

Chapter 19

Advanced Education—Working with the Advanced Education Sector to Achieve Ministry Strategies

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The Ministry of Advanced Education, in conjunction with post-secondary institutions, continues to make progress toward implementing processes and reporting structures to monitor whether advanced education sector strategies are achieved.

By August 2021, the Ministry implemented initiatives with post-secondary institutions to monitor progress toward achieving its strategies as follows: established a performance framework, determined accountability reporting under the multi-year funding memorandum of understanding (MOU), and set sector-wide performance measures. However, the Ministry has not yet set measurable targets and timelines for the performance framework or multi-year funding MOU.

Having specific, measurable targets and timelines will assist the Ministry in analyzing and reporting on progress made by post-secondary institutions toward achieving advanced education sector strategies.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Advanced Education is responsible for the post-secondary education sector.¹ Its responsibilities include coordinating, developing, implementing, promoting and enforcing policies and programs related to post-secondary education.² In particular, it is responsible for strategic alignment and effective two-way communication and information sharing between the Ministry and post-secondary institutions.³

To be successful in achieving its mandate as well as goals from the Ministry of Advanced Education's Plans, the Ministry must engage post-secondary institutions in its strategies.

This chapter describes our third follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2015 about the Ministry's processes to work with the advanced education sector to achieve Ministry strategies.

Our *2015 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 7, concluded the Ministry had, except in the areas reflected in our two recommendations, effective processes to work with the advanced education sector to achieve the Ministry's strategies for the sector as set out in *The Ministry of Advanced Education Plan for 2014–15*. By March 2018, the Ministry implemented one recommendation and partially implemented the other recommendation.⁴

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the

¹ *Ministry of Advanced Education Annual Report for 2020–21*, p. 5.

² *The Ministry of Advanced Education Regulations*, section 3.

³ *Ministry of Advanced Education Annual Report for 2020–21*, p. 6.

⁴ See *2018 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 13, pp. 199–201, and *2020 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 13, pp. 207–209.



Ministry's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Ministry management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with Ministry management and reviewed Ministry communications to post-secondary institutions, reports submitted by post-secondary institutions, Ministry analysis, and public reports.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION

This section sets out the recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at August 13, 2021, and the Ministry's actions up to that date.

3.1 Specific, Measurable Targets and Timelines Under Development

We recommended the Ministry of Advanced Education use specific, measurable targets and timelines to monitor progress toward achievement of its strategies. (2015 Report – Volume 1, p. 7, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 14, 2016)

Status—Partially Implemented

The Ministry plans to monitor progress toward achieving its strategies through a performance framework for post-secondary institutions, accountability reporting under the multi-year funding memorandum of understanding with post-secondary institutions, as well as sector-wide performance measures. However, the Ministry has not yet set measurable targets and timelines for the performance framework or multi-year funding MOU.

Performance Framework

By August 2021, the Ministry consulted with post-secondary institutions to develop a performance framework for the post-secondary sector. The performance framework builds on the five expectations for the sector, and includes key priorities for each expectation (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1—Five Expectations and Key Priorities for the Post-Secondary Sector

Expectation	Key Priorities
Accessible: Offers qualified people the opportunity to attend and succeed in post-secondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target groups: including First Nations and Métis students; students with disabilities; mature students; and new Canadians • Health, safety, and wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff • Post-secondary education options are available at a range of locations and modalities • Range of financial supports including student loans, grants, and scholarships • Learner pathways
Responsive: Meets the needs of students, communities and the economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research-linked, Government goals • Employer engagement • International engagement • Lifelong learning opportunities

Expectation	Key Priorities
High Quality: Meets standards and builds public confidence in the programs and services provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs have common standards and quality assurance • Programs provide skills and competencies required by Saskatchewan employers
Sustainable: Operates within available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of alternative funding sources and models • Enhanced financial monitoring • Ensuring infrastructure supports the needs of the sector • Efficiency through collaboration among institutions
Accountable: Achieves expected outcomes and is transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective board governance, including effective financial, operational, and management oversight • Establish accountability frameworks • Identifying strategic objectives and priorities • Ensuring performance monitoring and reporting of outcomes

Source: Adapted from information in the 2021–22 Budget Letters to post-secondary institutions. www.saskatchewan.ca/government/education-and-child-care-facility-administration/services-for-post-secondary-educational-institutions/funding-for-post-secondary-educational-institutions (13 September 2021).

For each expectation in the performance framework, post-secondary institutions submitted their own measures to the Ministry that the institution planned to report against in support of the framework. For example, in relation to the responsive expectation, measures include number of students participating in experiential learning and number of graduates who attain highly-skilled employment in a field related to their degree.

In its 2021–22 budget letters to post-secondary institutions, the Ministry set out the required reporting for the performance framework. By the first reporting deadline of June 30, 2021, we found post-secondary institutions reported on the measures institutions identified. The institutions also provided activities undertaken to support sector expectations.

The Ministry plans to provide further instructions to post-secondary institutions on the required information for the January 31, 2022 reporting submission. Currently, neither the Ministry nor institutions have defined targets and timelines for the measures identified by institutions (e.g., 5% increase in number of students participating in experiential learning by 2022).

Multi-Year Funding Memorandum of Understanding

By March 2021, the Ministry signed a multi-year funding memorandum of understanding (MOU) with post-secondary institutions for the period 2021–22 to 2024–25.⁵ The agreement includes accountability reporting for all institutions that will report on institutions' long-term financial sustainability.

As required under the agreement, by June 30, 2021, we found institutions submitted information on their plan to address long-term sustainability over the four-year period of the agreement, as well as submitted institutions' goals and objectives for the additional operating grant allocation to support identified priority areas such as COVID-19 recovery, revenue generation and sector collaboration.

At August 2021, the Ministry drafted some analysis on the reporting submitted by institutions. The Ministry communicated to institutions that it plans to conduct further

⁵ The MOU provides post-secondary institutions with an additional \$60M in operating funding to target areas such as COVID-19 recovery, revenue generation and sector collaboration. www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2021/april/21/saskatchewan-delivers-multi-year-funding-investment-for-post-secondary-education (1 September 2021).



analysis on how to monitor progress of achieving goals and objectives, including those measures in the performance framework.

Under the agreement, at January 31, 2022, the Ministry will require post-secondary institutions to provide measures and targets for the goals and objectives identified in the June 2021 reporting submission.

Sector-Wide Performance Measures

The Ministry defined targets and timelines for some of its sector-wide performance measures included in its annual plan and annual report.

As part of its annual plan, the Ministry set out performance measures for its annual goals. The Ministry's goals align with the five expectations for the sector (see **Figure 1**). For five out of 10 performance measures identified in its *Plan for 2020–21*, the Ministry determined targets and timelines for the measure (see **Figure 2**) and developed these targets and timelines using data obtained through the Post-Secondary Education Indicators Project.⁶ The Ministry reported on the results for its performance measures in its 2020–21 Annual Report.

Figure 2—Ministry Performance Measures with Related Targets and Timelines

Ministry Goal	Performance Measures	Targets and Timeline
Students succeed in post-secondary education (aligns with Accessible, Responsive & Accountable expectations)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous student enrolment in credentialed programs 2. Indigenous students receiving credentials 3. Post-secondary educational attainment of population aged 15 years and over 4. Educational attainment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations aged 15 years and over by credential 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase enrolment by 50% by 2024–25 (baseline year is 2014–15) 2. Increase by 25% by 2025 (baseline year is 2015) 3. 2021–22 target: one percentage point annual increase in the number of Saskatchewan residents, aged 15 years and over, who earn a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or university degree 4. Long-term target is to match the attainment level of the Indigenous population with the attainment rate of the overall Saskatchewan population
Meet the post-secondary education needs of the province (aligns with Responsive, High Quality and Accountable expectations)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment rate by credential 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2021–22 target: Saskatchewan's employment rate to remain higher than the national average
Saskatchewan's post-secondary sector is accountable and sustainable (aligns with Sustainable and Accountable expectations)	No performance measures with specific targets	

Source: Adapted from information in the *Ministry of Advanced Education Plan for 2021–22*.

Having specific, measurable targets and timelines will assist the Ministry in analyzing and reporting on progress made by post-secondary institutions toward achieving advanced education sector strategies.

⁶ In September 2015, the Ministry initiated, along with participating post-secondary institutions, the Post-Secondary Education Indicators Project to support consistent and comparable sector-wide reporting. www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/universities-colleges-and-schools/post-secondary-education-indicators-project (2 September 2021).