

PEQAB

Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board
Commission d'évaluation de la qualité de l'éducation postsecondaire

Report on Recommendations of the PEQAB Self-Study

November 2010

At the Board's meeting of November 15th, 2010, the Board considered the secretariat's report on the Board's progress toward implementing the recommendations of the self-study and approved the Report on Recommendations.

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Introduction

Following a brief overview of the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB/Board) and its processes, this report addresses the Board's progress on implementing recommendations for improvement to its criteria and procedures identified during an internal review. In January 2009, the Board commenced a self-study on all aspects of PEQAB's operations during its first seven years. The purpose of the study was to ensure the rigor and transparency of its criteria and processes, and to prepare the Board for an external review.

The self-study was structured to facilitate an analysis of the Board's operations against

- its legislative mandate as given in the *Post-secondary Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*, (PSECE Act/Act); and
- the benchmarks established by the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) as reflected in the *Guidelines of Good Practice*.

Methods employed for the review included:

- Archival: Audits of completed applications; review of Board materials for completeness, consistency, and accuracy.
- Research: a comparative analysis of the Board's criteria and processes with those of other quality assurance agencies in Canada and other jurisdictions; an analysis of the Board's impact on quality assurance practices in Ontario, in Canada, and elsewhere.
- Consultations: A combination of informal feedback and structured surveys on all aspects of the Board and secretariat's operations and criteria. Among those consulted:
 - Board members;
 - unsuccessful applicants;
 - consent holders;
 - experts assessors;
 - other quality assurance agencies; and
 - ministry staff.

The self-study was an iterative process. A number of matters were under review at any one time and the Board considered and approved aspects of the interim and final reports throughout a 12-month timeline.

The self-study was completed in December 2009, and the Board considered the recommendations of the interim report in January 2010. The recommendations focus on PEQAB criteria; transparency of criteria, procedures, and activities; criteria for continuous quality assurance of PEQAB; and PEQAB's contribution to quality assurance. This report is structured around these recommendations and the progress the Board has made in addressing them.

Self-Study Recommendations

PEQAB Criteria

- *That the Board*
 - *undertake a comprehensive review of all of its criteria to ensure it reflects standards recognized in Ontario and elsewhere; and*
 - *review and release new versions of its Handbooks for Applicants; Submission Guidelines; Quality Assessor and Organization Reviewer Report Guidelines.*

Transparency of Criteria, Procedures, and Activities

- *That the Board develop an explicit communications and publications strategy.*

Criteria for Continuous Quality Assurance of PEQAB

- *That the Board*
 - *develop a comprehensive strategy for assuring its own continuous quality;*
 - *develop a standard for ongoing quality assurance, including objectives and expected outcomes, against which it can review itself; and*
 - *include, as part of its comprehensive quality assurance strategy, a requirement*
 - *for cyclical, comprehensive internal review;*
 - *to collect, track, and respond to internal feedback;*
 - *for cyclical external evaluation;*
 - *for the use of feedback from its external evaluations; and*
 - *that a comprehensive survey of stakeholders be conducted every five to seven years.*
- *That*
 - *the 2009 Comprehensive Survey be used to inform the design of an annual survey;*
 - *the annual survey be*
 - *aligned with a more comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy; and*
 - *administered and analyzed by an independent party; and*
 - *the Board develop a strategy and procedure for reporting survey findings, responding to issues identified by respondents, and preserving these for the record.*

PEQAB's Contributions to Quality Assurance

- *That*
 - *the Board lead discussions with Canadian counterparts to establish a Canadian Quality Assurance Network;*
 - *the Chair and secretariat regularly attend the conferences/fora of INQAAHE, CHEA and other quality assurance agencies; and*
 - *the secretariat*
 - *participate in staff exchanges with other quality assurance agencies;*
 - *meet face-to-face regularly with the DQAB, CAQC, and MPHEC secretariats to share best practice;*
 - *demonstrate leadership in its contributions to the CMEC QAS; and*
 - *maintain accurate and complete records of collaborative activities, communications, and achievements.*

All recommendations have either been implemented, or are in development.

Chapter 1: Overview of PEQAB Mandate and Processes

As described in detail in the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study, PEQAB, established pursuant to the PSECE Act, is an arms-length quality assurance agency responsible for making recommendations to the Minister on applications for consent to offer a degree program, use the word “university”, and such other duties as may be prescribed.

The key features of the PSECE Act are:

- it established PEQAB;
- all organizations require either an act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or the consent of the Minister to offer a degree or use the term “university”;
- all applications must be referred to the Board for review and recommendation; and
- the Minister makes a decision about consent after having received the Board’s recommendation, at which point s/he considers both the recommendation and any matters of public policy related to the consent.

PEQAB is empowered by the Act to establish procedures and criteria that it will apply in reviewing applications referred to it. The criteria established by the Board are subject to two constraints. Criteria must:

- be in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions; and
- comply with such policy directions as may be given by the Minister.

The Minister has provided policy direction to the Board. The Board has been instructed to ensure that college degrees in applied areas do not duplicate those offered by universities, and that there be a demonstrated economic need for the degrees.

The Board consists of:

- a Chair appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council;
- a Vice Chair; and
- not more than nine other members appointed by the Minister.

Board membership includes representation from several sectors: colleges and universities, business, law, quality assurance, other provinces, and other stakeholders. The Board is supported by a secretariat that:

- manages applications for consent;
- represents the Board with key stakeholders, the ministry, regulatory bodies, and expert assessors to facilitate the comprehensive review of applications;
- undertakes research on degree granting and quality assurance;
- drafts the Board's assessment criteria, policies, and procedures.

Applicants for consent include all types of organizations that wish to offer degree programs (or parts of programs) and/or operate as a university (or university college) that do not have statutory authority to do so:

- **Private** (e.g., Niagara University of New York; Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College of Toronto);
- **Public out-of-province** (e.g., Charles Sturt University of Australia; Mount St. Vincent University of Nova Scotia);

- **Public in-province** (e.g., Michener Institute; Algoma University; Ontario College of Art and Design University; University of Ontario Institute of Technology); and
- **Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology** (CAATs).

Overview of the Consent Process

The **PEQAB review** process extends from the referral of an application by the Minister to the communication of the Board's recommendation on the application to the Minister. The entire **consent process**, however, involves three additional steps:

1. **Pre-referral:** occurs prior to the referral of an application to PEQAB.
2. **Post-recommendation Decision:** after the Board has made its recommendation the Minister makes his/her decision about whether to grant consent, and if so, what conditions to attach to the consent.
3. **Post-consent:** once a consent is granted, consent holders are subject to certain terms and conditions which may require further contact with the ministry during the life of the consent.

When feedback is received from applicants and consent holders by the secretariat (or the ministry) concerning the PEQAB process, the feedback often pertains not to the PEQAB process, but to these other steps, or the policy directives of the ministry. Before summarizing the PEQAB process, these additional steps in the consent process are briefly summarized.

1. Pre-referral

Ministry staff (not the secretariat) are responsible for administering and interpreting the Act, and for setting the application process. The ministry requires the applicant to submit a \$5,000 fee for each application, a letter to the Minister outlining the intended activities to be covered by the application, a signed agreement attesting to the truth of the application, and a PEQAB submission.

Ministry staff receive these materials and prepare a recommendation for the Minister's consideration that summarizes the proposed activities and identifies whether the activities are subject to the Act. If the activities are subject to the Act, staff also prepare a letter of referral to the Board for the Minister's signature. The length of time from receipt of application to its referral varies from a few weeks to several months.

2. Post-recommendation Decision

Following the Board's recommendation, ministry staff prepare a recommendation for the Minister's consideration that summarizes the proposed activities, whether there are any public policy or financial matters that may flow from the granting of a consent, and if consent is to be granted, what terms and conditions should apply to the consent. The length of time from the Minister's receipt of the Board's recommendation to the decision about consent varies from a few months to several years.

3. Post-consent

All consent holders are subject to certain conditions during consent, including that the program be maintained in conformity with PEQAB standards, and that material changes to programs not be made without notice to and permission of the Minister.

The ministry has communicated the kinds of changes that must be communicated to the Minister prior to being implemented.¹ Accordingly, consent holders may not make curriculum changes (except to maintain currency with the discipline); may not lower admission standards; may not create diploma-degree pathways where these were not proposed in the original application; may not diminish the resources available to support the program; and so on. Should consent holders wish to implement any material changes to programs, they are required to discuss the desired change with ministry staff who make the decision about whether the change requires a new application that must be referred back to PEQAB.

Overview of the PEQAB Process

As described in detail in the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study, the Board's review proceeds through a series of steps. All steps are identical for all types of providers with the exception of the organization review which applies to private providers only.

1. Secretariat

- reviews the application and confirms its completeness; identifies issues for the Board; and identifies potential expert reviewers for assessment panel;
- posts the application on the PEQAB web site and provides a 10-week period for the review of comments from the public²; and
- receives any stakeholder comment and forwards it to assessors and the applicant for response.

2. PEQAB

- considers the application and any matters requiring additional scrutiny;
- determines the assessment strategy; and
- appoints and instructs the Organization Review Panel and Quality Assessment Panel (for private applicants) or the Quality Assessment Panel only (for public and CAAT applicants).

3. Organization Review Panel (ORP)

- the panel of expert reviewers prepares a report against the Board's guidelines and submits it to the secretariat.

4. Secretariat

- reviews the ORP report for conformity to *Report Guidelines* and instructions from the Board;
- forwards the report to the applicant for response; and
- receives the applicant's response and seeks clarification when required.

¹ The (then) Minister sought PEQAB's advice in 2003 on what types of changes consent holders should be permitted to make during the life of a consent, and which should be subject to review prior to implementation. PEQAB's advice was adopted as policy, and communicated to consent holders. Ministry staff interpret the advice on a case by case basis.

² This was a 30-day period; however, the Ontario Council of Academic Vice Presidents requested a longer review period. For full programs, the period was increased to ten weeks. Applications for program changes are posted for the 30-day period.

5. PEQAB

- considers the ORP report and the applicant's response to the matters raised in the ORP report;
- requests more information if needed or refers response of the applicant back to the panel for additional comment; and
- if satisfied with the organization review, proceeds to program quality assessment.

6. Quality Assessment Panel (QAP)

- the panel of expert reviewers prepares a report against Board guidelines and submits it to the secretariat.

7. Secretariat

- reviews QAP report for conformity to *Report Guidelines* and instructions from the Board;
- forwards the report to the applicant for response; and
- receives the applicant's response and seeks clarification when required.

8. PEQAB

- considers the report(s) from expert panel(s);
- requests more information if needed or refers response of applicant back to the panel for additional comment;
- considers the application, reports from expert panel(s), the response(s) of the applicant to the panel(s) report, stakeholder comment, commitments made by the applicant, and any additional information; and
- formulates its recommendation to the Minister.

The length of time required from referral to recommendation varies from as little as one day to as long as eighteen months. Factors that influence the timing to complete the PEQAB process include the quality and completeness of the materials referred, and the nature and complexity of the proposed activities.

Chapter 2: Review of PEQAB Criteria

The self-study identified that some of the Board's requirements were not well understood by applicants and others required updating to account for new practices and expectations that had evolved since the Board was established. It was recommended that the Board

- *undertake a comprehensive review of all of its criteria to ensure it reflects standards recognized in Ontario and elsewhere.*

A comprehensive review of all PEQAB standards and benchmarks was undertaken, which involved researching criteria in use in Canada and the US (and other jurisdictions as necessary). In some instances expert reports were procured to augment the secretariat's research and consultations with other jurisdictions.

The updated standards and benchmarks resulting from this comprehensive review are published in the *2010 Handbooks and Guidelines* on the PEQAB's web site.

The following report on the review of PEQAB criteria is organized as follows:

1. A table summarizes the Board’s review of its standards for program quality, organization review, and other criteria. Revisions are categorized as minor or significant using the following criteria:

Minor: rewording of current benchmarks for purposes of clarity or to reflect current terminology

Significant: addition or deletion of benchmarks; wording changes that significantly changed meaning of standard or benchmark

2. The table is followed by a series of sections which address, for the most part, the review of each standard. Note that some issues span many standards (e.g., distance education, breadth/liberal arts), and these are treated in separate sections. These sections identify the rationale for the Board’s decisions, and the nature of the changes to the Board’s criteria.

Table: Program Quality Review Standards

Standard	Scan	Extent of Revisions		
		None	Minor	Significant
Degree level	yes	√		
Admission, Promotion, and Graduation	yes			√
Graduate faculty and programs	yes			√
Breadth/Liberal Arts	yes			√
Program Content	yes			√
Delivery Method	yes			√
Capacity to Deliver	yes			√
Credential Recognition	yes		√	
Regulation and Accreditation	no	√	internal guidelines adopted	
Nomenclature	no ³			√
Program and Organization Evaluation	no ⁴			√
Academic Freedom and Integrity	yes		√	
Student Protection	yes			√

³ Aside from PEQAB, there are no explicit nomenclature requirements in use by quality assurance agencies. The Board’s nomenclature criteria are consistent with usage commonly adopted across North America.

⁴ For Program Evaluation and Organizational Evaluation, jurisdictional scans were not conducted. With amendments to reflect the learning outcomes orientation of the Board’s statements, benchmarks were based on the criteria employed by Ontario public universities and Redeemer University College. See UPRAC Audit Guidelines, “Methodology for the audit of undergraduate program reviews”, 1998-02-05, and OCGS By-laws, and Procedures Governing Appraisals, 2001-08.

Mission Statement and Academic Goals	yes		✓	
Administrative Capacity	yes			✓
Ethical Conduct	no			✓
Financial Stability	yes			✓
Dispute Resolution	yes		✓	
Organization Evaluation	no ⁵			✓
Honorary Doctorates	yes			✓
Use of ‘university’	yes	✓		

Degree Standards

In 2003, PEQAB released its first degree standards/qualifications framework. The framework was based on the best features of those frameworks available internationally, with revisions to suit the Ontario context. The PEQAB degree framework was subsequently adopted for use by Ontario public universities.⁶

In 2007, the degree standards used by PEQAB and Ontario’s public universities were incorporated into a province-wide qualifications framework, the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF) (see the web site of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/programs/oqf/>). All degrees offered by Ontario publicly funded universities or pursuant to a consent of the Minister of Training, College and Universities are assessed against the degree standards articulated in the framework.⁷ All agencies responsible for the review of degree programs in Ontario, at the time of PEQAB’s review, use the qualifications framework as a component of the review of programs:

- PEQAB for review of all applications for consent to offer all or part of a Bachelor, Masters, or Doctoral program;
- Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC)⁸, the subcommittee of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) responsible for auditing the policies and procedures in place Ontario public universities for the review of undergraduate programs; and

⁵ See footnote 4.

⁶ There were two modifications made to PEQAB’s degree standards by the OCGS and UPRAC. 1. Where PEQAB had two categories of expectations of knowledge and skills for Depth and Breadth of Knowledge (Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Inside the Field of Study; and Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Outside the Field of Study), COU collapsed these categories into one: Depth and Breadth of Knowledge. The liberal arts or breadth component became a benchmark within the new category, rather than a separate expectation at the category level. 2. Two other PEQAB categories were collapsed. The expectations in one category (Level of Analytical Skill) were included in another (Application of Knowledge). PEQAB re-adopted the standards as modified by OCGS and UPRAC.

⁷ The only degrees offered in Ontario that are not assessed against the framework are those offered by private institutions pursuant to an act of the legislature. There is no requirement that degrees offered pursuant to a private act of the legislature be assessed against the framework or any other quality assurance criteria.

⁸ Note: subsequent to this review, COU created the OUCQA a new arms-length body, to ensure rigorous quality assurance of both undergraduate and graduate programs. This agency uses the degree standards, which it refers to as degree level expectations.

- Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS)⁹ the subcommittee of COU, responsible for reviewing Masters and Doctoral programs offered by Ontario public universities.

A review of PEQAB's degree standards determined that they not only reflected recognized degree standards, but set them. Revisions were not required.

Admission Requirements

A scan of requirements for admission, promotion, and graduation of other Canadian quality assurance agencies (with responsibilities similar to PEQAB's) was undertaken. The scan revealed that PEQAB's requirements for admission, promotion, and graduation are generally more detailed and (with one exception) more comprehensive than those of other quality assurance (with the exception of requirements of graduate admission). Accordingly, new benchmarks were adopted only for admission to graduate programs.

In addition, an issue arose around admission requirements when La Cité collégiale applied for renewal of its Bachelor of Applied Technology (Biotechnology). La Cité proposed that a secondary V from Quebec (Grade 11) was equivalent to an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (Grade 12). The Board disagreed. The Board's *Handbooks* did not specify any criteria with regard to Ontario Secondary School Diploma equivalency with credentials earned in Quebec. Clarifications in this regard were adopted by the Board.

Criteria Review: Graduate faculty and programs

A scan of requirements for graduate faculty and programs at Canadian quality assurance agencies (with responsibilities similar to PEQAB's) was undertaken, and PEQAB's benchmarks for faculty were judged comprehensive. They include criteria for policies pertaining to faculty academic/professional credentials; knowledge currency; performance reviews; teaching and supervision; and supports for professional development.

PEQAB's benchmarks parallel and address matters covered by other jurisdictions with the exception of requirements pertaining to the academic environment of graduate programs offered by comprehensive degree granting institutions. Some criteria articulated by the other quality assurance agencies assume a comprehensive degree granting organization, which the PEQAB criteria cannot assume. One new benchmark only was adopted to clarify the expectations for the research environment in graduate programs.

Breadth/Liberal Arts

The Board's breadth requirements have been poorly understood since the Board began operation. The Board's criteria pertaining to breadth can be found in three standards: Degree Level, Program Content, and Capacity to Deliver. Revisions to the Degree Level Standard were not adopted (see the section on Degree Level Standards) because the Degree Level Standard is shared with Ontario universities, and is reflected in the OQF. Likewise, no revisions to the single, relevant benchmark regarding faculty in the Capacity to Deliver Standard was required.

⁹ See note 8.

Significant revisions were made to the Board's Program Content Standard and benchmarks to address the range of matters pertaining to the key breadth outcomes identified in Ontario and other jurisdictions.

Program Content

The Board's benchmarks for program content are comprehensive and include requirements for a balance of theory and practice; ensuring currency of the program; application of learning outcomes; and the appropriateness of student assessments and work experiences. They address matters covered by other jurisdictions (with the exception of specific criteria for program objectives and student outcomes for particular program types as are articulated in Alberta). Moreover, the Board's requirements pertaining to breadth are more comprehensive than those articulated by other quality assessment agencies. One new benchmark only was adopted to address the issue of Canadian curriculum content, where relevant.

Program Delivery

In the 18 months leading up to August 2008, the Board gave extensive consideration to its distance education benchmarks. In August 2008, the Board directed the secretariat to update the Board's *Handbooks* to incorporate additional distance education benchmarks. The August 2008 revisions drew heavily on the *Distance Learning Programs: Guidelines for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs* used by the major American regional accrediting bodies. In 2009/2010 the Board considered the distance education criteria of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC); British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB); and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC).

Significant revisions were made to the criteria to reflect concerns relating to pedagogy; preparation of faculty and students; technological expertise and resources; hard- and software; and protection of student's privacy and academic integrity. With the exception of the Board's benchmarks pertaining to online delivery, the remaining benchmarks for program delivery are generally more detailed and comprehensive than those of other quality assessment agencies.

Capacity to Delivery

The Board's benchmarks for capacity to deliver are comprehensive and include requirements pertaining to legal and administrative status; budget commitments; academic support services; and human, physical, and learning resources. They address most matters covered by other jurisdictions with the exception of a benchmark pertaining to undergraduate faculty scholarship. Two additional benchmarks were adopted to clarify the Board's expectations for undergraduate faculty and faculty acting as graduate supervisors.

Credential Recognition

A scan of requirements for credential recognition of other Canadian quality assurance agencies (with responsibilities similar to PEQAB's) was undertaken and the Board's standard and benchmarks for program design, as it relates to credential recognition, were judged

sufficiently comprehensive. It is the case that degrees in applied areas of study are not recognized to the extent that they should be for entry into graduate programs, but this is not seen as a consequence of the design of the programs or the outcomes achieved by graduates. Accordingly, no revisions (other than minor rewording for clarification) were adopted.

Regulation and Accreditation

A scan of requirements for regulation and accreditation of other Canadian quality assurance agencies (with responsibilities similar to PEQAB's) was undertaken. The Board's requirements were sufficiently comprehensive, however, the Board did adopt some internal guidelines for its recommendations to the Minister on programs in regulated areas as a consequence this review.

Nomenclature

Consistent use of nomenclature contributes to public understanding of the qualifications of the credential holder and the nature of the postsecondary education achieved. The matter of nomenclature was addressed in the Board's *Handbooks* as guidelines for consideration rather than as a standard to be satisfied. Unless an assessment panel was specifically instructed to review program nomenclature, it was not normally among the matters assessed during the panel's review of programs.

In addition, the Board took a prescriptive approach to the nomenclature that it required for degrees in applied areas of study offered by CAATs. The Board reasoned that these were new credentials in Ontario and a consistent nomenclature could be used to "brand" the degrees. The requirements for college degree nomenclature, however, did not follow any recognized practice and did not facilitate understanding of the degree. The Board revised its nomenclature requirements for CAAT applicants, and made the requirements a standard for all applicants (rather than a guideline).

Program and Organization Evaluation

The Board requires all applicants to have internal evaluation policies and procedures to assure the continued improvement of programs, and requires private applicants to have an additional parallel process for the review of operational and administrative aspects of the organization. These policies and procedures are assessed against the Board's Program Evaluation (all applicants) and Organization Evaluation (private applicants) standards. The standards are based on the *Audit Guidelines* of the former UPRAC, and are consistent with the requirements for Internal Quality Assurance Policies required by the recently established the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA).

The Board requires applicants to implement these policies and procedures prior to renewing consent, and requires renewal applications to include the organization and program self-study and related materials arising from the review against these policies. The Board had no published criteria, however, pertaining to the review of applicants' self-studies; rather, special instructions were communicated to the organization and quality assessment panels for each renewal application.

The Board made an audit of the implementation of these policies and procedures a mandatory feature of all reviews of applications to renew consent.

Academic Freedom and Integrity

A scan of requirements pertaining to academic freedom and academic integrity was undertaken. The Board's benchmarks for academic freedom and integrity benchmarks include criteria for ethical research; policies on academic freedom, ownership of intellectual products, academic honesty; procedures for the enforcement of academic honesty; and policies and procedures for organizations with missions founded on specific world-views. The Board's standard and benchmarks for academic freedom and integrity are comprehensive. They address matters covered by other jurisdictions (with the exception of requirements aimed more broadly at integrity and ethics which the Board addresses in other standards such as student protection, dispute resolution, etc.). Moreover, the Board's requirements pertaining to academic honesty are more comprehensive than those articulated by other quality assessment agencies. Consequently, only minor rewording of benchmarks for purposes of clarity was adopted.

Student Protection

A scan of requirements pertaining to student protection was undertaken. The Board's benchmarks include specific requirements for the information that applicants must provide to the public and students; policies and procedures that protect students and consumers; and the confirmation of student awareness of a range of policies and procedures.

The Board's standard and benchmarks for student protection were judged comprehensive. They address matters covered by other jurisdictions with minor exceptions. Consequently, only minor rewording of the current benchmarks for purposes of clarity was adopted.

It is important to note that all consent holders are obliged by regulations to ensure that students' transcripts are properly stored and accessible for 75 years. In addition, it is the regulatory burden of private consent holders to provide financial protection for student tuition fees (including a trust fund and financial security of at least \$150,000 for each program in the form of a note, bond, debenture or other evidence of indebtedness). It is the ministry's responsibility to verify that consent holders abide by these regulations. Consequently, some criteria articulated by the other Canadian quality assessment agencies do not need to be included in PEQAB's standard and benchmarks as they are reviewed and monitored by the ministry.

Mission Statement and Academic Goals

A scan of requirements for the mission statement and academic goals was undertaken. The Board's mission statement and academic goals benchmarks include criteria for a clear mission and goals statement; a relationship between programs and the mission and goals; and policies and resources to support and advance the mission. The Board's standard and benchmarks for mission statement and academic goals were judged comprehensive and address matters covered by other jurisdictions. Some differences noted between the PEQAB requirements and those of other agencies include that American accreditors have detailed

requirements for the substance of mission statements (which the Board does not set) and include measures of the achievement of institutional goals (which the Board addresses in other standards such as Organization Evaluation, and Academic Freedom and Integrity).

Administrative Capacity

The Board's administrative capacity benchmarks include criteria for an applicant's legal, governing, and reporting structure; the legal nature of partnerships; senior administrative staff; administrative capacity; and the participation of academic staff and students in the development of curriculum, academic policies, and standards.

A scan of requirements for the administrative capacity was undertaken and the Board's standard and benchmarks for administrative capacity were judged comprehensive. Some differences noted between the PEQAB requirements and those of other agencies include that American accreditors have detailed requirements for an institution's governing body and chief executive officer and for the assessment of the governing body, institutional leadership, and administrative structures (note that these agencies are dealing primarily with traditional, comprehensive universities) that include measures of the achievement of institutional goals (which the Board addresses in the Organization Evaluation and other standards).

Financial Stability

A scan of requirements for financial stability of other Canadian quality assurance agencies (with responsibilities similar to PEQAB's) was undertaken. The Board considered the revised requirements in British Columbia particularly carefully, given the recent issues there with private providers. The Board's requirements were found to not be sufficiently comprehensive and several new benchmarks were adopted.

Dispute Resolution

The Board's standard and benchmarks for dispute resolution address matters covered by other jurisdictions (with the exception of the requirement for dealing with disputes between the organization and its faculty) and in more detail (CAQC and MPHEC's criteria for dispute resolution do not articulate what would be expected of resolutions in accordance with the principles of natural justice). Consequently, only minor rewording of the current benchmarks for purposes of clarity was adopted.

Honorary Degrees

The Board has considered applications for consent to offer honorary degrees on several occasions (for CAATs, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the University of New Brunswick, Charles Sturt University, and the Institute for Christian Studies). The Minister made a policy decision to allow CAATs to apply for consent to offer honorary bachelor degrees in applied areas of study. Prior to 2009, however, the Board had not made explicit its criteria for the assessment of applications to award honorary degrees. Accordingly, the Board introduced criteria that reflected the decisions of the Board on such applications.

Use of “University” and “University College”

PEQAB’s criteria for the review of an application to use “university” in an organization name, or to start a new university, were drawn from (with minor modifications), the institutional membership criteria for the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). Its criteria for the use of “university college” varies, depending on whether the applicant organization is an affiliate of an Ontario public university (as was the case, e.g., with Brescia University College, an affiliate of the University of Western Ontario) or an independent organization (as was the case, e.g., with Tyndale University College and Seminary). These criteria were developed by scanning the environment and articulating Ontario practice.

PEQAB also identified the salient characteristics of “university college” as all of the characteristics of a university, but which (in addition to having a charter or statute that identifies them as a “university college” instead of “university”) are either:

- affiliates of public institutions that have suspended degree-granting powers in favour of participating in the delivery of the university’s programs; or
- independent organizations (e.g., Redeemer University College) that offer a narrower range of programs (e.g., business, art, professional) or have a special mission (e.g., an environment designed to meet the needs of a particular group or permeated by particular values).

Recent Changes in the Use of “University” in Canada

Recent developments in British Columbia and Alberta, which renamed institutions offering a range of programs at all credential levels, and the tendency in New Brunswick to permit organizations that offer one or two degrees to use the term “university”, have added an additional layer of complexity to Canada’s already complex degree-granting landscape. It is not recommended that PEQAB regard the practice recently implemented by British Columbia, Alberta, and New Brunswick as establishing a “recognized standard” at this time. It is still the case that in most Canadian jurisdictions, “university” is a term reserved for comprehensive degree granting organizations.

Rather than reduce the potential confusion on the part of international students who may be considering pursuing degree education in Canada (or for that matter, a Canadian student pursuing options outside his or her own province), recent practice in British Columbia and New Brunswick may have the opposite effect. The burden of investigation has been significantly increased for potential students who want to discriminate between, e.g., the University of Toronto, Capilano University (formerly a public college in British Columbia, which specializes in tourism, outdoor recreation programs, and entertainment arts) the University of Fredericton (a private organization that offers two masters degrees in business) or Lansbridge University (a private organization that offers two masters degrees in business in New Brunswick and that had its consent revoked in British Columbia).

Though there is some variability in its use, the general public is likely to understand the term university to refer, in part, to comprehensive degree granting institutions. Because it implies a certain kind of institution, “university” in an organization name represents a valuable marketing tool for organizations wishing to offer degrees in niche areas but not wishing to

establish a comprehensive university or university college in any jurisdiction (such as those in British Columbia and New Brunswick). Ontario has not had such applications for ministerial consent since opening its education market, and this is likely due to the rigour of its requirements.¹⁰

The Board concluded that recent developments in British Columbia, Alberta, and New Brunswick did not establish a new “recognized standard”. Consequently, no changes were made to the Board’s requirements in this regard.

Chapter 3: PEQAB Publications

The internal review identified that some of the Board’s processes and policies required revisions to both ensure the clarity of the Board’s requirements and enrich the recommendations provided to the Minister. It was recommended that the Board

- *review and release new versions of its Handbooks for Applicants; Submission Guidelines; Quality Assessor and Organization Reviewer Report Guidelines.*

As the *Handbooks for Applicants* and *Submission Guidelines* detail the Board’s criteria, policies, and procedures, a comprehensive review of all PEQAB policies and procedures was undertaken. The review involved holding the Board’s first retreat, and researching policies and procedures in use by quality assurance bodies in Ontario and other jurisdictions - primarily in Canada and the US.

The updated *Handbooks for Applicants* and *Submission Guidelines, 2010 editions*, resulting from this comprehensive review are published on PEQAB’s web site, as are the revised and new policies adopted by the Board during the course of its review. A report of those revisions is provided below.

The *Guidelines* for Assessors and Organization Reviewers are currently under review by the Board and are expected to be revised. When completed (approximately January 2011), these publications will be also be published on the Board’s web site.

Review of PEQAB Policies and Procedures

The following report on the review of PEQAB’s processes and policies is organized as follows:

1. The table summarizes the Board’s review of its procedures and policies. Revisions are categorized as minor or significant using the following criteria:

- Minor: rewording of existing policies or minimal retooling of procedures for purposes of clarity
- Significant: addition, deletion, or alteration of procedure that significantly alter the policy or procedure

¹⁰ A related but unique request has been made by the University for Peace, a United Nations treaty organization, to operate in Ontario but not as a degree granter. The organization was denied consent.

2. The table is followed by a series of sections which address the review of each procedure/policy. These sections identify the practice in other jurisdictions (where relevant), the rationale for the Board’s decisions, and the revisions/additions and or deletions of particular policies and procedures.

Table: Procedure/Policy Review

Policy/Procedure	Scan	Extent of Revisions		
		None	Minor	Significant
1. Vision, Guiding Principles, and Knowledge Building	no (retreat)			√
2. Opportunity for Public Comment	no		√	
3. Board Members’ Commitments	yes			√
4. Assessor Code of Conduct	yes			√
5. Establishment of Committees for Breadth/Liberal Arts; Distance Education; and Organization Review	no			√
6. Organization and Program Quality Review Site Visits	yes	√		
7. Assessor Orientation	yes			√
8. Approach to the Review of Program Quality of New Program	yes	√		
9. Approach to the Review of Program Quality of an Existing Program: Renewal of the Minister’s Consent	yes			√
10. Conflict of Interest Policy	yes			√

1. Opportunity for Public Comment

The Board provided a 4-week window, which it increased to ten during the review, for interested parties to comment on applications for the Minister’s consent. The Board forwards comments to both the quality assessment panel and the applicant for their comments, and shares the commentary with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities with its recommendation.

Stakeholders frequently include in their comments a discussion of matters related to both quality and public policy. Procedurally, the comments were nonetheless forwarded in their

entirety to panel and applicants.

As a consequence of the internal review, the Board changed its

- procedures and now removes commentary on matters of public policy prior to forwarding comments to panels and applicants; and
- statement on the web site and in its *Handbooks* about the opportunity for comment so that it is clear that matters related to public policy would not be forwarded to the panel or applicant.

2. Board Members' Commitments

Board members' conduct is governed by several sources, including the *Policy on Conflict of Interest for Board Members*; the *Agency Establishment & Accountability Directive*; and the *Board's Terms of Reference with the Minister*.

The Board decided to formalize and publish its commitments concerning its conduct.

The commitments were developed through consideration of such codes used by Canadian quality assurance agencies with a mandate similar to PEQAB's, and incorporates components of codes of conduct for members of the:

- CAQC;
- DQAB in British Columbia; and
- MPHEC;

and the *Code of Conduct for Agencies*, developed by the Ministry of Government Services as part of its suite of governance tools.

3. Assessor Code of Conduct

Assessor's conduct is governed by several sources, including the contract with the ministry; the *Conflict of Interest Policy for Assessors and Applicants*; the generic instructions to assessors in the *Quality Assessment Report Guidelines*; and any additional specific instructions from the Board or secretariat.

Based on a scan of practices of the:

- CAQC;
- DQAB in British Columbia; and
- MPHEC;

and

- the *Code of Conduct for Agencies*, developed by the Ministry of Government Services as part of a suite of governance documents;
- "The Accreditation Team Experience: Ten Steps for Team Success" from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education;

the Board adopted a *Code of Conduct for Assessors*, which it posts on the PEQAB web site.

4. Establishment of Committees for Breadth/Liberal Arts; Distance Education; and Organization Review

Reflecting on its experience with hundreds of quality assessment review panels in the first 7-8 years of its operations, the Board concluded that some dimensions of the review of programs and organizations required a specialized expertise beyond the subject-matter experts consulted for each review. Accordingly, it struck three standing committees.

Breadth/Liberal Arts Committee

The Board's Undergraduate Degree Level and Program Content Standards require that graduates achieve a certain depth and breadth of knowledge outside of their main field of study. This is normally achieved through studying a liberal arts curriculum within the program.

The Board's original approach to reviewing the liberal arts curriculum was to assign an assessor with expertise in any humanities or social science field so long as the assessor had achieved at least the rank of Dean. This led to highly variable interpretations of the Board's expected outcomes, and consequently, variability in the quality of consent holders' liberal arts curricula.

Accordingly, the Board appointed a small standing committee of individuals with expertise in liberal arts as a pedagogical issue, and a record of scholarship that reflected an interest and understanding of the purpose and outcomes of a liberal arts curriculum.

Distance Education Committee

Originally, the Board required assessors with subject-matter expertise in the field of the proposed core curriculum to review all proposed delivery methods, including online methods. The Board's new requirements for distance education, however, require that assessors have specialized knowledge of that delivery mode and the resources required to support it. Accordingly, the Board appointed a small committee of individuals with expertise in distance technology and a record of scholarship on matters related to online and distance education.

Organization Review Committee

The Board has, since its inception, had a standing organization review committee comprised of experts in the management of higher education institutions. Its composition has varied, however, and its membership was, for some time, a single member. The Board renewed this committee as a consequence of its internal review, and its members have expertise in

- accounting certification and experience in corporate financial management;
- admissions/registrarial roles, including admissions policies and academic records management in a degree granting institution;
- managing learning resources;
- senior management of a degree granting institution; and
- professional, accrediting and regulatory bodies for higher education within and outside of Ontario.

5. Organization and Program Quality Review Site Visits

It is best practice for members of quality assurance agencies to attend site visits by expert panels. This ensures appropriate practice on behalf of the panel, and consistent application of standards. Each of the CAQC, the DQAB, and the MPHEC secretariats attend site visits. The PEQAB secretariat does not have sufficient human resources for a member of staff to attend site visits.

It was decided that as a compromise, organization reviews would occur at the PEQAB offices and a member of secretariat staff would attend. Organization reviewers meet with members of senior administration of the applicant organization, and conduct additional interviews by

teleconference. Where it is necessary to receive information about the physical site, instructions can be provided by the Board to the program quality assessment panels to follow up on those matters. (Such instructions have not yet been required.)

The Board is concerned that secretariat staff attend program quality review site visits as soon as resources become available to do so. As it is critical that the program review occur at the site, no compromise solution is available.

6. Assessor Orientation

Prior to 2009, assessors were not oriented by the secretariat prior to undertaking the work of expert assessment on the Board's behalf. Feedback was received during the internal review that applicants perceived inconsistency in the application of Board's standards during assessments. The secretariat now orients each assessment team by teleconference for 30 minutes prior to commencement of a review.

The orientation materials are tailored to suit different types of assessments: online capacity, breadth, nomenclature, renewals, etc. These materials will continue to be developed, and it is on the secretariat's work plan to develop a mandatory webinar for assessors early in 2011.

In addition, we are currently revising the *Quality Assessor Guidelines* to include orienting and reference materials that may be of use to panels, and enhance the consistency of the interpretation and application of the Board's standards.

We are also developing a formalized process to gather feedback from assessors on their experiences with respect to:

1. the review process;
2. review materials (sufficiency of materials provided by the applicant); and
3. usefulness of materials provided for the assessment (i.e., workbook/report and instructions).

Feedback received from assessors and applicants will continue to be incorporated in orientation materials.

7. Approach to the Review of a New Program

As indicated in some detail within the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study, the review of applications to offer new programs entails a thorough review by a team of academic peers appointed by PEQAB of curriculum; faculty; human, physical, and learning resources; additional input and commitments by the applicant, and a consideration of any commitments. This process was modelled on the former process in place for the review of graduate programs offered by Ontario public universities by OCGS.

Ontario university practices were recently changed so as to combine the process for the reviews of both undergraduate programs (formerly reviewed by auditing the processes for review internal to each university) and the OCGS process. The Board reviewed this new process and decided that, given the nature of the Board's applicants, it would not introduce any changes to its existing practices for review of an application to offer a new program.

8. Approach to the Review of an Existing Program: Renewal of the Minister's Consent

As a consequence of its experience with the first series of renewals of college degrees, and with its mandate of providing advice to the Minister on the quality of programs and institutions in mind, the Board made significant revisions to its renewal process.

Minister's consents are normally for a 5-7 year period, after which consent holders are subject to another PEQAB review for renewal of consent. Consent holders are also bound by the conditions of their consent with the Minister to not make any changes to programs, unless those are made in response to issues identified during internal cyclical review.

For the original renewal review consent holders were required to submit, against detailed templates provided by the Board:

- a report on curriculum and resources in place during the first 5 years of program delivery;
- a report on changes made to programs over the course of the original consent; and
- a new submission on the program as it was anticipated to be delivered for the next consent cycle.

The Board's advice to the Minister on matters related to quality was somewhat constrained by this approach, and extended to matters related to enforcement of the terms and conditions of the Minister's consent, which is outside the Board's mandate.

The revised approach focuses on the consent holder's internal self-study, and its report on the commitments made during the last Board review. Consent holders are not instructed how to demonstrate that they meet Board standards (through detailed templates), rather they must submit a narrative and supporting evidence for each Board standard. This shifts the onus for identifying the features of a quality program and organization from the Board to the consent holder, and allows the Board to

- determine whether the program, and its delivery, meet Board standards;
- use the submission itself as one of many indicators of the organization's understanding of quality; and
- audit the implementation of the consent holder's policies and procedures for internal self-review.

Such reviews will permit the Board to make recommendations to the Minister on both the quality of the program and the organization's ability to continuously improve. In cases where the consent holder demonstrates an ability to maintain ongoing quality, the Board could recommend, for example, longer consents or greater independence for the consent holder to make material changes to the program. In cases where improvements are required, the Board could recommend that the Minister monitor consent holders closely to ensure that quality is assured in the second (and subsequent) consent cycle.

9. Conflict of Interest Policy

As a consequence of its experience over the first 7-8 years of operation, the Board considered it necessary to address the situation where quality assessment panel members bring themselves into a conflict of interest following their work for the Board. The Board expanded its conflict of interest policy to exclude from further work for the Board assessors who, within six months following the completion of their duties, work for the organization they assessed. At the same time, the Board clarified the policy by including examples of what it regarded as conflicts.

Chapter 4: Publication and Communication Strategy

The self-study identified that while the Board had a number of publication and communication elements that contributed to meeting its obligations to be transparent about its criteria and processes, the Board did not have an explicit communications and publications strategy. Consequently, it was recommended that the Board

- *develop an explicit publication and communication strategy.*

At its July 2010 meeting, the Board approved a formal publication and communication strategy. The strategy outlines the framework for assuring and improving the Board's transparency and public disclosure, now and in the future.

The strategy commits the Board to the following guidelines and outlines actions to implement these commitments:

- ensuring the transparency of the Board's criteria, processes, and publications;
- demonstrating public accountability by informing and responding to the public by posting applications and decisions about consent; and reporting on its own performance;
- establishing and maintaining the Board's web site as a transparent, credible, and up-to-date source of information for prospective applicants, stakeholders and others;
- soliciting feedback, through surveys and informally, from internal and external stakeholders, and following-up on feedback regularly, consistently, and transparently;
- increasing awareness and understanding of the Board's mandate, standards, processes and activities; and
- raising the Board's profile as a quality assurance agency in Canada and internationally.

The strategy has been operationalized and is a routine component of the secretariat's work plan.

Chapter 5: Continuous Quality Assurance

As outlined in the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study, the Board did not have a comprehensive strategy for its own continuous quality assurance, although it did have many elements that could contribute to an assurance of ongoing quality. As per the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), best practice for the internal quality assurance (IQA) of quality assurance agencies includes:

- a published policy for the assurance of the ongoing internal quality of the agency, made available on its web site;

- undertaking external quality assurance activities on a regular basis; and
- procedures to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.

The INQAAHE *Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance* contain similar guiding principles for the IQA. Consequently, it was recommended that

- *the Board develop*
 - *a comprehensive strategy for assuring its own continuous quality;*
 - *a standard for ongoing quality assurance, including objectives and expected outcomes, against which it can review itself; and include, as part of its comprehensive quality assurance strategy, a requirement*
 - *for cyclical, comprehensive internal review;*
 - *for cyclical external evaluation;*
 - *for the use of feedback from its external evaluations;*
 - *to collect, track, and respond to internal feedback; and*
 - *that a comprehensive survey of stakeholders be conducted every five to seven years.*
- *the 2009 Comprehensive Survey be used to inform the design of the annual survey;*
- *the annual survey be*
 - *aligned with a more comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy;*
 - *be administered and analyzed by an independent party; and*
- *a strategy and procedure be developed for reporting survey findings, responding to issues identified by respondents, and preserving these for the record.*

At its June meeting, the Board adopted an IQA policy to guide its practices concerning ongoing quality assurance of the Board. The policy outlines the general framework for assuring and improving the quality of the Board's activities and will guide the development of the Board's IQA procedures.

Cyclical Self Reviews & External evaluation

The policy obligates the Board to undertake internal and external cyclical review, and consider any recommendations made in this context.

Annual Surveys

In 2009, as part of the self-study, a comprehensive survey of key stakeholders was undertaken by a third party. The survey consisted of two main components:

- qualitative interviews with key ministry staff who had responsibilities for or relationships with PEQAB; current and previous Board members; and unsuccessful applicants; and
- quantitative survey of consent holders; assessors; and other quality assurance agencies.

The survey results informed the self-study recommendations. The 2010 survey draws from the 2009 experience but is a targeted online survey of applicants and assessors from the 2009/2010 operating year. It is PEQAB's intention to survey assessors and applicants immediately following the assessment process in order to elicit timely, more specific feedback which can be used to improve the Board's criteria, publications, and processes. This immediate on-going feedback mechanism will replace the one-time annual survey.

Secretariat staff are currently researching best practices and expect to have this new process implemented in early 2011.

As per the recommendations of the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study, a comprehensive survey is expected to be conducted every five to seven years as part of the Board's ongoing survey strategy.

Internal and External Feedback

The secretariat receives regular feedback from ministry staff about PEQAB's operations, procedures, and criteria. With the exception of the 2009 survey, however, there had neither been a systematic collection of internal feedback, nor documentation of the Board's response to that feedback. Processes have now been put into place to systematically collect and share internal/external feedback among secretariat staff and with the Board.

Chapter 6: Participation in Higher Education Quality Assurance

The Board maintains links nationally and internationally with quality assurance agencies, regulators, and accreditors. Participation in national and international quality assurance activities is crucial to PEQAB's ability to meet its legislated mandate to develop criteria for the review of applications that are in accordance with educational standards recognized in Ontario and other jurisdictions; and demonstrates Ontario's commitment to quality assurance of its higher education. These activities are a priority for the secretariat; however, they are not pursued as vigorously as they should because staff are engaged in the day to day management of applications, the development of materials for the Board, and contributing to ministry policy development.

Canadian Quality Assurance Network

The Chief Executive of the secretariat communicates at least monthly via teleconference with the leadership of other quality assurance agencies, including the executive leads of DQAB, CAQC, and MPHEC. These discussions provide an opportunity for information sharing on mutually relevant concerns and developments in our respective jurisdictions.

In November 2010, the PEQAB secretariat hosted a half-day video conference for the four agencies. The fifteen participants, including the leadership of each agency and staff, discussed their respective mandates, legislation, and scope of activities, processes and criteria. They also had an opportunity to discuss other matters of mutual interest. The conference was viewed very positively and the agencies made a commitment to hold regular video conferences, with the next one planned tentatively for spring 2011.

No discussions as yet have occurred with respect to the formation of a regional network. Before discussions occur, some background will have to be developed and the goals and operations of such a network scoped. Secretariat staff have been fully engaged by the day to day management of applications, the development of materials for the Board, and contributing to ministry policy development and we have yet to make progress on this

recommendation. It is a priority for the secretariat and it will work toward these discussions as time allows.

Canadian Ministers of Education Canada Quality Assurance Subcommittee

The PEQAB Secretariat is a member of the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS), which has representation from all provinces and territories. The secretariat has had little opportunity to engage with the QAS at the level it would like, as staff are typically fully engaged by the day to day management of applications, the development of materials for the Board, and contributing to ministry policy development. It is a priority for the secretariat to participate in the QAS, and it will do so as time allows.

International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education

In March 2009, the Chair, Dale Patterson was elected, for a period of two years, to the Board of Directors of INQAAHE, where he holds the position as treasurer. He ran on a platform of international collaboration and harmonization, and committed to lead work on accreditation mills and distance education. He is also INQAAHE's Treasurer.

Approval for international travel must be given by both the Minister and the Secretary of Cabinet. In 2008, the (then) secretariat Director requested approval for travel to the 2008 conference but was declined. In 2009, the PEQAB Chair requested approval for travel to the 2009 conference, but withdrew the request following the downturn in the economy. In May 2010, the Chief Executive and the Chair were approved to attend the INQAAHE members' forum in Namibia. (Dr. Hatchette attended; the Chair's schedule, however, did not permit him to attend.)

The INQAAHE forum was attended by INQAAHE members, including senior representatives of quality assurance and accreditation bodies; organizations and persons with a major interest in evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in higher education; and higher education institutions with an interest in a formal association with a quality assurance network. The forum was an important opportunity to identify trends and best practice; formulate global quality assurance goals; and to share Ontario's ideas for and practices in quality assurance with a wide, international audience. Starting in July 2009 (and likely continuing to spring 2011), Dr. Hatchette has presented an overview of each forum presentation to the Board in order to share knowledge gained at the forum with Board members.

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation

In January 2010, the chief executive attended the Council for Higher Education Accreditation's (CHEA) annual conference and accreditation forum, "Accreditation's Future: Building on Strengths...Creating Opportunities," in Washington, D.C. (The ministry also approved the Chair for travel to the conference, but his schedule did not permit him to attend.) The conference and seminar presented an important opportunity to discuss strategic and operational issues related to degree granting, quality assurance, and student protection;

share Ontario's challenges and successes; and establish new and maintain existing networks and relationships with key individuals in degree quality assurance and regulation.

Staff Exchanges

Over the summer, Dr. Hatchette worked with the Human Resources Branch of the ministry to negotiate an agreement to bring a staff member from Tertiary Education Commission in Mauritius to the secretariat for a six-month internship. Unfortunately, the ministry was unable to come to terms with the UNESCO (the sponsoring agency) and the opportunity went to another country. As time allows, the secretariat will pursue other opportunities and work with the ministry to ensure that it can flexibly respond to opportunities.

Record of Collaboration

The secretariat has implemented an information management process for maintaining accurate and complete records of collaborative activities, communications and achievements, which was shared with the Board at its August meeting. With the exception of the relationships with CAQC, DQAB, and MPHEC, the secretariat's engagement with other quality assurance bodies is largely reactive. As time allows, the secretariat will adopt a more deliberate approach to its relationships with other agencies to establish a richer collaborative network.

Summary

In summary, as the following table indicates, all recommendations from the Report of the PEQAB Self-Study have either been implemented, or are in development.

<i>undertake a comprehensive review of all of its criteria to ensure it reflects standards recognized in Ontario and elsewhere</i>	complete
<i>review and release new versions of its Handbooks for Applicants and Submission Guidelines</i>	complete
<i>review and release new versions of its Quality Assessor and Organization Reviewer Report Guidelines</i>	in development
<i>develop an explicit communications and publications strategy</i>	complete
<i>develop a comprehensive strategy for assuring its own continuous quality include, as part of its comprehensive quality assurance strategy, a requirement:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>for cyclical, comprehensive internal review;</i> • <i>to collect, track, and respond to internal feedback;</i> • <i>for cyclical external evaluation;</i> • <i>for the use of feedback from its external evaluations; and</i> <i>that a comprehensive survey of stakeholders be conducted every five to seven years.</i>	complete
<i>develop a standard for ongoing quality assurance, including objectives and expected outcomes, against which it can review itself</i>	complete
<i>use the 2009 Comprehensive Survey to inform the design of an annual survey; ensure the annual survey</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>aligned with a more comprehensive continuous quality assurance strategy; and administered and analyzed by an independent party</i> 	complete
<i>develop a strategy and procedure for reporting survey findings, responding to issues identified by respondents, and preserving these for the record</i>	complete
<i>lead discussions with Canadian counterparts to establish a Canadian Quality Assurance Network</i>	on hold pending resource availability
<i>Chair and secretariat regularly attend the conferences/fora of INQAAHE, CHEA and other quality assurance agencies</i>	travel requests will be made
<i>the secretariat</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>participate in staff exchanges with other quality assurance agencies;</i> • <i>meet face-to-face regularly with the DQAB, CAQC, and MPHEC secretariats to share best practice;</i> • <i>demonstrate leadership in its contributions to the CMEC QAS; and</i> • <i>maintain accurate and complete records of collaborative activities, communications, and achievements</i> 	ongoing; activity dependent on resource availability

Appendix: Glossary of Acronyms

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC),
Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)
Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)
Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs)
Council of Ontario Universities (COU)
Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB)
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)
Internal quality assurance (IQA)
Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)
Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS)
Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF)
Organization Review Panel (ORP)
Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (OUCQA)
Postsecondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000 (PSECE Act; the Act)
Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB)
Quality Assessment Panel (QAP)
Quality Assurance Subcommittee (QAS)¹¹
Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC)

¹¹ Of CMEC.