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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2013AEIT0028-000406
March 4, 2013

Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology

Strengthening quality in post-secondary education

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology is inviting all British Columbians to participate in government decision-making as it moves to implement enhancements to quality assurance across the post-secondary education sector.

As part of the BC Jobs Plan and British Columbia's International Education Strategy, the B.C. government committed to expanding and strengthening post-secondary quality assurance to ensure domestic and international students receive the best education possible.

While the high quality of B.C.'s post-secondary institutions is recognized around the world, the rapid growth and diversification in post-secondary education and increased internationalization of the sector require that quality assurance processes are adapted and reinforced.

Beginning in April 2012, the ministry engaged students, stakeholders and the public on quality assurance through multiple forums, including the BC Jobs Plan website, post-secondary forums, electronic workbooks and a student focus group.

The ministry reviewed more than 100 submissions from institutions, students, associations and private individuals and met with over 100 practitioners from the higher education system. Two external advisory committees were also established to provide expert advice to the ministry.

The views and ideas received during this consultation period have informed the development of a new Quality Assurance Framework for post-secondary education in B.C.

The proposed framework is more transparent and more flexible than the current system and encourages a culture of continuous improvement in quality assessment and assurance practices among all educational institutions in British Columbia's post-secondary system including:

- Public post-secondary institutions and private degree-granting institutions (universities, colleges and institutes).
- Private career-training schools.
- Private theological institutions.
- Private language schools.
- Private post-secondary academic (non-degree granting) and Aboriginal-controlled institutes.

Key components of the proposed framework include:

- A continuing commitment to strong student rights and safeguards, including strengthened tuition refund policies across the entire post-secondary system to protect students in cases where the institution they are attending closes, and a comprehensive student resource website providing clear information on avenues available to students should they have concerns regarding the quality of their post-secondary education.
- Streamlining processes for assessing institutional eligibility for the StudentAid BC designation, Education Quality Assurance designation and to enrol international students.
- Allowing institutions demonstrating high levels of quality assessment policies and practices to gain increased autonomy over program quality assessment.
- Ensuring that a broad range of educational choices and opportunities are available to learners at various stages of their lives.

The ministry is now focusing on a new phase of engagement as government moves to the next stage in the development of quality assurance policy and regulation, with potential legislation in 2013.

A discussion paper outlining the proposed Quality Assurance Framework has been posted on the ministry's website for public review and comment:

http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/education_quality_assurance/docs/qaf-green-paper.pdf

During the spring of 2013, the ministry will continue to consult with stakeholders across the public and private post-secondary system.

Based on the input and feedback received, the ministry will complete work on the framework during the summer of 2013, with a phased implementation expected to begin in fall 2013.

Quotes:

John Yap, Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology –

“With valuable input from the public, students, and stakeholders across the post-secondary system, we’re taking action to strengthen quality assurance that serves as the foundation of our post-secondary education system.”

“Under the proposed Quality Assurance Framework, students can be assured that regardless of the post-secondary education institution they attend, the education promised will be the education delivered, and the credentials earned will have value when they seek employment or choose to pursue further education.”

Quick Facts:

- The current post-secondary system in B.C. includes:
 - 11 public universities, 11 public colleges and three public institutes, delivering 1,900 education and training programs to more than 430,000 students.

- 17 private degree-granting institutions, delivering 66 programs to 7,400 students.
 - 330 private career-training schools, delivering 2,500 programs to 51,000 students.
 - 13 private theological institutions.
 - Over 40 Aboriginal-controlled institutes.
 - Private language schools delivering training to 43,000 learners.
- Quality assurance, as undertaken by government, provides the public with reliable information to indicate that educational programs meet generally accepted educational standards, and serves students and families by giving them confidence that institutions deliver on the education promised and that their credentials have value.

Learn More:

- Discussion paper outlining the proposed Quality Assurance Framework: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/education_quality_assurance/qaf-green-paper.htm
- Refreshed student resource website providing clear information on avenues available to students should they have concerns regarding the quality of their post-secondary education: http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/education_quality_assurance/student_enquiry_policy.htm
- BC Jobs Plan and Skills Training Plan: <http://www.bcjobsplan.ca/>
- British Columbia's International Education Strategy: <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/internationaleducation/welcome.htm>

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