

Quality assurance for graduate education in Canada

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There is no national QA agency? Why?

- At confederation (1867), education was agreed to be a provincial responsibility, not a national one
- The provinces jealously guard their right to provide and manage education.
- This leaves Quality Assurance to the individual provinces.



Overview

- National level agreements
 - CMEC, AUCC
- Variety of provincial approaches
 - Maritimes
 - Quebec
 - Ontario
 - Prairies
 - Alberta
 - British Columbia
- Summary



Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

- Consists of the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for advanced education,
- In 2007, endorsed a national statement on quality assurance:
- “the primary responsibility for academic and institutional quality assurance rests with postsecondary institutions themselves.”
- “governments are responsible for assuring themselves and the public that appropriate forms of quality assurance are in place in all degree-granting institutions” and have a particular responsibility to do so for new programs



CMEC guidelines for evaluation of new degrees or programs,

There is review by an independent panel of experts with experience in the appropriate field of study and in the design and evaluation of programs.

The process includes

the institution's written proposal,
discussions with proponents at the institution,
a site visit when necessary,
a written report by the expert panel, and
an institutional response to the report.



CMEC components of program's document

- institution's and program's academic policies;
- program content, delivery, and governance;
- faculty performance and credentials;
- physical resources such as labs and equipment; and
- an on-going periodic review process for the institution.





Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)

- All member institutions declared their commitment to the *AUCC principles of institutional quality assurance in Canadian higher education*.
 - a formal, approved, transparent policy to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of its academic programs.
 - regular review of the institution's quality assurance policy and related processes

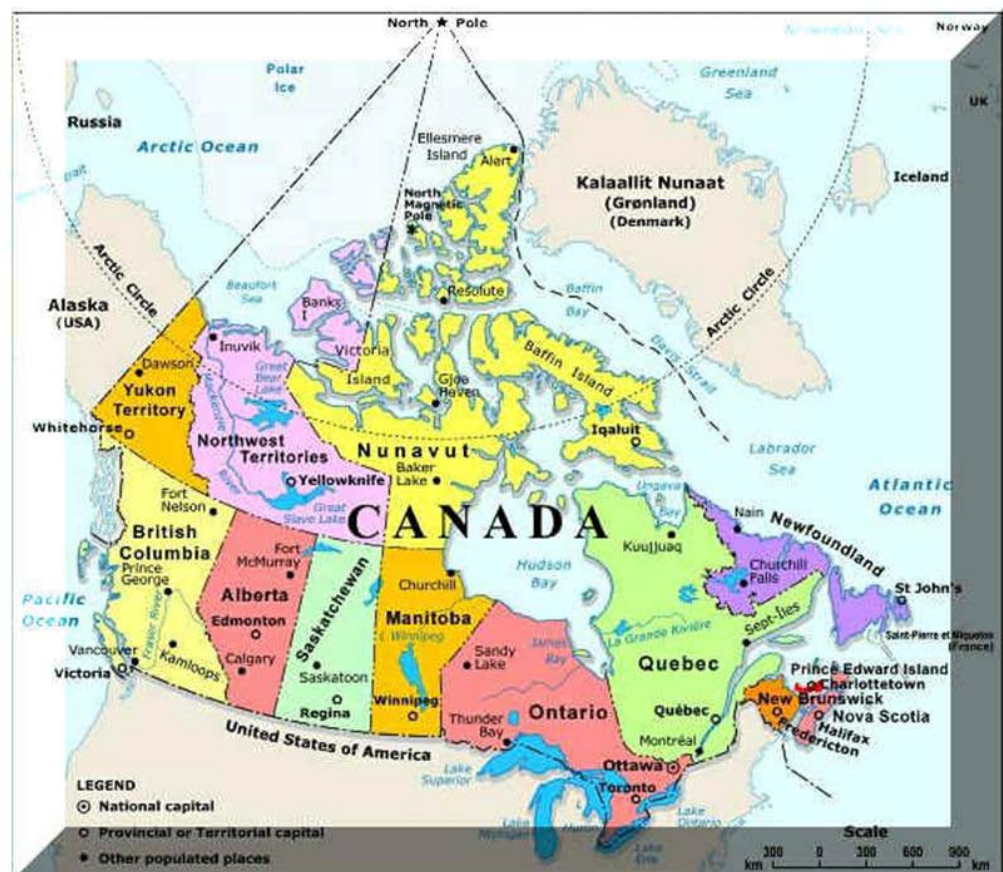


AUCC's Key characteristics of a review of quality

- Based on self-evaluation and peer review.
- Includes the involvement of external disciplinary experts.
- Involves internal and external stakeholders
 - students, faculty, and the administration of the institution, and
 - may also involve alumni and representatives of the community.
- Integrates professional accreditation criteria into university's own quality review processes

Provincial organizations and source of mandate

- Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC): government-university-public
- CREPUQ (Conference of Recteurs and Principals of Universities of Quebec): university
- Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS): university
 - To be replaced by Ontario University Council for Quality Assurance (OUCQA)?: university
- Manitoba and Saskatchewan: none
- Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC): government
- British Columbia Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB): government



MPHEC Assessment Criteria

- **program objectives**
- **anticipated student outcomes**
- **adequacy of resources** (human, physical and financial)
- **involvement of peers and experts**, normally external to the institution in the development of the proposed program
- **an environmental scan** to identify similar or equivalent or comparable programs in the region
- **consultation** with institutions offering similar or equivalent or comparable programs
- **Evidence of need**
- **Evidence of student demand.**



Additional MPHEC Criteria for graduate programs

- Existence of an appropriate academic environment:
 - a critical mass of research-active faculty and students;
 - breadth of disciplinary expertise among faculty;
 - a support network of related programs
 - capacity to provide a choice of advanced-level graduate courses;
 - evidence of sufficient library resources,
 - an appropriate structure (such as an Office of Graduate Studies) to support the program, and



MPHEC graduate criteria (2)

– in the case of research-based (master's and doctoral) degree programs,

- a strong research focus within the proposing unit
- evidence of faculty's ability to provide long-term supervisory capacity and supervisory committee membership; and
- appropriate student financial support is available.

- Review by an expert external to the institution, prior to submission



Quebec - CREPUQ

- Review of new programs is done by Commission d'évaluation des projets de programmes (CEP), part of CREPUQ
- Periodic review of existing programs is done within university, but process overseen by CREPUQ's Commission de vérification de l'évaluation des programmes existants (CVEP)



Ontario

- Reviews of new and existing programs are conducted by OCGS (Ontario Council on Graduate Studies)
- OCGS formally consists of the deans of all Ontario graduate schools
- Appraisal committee members are faculty members from Ontario universities
- All reviews require external reviewers



Ontario Council on Graduate Studies: Good quality programs (1)

- program's objectives are appropriate and are being met;
- the core faculty provide intellectual leadership in the disciplinary area(s) of the program through active engagement in research and scholarship;
- the faculty complement
 - is appropriate for the level and scope of the program and its identifiable fields, and
 - there are appropriate provisions and/or plans for its continuing vitality;
- the curriculum design is appropriate;
- the resources, such as laboratories, libraries, computer facilities, and research support, are appropriate;



Ontario Council on Graduate Studies: Good quality programs (2)

- enrolments are commensurate with the resources available;
- students complete the program in a timely fashion;
- there is evidence of appropriate financial support for students; and
- there is demonstration of the quality of the educational experience of students,
 - including intellectual development,
 - the acquisition of relevant skills, and
 - the attainment of the appropriate degree level expectations



Manitoba and Saskatchewan

- Both have no province-wide body or procedures
- U Manitoba's FGS has modeled its process on that of OCGS, including externals
- Saskatchewan uses externals for new and existing programs
 - Existing program process run through FGS



Campus Alberta Quality Council additional requirement

- **Demonstrated Graduate Student Outcomes**
Note: This section is applicable for institutions applying to offer a new program in which they have been offering some graduate programs for some time.
- detailed enrolment and completion data over a five year period
 - graduations
 - average time to complete degrees
 - full and part time student ratios
 - completion data
 - withdrawal data
 - employment and further education of graduate students
 - financial support to graduate students
 - graduate satisfaction



British Columbia

- Degree Quality Assessment Board has granted an exception to the 4 universities offering graduate programs
- Hence all review is internal to the university
- Periodic program reviews are done as part of reviewing a whole department



Responsibility for QA

	new programs	existing programs	overseen by
Maritimes	MPHEC (1)	university	MPHEC
Quebec	CREPUQ (2)	university	CREPUQ (2)
Ontario	OCGS (2)	OCGS (2)	
Manitoba	university/ COPSE (1)	university	COPSE (?)
Saskatchewan	university	university	
Alberta	CAQC (1)	university	CAQC (?)
Brit Columbia	university	university	

(1) a governmental agency

(2) an organization composed of university representatives



Summary

- External peer review is essential
- Based on a self-study report, and a site visit
- Appraisal is on a program-specific basis, not simply at the university level.
- These appraisals are effective in monitoring graduate program quality.



Key criteria

- a critical mass of research-active faculty (and students);
- appropriate disciplinary expertise and activity among faculty;
- program content, delivery, and governance
- evidence of sufficient library resources
- detailed enrolment and completion data over a five year period
 - average time to complete degrees
 - completion data
 - withdrawal data
 - employment and further education of graduate students
 - financial support to graduate students
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