

Special Report

APRIL 2000

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

Transfer: Some Solutions A Special Report of the Transfer and Articulation Committee

Introduction

In April 1999, The B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer published a Special Report titled *Transfer: What's the Problem?* That report outlined findings of numerous BCCAT research and other projects, and reported on problems in the current transfer environment. As a follow up, this report now concentrates on actions taken by the Council to address some of those issues, in particular by looking at those aspects of the transfer system that have to do with articulation and inter-institutional academic agreements/relationships. A future newsletter will describe approaches that BCCAT is undertaking to improve other aspects of transfer, such as administrative processes and communication mechanisms.

While *Transfer: What's the Problem?* dealt with problematic aspects of the transfer system, it also concluded that the B.C.

post-secondary system of course-to-course transfer is working well. Many improvements are desirable in order to ensure smooth and equitable transfer for students, but the transfer system is not "broken" and does not need major change at this time. Rather, incremental improvement and some new approaches are needed.

As a result, BCCAT has now embarked on a series of initiatives in the area of "Transfer Innovations." These initiatives suggest new ways of looking at articulation, and new types of transfer agreements. They address issues identified as problematic either during the consultation process or through other research efforts of the Council. One initiative to be dealt with in a separate newsletter relates to the use of the Associate Degree as a transfer credential.

The Transfer Innovations Initiatives and Projects promise new models of articulation, and new ways of forging relationships between institutions. The ultimate beneficiary will be the student who needs clear information about transfer paths and options.



Tourism Management Transfer Innovations Project Team. Seated, left to right: Jonathon Rouse, Capilano (Articulation Chair); Don Basham, Capilano (Project Leader); Darrel Mansbridge, Malaspina (Project Leader). Standing: Dave Twynam, UCC; Bob Falle, Selkirk; John Bryant, OLA; Arlene Schieven, BCIT.

Transfer Innovations: New Transfer Models

The projects and approaches labeled "Transfer Innovations" are directly aimed at addressing problems on the *articulation* side of transfer. Some of the institutional and system realities that characterize our transfer environment affect project design:

- Complexity of the system: in the last ten years, the establishment of new degree granting institutions has introduced new programs, degrees and majors. Sending institutions now have a more complex environment within which to construct their transfer curriculum. New receiving institutions face the challenge of devising a unique curriculum that is also transfer-friendly.

- Requirements of the pre-major: where these requirements differ substantially from one receiving institution to another, it becomes increasingly difficult for sending institutions to offer the range of courses needed for students to have a choice of transfer destination.
- The need for all institutions, but especially receiving institutions, to update and change curriculum: changes to program requirements at receiving institutions have consequences for the sending institutions.
- Increased need for advising services and improved communication: as the system becomes more complex, students need to plan their transfer programs more carefully, and their advisors need current and reliable information.
- Involving articulation committees: articulation committees in a particular discipline are central to any discussion of articulation and transfer.
Transfer Innovations projects were designed with these realities in mind. Most projects revolve around the need for increased flexibility in transfer arrangements, and for positive and collaborative responses to challenges inherent in inter-institutional mobility of students. In the spring of 1999, articulation committees were invited to apply for grants for Transfer Innovations Projects. BCCAT awarded funding for ten projects to eight different committees.

Flexible Pre-Major Projects

One important issue identified in the consultation process related to the difficulties experienced by students and by sending institutions in regards to the “Pre-Major,” defined as the set of first and second year courses which students are required to complete in order to be admitted to a major program, usually at the end of the second year of a four year degree. *Fulfilling the requirements of the pre-major has*

become the single most problematic area of transfer for academic students. This can be ascribed to two main factors.

First, all institutions review their programs and update them over time, and all offer specializations based upon departmental philosophy and expertise. Accordingly, requirements once quite similar across institutions may have become widely divergent. Second, the university colleges, institutes and newer universities are now developing their own degrees including unique approaches to majors. The net result is that sending institutions are experiencing increasing difficulty in devising a set of courses that will allow students to transfer in more than one direction.

The Flexible Pre-Major projects involve devising a list of requirements, deliverable at all participating sending institutions and acceptable by all participating receiving institutions. The requirements can be expressed in terms of articulated courses, which can vary from institution to institution, as well as in terms of outcomes. By fulfilling these requirements the student is deemed to have completed the pre-major and is therefore eligible to apply for admission to the major.

The Projects

- **Music:** Project Leader: Kevin Barrington-Foote, Douglas College.
- **Earth Sciences:** Project Leader: Michael Wilson, Douglas College.

Descriptive Pathways Projects

These projects involve the production of a “grid” that details all the transfer routes and courses available to students in a given degree program. An invaluable advising and planning tool, the grid normally involves no change in curriculum, and no negotiations of new transfer arrangements.

The Projects

- **Earth Sciences:** Project Leader: Robbie Dunlop, Simon Fraser University.
- **Forestry:** Project Leader: Ed Morrice, College of New Caledonia. This project looks at transfer courses, which can apply to degree programs, and to the Registered Professional Forester (RPF) designation.

Block Transfer Projects

Block Transfer is the process whereby a block of credits is granted to students who have successfully completed a certificate, diploma or cluster of courses recognized as having an academic wholeness or integrity, and that can be related meaningfully to a degree program.

For many years in the B.C. post-secondary system block transfer has facilitated the transfer of professional and applied programs. For example, graduates of a two-year college forestry diploma program, designed as a terminal, employment-oriented credential, might receive little or no credit towards a forestry degree on a course-to-course basis. However,

under a bilateral block transfer agreement, students from several college diploma programs who have successfully completed the credential are eligible for one to two years of credit towards forestry degrees at provincial institutions. The content of first and second year courses at the sending and receiving institutions is sufficiently different to preclude the establishment of equivalencies and hence the granting of credit for individual courses. Nevertheless, an assessment of the entire diploma curriculum can establish whether the graduates are likely to possess the prerequisite knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for success in upper division courses.

There are currently about 300 block transfer agreements documented in the *B.C. Transfer Guide*. Most agreements are in applied and professional fields, but there are also some block transfer agreements in place for more traditional academic degrees.

The Projects

- **Environmental Studies:** Project Leader: Steve Grundy, Royal Roads University
- **Hospitality Management:** Project Leader: Dave Donaldson, Vancouver Community College
- **Physical Education and Kinesiology:** Project Leader: Susan Todd, Langara College
- **Tourism Management:** Project Leaders: Don Basham, Capilano College and Darrel Mansbridge, Malaspina University-College

Flexible Program Transfer Project

Our "Request for Proposals" document also stated that articulation committees were free to submit proposals which did not fit the description of any of the preceding projects. The Theatre articulation committee was awarded a grant to investigate flexible transfer options for that discipline.

The Project

- **Theatre:** Project Leaders: Des Price and Dawn Moore, Capilano College.

Estimated outcomes/improvements to the transfer system

These articulation committee projects are ground breaking on two counts. First, they feature new approaches to transfer and new ways of forging relationships between institutions. Each committee's final report will provide models and ideas of broad interest to all disciplines. While the solutions to the challenges of transfer in specific disciplines may not suit other disciplines in their details, collaboration and willingness to work towards creative solutions demonstrate what inter-institutional good will and cooperation can accomplish. Second, these projects provide articulation committees with a renewed sense of purpose, invigorating items for their agendas, and a sense that articulation committees can make a difference.

Conclusions

The Transfer Innovations Initiatives and Projects promise new models of articulation, and new ways of forging relationships between institutions. The ultimate beneficiary will be the student who needs clear information about transfer paths and options.

More information on these initiatives, plus complete application packages, are available on BCCAT Online at www.bccat.bc.ca/artic/issues.htm. Any articulation committee or other group interested in learning more is also invited to call the Council office at 604-412-7700.

Many improvements are desirable in order to ensure smooth and equitable transfer for students, but the transfer system is not “broken” and does not need major change at this time. Rather, incremental improvement and some new approaches are needed.

Council Announces New Transfer & Articulation Project (TAP) Fund

Purpose of the fund

To provide small grants (up to \$5000 maximum) to articulation committees or other groups to fund specific projects related to transfer and articulation.

Criteria for funding

- The project must be clearly related to transfer and articulation, or to the work of articulation committees or other related groups.
- The project should fulfill one or more of the following functions:
 - clarify or improve transfer in a particular discipline or program area.
 - facilitate work of the articulation committee.
 - provide better information about transfer or program offerings to students or advisors.
 - explore or establish models or concepts germane to transfer and articulation in B.C.
 - research aspects of transfer and articulation that might illuminate current issues or problems.
 - result in resolution of articulation or transfer issues or concerns.
 - provide significant resources (e.g. articulation committee web site designed to address instructional and related matters).
- The project should fall outside the scope of the funding criteria of the Transfer Innovations Fund, or any other fund such as LIC or PIC grants.
- Funding is on a one-time only basis for a discrete project. On-going activities or project maintenance will not be funded. Funding cannot be used to supplement or cover

regular committee expenses such as meeting attendance, minute taking/distributing, food, accommodation, travel or other such costs.

- If submitted on behalf of an articulation committee, the proposal must include evidence of support by the articulation committee (e.g. a motion of support extracted from meeting minutes).

Proposals must be received by **March 31st, June 15th or December 15th** each year. The Transfer and Articulation Committee will adjudicate proposals according to the above criteria. For more information on the TAP fund, or to obtain an application form, call the Council office or go to www.bccat.bc.ca/artic/ctteresources.htm

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SUPPORTING BC'S
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