

## **PEQAB Policy 11: External Expert Review Panel Code of Conduct**

### **Purpose and Application**

The purpose of this Code of Conduct (Code) is to establish rules of conduct to govern the professional and ethical responsibilities of External Expert Review Reviewers (Reviewers) and any other external expert appointed by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) as they carry out their responsibilities to conduct the wide range of PEQAB Reviews.

This Code is not limited by the Reviewers' obligations as set out in their contracts for consulting services provided to the government of Ontario or the Board's Policy 9. External Expert Panel Conflict of Interest. Also, it is not intended to conflict with any legal or professional requirements.

In accordance with established norms of good governance, this Code is based on the principles of integrity, honesty, openness, and concern for the public interest. It is designed to maintain the effectiveness of PEQAB as a whole and to ensure the fairness of all PEQAB procedures, Recommendations, and decision-making processes. It addresses common situations that Reviewers may experience as they carry out their responsibilities, while it recognizes that not all situations can be anticipated. All Reviewers have a responsibility to consider appropriate standards of behaviour and to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner. The Code assumes that it is not only the actual situation but also the perception others may have that may lead to a perception of bias, dishonesty or inappropriate conduct.

### **To Whom Does the Code Apply?**

The Code applies to all Reviewers and other experts appointed by PEQAB.

### **General Rules of Conduct**

Reviewers are committed to the principles and practices of quality assurance in post-secondary education. When reviewing applications or other matters referred to them, Reviewers base their judgement on the merits of the information available and consider the information provided in good faith and to the best of their abilities not being concerned with the prospect of disapproval from any person, institution, or community.

#### *a. Confidentiality*

- Subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990* the confidentiality of the services and all information obtained in connection with the services are at the discretion of the Ministry both during and after the Reviewers appointment by PEQAB. No such confidential information is used by the Reviewers or divulged in any form without the prior written consent of the Ministry representative as designated in their contracts, normally the PEQAB CEO.

- In order to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the application and Review process, the Reviewers do not discuss their Reviews, except with other members of the External Expert Review Panel, the PEQAB Board, its Secretariat, or as may be agreed upon in writing by CEO.
- Confidentiality requirements survive the expiry of the Reviewers' appointments by PEQAB.

*b. Communication*

- Reviewers do not make public comments, orally or in writing, on any issues concerning any application.
- Reviewers do not communicate with the media regarding their Reviews or findings for PEQAB. All inquiries from the media are to be referred to the PEQAB CEO.

*c. Personal Gain*

- Reviewers do not engage in conduct that exploits their positions.
- Reviewers do not take improper advantage of information received through official duties as Reviewers for PEQAB.
- Reviewers do not accept money, awards or gifts from persons who may be, or have been or may be seen to have been affected by a PEQAB Review.

*d. Fairness and Objectivity*

- Reviewers are sensitive to issues of gender, race, language, culture, and religion that may affect the conduct of a Review.
- Reviewers deal with groups and persons, with staff, and with each other in a manner that reflects open and honest communication, respect, fair play, and ethical conduct.
- Reviewers approach every Review and every issue arising with an open mind and avoid doing or saying anything to cause any person to think otherwise.
- Reviewers are independent in making their PEQAB recommendations.

*f. Commitment*

- Reviewers commit to a thorough preparation for the duties expected of them and make themselves available on a timely basis to conduct the Review during the contract period.

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