
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2010ALMD0026-000751
June 23, 2010

Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market
Development

EQA EXPANSION GIVES STUDENTS MORE OPTIONS

VICTORIA – Local and international ESL students will have more EQA-designated schools to choose from – ensuring they’ve made secure educational choices – through an agreement between the Province and Languages Canada, announced Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development Moira Stilwell.

The agreement, signed by the Province with Languages Canada, recognizes Languages Canada accreditation as an acceptable quality-assurance mechanism to apply for B.C.’s Education Quality Assurance designation. The Education Quality Assurance (EQA) designation is British Columbia’s brand for quality post-secondary education. The EQA trademark will be used around the world to promote high-quality, reputable B.C. post-secondary institutions.

“Expanding EQA eligibility to British Columbia’s English as a Second Language schools through our agreement with Languages Canada means that even more students who choose post-secondary education in B.C. will be assured of receiving a high-quality education,” said Stilwell. “Our government is committed to protecting students, enhancing quality, and ensuring accountability at B.C.’s post-secondary institutions.”

Previously, language schools were eligible to apply for EQA designation only if they were accredited through the Private Career Training Institutions Agency. This new agreement now also recognizes schools that are accredited with Languages Canada, giving ESL schools more options for seeking EQA designation.

The agreement also has protections in place for students if there are any school closures. Languages Canada will be responsible for placing students affected by a school closure at another Languages Canada member school or, in cases where placement is not suitable, for providing students with a tuition refund for the uncompleted portion of the program.

Languages Canada is an organization that promotes quality-accredited English and French language training in Canada, both nationally and internationally. Members must meet the association’s accreditation standards to maintain their membership status. Standards include curriculum, teacher qualifications, student services, student admissions, marketing, promotion, facilities and administration.

Established in 2008, Languages Canada is a single association that brought two former language training associations – the Canadian Association of Private Language Schools and Canadian Language Council – together to form a single entity. Sixteen public and 36 private B.C. post-secondary institutions are members of Languages Canada.

“B.C. is taking a leadership role in Canada by recognizing that language programs, whether in a public or private setting, form a distinct sector and are a powerful contributor to education,” said Languages Canada executive director Gonzalo Peralta. “Languages Canada is proud to lend its high standards and regulations to the EQA family. Our top priorities are to protect students in B.C. and to support marketing efforts in the quickly growing global and national markets. In this respect, Languages Canada looks forward to formalizing our existing collaboration with BCCIE, itself a leader in the Canadian education landscape.”

The BC Council for International Education (BCCIE), an independent society, administers the EQA designation on behalf of the Province. It provides international marketing and promotion of EQA designated institutions and encourages joint programming and other partnerships between B.C. post secondary institutions and those in other countries.

“We are very excited to welcome Languages Canada and its member institutions into EQA,” said BCCIE executive director Randall Martin. “Languages Canada has a rigorous accreditation mechanism, its member schools offer world-quality language programming and provide instruction to significant numbers of international students in the province, many of whom then pursue pathway options into other post secondary institutions within British Columbia.”

The EQA brand enhances B.C.’s reputation by enabling both domestic and international students to readily see which post-secondary institutions, both public and private, are recognized as having met or exceeded government-recognized quality assurance standards.

British Columbia is one of the top destinations for international students in Canada, and attracts more on a per-capita basis than Ontario. It is estimated that B.C.’s public and private education-sector institutions host approximately 150,000 international students a year.

For more information on EQA, go to www.bceqa.ca.

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