provide an overview of the activities of the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) in 2018, the Board's sixth year in operation.

The SHEQAB typically meets three times each year, in the winter, spring and fall. The meetings this year were held at Saskatchewan Polytechnic (Saskatoon), the University of Regina, and the University of Saskatchewan. Thank you to these post-secondary institutions for sharing their facilities with us.

The Board was happy to welcome former Minister of Advanced Education Herb Cox and Deputy Minister Mark McLoughlin at its January meeting, Minister Tina Beaudry-Mellor at its June meeting and again Deputy Minister Mark McLoughlin at its November meeting. These occasions enable the Board and Government to discuss the current and future work of the SHEQAB keeping in mind the best interest of students and the post-secondary sector.

This year the Board was pleased to welcome its newest members Ms. Tavia Laliberte (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies), Dr. Keith Walker (University of Saskatchewan) and myself (University of Regina). Members whose terms expired included Dr. Ronald Bond (Chair), Dr. Karen Barnes (Vice-Chair), Dr. Marie Battiste, and Dr. Robin Fisher. A big thank you goes out to these talented individuals for their six years of service and commitment to the SHEQAB as founding members. The Minister has since appointed me as Chair, Dr. Ryan Walker as Vice-Chair and re-appointed Dr. Thomas Chase, Dr. Fay Myers, and Dr. Asit Sarkar for a second and final term. The SHEQAB has one outstanding vacancy.

The SHEQAB Competency and Composition Matrix is a tool used to recruit appropriately skilled Board members. At the request of the Minister, the Board reviewed the Matrix to broaden representation from industry, the information technology sector, and other public interest groups. As you may already know, the Board is currently seeking nominations for an eighth member to fill the vacant spot.

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To date, the Minister has authorized six degree programs in Saskatchewan, including:

Briercrest College and Seminary:

- Bachelor of Arts in Humanities (2013-2020)
- Bachelor of Arts in English/English (Honours) (2015-2022)
- Bachelor of Arts in History/History (Honours) (2018-2025)
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (2018-2025)

Saskatchewan Polytechnic:

- Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing (2013-2020)
- Bachelor of Construction Management (2017-2024)

The SHEQAB's mandate includes ensuring degree programs meet quality assurance standards. As such, the SHEQAB commissions organizational and/or program panels to conduct quality assurance reviews of proposed new degrees. In the fall, the Minister asked the SHEQAB to conduct a quality assurance review of Saskatchewan Polytechnic's proposed Bachelor of Applied Management. The SHEQAB is working to coordinate an external program panel to conduct a review of the new degree program and will report its findings to the Minister in 2019.

As part of its monitoring function, the Board reviews reports submitted by institutions offering authorized degrees. This year, the Board reviewed Briercrest's year three report on its Bachelor of Arts in English/English (Honours). When authorized programs enter their fifth year of delivery, institutions are required to undertake a more comprehensive review that includes, among other things, a program review by an external panel. Briercrest submitted a comprehensive report to the Board for its Bachelor of Arts in Humanities. Similarly, Saskatchewan Polytechnic submitted its comprehensive report on the Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing. The Board reviewed the reports to determine how the programs are meeting quality assurance standards and reported the findings to the Minister.

Year one monitoring reports for Briercrest's Bachelor of Arts in History/History (Honours) and Saskatchewan Polytechnic's Bachelor of Construction Management are anticipated in the fall of 2019. Further, Briercrest may launch its newly authorized Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in September 2019. The Board looks forward to hearing about these new programs in the coming years.

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The quality assurance standards used to assess institutions seeking authorization of undergraduate (Bachelor's) and graduate (Master's and doctoral) level programs are approved by the Minister of Advanced Education. The SHEQAB is legislated to conduct a review of the standards every two years. The last review took place in the Spring of 2018. With the exception of policy-related considerations that were passed on to the Ministry of Advanced Education, there were no changes to the standards.

Separate from the review of the standards, the SHEQAB made a recommendation to the Minister regarding a revision to the *Bachelor's Degree Level Standard* to include requirements for three-year degrees. The Minister accepted the SHEQAB's recommendation and the updated standard, which includes the new criteria for three-year degrees, has been published on the SHEQAB website. The SHEQAB is exploring whether Indigenization should be incorporated into the quality assurance standards. A Subcommittee of the SHEQAB will continue to work on this in 2019.

The Ministry of Advanced Education is conducting a review of *The Degree Authorization Act* (Act) and *The Degree Authorization Regulations* (Regulations), which it committed to doing with the enactment of legislation in 2012. Ministry officials attended the SHEQAB's November meeting to provide an overview of the proposed changes to the Act and Regulations. The Board was pleased to provide its advice on a number of the proposed revisions.

The SHEQAB is supported in all aspects of its work by a dedicated and professional Secretariat led by Michèle BirnsHahn, Director, who joined the Ministry's Quality Assurance and Private Vocational Schools Branch in July 2018. The Secretariat provides policy and procedural advice, organizes Board meetings, prepares correspondence and briefings, orients new Board members, maintains the SHEQAB website, and coordinates external panel reviews. Through monthly teleconferences, the Secretariat liaises with its counterparts in other jurisdictions, including the Degree Quality Assessment Board in British Columbia, Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Ontario Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, the Council of Ontario Universities' Quality Council, the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, the Indigenous Institutes Quality Assessment Board, and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. Inter-agency discussions focus on new developments in quality assurance across the country and the sharing of best practices in quality assurance in higher education.

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For more information about the SHEQAB, please visit our website (www.quality-assurance-sk.ca). There you will find the minutes of Board meetings, the quality assurance standards that form the basis for organizational and program reviews, Board members' biographies, and other information regarding Saskatchewan's degree authorization and quality assurance review processes.

If you have any questions, or would like to provide input regarding SHEQAB's activities, please feel free to contact me through the Secretariat by e-mailing info@quality-assurance-sk.ca. Please feel free to forward this letter to others who may be interested in the work of the Board.

My colleagues on the Board and I are pleased to be able to contribute to the quality assurance of new degree programs in Saskatchewan. We look forward to an eventful 2019 in Saskatchewan's higher education sector.

Sincerely,



Kathleen McNutt, PhD
Chair, SHEQAB

cc: Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education
Mark McLoughlin, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education
Michèle BirnsHahn, SHEQAB Secretariat

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