

# **Discussion Guide: Ontario Public Service Employees Union Roundtable**

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities  
July 2013

## Introduction

### Roundtable Objectives:

- Share the Ministry's views on key policy issues
- Seek input on the outlined direction

### Topics:

- Differentiation
- Ontario Online Initiative
- Credit Transfer

# Ministry Perspective – Challenges

- Since 2002-03, government invests in postsecondary education grew at an average of 6.5% annually, growing enrolment by over 160,000.
- From 2013-14 to 2015-16, postsecondary education operating funding to colleges and universities will increase by 1.1% on average.
  - A 2012 productivity report from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario indicated that institutional inflation is in the range of 5% to 8% annually.
- As outlined in the report from the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, existing cost structures are unsustainable and risk eroding the quality and competitiveness of Ontario's institutions.
- Ontario institutions operate within the context of a globally changing higher education landscape:
  - Digital technologies are enabling new teaching and learning delivery models and increased market competition that makes courses available worldwide.
  - New international standards for program length and learning outcomes are supporting global mobility of students.
  - Performance measurement is being driven by the collection of detailed data, including student-level information and public reporting of metrics.

# Topic 1: Differentiation

## Principles:

- The Ministry is establishing principles that will guide the development and implementation of a policy of differentiation in Ontario. The following are for discussion purposes:

Principle	Description	What does this mean
Quality	Institutions to focus on specializations resulting in teaching and research excellence while ensuring a high standard of education in specific fields where Ontario can be competitive nationally and globally.	➤ <i>Teaching and research are both valued activities, but the breadth and scope undertaken at each institution should be clearly differentiated in Strategic Mandate Agreements and be driven by student and provincial need.</i>
Collaboration	Institutions to work together and partner in the development and delivery of programs; to provide pathways for students and enable credit transferability and credential recognition; to work together and share services to realize operational efficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In a differentiated system, there is an imperative to break down silos and be more coordinated in creating more pathways for students.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Technology especially creates opportunities for collaboration that did not exist in the past. Unless we start thinking creatively about how we use technology on a larger scale, we are going to miss opportunities to improve quality in a cost effective way.</i></li> </ul>
Responsiveness	Institutional planning and decision making to be responsive to the needs of students, local economic and community development, and government priorities.	➤ <i>All institutions are drivers of student success and economic prosperity, but an individual institution's contribution should mirror the unique needs of its students and the local or regional economy.</i>
Transparency	System to publicly demonstrate accountability for provincial and student investments with particular attention to tangible student outcomes.	➤ <i>Improvements have been made to the types and level of information available to students and the public but more needs to be done. Continued effort to refine information we provide to students and Ontarians is needed so that they can make the best choices possible for them.</i>
Sustainability	Institutions to align investments and aspirations with areas of strength; government to align decision making to support differentiated mandates, encourage innovation to drive productivity gains, and achieve sustainable cost structures.	➤ <i>The fiscal reality requires that we do things differently. This means putting the sustainability lens on the decisions government and institutions make.</i>

## Topic 1: Differentiation

- The Ministry is proposing that Ontario’s approach to institutional differentiation supports the diversity that already exists within the system and encourages institutions’ ambitions to focus on areas of strength and specialization on the basis of the following filters:

Filters	Description	Challenge
Enrolment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most institutional growth aspirations are greater than government’s projected demand for postsecondary education and available resources.</li> </ul>
Research & Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and research intensity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional aspirations indicate an intention to increase the level and scope of research activity, raising concerns about cost structures and the student learning experience.</li> </ul>
Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional aspirations for growth suggest that many institutions have ambitions to expand their areas of activity, both program areas and/or credentials.</li> </ul>
Program Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery methods of strength</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional aspirations illustrate that universities are looking for new partnerships (e.g., other institutions, employers, not for profit organizations, etc.) and to expand learning options for students.</li> </ul>
Student Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions’ focus on targeted student groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The growing diversity of students require different supports for access and success (mature, Aboriginal, Francophone, first generation, students with disabilities, etc.)</li> </ul>

### Discussion Questions:

- Which filters and principles are most important to prioritize?

## Topic 2: Ontario Online Initiative

### Context:

- The Ministry is proposing to work with the publicly-assisted postsecondary sector to implement an Online Initiative that prioritizes cross-sector cooperation and collaboration.
  - The need for a collaborative approach has been reiterated by students, institutions, and other stakeholders throughout the Ministry's consultations.
- The advice of online learning experts, a review of activities in peer jurisdictions, and the submissions received from stakeholders: all point to a consortium model as an effective and efficient avenue for meeting the needs of students.

### Proposal:

- The Government of Ontario will provide multi-year funding to support the creation of a not-for-profit online learning consortium consisting of publicly-funded colleges and universities. Consortium members, rather than the consortium itself, will award academic credits or credentials.

## Topic 2: Ontario Online Initiative

### The consortium will achieve the following objectives:

1. Provide exemplary online college and university foundational courses in popular disciplines that meet the following criteria:
  - Developed and updated in consultation with experts in online pedagogy and course development.
  - Defined alignment of learning activities to learning outcomes.
  - Mutually recognized by consortium members, with online bridging courses offered as necessary.
  - Offered in conjunction with a system of prior learning assessment and various remedial courses that facilitate access to postsecondary education.
2. Create a centre of excellence and innovation that will:
  - Bring the best researchers and educators in online education from Ontario and elsewhere together to act as a nexus for research, best practices and course development.
  - Lead the design and review of courses offered through the consortium.
  - Facilitate the use of high-quality open educational resources that promote innovative course design and facilitate students' access to educational resources.
  - Offer robust professional development in online and hybrid teaching for faculty.

### Discussion Questions:

- What would OPSEU consider to be key in implementing this approach?

## Topic 3: Credit Transfer

### Context:

- Over the past four years, substantial work has been done with colleges and universities to build trust, encourage collaboration and lay the foundation for a comprehensive credit transfer system.
  - In 2011, the Ministry launched a province-wide credit transfer initiative with \$73.7 million in funding over five years. The Ministry also released a Credit Transfer Policy Statement that articulates the principles of Ontario's credit transfer system.
  - The Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT) has established a credit transfer website ([ontransfer.ca](http://ontransfer.ca)) which provides transparent information on transfer opportunities for students, and a Credit Transfer Innovation Fund for to develop and expand credit transfer pathways between colleges and universities in high demand areas and for research.
- Additional improvements are required to make credit recognition and transfer processes more transparent; to further reduce student time to completion; and to increase affordability for students and government.

### Toward a Vision:

- Before building on these successes, the Ministry wishes to discuss the vision for credit transfer in Ontario.

### Discussion Question:

- What steps could be taken to ensure the success of students who seek to transfer between institutions?



# Discussion Questions

## Differentiation

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## Ontario Online Initiative

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## Credit Transfer

- What steps could be taken to ensure the success of students who seek to transfer between institutions?