

## BC COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER: Mandate, Membership, Role and Responsibilities

### Overview

From its inception in the 1960s and 1970s as a binary system of three public universities and several public community colleges, the BC Transfer System has developed to include a diverse range of public and private universities, colleges, and institutes. Within the BC post-secondary context, independent institutions regularly cooperate in system-wide initiatives that benefit students in meeting their diverse educational needs and goals.

These collaborative activities are the main focus of the **British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)**, which was established by government in 1989. BCCAT has encouraged system-wide cooperation through the maintenance of transfer agreements that ensure students who take equivalent courses and / or blocks of courses at one institution will be granted credit at another in order to build on and continue their education. BC's Transfer System is often cited as a high-functioning transfer environment:

*“British Columbia has taken the California model and developed it into what is possibly the most extensive credit accumulation and transfer arrangement in the world.”*

*The Higher Education Policy Institute, United Kingdom, 2004*

BCCAT's experience affirms that coordination of and support for inter-institutional agreements developed and maintained through relevant research and discipline-based collaboration is an effective means of facilitating cooperation amongst diverse institutions, while respecting the autonomy integral to each in fulfilling its roles and responsibilities. An ongoing responsibility for the BC Transfer System is to enable efficient student mobility and transferability of credits across the broad array of institutions, programs, and credentials. Students should have access to information on whether or not credit achieved at one institution is transferable to another and whether a credential received at one institution will be recognized at another.

This document summarizes BCCAT's mandate, structure, and services, as well as the role and responsibilities of Council and committee members in fulfilling its mandate.

## Mandate

BCCAT (Council) provides an integral link between the BC post-secondary institutions, education ministries, and public and private education sectors. The Council's mandate is to facilitate admission, articulation, and transfer arrangements among BC Transfer System member institutions, as well as to conduct research on student and credit mobility. To this end, the Council engages in the following activities:

- *encouraging institutions to develop policies and practices regarding the transferability of post-secondary credit;*
- *researching issues pertaining to capacity, demand, and student mobility;*
- *recommending policies and practices related to the admission processes for direct entry and transfer students; and,*
- *facilitating the development of credit transfer arrangements through oversight of articulation committees;*
- *managing online resources to assist institutions in creating transfer agreements and supporting students in their education planning.*

## Council Status

BCCAT is a government-funded, arms-length advisory committee established by the Minister responsible for post-secondary education. As expressed in the *College and Institute Act*, the powers of the Minister include discretionary authority to do the following:

- *establish articulation committees to advise the Minister on the equivalence of courses given at one institution or university as compared to courses given at another institution or university;*
- *require an institution to participate in the work of an articulation committee;*
- *establish committees consisting of members of boards, presidents and employees of institutions and other persons.*

The Council is not a governing board and has no regulatory authority. Key to Council's success is its consultative and facilitative approach in recommending transfer policies and practices, assisting in the coordination of inter-institutional cooperation and articulation, and providing information and resources for students who plan to move between institutions and receive appropriate transfer credit for previously completed studies. Council members strive to achieve the mandate of the Council by serving the overall best interests of the post-secondary system and do not formally represent any specific institution or constituency with which they are affiliated.

## Council Membership

The Minister responsible for post-secondary education appoints all members to the Council.

### **Composition**

Membership currently consists of 19 individuals, normally selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- Two Co-Chairs (one of whom is also the Executive Director);
- Ten representatives from public post-secondary institutions;
  - Historically, this has included one representative from each research university;
- One representative of the secondary school sector;
  - Historically, this has been a Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent;
- One representative from a private post-secondary institution;
- One student representative;
- Two additional faculty/staff representatives from the university sector; and,
- Two additional faculty/staff representatives from the college and institute sectors

Current membership is available at [bccat.ca/about/council](http://bccat.ca/about/council).

### **Nominations**

The Co-chairs identify suitable nominees by consulting, where appropriate, with relevant constituent groups and / or institutions in the field, keeping in mind any guidelines for government appointed positions. Normally, two individuals are nominated for each vacancy. The Executive Director then submits nominations for Council membership (in confidence) to the Ministry. After the evaluation process, recommendations are made by Ministry and other governmental staff to the Minister for consideration.

Candidates for nomination should share the values inherent to the Council's mandate, should have sufficient time to make a positive contribution to the work of the Council, and, preferably, should have demonstrated an interest in and have had significant experience

with admissions and transfer related policies and practices. In addition, nominees should be recipients of the highest levels of confidence and credibility within their own institution and / or constituency or system, and should be willing to make the following commitments:

- attend Council meetings, and, where possible, serve on a committee or task force of Council;
- work within an expectation that Council members are representatives from (rather than of) various institutions and constituencies and are expected to represent the broad interests of the post-secondary system and students rather than the particular institution or constituency with which they are associated;
- approach issues from a problem-solving perspective and work collaboratively with other Council members to achieve consensus on policy issues; and,
- serve for the entire period of their term.

In addition to the above criteria, other factors are taken into consideration in attempting to structure the overall makeup of the Council to ensure that a) members are representative of a broad range of institutions (reflecting the diversity of the system in terms of size, type, and geographical location of post-secondary institutions) and that b) they bring a variety of specialized expertise and institutional experience to Council deliberations.

### **Appointments**

All Council appointments are made by the Minister responsible for post-secondary education. The Minister also determines the duration of each appointment. Historically, most Council members except the student representative have been appointed for a three-year term and, subject to the Minister's discretion, subsequently re-appointed for one additional three-year term. Normally, the student representative is appointed for a two-year term and considered for re-appointment for up to two additional two-year terms. Normally, six years is the maximum amount of time a Council member may serve.

The 19 members of Council include two Co-Chairs appointed by the Minister. One Co-Chair is *external* and the other is *internal* i.e., also the Executive Director.

### **Co-Chairs**

The external Co-Chair is appointed for a three-year term and is normally re-appointed for an additional three-year term. The external Co-Chair chairs Council meetings and provides advice and oversight for the Executive Director. If a search for an Executive Director is required, the external Co-Chair convenes a selection committee (including several Council members) to guide the search process, and consults with the Ministry of Advanced Education prior to confirming an appointment.

The Executive Director is also appointed by the Minister to serve as a Co-Chair, but without term limit. The Executive Director is responsible for administrative operations, including management of the budget, implementation of the work plan, and furthering the mandate of the Council. The Executive Director also maintains a close working relationship with the Ministry in order to bridge the strategic interests of the government with those of the Council.

### **Remuneration**

The external Co-Chair (not the Executive Director) receives a *per diem* for meetings and activities pursuant to Council business. Other Council members receive no remuneration, but they are reimbursed for travel expenses incurred for attending Council meetings and events.

## **Council's Role and Responsibilities**

The Council normally meets four times a year. While there are no specific government regulations directing the Council on how it should achieve its mandate, its primary role and responsibilities have evolved over time to include the following actions:

- to approve an annual operating budget and work plan consistent with BCCAT's mandate and role in the BC post-secondary system;
- to monitor progress in completing the annual work plan in a timely fashion and within the approved budget;
- to receive an annual report (now referred to as the *Annual Review*) prepared by staff for the Ministry;
- to recommend institutional or system-wide transfer practices and policies;
- to ensure that the results of Council's work are widely distributed to the post-secondary system in a timely fashion; and,
- to act as ambassadors in support of the mandate and role of BCCAT.

Notwithstanding Council's role and responsibilities as described above, Council acknowledges the Executive Director's authority to make adjustments to the work plan and budget in order to be responsive to ongoing changes and developments throughout the year. When possible, the Executive Director will consult with Council and / or its standing committees in advance regarding work plan changes, but the scheduling of meetings may sometimes preclude that from occurring.

## Council and Staff

The Council guides the work of standing committees, each devoted to different aspects of the Council's mandate, such as system-wide communication, research, admissions policy and practice, transfer practices, and course and program articulation. The work of the Council and committees is coordinated by staff members. A list of BCCAT staff is available at [bccat.ca/about/staff](http://bccat.ca/about/staff).

BCCAT staff members are responsible for implementing the day to day operations of the Council by providing a variety of services to develop and maintain a viable transfer system to support student mobility.

### **Providing direction for transfer and education planning technologies**

BCCAT maintains a variety of technologies in support of students and the post-secondary sector. In support of transfer, articulation, and student mobility, BCCAT maintains the BCCAT website ([bccat.ca](http://bccat.ca)), the Transfer Credit Evaluation System, and the BC Transfer Guide ([bctransferguide.ca](http://bctransferguide.ca)). In addition, under the oversight of a provincial steering committee, BCCAT in collaboration with BCcampus staff provides direction for the EducationPlannerBC ([educationplannerbc.ca](http://educationplannerbc.ca)) common application system and supporting services such as the XML transcript exchange through TranscriptsBC.

### **Providing administrative oversight for articulation committees**

Over 65 discipline and program committees meet annually to discuss articulation, transfer, and equivalency within their discipline. The work of articulation committees is the essential base for negotiating institutional transfer agreements. These committees are self-administered but conduct their work with the coordination and support of BCCAT.

### **Commissioning research**

BCCAT sponsors, supports, and engages in research related to admissions, student mobility, transfer, and other areas of the Council's mandate, recommends transfer practices and policies, and provides evidence of the success of transfer students and the effectiveness of the BC Transfer System.

### **Circulating discussion papers, reports, and information bulletins**

These publications are a means of informing a broad audience of the many aspects of the Council's work. All such publications are available in the Research & Publications section on the Council's web site: [bccat.ca](http://bccat.ca).

### **Sponsoring workshops, forums, and symposia**

Council sponsors events for presentations of new initiatives and sharing information on post-secondary practices. Past workshops, forums, and symposia have addressed topics such as block transfer, articulation issues, transfer among applied programs, secondary school transitions, and degree partnerships.

### **Resolving transfer problems by bringing together institutional representatives**

All post-secondary institutions in the BC Transfer System agree with a statement of *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*. Occasionally, when a member institution believes that a decision has been made by another member institution that contravenes one of these principles or guidelines, the institutions may seek Council's assistance to bring the parties together to resolve the matter.

### **Participating in meetings with institutional, agency, and government representatives**

Council's work includes a vast array professional interaction not only with constituents from BC, but also from other provincial and pan-Canadian jurisdictions and bodies.

## **Standing Committees of Council**

The Council establishes standing committees and task forces to oversee many of the Council's projects and activities, to provide advice to staff, and when appropriate, to make specific recommendations to the Council. These committees are normally chaired by a Council member, and their membership is composed primarily of experienced faculty and administrators from member institutions and / or other appropriate representatives from educational groups. Current standing committees include:

- Admissions ([bccat.ca/admissions/committee](http://bccat.ca/admissions/committee))
- Transfer and Articulation ([bccat.ca/about/committees/tac](http://bccat.ca/about/committees/tac))
- Research ([bccat.ca/about/committees/research](http://bccat.ca/about/committees/research))

Current membership information and terms of reference for the standing committees of Council are available at the links provided in the parentheses above.

### **Authority**

By motion at its March 4, 2011 meeting, Council delegated to standing committees the authority to approve and finalize projects, including payment to project contractors.

### **Remuneration**

Standing committee members receive no remuneration for their committee work, but they are reimbursed for travel expenses incurred for attending Committee meetings and events.

### **Terms of Reference**

Detailed terms of reference for standing committees are available in Appendices A-C.

## Appendix A

### Admissions Committee of Council Terms of Reference

(Approved by Council on March 2, 2012 with revisions incorporated)

[NOTE: In this Mandate, Membership, Role, and Responsibilities document, edits have been made for grammatical and punctuation consistency across all committee terms of reference documents (September 2016).]

*The Admissions Committee is a standing committee established by and reporting to the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT).*

#### Membership

The Committee will be composed of approximately 12 members, at least 2 of whom are members of Council. The committee is normally chaired by a Council member, who is appointed in keeping with the *General Guidelines for the Selection of Council, Committees, and Task Forces*.<sup>1</sup> The remaining members will be drawn from a broad cross-section of the post-secondary system and will include at least one member from the secondary school system. Members will be chosen for their expertise and/or interest in post-secondary admissions. Normally, the term of membership is three years subject to renewal for additional terms if mutually agreed.

The Executive Director and Co-chair, and Director, Admissions and Research are *ex officio*, non-voting members of the Committee. The Director, Admissions and Research is the primary staff liaison and support for the Committee. As requested or required, other BCCAT staff may also attend as non-voting resource persons.

#### Purpose

The ability of students to transfer credits in BC's well-developed Transfer System is integrally linked to opportunities to be admitted to and move among post-secondary institutions. The Admissions Committee examines data and issues pertaining to overall system capacity and student demand, mobility, and success. It recommends policies and practices that facilitate the admission process for direct entry and transfer students within the BC post-secondary system. The Committee works in a collegial manner that is reflective of BC's collaborative and decentralized post-secondary system made up of autonomous institutions. The Committee provides expert advice and reports to Council.

---

<sup>1</sup> Information on the selection of committee members is available at [www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf](http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf)

The work of the Admissions Committee is intended to be of benefit to institutions for enrolment planning, government for system planning, and students for education planning.

## **Objectives**

1. Recognizing institutions' governance and decision-making processes, to recommend areas in which institutions might agree to cooperate in developing admissions policies and practices that would simplify admissions processes, remove systemic barriers, and/or assist students in their planning.
2. In cooperation with the Research Committee of Council and working closely with the Student Transitions Project Steering Committee, to initiate, approve, monitor, and disseminate information on research projects related to admissions, access, student mobility, and student success, including inter-institutional studies on overall system capacity and student demand involving direct entry and transfer students.
3. To assist institutions by providing data that could help with enrolment planning and forecasting decisions, with respect to both direct entry and transfer students.
4. To examine admissions-related trends and issues with respect to the transition of secondary school students into and among post-secondary institutions in the BC Transfer System in order to inform transition planning, support transition processes and programs (such as dual credit programs), and remove barriers.
5. To collect and disseminate comparative information about the post-secondary system, its institutions, and their admissions policies and practices, and recommend ways in which it can be provided to students, educators, and the general public, building upon the wealth of information already provided at the system level (e.g. the BC Transfer Guide) and by individual post-secondary institutions.
6. To examine admissions-related data and issues with respect to the mobility of high school and post-secondary students at the inter-provincial and international levels.

## Appendix B

### Transfer and Articulation Committee Terms of Reference

*Approved by Council on June 8, 2013;  
Subsequent revisions approved by Council on October 4, 2013.*

*The Transfer and Articulation Committee is a standing committee established by and reporting to the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT).*

#### **Membership**

The Committee will be composed of up to twelve voting members, at least two of whom are also members of the Council. The Committee is normally chaired by a Council member, who is appointed in keeping with the *General Guidelines for the Selection of Council, Committees, and Task Forces*.<sup>2</sup> The remaining members will be drawn from a broad cross-section of students, faculty, and administrators within the BC post-secondary system. Members will be chosen for their expertise and/or interest in post-secondary transfer and articulation. Normally, the term of membership is three years, subject to renewal for additional terms if mutually agreed.

The Executive Director and Co-chair, and the Director, Transfer and Articulation, are ex officio, non-voting members of the Committee. The Director, Transfer and Articulation is the primary staff liaison and support for the Committee. As requested or required, other BCCAT staff may also attend as non-voting resource persons.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and counsel to articulation committees and BCCAT on issues of articulation and transfer policy and practice; to oversee articulation committees under BCCAT's administrative sponsorship; and to initiate, implement, and monitor research, projects, or activities designed to improve or enhance transfer. The Committee provides expert advice and reports to Council.

---

<sup>2</sup> Information on the selection of committee members is available at [www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf](http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf)

## Objectives

1. To advise Council and members of the BC Transfer System on key issues and values related to articulation and transfer.
2. To advise Council and members of the BC Transfer System on issues related to expanding the BC Transfer System by adding new member institutions or through articulation with other systems or sectors.
3. To recommend policies and operational practices to enhance transfer opportunities for students wishing to move between post-secondary institutions.
4. To initiate, approve, and monitor innovative transfer projects and activities.
5. To initiative, approve, monitor, and disseminate information on research projects related to articulation and transfer consistent with Council's research program and in cooperation with the Research Committee of Council.
6. To oversee the operations and effectiveness of articulation committees: including, providing general terms of reference, reviewing requests for the establishment of articulation committees, assessing the need for delisting and/or consolidating existing articulation committees<sup>3</sup>, and advising on the appointment of System Liaison Persons.
7. To review issues that arise from meetings of the articulation committees and to assist in resolving any problematic situations as and when they arise.
8. To review articulation and/or transfer problems that arise and help resolve any such problems.
9. To review available research or documents on articulation and transfer issues in BC and/or other jurisdictions that might affect current or future transfer policy, procedures or projects.

---

<sup>3</sup> TAC approved Terms of Reference for articulation committees and processes for establishing and delisting articulation committees are available in the Articulation Committee Companion (at [www.bccat.ca/articulation](http://www.bccat.ca/articulation)).

## Appendix C

### Research Committee Terms of Reference

*Approved by Council, December 12, 2014*

#### Membership

The Committee is composed of at least two members of Council and at least three members drawn from the post-secondary sector who have expertise in research and represent a broad cross-section of the educational community. The committee is normally chaired by a Council member, who is appointed in keeping with the *General Guidelines for the Selection of Council, Committees, and Task Forces*.<sup>4</sup> Normally, the term of membership is three years subject to renewal for additional terms if mutually agreed. As required and with the advice of the Committee, the Chair may invite individuals with specific expertise to participate on the Committee for a defined period.

The Executive Director and Co-chair, and Director, Admissions and Research are *ex officio*, non-voting members of the Committee. The Director, Admissions and Research, is the primary staff liaison and support for the Committee. Other BCCAT staff may also attend as non-voting resource persons.

#### Purpose

To recommend to Council, a research agenda which supports the Council's mandate and objectives; to initiate and disseminate research consistent with this agenda; and to provide guidance to research undertaken by other standing committees of Council.

#### Objectives

1. To collaborate with other standing committees of Council (e.g., Admissions Committee and Transfer and Articulation Committee) to develop a research agenda for approval by Council.
2. To solicit, receive, and review research proposals from the broader research community consistent with Council's research agenda, and approve deliverables on behalf of Council;

---

<sup>4</sup> Information on the selection of committee members is available at [www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf](http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/committeeguidelines.pdf)

3. To provide guidance on research design, budget requirements, contractor qualifications, and analysis for research projects initiated by the Research Committee and other standing committees of Council;
4. To provide guidance on the appropriate circulation of reports throughout the BC post-secondary system and beyond;
5. To support Council in keeping abreast of current provincial, national, and international research related to its mandate; and
6. To promote awareness of Council research.