Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board

Quality Assurance Review Process

Bachelor's Degree Level Standard

Approved July 26, 2018

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SASKATCHEWAN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE

Government of Saskatchewan

The information presented in this document is used by the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) to conduct quality assurance reviews of institutions seeking authorization to provide bachelor's (baccalaureate) degrees pursuant to *The Degree Authorization Act*.

This standard was approved by the Minister of Advanced Education
July 26, 2018 and supersedes the standard approved May 14, 2014.

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Introduction

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, to which Saskatchewan is a signatory, includes the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF), which addresses:

- The salient characteristics of degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels;
- Degree level standards, which describe the demonstrable learning skills and level of mastery required of graduates at each degree level; and
- Procedures and standards for assessing new degree-granting institutions and proposed new degree programs.

The CDQF provides a common foundation for the quality assurance reviews of degree-granting institutions and degree programs across Canada.

An institution seeking authorization pursuant to *The Degree Authorization Act* for a bachelor's level program must ensure that the program has characteristics and learning outcomes consistent with those presented in this document, which are directly based on the CDQF. These requirements are intended to:

- Facilitate the assessment of credentials for the broad purpose of credit transfer and credential recognition;
- Promote the recognition of Saskatchewan graduates both nationally and internationally; and
- Serve as a foundation for Saskatchewan's quality assurance review process.

The **characteristics** of bachelor's degree programs are categorized as follows:

a) Program Design and Outcome Emphasis
b) Preparation for Employment and Further Study
c) Length of Program and Distribution Requirements
d) Admission Requirements.

Degree level standards, which specify the learning outcomes required for bachelor's programs, are categorized in the following **six dimensions**:

1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge
2. Knowledge of Methodologies
3. Application of Knowledge
4. Communication Skills
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
6. Professional Capacity/Autonomy

Characteristics of a Bachelor's Degree

The following four descriptions of degree characteristics are intended to capture the most salient general aspects of bachelor's degrees offered in Canada. These characteristics apply to a broad spectrum of disciplines, program types, and program lengths, including three- and four-year degrees.

a) Program Design and Outcome Emphasis

The bachelor's degree is designed to:

- Acquaint the student with basic conceptual approaches and methodologies of the principal discipline(s) that constitute the program of study;
- Provide some specialized knowledge; and
- Nurture the capacity for independent work in the discipline(s) and field of practice.

All bachelor's degree programs are designed to provide graduates with the knowledge and skills that enable them to develop the capacity for independent intellectual work. That capacity may be demonstrated by the preparation, under supervision, of one or more essays, a terminal research paper, thesis, project, exhibition, or other research-based or performance-based exercise that demonstrates methodological competence and capacity for independent and ethical intellectual/creative work and, where relevant, the exercise of professional responsibility in a field of practice.

Bachelor's degree programs are intended to provide:

- A wide exposure to several disciplines; or
- An in-depth education in one or more disciplines (often as preparation for graduate study); or
- A blend of theory and practice that equips students for entry into an occupation or profession.

Despite this diversity, each bachelor's degree program must meet a substantial and common set of competency outcomes, as outlined below, to justify use of the bachelor's degree label.

The range of bachelor's degree programs includes:

Programs Designed to Provide a Broad Education as an End in Itself

Such programs may also prepare graduates for employment in a variety of fields and/or for admission to second entry professional programs. Examples: B. Hum (Humanities); General B.A. and General B.Sc. degrees.

Programs Designed to Provide In-Depth Study in Academic Disciplines

Such programs normally prepare students for graduate study in the discipline(s) (e.g., honours degrees) and for employment in a variety of fields.

Programs with an Applied Focus

Such programs blend theory and practice, with content selected to ensure mastery of the field of practice, and to prepare students for employment and for advanced study in relevant graduate and professional programs.

Programs with a Professional Focus

Such programs are designed to prepare graduates to meet admission requirements and to be competent practitioners in the profession. Some of them are first-entry programs, others are second-entry programs (that is, they require some prior degree-level study or a degree). They normally require periods of practical experience (apprenticeship, internship, articling, clinical, etc.). The capacity for independent professional work is demonstrated by academic and practical exercises, under supervision, followed by admission tests for entry into the profession. Though considered to be bachelor programs in academic standing, some professional programs yield degrees with other nomenclature (e.g., D.D.S. (Dental Surgery); M.D. (Medicine); LL.B (Law); or J.D. (Juris Doctor)).

b) Preparation for Employment and Further Study

In addition to providing personal and intellectual growth, bachelor's degree programs may prepare students for entry into graduate study in a field, second-entry professional degree programs, or employment in one or more fields.

c) Length of Program and Distribution Requirements

Classroom instruction is typically between six and eight semesters or more in duration (normally 90 to 120 credits or the equivalent) and may be supplemented by required professional experience (e.g. supervised practicum, internships, and work terms).

Distribution requirements ensure that students are exposed to courses outside their areas of specialization. Such exposure adds breadth to a program of study and is a defining characteristic of a liberal arts and sciences education.

Three and four-year bachelor degree programs should include an appropriate distribution of credit requirements (areas of study/discipline) with considered alignment to that being offered at other post-secondary institutions in and outside the province.

d) Admission Requirements

Admission normally requires at a minimum:

- Secondary school and/or university preparatory courses;
- A defined minimum grade-point average; and
- Other program-specific requirements.

Students lacking these credentials may be admitted on a part-time or probationary basis, with continuation in the program subject to acceptable academic achievement.

Second entry programs normally require at least two or three years of completed degree-level studies or, in some cases, the prior or concurrent completion of another undergraduate degree.

Dimensions of Specialized Knowledge for a Bachelor's Degree

The following table outlines degree-level standards and expectations of graduates from three and four-year degree programs. The standards outline the demonstrable transferable learning skills and level of mastery of a body of specialized knowledge in six areas:

1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge
2. Knowledge of Methodologies of Research
3. Application of Knowledge
4. Communication Skills
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge
6. Professional Capacity/Autonomy

Among other things, the degree-level standards are intended to facilitate the assessment of credentials for purposes of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning, to provide clear learning outcome standards to instructional and program designers, and to be a guide for quality assurance purposes.

As articulated in the following table, three-year degrees provide a more generalized learning experience in a particular field of study, resulting in a lower level of specialization. Of importance, however, is the requirement for all students to gain an acceptable level of critical inquiry (independent research, analysis, problem solving) in both three and four-year degree programs.

	Three-Year (90 Credits) Bachelor's Degree	Four-Year (120 Credits) Bachelor's Degree
1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge	a) Knowledge and basic understanding of the principle assumptions, methodologies and applications of the discipline, the main fields within the discipline and the discipline's relationship with other disciplines. b) The ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret new information relevant to the discipline. c) Some detailed knowledge in specialized areas. d) The ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.	a) Knowledge and critical understanding in a field of study that builds upon the student's secondary education and includes the key assumptions, methodologies and applications of the discipline and/or field of practice. b) Basic understanding of the range of fields within the discipline/field of practice and of how the discipline may intersect with fields in related disciplines. c) The ability to gather, review, evaluate and interpret information, including new information relevant to the discipline; and to compare the merits of alternate hypotheses or creative options relevant to one or more of the major fields in a discipline. d) The capacity to engage in independent research or practice in a supervised context. e) Critical thinking and analytical skills inside and outside the discipline. f) The ability to apply learning from one or more areas outside the discipline.

	Three-Year (90 Credits) Bachelor's Degree	Four-Year (120 Credits) Bachelor's Degree
2. Knowledge of Methodologies of Research	A general understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in the primary area of study that enables the student to: a) Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; and b) Devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods.	An understanding of methods of enquiry or creative activity, or both, in the primary area of study that enables the student to: a) Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems using well established ideas and techniques; b) Devise and sustain arguments or solve problems using these methods; and c) Describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research or equivalent advanced scholarship in the discipline and how these are relevant to the evolution of the discipline.

	Three-Year (90 Credits) Bachelor's Degree	Four-Year (120 Credits) Bachelor's Degree
3. Application of Knowledge	a) The ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to: • Develop lines of argument; • Make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study. b) The ability to use a range of established techniques to: • Analyze information; • Evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to the area(s) of study; and/or • Propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis. c) The ability to use scholarly reviews and primary sources.	a) The ability to review, present and critically evaluate qualitative and quantitative information to: • Develop lines of argument; • Make sound judgments in accordance with the major theories, concepts and methods of the subject(s) of study; • Apply underlying concepts, principles, and techniques of analyses, both within and outside the discipline; and • Where appropriate, use this knowledge in the creative process. b) The ability to use a range of established techniques to: • Initiate and undertake critical evaluation of arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and information; • Propose solutions; • Frame appropriate questions for the purpose of solving a problem; and • Solve a problem or create a new work. c) The ability to make critical use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.

	Three-Year (90 Credits) Bachelor's Degree	Four-Year (120 Credits) Bachelor's Degree
4. Communication Skills	The ability to communicate the results of the student's study/work accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, using structured and coherent arguments informed by concepts and techniques of the discipline.	The ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing, to a range of audiences, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, using structured and coherent arguments, and, where appropriate, informed by key concepts and techniques of the discipline.
5. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge	An understanding of the limits to the student's own knowledge and how this might influence the student's analyses and interpretations.	An understanding of the limits to the student's own knowledge and ability, and an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge and how this might influence analyses and interpretations.
6. Professional Capacity/ Autonomy	Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring: • The exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts; • Working effectively with others; and • Behaviour consistent with academic integrity.	Qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study, employment, community involvement and other activities requiring: • The exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in both personal and group contexts; • Working effectively with others; and • Behaviour consistent with academic integrity.

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