



## Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB)

### Minutes of the Fourth Meeting held October 23, 2013 University of Regina, Regina, SK

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- Board Members:** Grant Isaac (Chair); Ronald Bond (Vice-Chair); Karen Barnes; Robin Fisher (by teleconference); Irene Lewis (by teleconference); Mhairi (Vi) Maeers; Bill McLaughlin
- Regrets:** Marie Battiste
- Guests at the Invitation of the Chair:** Louise Greenberg, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education – for Agenda Item 5  
Shane Garritty, Executive Assistant to the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education – for Agenda Item 5  
Reg Urbanowski, Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Advanced Education
- Secretariat:** Patti Bateman; Philip Cameron

#### 1. Congratulations

Board members extended heartfelt congratulations to Marie Battiste, who was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in September 2013.

#### 2. Approval of Agenda

**It was moved and seconded (McLaughlin/Bond) to approve the Agenda as presented, with the addition of items regarding business cards and the Code of Conduct. Carried.**

#### 3. Approval of Minutes of the May 28, 2013, Meeting

**It was moved and seconded (Bond/Barnes) to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2013, meeting as presented. CARRIED.**

#### 4. Business Arising from the Minutes of the May 28, 2013 Meeting

##### a. Adoption of SHEQAB Operating Principles (draft September 18, 2013)

**It was moved and seconded (McLaughlin/Barnes) to adopt the SHEQAB Operating Principles as presented. CARRIED.**

#### **b. Quality Assurance Standards for Graduate Degrees**

The Board reviewed draft standards (ver. September 26, 2013) developed by the Secretariat, along with feedback on the draft standards provided by the Deans of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. The Board expressed its appreciation to the Deans for their considered input and directed the Secretariat to continue the development process. The Board's preference is for a less prescriptive approach with a greater focus on outcomes rather than inputs. The Secretariat will prepare a new draft for consideration at the next meeting.

#### **c. Expert Advisors**

The Secretariat confirmed that due to regulatory and financial administration limitations, the Minister will make the final determination of the composition of external review panels after receiving recommendations from SHEQAB.

#### **d. SHEQAB Professional Development Plan**

The Secretariat will continue to explore opportunities for Board and Secretariat professional development activities. To facilitate information sharing and opportunities for on-line discussion, the Ministry will establish an on-line learning community for the Board's use. Board members are invited to send any ideas they have for professional development to Philip Cameron.

#### **e. Chair's Letter to the Sector**

In November 2013, the Chair will send a letter to the Minister, Deputy Minister, senior officials at all Saskatchewan post-secondary education institutions, and other interested parties outlining the Board's activities during its inaugural year. The letter will also be posted on the Board's website.

#### **f. Associate Degrees**

Philip Cameron reported on the use of associate degrees in British Columbia, noting that a recent report on associate degrees by the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer articulates challenges related to credit transfer, access, and public/employer recognition. The Ministry is currently engaged in internal discussions regarding potential requirements for associate degrees in Saskatchewan. Since associate degrees are included in the definition of 'degree' that is included in *The Degree Authorization Act*, standards are also required.

The Board acknowledged the potential benefit of retaining more students in Saskatchewan if associate degrees are recognized by the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan for credit transfer purposes, but also acknowledged that employers and others in Canada do not necessarily understand associate degrees in the way they are understood in the USA.

The Secretariat will update the Board on the Ministry's position regarding associate degrees at the Board's next meeting.

### **5. Deputy Minister's Presentation on Situational Trends**

Louise Greenberg presented an overview of the challenges and opportunities facing Saskatchewan's post-secondary education sector. She spoke to the significant need for an educated labour force, as articulated in the Government's *Plan for Growth*, and stressed that the post-secondary system must be focused on quality, efficiency, and responsiveness to labour market needs. In addition, the system must

be sustainable and have meaningful accountability measures in place. Of particular importance is the need for better outcomes for First Nations and Métis students and for adult literacy attainment.

Various sector/Ministry working groups have been formed to address priority initiatives, including the Growth and Sustainability Action Team, the Deputy Minister's Policy Panel, and the Vision 2030 Working Group. In November 2013, a multi-institution forum will be held to develop a collaborative framework to facilitate system-wide planning and decision-making.

Also of note was the close alignment between the criteria found in section 8 of *The Degree Authorization Regulations*, which apply to the assessment of new degree applications in Phase I of the degree authorization process, and the Ministry's current approaches to reviewing programs and services. The key point of commonality is the focus on meeting the social and economic needs of the province.

## **6. Minister's Referrals**

On September 24, 2013, the Minister referred to the Board two *Applications for Authorization* submitted by Briercrest College and Seminary (Briercrest), the first for a Bachelor of Arts English/English (Honours), the second for a Bachelor of Arts History/History (Honours). Accompanying the applications were compilations of the comments submitted to the Ministry during the 30-day public consultation period that occurred in May 2013 at the outset of Phase I of the degree authorization process.

It was agreed to defer a decision regarding the precise nature of the quality assurance review required for each application until the Board is briefed regarding Briercrest's long-term degree plan. Briercrest has expressed its intentions to submit multiple applications over the next few years. The Board would like to acquire a better understanding of how Briercrest will manage the expansion of its authorized programs, particularly from a cultural transformation perspective and from an HR management perspective. The Board may determine that there would be value in including elements of an organizational review within the program reviews that will be required for both applications.

Ministry officials and Secretariat staff will meet with senior officials from Briercrest on October 29, 2013, to discuss Briercrest's degree plan. The Secretariat will brief the Board following the meeting with Briercrest, and the Board will then determine how the reviews should be structured.

Potential external reviewers were identified, including nominees submitted by Briercrest. The Secretariat will coordinate the selection process with the Board in the coming weeks, and will then forward the names of the Board's nominees to the Minister.

## **7. SIAST Authorization – Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing (BPN)**

Pursuant to the Terms and Conditions attached to the Minister's authorization of the BPN program, SIAST provided the Board with the following documents:

- Academic Freedom - Policy and Procedure Statement A-1.4 (approved May 6, 2013)
- External Program Review for Degree Programs – Policy and Procedure Statement A-1.11 (approved September 12, 2013)
- BPN Program Learning Outcomes (originally included in SIAST's Program Self-Evaluation submitted to the Interim Quality Assurance Board in April 2012).

The Board was satisfied with the documents as provided and commended SIAST on its thorough and conscientious response.

#### **8. Monitoring Framework (draft September 16, 2013)**

The Board reviewed a first draft of a framework that will establish how authorized programs will be monitored. The Secretariat will incorporate the Board's feedback in a new draft to be prepared for the next meeting. The next draft will also be provided to SIAST and Briercrest to provide the institutions with as much lead time as possible to enable them to meet anticipated reporting requirements.

#### **9. External Panel Guide (draft September 30, 2013)**

The Board approved the draft as presented. It was agreed that the External Panel Guide will be revised periodically as experience with external panels is acquired. In the interests of consistency and completeness, the Board expressed a preference for using a 'checklist' approach for panel reports, provided that ample opportunity is available for the provision of the panel's comments.

#### **10. Ministry Update**

##### **a. New Minister of Advanced Education**

Effective September 13, 2013, the Honourable Rob Norris became the Minister of Advanced Education, succeeding the Honourable Don Morgan, who assumed the Education portfolio.

##### **b. Fall Sitting of the Legislature**

The fall session of the Saskatchewan Legislature will run from October 23 to December 5, 2013. The Throne Speech speaks to new training seats at SIAST and the Regional Colleges, as well as legislative changes that will formalize SIAST's status as a polytechnic.

##### **c. Budget process for Post-secondary Institutions**

In September 2013, the Ministry of Finance (Treasury Board) held meetings with public post-secondary institutions to begin budget discussions. Additional meetings will be held as the budget process continues.

##### **d. First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv)**

FNUniv is developing its Strategic Plan. The Ministry does not anticipate receiving an application for authorization from FNUniv in the near future.

##### **e. Policy Panel**

The next meeting of the Policy Panel is scheduled for the end of November 2013. The Panel is considering the topic of transnational education. Reg Urbanowski will brief the Board on this topic at the next meeting.

##### **f. What is a "University"?**

The Ministry is currently engaged in internal discussions regarding the question of "What is a University?" and, more specifically, what the criteria should be for assessing requests from institutions seeking approval to use the term "university". The Ministry will provide a more fulsome briefing regarding this topic at the next meeting.

**g. University Audits**

The Ministry has been advised by legal counsel that the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina cannot voluntarily submit to an audit of their internal quality assurance review processes, as they had previously indicated they would, because they are exempt from the Act. The exemption preserves the autonomy of the institutions and ensures that the institutions are not perceived as coming under any level of control or influence by government.

**11. Other Business**

**a. Business Cards**

The Secretariat will order business cards that reflect the distinctive SHEQAB visual identity. Board members are welcome to have cards if they would find them useful.

**b. Code of Conduct**

Board members will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging adherence to the SHEQAB Code of Conduct (adopted May 28, 2013).

**12. Next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2014, in Saskatoon; however, the meeting may be re-scheduled to the latter part of February or early March to provide additional time for the Briercrest external reviews to be completed prior to the next meeting, should the Board, after receiving Briercrest's degree plan, determine that the reviews should proceed. The meeting date will be finalized within the next few weeks.

**13. Adjournment**

With all business completed, the Chair adjourned the meeting.