



Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)

Report of the CMEC Quality Assurance Subcommittee

2007

2007 CMEC Jurisdictional Update on Activities Related to Quality Assurance

Introduction

In February 2007, ministers responsible for advanced education endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*.

The primary reasons for endorsing the statement are as follows:

- To provide assurance to the public, students, employers, and postsecondary institutions at home and abroad that new programs and new institutions of higher learning meet appropriate standards and that performance against the standards will be assessed by appropriate means
- To provide a context for identifying how degree credentials compare in level and standard to those in other jurisdictions, with a view to facilitating the search for continuous improvement, the education and training of an internationally competitive workforce, and international recognition of the quality of Canadian credentials
- To improve student access to further study at the postsecondary level by establishing a degree-level standards context in which policies on the transfer of credits and credential recognition may be developed and, in fairness to students who choose non-traditional providers, to focus discussion of credit transfer and credential recognition on the academic standards that the programs involved have met

At their meeting in August 2004, members of the Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education (ACDME) established a committee on quality assurance to develop the ministerial statement and work in areas related to quality assurance. Part of the mandate of that committee is to report on provincial/territorial activities related to quality assurance. This is their first public report.¹

¹ Since the 2004 ACDME meeting in which deputy ministers established the Committee on Quality Assurance of Degree Programs in Canada, members have also referred to themselves variously as the Pan-Canadian Committee on Quality Assurance of Degree Programming, the Quality Assurance Working Group, the Working Group on Quality Assurance, and the Quality Assurance Subcommittee. In the interests of consistency and clarity, the group will be known henceforth as the Quality Assurance Subcommittee.

Alberta

Alberta's minister of advanced education and technology has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The standards and processes of the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), the arm's-length body that provides a recommendation to the minister with respect to the quality of all new degree programs and the viability of institutions to implement and sustain them, are already consistent with the standards and processes in the ministerial statement. The CAQC has adopted and will adapt the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF) to reflect more fully degrees offered in Alberta. The CDQF has been used in a number of CAQC's reviews, and institutions are finding it helpful as they develop new degree programs. The CAQC and BC's Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) are exploring the possibility of mutual recognition. The first step being taken by the two agencies is to harmonize standards.

British Columbia

British Columbia's minister of advanced education endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) provides assessments and recommendations to the minister of advanced education of new degree programs at both public and private institutions, as well as assessment of applications for institutions to use the word "university" under the Degree Authorization Act. The DQAB recently conducted a review of British Columbia's criteria and guidelines for the assessment of degree-granting institutions, in part to ensure that the revised criteria were consistent with the Canadian Degree Qualifications framework. BC's revised criteria came into effect in December 2006. With a view to possible mutual recognition of degree programs, DQAB is also working with the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) on harmonizing its standards while ensuring they are closely aligned to those in the ministerial statement.

Manitoba

The minister of advanced education and literacy has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*, and the Council on Post Secondary Education Secretariat has adopted the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF). This information is now available to the three public universities and the two university colleges in Manitoba. Manitoba's newest postsecondary institution, the University College of the North, has utilized the CDQF in developing its new university degrees and will continue to do so as further new programs are developed. The institutions have been encouraged to utilize the CDQF to facilitate credit transfer and articulation. Manitoba is committed to continue to work on quality assurance issues in the province.

Maritime Provinces

In New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, the ministers have endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) is the organization charged by the three

Maritime provinces with quality assurance of university education. With regard to the implementation of the elements contained in the statement, the Commission, in consultation with its stakeholders, has devised a Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework (MDQF), which is an adaptation of the CDQF. While not a prescriptive document, the MDQF will be used as a reference tool for understanding degree structure/expectations within the region, as well as to encourage universities to consider these expectations when developing new or modified academic programs and when hiring external reviewers in their assessment of proposed programs, as it provides a description of the region's current degree structures, some of which may not be familiar to academics working outside the Maritime provinces. The commission had determined early on that the Standards for Programme Assessment were already in place within its Policy on Quality Assurance. They are also addressed within the process managed by the commission to review programs under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act. The Standards for Institutional Assessment constitute the basis for consideration of an expanded process to assess the organizational appropriateness of institutions applying for degree granting status under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* and has shared the same with Memorial University, the only degree-granting institution in the province.

Nunavut

The minister of education has endorsed the CMEC *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada* and looks forward to the release of the statement by ministers. The work of CMEC and the Quality Assurance Subcommittee has provided a basis from which Nunavut is now developing its own approach to quality assurance. As part of this process, the Government of Nunavut, in cooperation with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (the Inuit Land Claims implementation body), has completed the Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy, a 20-year strategy for improving postsecondary and adult education in Nunavut. The strategy contains 23 objectives, including a major component on quality assurance, which is based on the work of the CMEC subcommittee.

The Department of Education is now moving into implementation of the Adult Learning Strategy and will be forming an Implementation Panel, which will report to the Legislative Assembly. This panel will be addressing the issue of the development of key performance indicators, and other quality assurance issues, and will form a de facto Quality Assurance Board for the new territory, until appropriate structures are defined.

Ontario

The minister has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. The Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) is responsible for the assessment of applications for the minister's consent to offer degree programs. Quality assurance of degree programs at publicly assisted universities is in accord with policies and

procedures established by the Undergraduate Program Review Audit Committee (UPRAC) and the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS). PEQAB, UPRAC, and OCGS use the standards and principles contained in the ministerial statement and a variation of the degree qualifications framework tailored for Ontario's circumstances. Ontario is currently consulting on a provincial qualifications framework, which will describe the skills and knowledge expected of holders of all postsecondary education qualifications (degrees, diplomas, and certificates) offered in Ontario.

Quebec

The Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. It should be noted that Quebec universities have independent mechanisms to verify the quality of new degree programs. Also, only institutions specifically set out in the Act Respecting Educational Institutions at the University Level are authorized to offer programs leading to university degrees.

Saskatchewan

The minister has endorsed the *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*. Although the province is not conducting any degree program reviews at this time, Saskatchewan also endorses the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (CDQF).