

DRAFT

**EXEMPT STATUS
CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES**

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What is Exempt Status?

Institutions with proven track records (ten years' history in granting degrees at the particular degree level) and appropriate governance mechanisms in place may obtain "exempt status" to a specific degree level. For example, if an institution has had authority to grant baccalaureate degrees for ten years **and** meets the other criteria for exempt status, the institution could have exempt status in respect of new baccalaureate degrees. New degree programs submitted by exempt institutions at the degree level for which the institution is exempt will go directly to the Minister for approval and will not be reviewed by the Board, unless the Minister has concerns about a proposal and refers it to the Board.

To obtain exempt status, institutions must first submit an application to the Minister for exempt status, up to a particular degree level, and the submission will be reviewed by the Degree Quality Assessment Board using the criteria established by the Minister.

Submission Process

Notice of Intent

The Notice of Intent must present, in a succinct manner, the purpose of the application and an explanation of how the institution meets the criteria for exempt status. The Notice of Intent must be no longer than 1,000 words and must include the name, title, phone number and e-mail address of the institutional contact person.

The Notice of Intent is intended to provide the public with an opportunity to view and comment on the application and to meet the Degree Quality Assessment Board's commitment to an open and accountable process. The Notice of Intent will be posted on the website while the application is under review and will be open for public comment for 30 days.

Submission Format

Once you have obtained a Post-Secondary Institution Proposal System (PSIPS) User ID and password and have verified your organizational information (data fields) on PSIPS, please provide the required submission for exempt status in Adobe PDF format as a PSIPS attachment.

Important: When creating Adobe PDF files, navigation tools such as "**bookmarks**" must be incorporated into the document(s) to allow the reader to navigate quickly to a particular page or section within the document. Information on navigation tools can be found in your Adobe Acrobat documentation.

The length of the submission may vary, but should be approximately 5,000 words. (Additional information may be added to the proposal in the form of Appendices). A submission for exempt status must provide information and discussion in a format that adheres to the order and addresses the areas below:

1. Indicate the purpose of the application and specify the degree level for which approval for exempt status is being sought (e.g. baccalaureate, masters, doctoral).
2. Indicate how the institution meets the prerequisite period for approval to grant degrees up to a particular level. **Note:** the ten-year prerequisite period refers to the time period that the institution has had authority to grant degrees in its own name up to a particular level, **and** has been enrolling students in approved degree programs.
 - Indicate the name of the approval body, accrediting body or statutory authority, as appropriate, and indicate where the institution has been operating.
 - Indicate, by degree level, when the institution received approval or authority to grant degrees.
 - Indicate, by degree level, the number of years that the institution has been enrolling students in the degree programs.
3. If the institution demonstrates that it meets the ten-year prerequisite period to be considered for exempt status, the submission will be assessed in the following categories:
 - Mission and Policies
 - Governance, Faculty, Services and Facilities
 - Accountability and Financial Capacity
 - Other

Organization Review

For applications by all private post-secondary institutions and out-of-province public post-secondary institutions, the Degree Quality Assessment Board will assess whether an organization review should be required, and if so, whether any prior accreditations can be recognized as satisfying all or part of British Columbia's organization review criteria.

Submission Criteria

Prerequisite Time Period

The prerequisite for an institution to be considered for exempt status is that the institution has, for ten years:

- had approval to grant degrees in its own name up to a particular level, and
- been successfully enrolling students in approved degree programs at that level.

Organizational Capacity

If an institution applying for exempt status has satisfied the ten-year prerequisite period of approval to grant degrees up to a particular level, the Degree Quality Assessment Board will assess the applicant's organizational capacity for exempt status. Exempt status, if granted, will

be to the degree level that the institution has had degree-granting authority and been enrolling students in degree programs for the ten-year period.

In determining an institution's organizational capacity, the Degree Quality Assessment Board may consider the institution's achievement of a successful review or accreditation under comparable standards, including membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

Where an institution has not successfully undergone a review of comparable standard, the Degree Quality Assessment Board may evaluate its organizational capacity for exempt status according to the following criteria:

Mission and Policies

The institution has in place:

- An approved, clearly articulated and publicly stated mission statement reflecting goals that are appropriate to an academic institution of high standard.
- Appropriate policies concerning academic integrity and standards.
- Policies to ensure that the institution conforms generally to the principles of academic freedom and responsibility.
- When students or staff are asked to sign or adhere to a statement of faith and/or a code of conduct that might constitute a constraint upon academic freedom, a policy in which the applicant:
 - notifies staff and students prior to employment or admission; and,
 - has adequate procedures in place to ensure the principles of natural justice are followed, in the event of alleged violations of any contractual arrangement concerning such required statement of faith and/or code of conduct.

Furthermore, the institution publishes the policies noted above and makes these available to students in an academic calendar or other publication.

Governance, Faculty, Services and Facilities

- The institution has a governance structure and administrative capacity appropriate to that of an academic institution of high standard, with an acceptable level of faculty involvement in governance.
- The institution has appropriate faculty, services and facilities to support degree programs for which it has consent/approval.

Accountability

- The institution can demonstrate that it has rigorous, ongoing program and institutional quality assessment processes, both internal and external.
- The institution can demonstrate that it has an established and ongoing institutional and program planning cycle and process.

Other

- The institution has in place programs that can be appropriately integrated with the provincial post-secondary system in program transfer and articulation.
- Any other information or condition the Degree Quality Assessment Board deems necessary to determine the organizational capacity of the institution.

Notes on the process for obtaining and maintaining Exempt Status

1. If an institution's application for exempt status is rejected, the institution may reapply two years after the date of its original application.
2. An institution with exempt status must continue to submit new degree proposals to the Minister for ministerial consent (approval or Order in Council in the case of British Columbia public institutions) by posting a Notice of Intent on the Post-Secondary Institution Proposal System (the documentation the institution used for its program approval process, or a link to the website where this information is available, must be attached).
3. The Minister reserves the right to require any exempt institution's degree proposal to be reviewed by the Degree Quality Assessment Board if the Minister believes a review is necessary or if:
 - a. the request represents a significant departure from programs historically offered by the institution, or is inconsistent with the institution's mission;
 - b. the quality of the institution's degree offerings has fallen into disrepute; or,
 - c. the financial stability of the institution is in doubt.
4. If an institution's application for exempt status is approved, the institution's exempt status will not normally require renewal or reapplication.
5. The Minister reserves the right to revoke, suspend or amend an institution's exempt status. The Minister shall request a review by the Degree Quality Assessment Board for recommendation on the revocation, suspension or amendment of exempt status of an institution; if the Minister believes a review is necessary or if:
 - a. the Minister has referred more than two programs to the Board for review within a two-year period;
 - b. the institution has failed to comply with any terms and conditions or any legislative obligation; or
 - c. the institution no longer appears to meet the criteria for exempt status.