

April 29, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I hope you are staying well as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our lives and as we seek a new path forward for post-secondary education in Saskatchewan.

I am writing to provide an overview of the activities of the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) in 2019, along with some brief comments on our more current activities.

In keeping with established practice, the SHEQAB met three times in 2019, twice to conduct business and once for a retreat. To reduce operating costs, our core business meetings in May and November were held via videoconference. Based on the success of these meetings, we intend to enhance the use of distance technology and other innovative platforms for Board activities going forward.

In October, the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy hosted and facilitated a two-day retreat for the SHEQAB. The retreat allowed the Board to reflect upon the achievements and learnings over the first seven years of implementation of Saskatchewan's degree authorization framework, and consider improvements and future priorities, as demonstrated below:

The SHEQAB received presentations from representatives of Saskatchewan Polytechnic and Briercrest College and Seminary that addressed their experience with Saskatchewan's degree authorization framework and future degree proposal plans. The Ministry of Advanced Education anticipates receiving a number of degree proposals from Briercrest in 2020.

- Jennifer Brass, Senior Indigenous Advisor with the Ministry of Advanced Education, updated the Board on Indigenization activities within the post-secondary sector.
- The Board laid the groundwork for its first five-year Strategic Plan, which has since been finalized. I'm pleased to enclose a copy of the Strategic Plan for your reference.

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- The Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education, tasked the SHEQAB with leading the development of a micro-credentials framework that will support the expanded use of micro-credentials in Saskatchewan. You'll note that this priority has been incorporated in the Board's Strategic Plan, under the objective of supporting higher education in Saskatchewan that prepares students to be leaders in the evolving global economy. The ministry is assisting the Board with this important work and will be reaching out to the sector as an action plan is further developed.

This year the SHEQAB was pleased to welcome Jay Notay, President and CEO of Northwest College, as the newest member of the Board. In the coming weeks, I will be seeking nominations for two positions on the Board, the first created by the recent departure of Dr. Thomas Chase from the Board, who is now the Interim President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Regina, and the second that will be created by the pending departure of Dr. Ryan Walker, whose term will be ending in May. Please watch for separate correspondence regarding the Call for Nominations process.

The SHEQAB's mandate includes ensuring degree programs meet quality assurance standards. As such, the SHEQAB commissions quality assurance reviews of proposed new degree programs.

- In the fall of 2018, the Minister asked the SHEQAB to conduct a quality assurance review of Saskatchewan Polytechnic's proposed Bachelor of Applied Management. By June 2019, the Board had completed its review, and, in July, the Minister authorized Saskatchewan Polytechnic to begin offering its Bachelor of Applied Management.
- In the spring of 2019, Cape Breton University applied for authorization of its Master of Business Administration in Community Economic Development, a degree program it has delivered in Saskatchewan, in partnership with Great Plains College, since 2009. When *The Degree Authorization Act* was proclaimed in 2012, this degree was exempted from the Act for a period to enable Cape Breton University to apply for authorization. The exemption period will expire on June 30, 2020. Following completion of the ministry's system coordination review, Cabinet approved the application and referred it to the SHEQAB for an expedited quality assurance review. The SHEQAB is completing the expedited review process and, in June 2020, will make a recommendation to the Minister regarding authorization.

Saskatchewan now has the following seven authorized degree programs:

Briercrest College and Seminary:

- Bachelor of Arts in Humanities (2013-ongoing)
- 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-ongoing)
- Bachelor of Construction Management (2017-2024)
- Bachelor of Applied Management (2019 – ongoing)

You will note that the authorizations for three degree programs are now ongoing, with no expiry date. The ministry has, through a policy change, eliminated the requirement for degree programs to be periodically re-authorized, a measure that has reduced red tape, lowered institutional costs and improved student confidence. In the coming years, the expiry dates attached to the remaining four authorizations will also be removed. The SHEQAB will continue its annual monitoring of all degree programs to ensure that quality standards continue to be met.

The Ministry of Advanced Education is proceeding with amendments to *The Degree Authorization Regulations*. The Board reviewed the ministry's consultation document on *Proposed Amendments to The Degree Authorization Regulations* and provided its feedback to the ministry. The updated Regulations are expected to come into force in 2020.

The SHEQAB is supported in all aspects of its work by a dedicated and professional Secretariat, which provides policy and procedural advice, organizes Board meetings, prepares correspondence and briefings, orients new Board members, maintains SHEQAB webpage content, and coordinates external panel reviews. Through monthly teleconferences, the Secretariat liaises with quality assurance agencies 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.

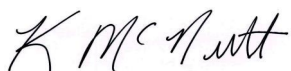
I wish to thank Michèle Birns Hahn, former Director of the Secretariat, for the excellent support she provided the Board in 2019. Michèle left the Secretariat in December 2019 to pursue another opportunity with the Government of Saskatchewan. Tammy Jones is now Acting Director, and I thank her for agreeing to take on this important function and for her continuing support.

In an effort to streamline communication, all information about the SHEQAB has been moved to the Government of Saskatchewan's website. The former SHEQAB website has been disabled. Please use this [link](#) to access 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 contact me through the Secretariat by emailing 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 wish you much success as you move forward with plans for the delivery of programs and student services within these very challenging times. Take good care.

Sincerely,



Kathleen McNutt, PhD
Chair, SHEQAB

cc: Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education
Mark McLoughlin, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education
Tammy Jones, SHEQAB Secretariat
SHEQAB Board Members

Enclosure: Strategic Plan

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Distribution List:

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Institute of Technologies

Ms. Madison Leister, President of Student Government, Briercrest College and Seminary

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Dr. Jeromey Martini, President, Horizon College and Seminary

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