

Council on Higher Education

Annual Report

September 1, 2019 - August 31, 2020

Chairperson's Message

The Council on Higher Education is defined as a category three entity pursuant to the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. As Chairperson, I am pleased to submit the 2019-20 Annual Report of the Council on Higher Education. This report covers the period of September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020 and highlights the third year of the 2017-20 Activity Plan.

The Council on Higher Education continues to work within the authority granted under the **Council on Higher Education Act**. The Council is impacting the strategic direction of the public post-secondary education in the province through increased collaboration, shared resources, and improved engagement.

My signature below is on behalf of the Council on Higher Education and is indicative of its accountability for the actual results reported herein.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Osborne', written in a cursive style.

Honourable Tom Osborne
Chairperson

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Overview

The Council on Higher Education (the “Council”) was reactivated in 2017 in alignment with the strategic directions of the Provincial Government. The Council is a partnership between Memorial University (MUN), College of the North Atlantic (CNA), and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Council is tasked with the promotion of a shared approach between MUN and CNA with respect to program planning, promoting collaboration on issues related to economic development in the province, and enhancing cooperation in the delivery of public post-secondary academic programs.

Departmental restructuring in August 2020 combined the former Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and some of the post-secondary education functions formerly within the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour with the exception of apprenticeship and trades certification and industrial training. The Council on Higher Education now falls under the mandate of the Department of Education.

Mandate

The establishment of the Council is outlined in the **Council on Higher Education Act**. The Council is responsible for making recommendations to MUN, CNA, and the Minister of Education with respect to:

- Strategic direction for public post-secondary education;
- Reduction of unnecessary duplication of effort and expense;
- Sharing of resources, information and student support services;
- Cost-effective provincial, national and international recruitment policies, standards and activities;
- Student credit transfer arrangements; and
- Other related matters.

The Council encourages collaboration at the highest levels of leadership and ensures the continued engagement of students in setting priorities and decision-making. Information on the Council’s lines of business can be found in its 2017-20 Activity Plan available at: [2017-20 Activity Plan](#).

Membership

Section 3(1) of the **Council on Higher Education Act** provides for the membership of the Council:

- Minister of Education (Chair);
- Deputy Minister of Education;
- Chair, MUN Board of Regents;
- Chair, CNA Board of Governors;
- President of MUN;
- President of CNA;
- MUN Student Representative; and
- CNA Student Representative.

In addition, the Council may appoint three optional members. Membership as of August 31, 2020 is listed below.

Table 1: Council on Higher Education Membership

Name	Position	Membership Details
Hon. Tom Osborne	Minister, Education	By virtue of position
Robert Gardiner	Deputy Minister, Education	By virtue of position
Iris Petten	Chair, Memorial University Board of Regents	By virtue of position
Alastair O'Reilly	Chair, College of the North Atlantic Board of Governors	By virtue of position
Dr. Vianne Timmons	President and Vice Chancellor, Memorial University	By virtue of position
Elizabeth Kidd	President and CEO, College of the North Atlantic	By virtue of position
Aubrey Gover	Deputy Minister, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation	Ministerial appointee, approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council
John Godfrey	MUN Student Member	Lieutenant-Governor in Council
Andrew Haire	CNA Student Member	Lieutenant-Governor in Council

Members serve without remuneration. The Council is not subject to the **Independent Appointments Commission Act**.

Staff

There are no staff positions directly employed by the Council; however, the Director of Literacy and Institutional Services of the Department of Education provides support to the Council and acts as officer under the **Council on Higher Education Act**. The officer does not have voting privileges.

Budget

The Council does not have a defined budget and is not required to submit separate financial statements; all expenses are charged to the Department of Education's Literacy and Institutional Services Division. The Council did not incur expenditures during the reporting period.

Highlights and Partnerships

The Council is a tripartite alliance between CNA, MUN, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, with the goal of increasing collaboration between the entities. The Council directly supports the strategic directions of the Provincial Government to work with MUN and CNA to identify ways for the institutions to collaborate, partner, and pool resources in applied research areas and to assist in supporting and facilitating the transfer of students between the two institutions.

Committees and Subcommittees

During the 2019-20 academic year, the Council met three times and discussed priority areas for collaboration, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the work of the three subcommittees: Articulation and Transfer, Applied Research Priorities, and Indigenous Education.

The Advisory Committee, consisting of senior officials from MUN, CNA, and the Department of Education senior executive provide advice and support to the Council. The Advisory Committee met once during the 2019-20 academic year. The committee focused on ensuring the work of the Council remained reflective of its mandate, the Council members' priorities, the strategic directions of Government, and priorities outlined in the Minister of Education's Mandate Letter.

During the 2019-20 academic year, the Articulation and Transfer Subcommittee continued activity on its work plan to enhance student mobility; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting priorities at post-secondary institutions, activities related to the work plan were temporarily suspended and the ability to meet deadlines outlined in the 2019-20 academic year were impacted. The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted meetings of the subcommittee.

The Applied Research Priorities Subcommittee met twice during the reporting period to advance activities to increase collaboration between MUN and CNA on applied research initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted meetings of the subcommittee.

The Indigenous Education Subcommittee met twice during the 2019-20 academic year to explore opportunities to enhance Indigenous education and share information between institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted meetings and work of the subcommittee.

Report on Performance

The Council's work is guided by two priorities identified in its 2017-20 Activity Plan: to support and foster collaboration in applied research areas and to facilitate the transfer of students between the two institutions. 2019-20 is the third and final year reporting under the 2017-20 Activity Plan. The Council continues to progress its important work in its priority areas through collaboration between MUN and CNA.

Performance measurement information was identified in the Activity Plan to assist both the Council and public in monitoring and evaluating progress in meeting these objectives.

Issue 1: Engagement to identify further research opportunities in the province and foster collaboration to partner and pool resources in applied research areas.

Applied research in public post-secondary education is essential to creating opportunities for students and industry to work collaboratively, and contributes to the province's economic growth. MUN and CNA are leaders in degree and diploma programs that include areas such as health, ocean technology, engineering, business, and other industries specific to the province. Each institution continues to develop innovations through applied research that assist businesses throughout the province to grow and strengthen their competitiveness in key sectors nationally and internationally. Coordination and collaboration between the province's two public post-secondary institutions and its stakeholders, specifically in the areas of applied research in priority sectors, continues to support economic and labour market growth.

The following objective and indicators apply to the 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years.

Objective: By August 31, 2020, the Council on Higher Education will have assessed current research programs and initiatives to identify opportunities to enhance research programs and initiatives through collaboration, partnership and the pooling of resources.

Indicator	2019-20 Results
1. Assessed the current level of research programs and initiatives.	As reported in the 2017-18 Annual Report, during the 2017-18 academic year, the Council completed this indicator. During the reporting period, MUN and CNA completed an internal data collection and review of joint applied research funding applications for the period 2013-14 through 2017-18 (five years).
2. Identified opportunities to enhance the amount of	In the 2019-20 academic year, the Council continued its work in this area. The Applied Research Priorities Subcommittee, which includes representatives selected from CNA, MUN, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, progressed

<p>research programs and initiatives undertaken by public post-secondary institutions.</p>	<p>with its work plan. The subcommittee increased opportunities for collaboration between MUN and CNA on applied research initiatives through updating equipment databases that was shared with faculty from both institutions, tours of institutional facilities that could be used for joint projects, and reviewing potential project funding opportunities.</p> <p>Key goals of the work plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an inventory of past MUN/CNA research collaborations and opportunities for future collaborative applied research; • Encouraging collaboration between MUN and CNA; and • Developing at least one joint CNA/MUN application for submission to an applied research funding program offered by a federal funding agency.
<p>3. Identified opportunities and made recommendations to members for collaboration, partnering, and pooling of resources to further support applied research.</p>	<p>During the 2019-20 academic year, the Applied Research Priorities Subcommittee held two meetings: October 11, 2019, and February 11, 2020, and substantially completed the work outlined in its work plan. The subcommittee identified opportunities for collaboration, and pooling of resources to further support applied research and continues to explore those opportunities. This includes opportunities for CNA engagement with the MUN Centre for Entrepreneurship, continued work in developing an intellectual property (IP) policy, and continued work on databases for research and infrastructure resources.</p> <p>Additional meetings and the work of the subcommittee was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>

Issue 2: Supporting and facilitating the transfer of students between the two institutions.

Educational attainment is a vital aspect of labour market attachment and success. The province's public post-secondary system seeks to be responsive to the needs of the local labour market while remaining an attractive destination for students. To facilitate this, institutions work to identify commonalities in programming and credentials achieved to ensure seamless academic mobility for students, non-duplication of effort, and cost-efficiency.

The following objective and indicators apply to the 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years.

Objective: By August 31, 2020, the Council on Higher Education will have assisted the two-way transfer of students between institutions.

Indicator	2019-20 Results
1. Assessed current student transfer opportunities.	<p>In the 2019-20 academic year, the Department of Education worked with MUN and CNA to assess, update, and release the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Credit and Program/Block Transfer Guide (2019-2020 guide released December 1, 2019). The Transfer Guide lists established transfer of credit and program precedents available to students in Newfoundland and Labrador and is updated on an annual basis each December; the document is available online:</p> <p>https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/post-secondary-education/transfer-guide/.</p> <p>Additionally, the Articulation and Transfer Subcommittee continued activity on its work plan, which included assessing current student transfer opportunities. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting priorities at post-secondary institutions, activities related to the work plan were temporarily suspended in March 2020, and the ability to meet deadlines outlined in the 2019-20 academic year were impacted.</p>
2. Consulted regarding opportunities to support the transfer of students between the two institutions.	<p>In the 2019-20 academic year, the Articulation and Transfer Subcommittee continued to consult via telephone and email. An in-person meeting was planned for March 2020, however this meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the pandemic impacted the ability of the committee to meet during the remainder of the academic year. Until March 2020, the subcommittee had been progressing on its work plan, which includes identifying further opportunities to support the transfer of students between MUN and CNA. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting priorities at post-secondary institutions, activities related to the work plan were temporarily suspended and the ability to meet deadlines outlined in the 2019-20 academic year were impacted.</p> <p>Key goals of the work plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an overarching Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between MUN and CNA to facilitate and guide work on articulation and transfer between the institutions; • Developing an inventory of existing articulation and transfer agreements between MUN and CNA;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing an agreement template to standardize the articulation and transfer process; and• Conducting analysis of data on the current and recent student mobility landscape between MUN and CNA.
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Opportunities and Challenges

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has had impacts on the work of all three subcommittees, and the Council itself. Due to the pandemic, post-secondary institutions were forced to quickly pivot to online and remote learning, move student supports to virtual platforms, and find new ways to safely allow for practical training. However, there are potential opportunities and areas of focus that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented, such as micro-credentialing, and increased access to students who may wish to study through virtual learning, which may be explored in the 2020-2023 Activity Plan.

The independent public post-secondary education system review, announced in Budget 2018 continues. CNA and MUN continue to play an active role in the review and future work of the Council may be guided by the results of the review.

Conclusion

The Council continued to work towards all objectives and indicators during the 2019-20 academic year to ensure that objectives and indicators have results as this is the third and final year of the 2017-2020 Activity Plan. The work of the Applied Research Priorities Subcommittee, the Articulation and Transfer Subcommittee, and the Indigenous Education Subcommittee has been ongoing. CNA, MUN, and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador are committed to achieving results in all indicated priority areas.