

**MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENTS
OF NEW DEGREE PROVIDERS**

I. Introduction

By request of the New Brunswick Minister responsible for Post-secondary Education (hereinafter referred to as “the Minister”), the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (hereinafter referred to as “the MPHEC”) assesses institutions (and their programs) applying under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act. The Act, adopted in March 2001, establishes a framework to evaluate the quality of the institution and its programs leading to a degree, offered by all public and private institutions, except those created by an Act of the NB legislature prior to the Act coming into force.

The designation process is made up of four key steps:

- (1) evaluation of the financial viability of the applicant and the degree program;
- (2) assessment of the institution;
- (3) assessment of the academic quality of the degree program; and,
- (4) ministerial and government decision on designation.

The first step, administered by Business New Brunswick, involves verification of the viability of the business plan, including such things as budget provisions, financial plans, market potential and the financial stability of the applicant.

Normally the second step involves an external institutional assessment conducted by the MPHEC to determine whether the institution has the necessary governance, policies, planning and financing in place to deliver a quality degree program.

The third step requires an external program quality assessment conducted by the MPHEC to determine the suitability and quality of the proposed program given its objectives, structure, institutional appropriateness, resources, stated student outcomes and their relevance.

In the final step, the Minister recommends designation to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council if the Minister believes that the applicant has met all of the applicable requirements. Designated institutions are subject to a follow-up institutional assessment at regular intervals and are required to submit their programs for reassessment in the fifth year following designation and be re-designated every ten years.

This document outlines MPHEC’s procedures and information requirements for the institutional assessment of new degree providers.

Please note that all applications for designation are made to the Minister and not the Commission. It is the Minister who forwards the application to the Commission for a quality assessment. The Commission’s role is limited to conducting the quality assessment and providing advice to the Minister who in turn makes the final decision on all applications. Therefore, anyone wishing to submit an application under the Act should contact the Post-Secondary Affairs Branch of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (hereinafter referred to as “the Department”). Prior to submitting an application, organizations are strongly encouraged to meet with officials from the Commission to go over the assessment information requirements and procedures and to clarify expectations. These preliminary meetings are important as the Commission will not engage in discourse with the applicant once the quality assessment process has been officially launched.

II. SUBMISSION OF THE SELF-STUDY

The self-study is the main documentation needed for the MPHEC (and its panel of external evaluators) to assess the institution's readiness to implement and sustain the degree program(s).

The self-study serves three purposes:

- (i) For an institution, it provides a very useful analysis of its objectives, resources, students and achievements and of the relationships among them that is valuable for the institution's strategic planning.
- (ii) For the MPHEC and its evaluators, it provides the detailed information whereby they become familiar with the institution.
- (iii) It reveals the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of an institution in relation to the achievement of its purposes and objectives.

Self-studies submitted by an institution under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act must be prepared according to the *Information Requirements for Institutional Assessments – submitted under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act*.

The institution is required to submit 10 paper copies and one electronic copy to the Department for use by the MPHEC. Upon receipt of a self-study, the MPHEC will post the name of the institution, a brief description, and the name of the applicant on its website.

Institutions must meet all the information requirements in the *Information Requirements for Institutional Assessments – submitted under the New Brunswick Degree Granting Act*. If the applicant is unable to provide all of the information requirements, it must justify/document the omission. The MPHEC reserves the right to request from the applicant additional information, which it deems necessary to conclude its assessment of the institution. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all the information and representations as part of this application process, including information provided to the Minister, the Province of New Brunswick, the MPHEC presented in any form whatsoever, are true.

The MPHEC recognizes that for de novo institutions it may be difficult to provide all the information required to satisfy the standards. In this case, the MPHEC will look for evidence of a thorough planning process and evidence that an organization will have in place policies, resources, facilities and personnel to meet the standards and criteria laid out in the guidelines. The MPHEC may recommend to the Minister very specific terms and conditions that need to be met if designation is provided as a way of insuring that an institution develops appropriately.

Please note that the MPHEC reserves the right to modify its policies, procedures, criteria, and information requirements from time to time and will post current versions on its website. It is the applicant's responsibility to use current policies, procedures, criteria, and information requirements.

III. ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

The MPHEC and its evaluators will use the following assessment standards in its institutional assessment of new degree providers.

1. **Mission Statement and Academic Goals** – The institution has approved a mission

statement and academic goals that identify the academic character and the aspirations of the organization, including the extent to which the applicant is committed to the dissemination of knowledge through teaching and, where applicable, the creation of knowledge and service to the community or related professions. The institution has academic policies and standards that support the institution's mission and academic goals.

2. **Academic freedom and integrity** – The institution maintains an atmosphere of academic freedom and intellectual independence: an atmosphere that not only promotes a full and balanced treatment of the commonly-held academic body of knowledge, theories, and opinions, but also encourages testing the limits of knowledge and communicating research findings and the implication of those findings to the academic community and beyond. Academic activity is supported by policies, procedures and practices that encourage academic honesty and integrity and respect the ownership rights of the creators of intellectual property whether faculty, employees or students. The institution has adopted formal ethical research standards as well as policies concerning the management of research funds. The institution has means and procedures for the enforcement of the above policies based on principles of natural justice.
3. **Governance** - The institution has the legal characteristics and governance structure necessary to organize and manage an institution of higher learning. The structure normally includes a body competent to either make decisions or give advice in academic matters.
4. **Administrative Capacity** - The institution has the capacity to manage itself in a competent way. It has capable administrative staff, policies with respect to strategic planning, an adequate information system to gather and analyze data needed for planning and decision-making, and procedures for the development of curricula and academic policies which include participation by academic staff and consultation with students.
5. **Dispute resolution** - The institution has policies for dealing with disputes between the institution and its students, the institution and faculty, and between faculty and students, where complaints, grievances, and/or disputes of students, faculty, staff and administration are dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice (i.e., fair and expeditious resolution of disputes with reasonable deadlines; full disclosure; the right to be heard in response to charges or complaints; a process for and an officer charged with reviewing disputes and examining the evidence; and provision for a final internal review by a body of persons (or person) not involved in the dispute).
6. **Ethical conduct** - The institution values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct, as demonstrated by the policies and practices by which it proposes to conduct its business and, if applicable, by its past performance within and/or outside of the jurisdiction.
7. **Financial stability** – The institution demonstrates financial stability and the financial resources to provide a stable learning environment and to ensure that students can complete their programs; has a credible strategic and business plan; has procedures for the regular audit of the institution's financial methods, performance and stability by an arm's-length professional accountant; and has methods to protect student financial investment in the case of the cessation of activity.
8. **Credible business plan** - (at least five years) that includes best case/worst case scenario that addresses the applicant's future educational, enrolment, physical and fiscal growth in New Brunswick. The business plan includes the organization's academic, financial, facilities, marketing and human resource plans and demonstrates that the organization has the administrative organization and capacity to effectively manage a degree-granting institution. The business plan details the programs to be offered in New Brunswick and demonstrates the organization's commitment to academic quality of program content and delivery.
9. **Faculty and staff** - The institution has policies with respect to the number and qualifications of the academic faculty and instructional staff, including provisions

- against fraudulent credentials, and policies with respect to appointment, evaluation (including student evaluations), employment conditions, which include workload, promotion, termination and professional development, and policies/practices with respect to research and/or scholarship. In addition, the institution has policies regarding appropriate human resource development and management.
10. **Periodic review** - The institution has a formal approved overarching quality assurance policy requiring the periodic review of all units and/or operations to occur on a cyclical basis, normally not exceeding five to seven years. The periodic review includes at a minimum:
 - (i) A self-study undertaken by faculty members and administrators based on evidence relating to program performance against the criteria stated above, including strengths and weaknesses, desired improvements, and future directions;
 - (ii) An assessment conducted by a panel consisting of experts external to the institution that normally includes a site visit;
 - (iii) A report of the expert panel assessing institutional quality and recommending any changes needed to strengthen that quality;
 - (iv) An institutional response to the recommendations in the report;
 - (v) A summary of the conclusions of the evaluation made publicly available.
 11. **Information Services and Systems** - The institution has available for students and faculty appropriate information services and learning resources to support the academic programs. The review normally considers how priorities are established with respect to their acquisition and the institution's commitment to maintaining and supplementing them.
 12. **Academic Policies** – The institution has published academic policies with respect to admission, promotion and graduation requirements, mature student, credit transfer and prior learning assessment, appeals and academic dishonesty consistent with the level of the proposed degree program. It has established policies and procedures that outline the process by which transfer of academic credit is awarded.
 13. **Student Protection** - The institution values and upholds integrity and ethical conduct in its relations with students through the availability of full, accurate and truthful material regarding its mission and goals, history, governance and academic structure; program and subject descriptions; faculty and administrators' credentials; entrance requirements including credit transfer and prior learning assessment policies; clear and informative student enrollment agreements verifying student awareness of relevant policies; support services; payment requirements and refund policies; financial assistance; and transcript protection. Student records should be accurate; and adequate provisions must be in place to maintain these records in perpetuity.
 14. **Student Services** - The provision of student services, such as counselling, extracurricular activities, residential accommodations, and financial aid, should be appropriate to the institution's mission and educational objectives.
 15. **Physical Plant** - The institution has a physical plant and facilities, including laboratories, classrooms, library, technology and specialized equipment, appropriate to support degree programming in the program(s) it offers (or proposes to offer) or demonstrates the availability of adequate learning resources and learning support for students where alternate means of delivery are employed.
 16. **Technological Infrastructure** – Faculty, tutors, course designers, editors, student- and technology-support personnel are adequately trained in the technology and pedagogy of on-line instruction. The institution has a clear IT plan that outlines the technology and support parameters for the instructors and students. The technology used to administer and deliver the program, both pedagogically and administratively, is adequate to facilitate program delivery, and institutions are committed to appropriate updating of any technologies employed, and the identification and evaluation of emerging technologies. Sufficient resources need to be available for development and sustainability. Students and staff are provided with an orientation to, and sufficient ongoing training/technical support for, any hardware and software resources required

in the program.

IV. ESSENTIAL CONTENTS OF THE SELF-STUDY

The self-study should address each of the following 13 sections. The nature of the self-study is to be comparative, reflective, and outcome-oriented. Where possible it should include feedback from students, alumni, transfer institutions, employers, and graduate programs. The self-study should be attentive to the institution's current place in the New Brunswick educational context.

All appendices should be numbered according to the specific information requirements (e.g. appendix 2.5 should correspond to the information requirement specified under section 2.5 of the Essential Contents of the Self-Study). In addition, all appendices should be listed in the Table of Contents.

SECTION 1: INSTITUTION IDENTIFICATION

Provide the following (supporting documentation is to be appended):

- 1.1 Full legal name of institution
- 1.2 Operating name of institution
- 1.3 Common acronym of institution (if applicable)
- 1.4 URL for institution homepage (if applicable)
- 1.5 Addresses for the head office, the main campus and all other operating sites, as well as telephone, facsimile, and email contact information
- 1.6 Written authorization of the representative of the applicant institution to enter into a binding application (including name, title, address, telephone and email address)
- 1.7 Written authorization of the institutional contact person to represent the institution throughout the application process (include name, title, address, telephone and email address)
- 1.8 Documents to substantiate the institution's legal character, i.e., articles of incorporation, partnership agreements, statutory authority, or other document(s), including documentation relevant to any relationship to parent, subsidiary or other corporate groups
- 1.9 Number and geographic distribution of employees (faculty, administration and staff) indicating whether full-time or part-time
- 1.10 Demographic profile of the student body (including number, geographic distribution, full-time or part-time)
- 1.11 An organization chart that outlines the institution's reporting structure and shows the relationship among the owners and governing and managing bodies. Provide an explanation of how these reporting structures are consistent with the organization's academic purposes
- 1.12 Copy of academic calendar if available

SECTION 2: MISSION/MANDATE EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures to be appended):

- 2.1 A brief history of the institution
- 2.2 Official mission statement and specific educational objectives
- 2.3 Statement of educational philosophy
- 2.4 Brief description of current and prospective programs
- 2.5 Academic freedom and academic honesty policies, procedures and practices as they pertain to faculty and students

SECTION 3: ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 3.1 The institution's corporate structure
- 3.2 The institution's legal status (sole proprietor, partnership, society, corporation)
- 3.3 The institution's legal character (e.g. articles of incorporation, bylaws, partnership agreements, charter, statutory authority or other documents) including documentation relevant to any relationship with parent, subsidiary or other corporate groups
- 3.4 Relationship to other organizations (government, university, church, business, etc.)
- 3.5 Historical performance of affiliated institutions and institutions to which the applicant is affiliated
- 3.6 Composition and responsibilities of the institution's governing bodies
- 3.7 Organizational and decision-making flow charts of the institution
- 3.8 CEO or other officer with overall responsibility for degree programs and other key administrative staff, their abbreviated vitae and position descriptions
- 3.9 Provision for continuity of leadership
- 3.10 Policies regarding hiring, employment conditions and benefits, dismissal of administrative officers, health and safety, codes of staff and student behaviour and dispute resolution policies
- 3.11 Academic staff organization and administration
- 3.12 Strategic plan or planning document that outlines the institution's major directions
- 3.13 Statement regarding how the planning process reflects and supports the institution's mission
- 3.14 How does the planning process inform decision-making at the institution
- 3.15 The institution's overall planning process that links and coordinates the institution's different planning activities. The description might include the following:
 - 3.15.1 Who at the institution has major responsibility for coordinating institution-wide planning
 - 3.15.2 Who else participates and how various stakeholders are involved in the process; how is feedback sought from students and alumni
 - 3.15.3 Timeframe or length of the planning cycle
 - 3.15.4 How academic, financial, facilities, etc. planning is integrated into an overall comprehensive planning process
- 3.16 How the planning process is disseminated and understood throughout the institution
- 3.17 Mechanism(s) used to update the strategic plan/ensure that the plan remains current

SECTION 4: ETHICAL CONDUCT

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 4.1 Has the owner(s) of the institution or any of its directors or officers been convicted of fraud or misinterpretation? If yes, explain.
- 4.2 Are there any legal or administrative actions related to the operation of a business or business activity pending against the institution and/or any of its owners, officers, or administrators by any federal, provincial, state, or municipal law-enforcement agency? If yes, explain.
- 4.3 Provide the names and addresses of postsecondary organizations currently or previously owned/controlled by the institution's owners/officers.

SECTION 5: FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 5.1 Financial resources and sources of revenue
- 5.2 Financial obligations and expenditures
- 5.3 5 year business plan (as per the assessment standard Credible Business Plan above)
- 5.4 Financial ratios including (for previous year, current year and 3-year projections):
 - 5.4.1 Cost per student per course completion
 - 5.4.2 Cost per student per credit hour
 - 5.4.3 Cost per graduate
 - 5.4.4 Ratio of teaching costs to overhead costs per year
 - 5.4.5 % of budget allocated to learning resources and library each year
 - 5.4.6 % of expenditures on contracts for teaching staff who are not full-time employees of the institution per year
 - 5.4.7 Net of earned revenue minus costs per year
 - 5.4.8 Information technology expenditure per student per year
 - 5.4.9 Information technology expenditure per graduate per year
- 5.5 Organization and staffing of the business office
- 5.6 Budget preparation, financial control, and audit policies and procedures
- 5.7 Audited financial statements for the past three years
- 5.8 Fund-raising policies and procedures
- 5.9 Policies and procedures regarding student fees
- 5.10 Future fiscal priorities
- 5.11 Process of costing new programs and assessing risks

SECTION 6: ACADEMIC STAFF

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 6.1 All current and potential (full-time, part-time) academic staff members and their abbreviated vitae
- 6.2 Academic staff profile with respect to number, discipline, degrees, rank, tenure, teaching experience and salary

- 6.3 Policies with respect to the employment of full-time and part-time academic staff
- 6.4 Teaching loads, committee work, and administrative duties of academic staff members
- 6.5 Policies and practices regarding academic staff involvement in scholarship and/or research in the context of the institution's mission statement
- 6.6 Policies regarding hiring, evaluation, promotion, tenure, employment conditions and benefits, and dismissal of academic staff members
- 6.7 Policies regarding academic freedom and ethical conduct
- 6.8 Communication of academic staff responsibilities, obligations, employment conditions, and benefits
- 6.9 Provisions for academic staff participation in governance
- 6.10 Opportunities and support for professional development and improvement of instruction
- 6.11 Future plans and priorities regarding academic staff. For new institutions or those proposing to offer a first degree, provide evidence of sufficient academic expertise or concrete plans to obtain it in order to launch the proposed program(s)

SECTION 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 7.1 Procedures for the evaluation and improvement of administrative effectiveness
- 7.2 Procedures for curricular development, approval, implementation and change
- 7.3 Procedures for the evaluation and improvement of instruction
- 7.4 The institution's overarching quality assurance policy and procedures:
 - 7.4.1 Scope of policy
 - 7.4.2 Review cycle
 - 7.4.3 Program review process (as per the Assessment Standard Periodic Review listed above under section III item 10 from i to iv.)
 - 7.4.4 Follow-up mechanism
 - 7.4.5 Consultation processes (faculty, students, graduates, alumni, employers, etc.)

SECTION 8: INFORMATION SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 8.1 Resources available on site or off site to support degree programs
- 8.2 Summary of library holdings in various subject areas
- 8.3 Collection policies
- 8.4 Policies regarding ordering and budget allocations
- 8.5 Accessibility and usage of information services
- 8.6 Space analysis (including student study space)
- 8.7 Resource staff and their vitae and job descriptions
- 8.8 Agreements regarding student access to other conveniently located libraries
- 8.9 Provisions for student access to information by electronic means (e.g. CD-ROM, internet)
- 8.10 Future plans and priorities regarding resource centres, libraries and other information services

- 8.11 Information systems that support the administrative structure and plans to meet future needs

SECTION 9: ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RECORDS

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 9.1 Transferability of course credits to other educational institutions and historical performance of students after transfer
- 9.2 Policies for transcript protection services
- 9.3 Instructional methods and procedures (including the application of technology in the teaching/learning process)
- 9.4 Class-size analysis and student-instructor ratio
- 9.5 Future plans and priorities regarding curricula and instruction
- 9.6 Retention of students per program
- 9.7 Success of graduates per program
- 9.8 Historical performance of the institution in providing learning and support to students (outcomes)
- 9.9 Policies and procedures regarding student recruitment, including financial aid
- 9.10 Policies and procedures regarding admissions
- 9.11 Policies and procedures regarding registration
- 9.12 Policies and procedures regarding transfer students
- 9.13 Policies and procedures regarding class schedules and length of academic terms
- 9.14 Policies and procedures regarding student records, including the confidentiality of these records
- 9.15 Policies and procedures regarding academic behavior (attendance, completion of assignments, plagiarism, etc.)
- 9.16 Mechanisms in place to assure and to deal with all copyright and intellectual property issues, such as shared ownership, access to data, digital rights management and the use of object learning repositories.
- 9.17 Policies and practice regarding evaluation of students (methods, grading system, examination policy, appeal process, etc.)
- 9.18 Grade distributions, average grade and standard deviation per program
- 9.19 Policies and procedures regarding academic probation and academic honours
- 9.20 Graduation requirements per program
- 9.21 Mechanism to communicate academic policies to students and academic staff
- 9.22 Policies and procedures regarding alumni records
- 9.23 Future plans regarding academic policies and records
- 9.24 Residency requirements
- 9.25 Provision for ongoing maintenance of student records and transcript protection; provisions for student record maintenance in perpetuity (particularly in the event the organization folds or its status is significantly modified)

SECTION 10: STUDENT SERVICES

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 10.1 Services provided (counselling, residence, athletics, recreation, student government, clubs and other extracurricular activities, food, health services, financial aid, etc.)
- 10.2 Policies, practices and staffing regarding each service provided
- 10.3 Future plans and priorities regarding student services

SECTION 11: PHYSICAL PLANT, FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 11.1 Facilities available
- 11.2 Policies and practices regarding utilization and maintenance
- 11.3 Future plans and priorities regarding physical plant facilities
- 11.4 Computer and related equipment to support information services and technology used in the teaching/learning process.
- 11.5 Technology used to administer and deliver the institution's programs, both pedagogically and administratively.
- 11.6 Staff and faculty training in the technology and pedagogy of on-line instruction
- 11.7 Support available to students, faculty and staff in terms of orientation to, and ongoing training/technical support for, any hardware and software resources required in delivering the institution's programs
- 11.8 The institution's IT plan

SECTION 12: DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Describe the following (supporting documentation such as copies of policies and procedures are to be appended):

- 12.1 Production of institution publications
 - 12.1.1 Statement of policies regarding production of institution publications
 - 12.1.2 Samples of institution publications (brochures, newsletters, handbooks for internal use, etc.), or alternately an institution may wish to provide samples of publications for review at the site visit
 - 12.1.3 Statement of future plans regarding institution publications
- 12.2 Published policy and procedures should include but are not restricted to the following, check all that apply and indicate source (i.e. standard library reference or URL) as well as format (i.e. online, paper):
 - (i) Mission and goals of the institution and the purposes and objectives of specific programs:
 - (ii) Institution's history:
 - (iii) Institution's administrative and academic structure:
 - (iv) Admission requirements and procedures for each program:
 - (v) Program and subject descriptions with an indication of duration and scheduling:
 - (vi) Faculty and administration credentials and the rules of conduct for staff, student and faculty:
 - (vii) Full statement of degree completion requirements:
 - (viii) Statement of full disclosure of the fee structure and refund policies:
 - (ix) Entrance requirements, credit transfer information and prior learning assessment policies must be fully disclosed. These must be consistent with other existing educational institutions and made explicit to students and the general public:

- (x) Attendance and participation requirements for programs:
- (xi) A full explanation of student support services including academic assistance, counselling services, etc. :
- (xii) Statement of disclosure of any financial assistance that might be available to the student:
- (xiii) A discussion of transcript protection services and long term planning that safeguard student records in perpetuity:
- (xiv) Statement of disclosure with regard to tuition refund, credit transfer/train-out arrangements with other institutions in the event the organization folds or its status if significantly modified. :
- (xv) Appropriate policies must exist regarding academic honesty:
- (xvi) Grading procedures must be clearly developed and explained:
- (xvii) Appropriate policies must exist that insures that all international students meet program requirements for admittance and degree completion:
- (xviii) A policy and procedure regarding prior learning assessments exists including entrance exams, academic prerequisites, etc. :
- (xix) Methods of course delivery:
- (xx) List others:

SECTION 13: ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

All applicants shall include an analytical summary of the major strengths and weaknesses of the institution and the challenges encountered in the achievement of its objectives.

(Approved March 12, 2007 - three year pilot)