

# DEGREE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ALBERTA: THE ROLE OF THE CAMPUS ALBERTA QUALITY COUNCIL IN ADVANCING STUDENT MOBILITY

Presentation to PCCAT's *Best Practices in Student Mobility:  
Transforming Higher Education in Canada*

24 June 2010

Dr. Peggy Patterson  
Member, Campus Alberta Quality Council

1

## TOPICS for Today's Session

- Ministerial Responsibility for degree program approval
- Campus Alberta Quality Council
  - Mandate and role
  - Key operating principles
  - Review process – Expedited reviews
  - Degree program approval process: Part A and Part B
  - Monitoring role
  - Institutional leading practices contributing to quality assurance
  - CAQC's impact
  - Recent and current initiatives
  - CAQC and quality assurance

2

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEGREE PROGRAM APPROVAL

*Post-secondary Learning Act ... (italics added...)*

- S. 106 of the PSLA stipulates that a public post-secondary institution, a resident private college or a non-resident institution cannot grant a degree, offer a program of study that provides for the granting of a degree, or advertise that it has the authority to do so *UNLESS it receives approval by the Minister.*
- s. 109(2) – “The Campus Alberta Quality Council may *inquire into and review any matter relating to a proposal to offer a program of study leading to the granting of an applied, baccalaureate, master’s or doctoral degree other than a degree in divinity.*”

3

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEGREE PROGRAM APPROVAL

... and the Programs of Study Regulation

- Regulation – s. 2 – a public post-secondary institution or a resident private college or non-resident institution that *proposes to establish, extend, expand, reduce, suspend, terminate or transfer a degree program offered or to be offered in Alberta, must apply for approval to the Minister do so.*

4

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEGREE PROGRAM APPROVAL

*Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Publicly  
Funded Advanced Education System (2007)*

- Six sectors (enshrined in legislation):
  - Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions
  - Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institutions
  - Polytechnical Institutions
  - Comprehensive Community institutions
  - Independent Academic Institutions
  - Specialized Arts and Cultural Institutions

5

## CAMPUS ALBERTA QUALITY COUNCIL (CAQC)

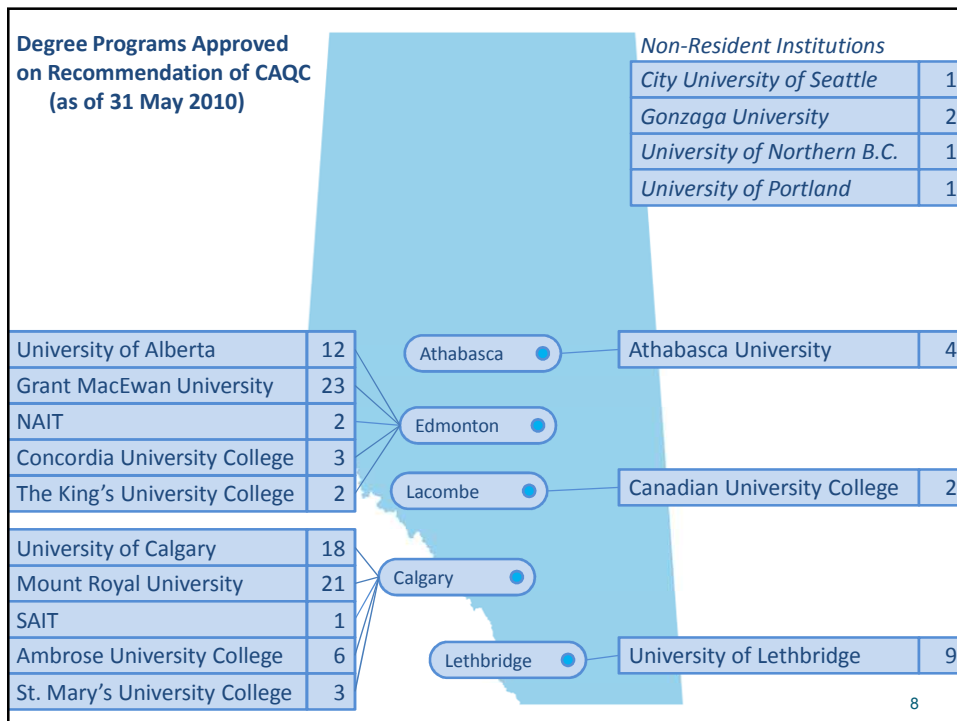
- An arm's length quality assurance agency established in 2004 by the *Post-secondary Learning Act*
- An 11-person expert committee with respected membership from within Campus Alberta and from outside Alberta (supported by a small Secretariat)
- Current members come from a diversity of institutions and a variety of backgrounds

6

## CAQC MANDATE AND ROLE

- **Mandate** – to apply quality standards in reviewing the quality of ALL proposed degree programs (except for degrees in divinity) to be offered in Alberta by private and public institutions, including non-resident institutions.
- **Role** – conducts organizational and program evaluations, and monitors approved degree programs once implemented to ensure they continue to meet standards.

7



8

## CAQC'S KEY OPERATING PRINCIPLES

- appropriate standards comparable to **national and international standards**
- **best interests of learners are at the core of Council's activities**
- respects the **foundational role of academic freedom**
- **peer evaluation** an essential component of Council's evaluation
- **stakeholder participation** an integral part of process
- retains **autonomy** from outside influences
- exhibits **equity** in all aspects of its operation
- exhibits and promotes **openness and transparency** in practices and policies
- processes are iterative; potential for **continuous improvement**
- acts **expeditiously** and in keeping with principles of natural justice
- committed to **QA review of its own activities** and **sharing of best practices**
- appreciates **institutional diversity** and respects **institutional autonomy**
- ensures appropriate **monitoring** of approved degree programs
- members and peer reviewers act in accordance with **ethical standards**

## CAQC'S REVIEW PROCESS – EXPEDITED REVIEWS

- Council, reviews may proceed in one of 3 ways:
  - **Full Review** – for applicants proposing a first degree or a first degree at a new level. CAQC appoints external evaluators for both organizational and program reviews.
  - **Partially Expedited Review** – omitting organizational review but conducting a full program review using CAQC-appointed external evaluators.
  - **Fully Expedited Review** – neither an organizational evaluation nor CAQC-appointed external program evaluators. Desk review by subcommittee.
- Expedited review criteria listed on website – obtaining external review prior to sending to CAQC enhances case.

## DEGREE APPROVAL PROCESS

### Stage 1 – System Coordination Review by Ministry

- Key questions:
  - Is the program consistent with the institution's mandate?
  - How does the program fit within the broader post-secondary system?
  - Does the institution have the capacity to offer this program?
  - Do student, economic and educational demand data support the need for the program?

11

## DEGREE APPROVAL PROCESS

### Stage 1 – System Coordination Requirements

- Information requirements:
  - Enrolment plan
  - Institutional approval process
  - Consultation with other institutions, regulatory/professional bodies and employers/industry
  - Support from professional organizations, regulatory bodies, employers and industry
  - Fit with GOA policies and priorities
  - Student and economic demand
  - Progression to further study
  - Fiscal plan

12

DEGREE APPROVAL PROCESS  
Stage 2 – Quality Review by CAQC:  
a) Organizational Review

- Mandate and mission
- Governance and administrative capacity
- Academic freedom and integrity
- Academic policies
- Organizational policies, planning and periodic review
- Financial planning and resources
- Ethical conduct
- Faculty and staff
- Information services and systems
- Student services and student protection
- Dispute resolution
- Scholarly and research support
- Physical plant
- Graduate program policies, if applicable

13

DEGREE APPROVAL PROCESS  
Stage 2 – Organizational Assessment –  
Graduate Programs

- Graduate program policies
- Commitment to graduate students
- Faculty
- Library and information resources
- Research facilities

14

## DEGREE APPROVAL PROCESS

### Stage 2 – CAQC Quality Review:

#### b) **Program Review**

- Faculty and staff
- Academic policies
- Resource capacity
- Credential recognition
- Program delivery
- Program content
- Program structure
- Program evaluation
- Regulation and accreditation

Also have additional standards for graduate degrees

15

## CAQC'S MONITORING ROLE

- Review of reporting on implementation of new programs
- Review of annual reporting
- Conduct comprehensive evaluation after 6 years of offering first degree program
- Conduct other periodic reporting
- CAQC can recommend the rescinding of ministerial approval to offer a degree program

16

## INSTITUTIONAL LEADING PRACTICES CONTRIBUTING TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Internal review and self-reflection: SWOT and gap analyses
- Interdisciplinary programs relying on cross-faculty cooperation and critical mass
- Inter-institutional consultation and collaboration
- Innovative and niche programming

17

## CAQC's IMPACT

- *Application of our quality standards to proposals has enhanced programs and applications*
- CAQC has acted as a stimulus to the further development of a "quality culture"
- CAQC is sensitive to impacts on quality in times of economic restraint – our goal is to be responsive, facilitative and *flexible*
- Degree recognition, nationally and internationally, promotes confidence in the Alberta "brand" and mobility of graduates

18

## RECENT AND CURRENT INITIATIVES

- Guidelines for specific types of undergraduate degrees (BA, BSc, BEd, BTechs, applied degrees, some professional degrees, degrees involving diplomas)
- CAQC's 2008 Collaborative Degree Protocol (which had buy-in from all stakeholder groups)
- Toolkits for Off-site and Cross-border Delivery of Programs
- Review of standards for distance and distributed learning programs and of processes for comprehensive reviews: continuous improvement

19

## CAQC IS "PLUGGED IN" TO THE WORLD OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

- CAQC is a member of INQAAHE, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
- CAQC ensures degree programs are assessed using nationally and internationally acceptable standards in order to ensure portability
- Alberta, BC and Ontario have compared assessment standards and those mutually acceptable have been adopted by CAQC
- CMEC working group on the quality of degree programming in Canada (produced the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework)
- CAQC and its Secretariat continually keep informed of developments in the world of quality assurance, e.g., the Bologna process

20

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- Campus Alberta Quality Council website at:  
[www.caqc.gov.ab.ca](http://www.caqc.gov.ab.ca)