

February 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

This past year has been impactful and significant where we, as a sector, were faced with adversity in the form of a global pandemic, yet, most importantly, we experienced persistence and perseverance. Many innovations were implemented this past year in order to adapt to the pandemic, and we continue to discover new methods and paths as we move forward in our work to improve the quality of 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 2020.

In keeping with established practice, the SHEQAB met three times in 2020. The meetings in March and June were to conduct business, and the third meeting in December was a brief overview of current matters. The entirety of SHEQAB meetings this year were held online through videoconference. The use of this technology allowed the Board to continue to meet throughout the pandemic while ensuring we maintain a high quality of service as Board members, ensuring the safety of our members as well as reducing costs. We continue to enhance the use of technology and other innovative platforms as we move forward, such as the use of video technology to complete virtual site visits.

In 2020, the SHEQAB implemented its first Strategic Plan, which outlines the Board's direction for the next five years (2019-2024). Along with our mission, vision and values, our Strategic Plan provides information about the SHEQAB's Operating Principles, its Objectives, Key Actions, Activity and Performance Measures. To learn more, we invite you to review our Strategic Plan which has been enclosed for your convenience.

In December, the Ministry of Advanced Education and the SHEQAB co-hosted a micro-credentials learning event. This event shared knowledge and learnings regarding the current use and implementation of micro-credentials, as well as their anticipated evolution in the post-secondary sector. The panelists were experts from around Canada, the United States and New Zealand.

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This year, the SHEQAB was pleased to welcome Dr. Barbara Gustafson and Dr. Laurie Rancourt as new members of the Board. Dr. Gustafson currently serves as a Special Advisor to the Provost at Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Previously, she was a faculty member in the School of Business, a co-author of Saskatchewan's Polytechnic's Academic Model, and Director of Learner Pathways. Her work has included development of policies and processes to support quality assurance in all programs, including Saskatchewan Polytechnic's degrees.

Dr. Rancourt is currently Senior Vice-President, Academic at Humber College. In 2014, Dr. Rancourt was the President and CEO at Northern Lights College in British Columbia, where she undertook a comprehensive strategic planning processes. Under her leadership, the College saw increased enrolments in strategic areas and was designated by the Ministry of Advanced Education as the BC Centre of Training Excellence in Oil and Gas. She oversaw negotiating the management of successful local, regional, provincial and international partnerships, as well as the development of strengthened relationships within the community. We are fortunate to welcome these two members to the Board and the plethora of experience and knowledge they bring.

The SHEQAB's mandate includes ensuring degree programs meet quality assurance standards. SHEQAB commissions quality assurance reviews of proposed new degree programs. This past year, SHEQAB completed its review of Cape Breton University's Master of Business Administration in Community Economic Development. The Government of Saskatchewan has authorized a total of eight degree programs as follows:

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)

Cape Breton University:

- Master of Business Administration in Community Economic Development (2020 – ongoing)

As a reminder, last year the Ministry of Advanced Education removed the authorization end dates for two degree programs to be periodically re-authorized; a measure that has reduced red tape, lowered institutional costs and improved student confidence. 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 completed its amendments to *The Degree Authorization Regulations* which are now in force. Notable changes to the Regulations include revisions to extend the grandfathering period of four undergraduate theological degrees from June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2023; and to establish June 30, 2025 as the grandfathering expiry date for graduate theological degrees. Moreover, the revised Regulations lengthen the review cycle for quality assurance standards from two years to five years. Additionally, the revised Regulations allow the SHEQAB to select expert review panel advisors without having to obtain the approval of the Minister of Advanced Education.

As you may know, the SHEQAB Secretariat provides an important support function to the Board. The Secretariat, among other things, provides policy and procedural advice, organizes Board meetings, coordinates quality assurance reviews, prepares correspondence and briefings, orients new Board members, and maintains SHEQAB webpage content. The Secretariat liaises with quality assurance organizations throughout Canada on a monthly basis, such as 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. This inter-agency discussion focuses on new developments in quality assurance across the country and the sharing of best practices in quality assurance in higher education.

This past year saw Tammy Jones become the Director of Quality Assurance and Private Vocational Schools Unit at the Ministry of Advanced Education. She and her staff, Gamal bin Ghanem, Evan Holmes, Priyanka Roy and Wanda Billard, comprise the Secretariat to the SHEQAB. I thank her and the rest of the Secretariat for their continuing support of the SHEQAB.

As a reminder, the communication regarding SHEQAB has been moved to the Government of Saskatchewan's website. 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 the SHEQAB's activities, please contact me through the Secretariat by emailing info@quality-assurance-sk.ca. I invite you 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 with these times of challenges and growth.

Sincerely,



Kathleen McNutt, PhD
Chair, SHEQAB

cc: Honourable Gene Makowsky, Minister of Advanced Education
Mark McLoughlin, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education
Mike Pestill, Executive Director, Ministry of Advanced Education
SHEQAB Board Members
Tammy Jones, SHEQAB Secretariat

Enclosure: Strategic Plan

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Distribution List:

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