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MEMBERSHIP IN THE BC TRANSFER SYSTEM

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

BC public post-secondary institutions are authorized through public acts of the provincial legislature to operate and grant credentials in keeping with their scope and mandate.¹ BC public post-secondary institutions are *de facto*, ongoing members of the BC Transfer System.

The purpose of this policy is to establish the conditions and expectations under which other degree-granting institutions may seek and maintain membership in the BC Transfer System. The policy outlines the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer’s (BCCAT) parameters for institutional eligibility, the criteria and processes for assessing requests to join the BC Transfer System, and the processes to be followed by those institutions once membership has been granted.

An additional purpose of this policy is to guide all member institutions on appropriate procedures and practices for articulating transfer agreements for academic credit within the BC Transfer System and having those agreements listed in the BC Transfer Guide (Refer to APPENDIX I: BC Transfer System Procedures and Practices).

SCOPE AND LIMITS

This policy applies to prospective members in the BC Transfer System that are Canadian public post-secondary institutions not operating within BC, and private and non-Canadian public post-secondary institutions offering a degree program in BC. These institutions must have and maintain appropriate government authorization to offer one or more degree programs and successfully meet and maintain quality assurance process and practice expectations recognized by BCCAT.

There are two categories of prospective member institutions:

1. Canadian public post-secondary institutions not operating in BC but that have been authorized by their provincial or territorial government to grant degrees in their jurisdiction, and that are members of a BCCAT equivalent organization, if applicable.²

¹ See the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training website for more information on public institutions in BC: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/degree-authorization/degree-quality-assessment-board> ; <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/find-a-program-or-institution/find-an-institution>

² For example, in Alberta, institutions that have been approved by the Alberta government to grant degrees in that province, and that are members of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) are eligible to seek membership in BCCAT as agreed upon under the transfer relationship established under the *BC / Alberta Transfer System Protocol* and the understanding that geographical proximity will lead to student mobility.

2. Private and out-of-province public institutions that have undergone quality assessment review by the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) and have been authorized by the Minister responsible for advanced education (i.e., given "ministerial consent") to offer a relevant associate or baccalaureate degree program in BC.³

Institutions with unique or specific missions, or programs offered only at the graduate level, or programs with no parallels within the BC Transfer System may not be appropriate for membership and articulation within the BC Transfer System.

Following admittance to the BC Transfer System, private and out-of-province public institutions authorized to operate in BC may formally articulate agreements pertaining to the degree program curriculum for which they have ministerial consent. However, this policy does not oblige other members of the BC Transfer System to accept articulation requests from any other institution that has gained membership in the BC Transfer System.

DEFINITIONS

Associate Degree: The Associate of Arts and Associate of Science Degrees are 60 credit provincial credentials offered by many institutions in BC (See <http://www.bctransferguide.ca/associate>).

BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT): The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer oversees the BC Transfer System. Members of the Council are appointed by the Minister and are selected from across the BC post-secondary system to serve the overall best interests of the system. BCCAT is supported by a small professional staff.

BC Transfer Guide: The website service hosted by BCCAT that provides information on formal course-to-course, block, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and program specific transfer agreements between participating BC Transfer System institutions.

Block Transfer: This occurs when a group of courses, often in the form of a certificate, diploma, or associate degree, is recognized as a whole for a predetermined amount of transfer credit.

Degree Authorization Act: In 2002, the Government of British Columbia passed the *Degree Authorization Act*, enabling private institutions or public institutions from other jurisdictions to seek authorization, through consent by the Minister responsible for advanced education, to offer degree programs in BC.

Degree Programs: For the purpose of membership in the BC Transfer System, these are associate and baccalaureate degree programs.

Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB): The Degree Quality Assessment Board is a provincial Board appointed by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training for British Columbia. The DQAB reviews proposed degree programs at public and private institutions in BC and makes recommendations to the Minister. The DQAB also conducts organizational reviews of private institutions or public institutions from other jurisdictions offering degree programs in BC with the consent of the Minister responsible for advanced education.

Formal Articulation: This is the process whereby one institution submits course or program outlines to another institution and requests transfer credit through BCCAT's Transfer Credit System. Resulting transfer credit agreements are recorded in the BC Transfer Guide.

³ Refer to the Degree Quality Assessment Board pages of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training website for more information on degree authorization in BC: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/degree-authorization#degree-authorization>

Institutional Contact Person (ICP) / Transfer Credit Contact (TCC): These designated institutional staff provide links between BCCAT and BC Transfer System member institutions. Each institution has at least one staff member serving in these roles, but there are often two or more.

Letter of Assurance: This formal agreement between a non-BC Canadian public or BC private member institution and BCCAT sets forth expectations for participation in the BC Transfer System and indicates the commitment of the member institution to uphold the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer* as well as the norms and standards of the BC Transfer System.

Operating in BC: Authorization to operate in BC indicates that courses and programs will be delivered, evaluated, and transcribed by the institution granted ministerial consent, not by other institutions through partnership or affiliation agreements.

Transfer Credit: Transfer credit occurs when courses, blocks, or programs successfully completed at one institution are granted credit at another institution.

Transfer Credit System (TCS): The Transfer Credit System is the online resource used to send and receive formal articulation requests between institutions.

Triangulation: Triangulation occurs when an institution extrapolates credit equivalencies between courses listed in the BC Transfer Guide based on those courses being articulated for transfer credit with another specific course at a separate institution.

PRINCIPLES

BC Transfer System membership carries responsibilities. Member institutions abide by the commonly accepted standards and practices of the system as detailed in this policy, in the *Letter of Assurance*, and in the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*. These and other supporting documents describe the normative expectations for members of the BC Transfer System.

Determinations to grant BC Transfer System membership require evidence that:

- inclusion would provide valuable information to students about viable transfer pathways that are not now recorded in the BC Transfer Guide; and
- significant student transfer and articulation activity exists with member institutions.

While the establishment of a transfer agreement between institutional members of the BC Transfer System is voluntary for both partners, all member institutions have endorsed the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer* (bccat.ca/system/principles). BCCAT recognizes that transfer agreements rest on a foundation of mutual trust and quality assurance.

Agreements listed in the BC Transfer Guide constitute transfer credit commitments between institutions. When listings are current, reliable, and respected by both partners, the system is credible. Mutual respect for and accountability to all members of the BC Transfer System ensures that the academic integrity of courses and programs is protected and preserved. It is the institution's responsibility to ensure their policies, procedures, and resources are supportive of the BC Transfer System.

Inclusion of new member institutions in the TCS and BC Transfer Guide will be based on the same principles of trust, reciprocity, fairness, and quality that guide similar decision-making by existing members of the BC Transfer System. However, in order to develop formal articulation arrangements, new member institutions must first

establish ongoing professional relationships with peers through ongoing participation in relevant articulation committee meetings and BC Transfer System activities.

Reciprocity of transfer credit may occur in practice, but is not required. Therefore, institutions that assign transfer credit to courses from another institution cannot assume, or represent, that their courses, in turn, will receive transfer credit at the other institution.

PROCEDURES

Criteria for Assessing Applications from Prospective Institutions

The following criteria will be used by BCCAT to assess applications for inclusion in the BC Transfer System:

- 1) In the case of a Canadian public institution not operating in BC, evidence is required that it is authorized by its provincial or territorial government to grant degrees in that jurisdiction, and that it is a member of the jurisdictional equivalent of BCCAT, where appropriate. Normally a copy of enabling legislation will be required.
- 2) In the case of a private or out-of-province public post-secondary institution operating in BC, evidence is required that it is authorized by the Minister under the *Degree Authorization Act* to offer an associate or bachelor degree program in BC and is in compliance with the terms and conditions attached to the consent and with DQAB expectations. Normally a copy of the Minister's consent and a letter from the DQAB secretariat will be required.
- 3) The institution submitting an application must present a business case for inclusion in the BC Transfer System. Relevant information should include the following:
 - a) Evidence of the level of collaboration /discussion that has occurred with institutions in the BC Transfer System and evidence of support from those institutions.
 - b) Number of individual courses for which transfer credit is routinely granted by the applying institution or by BC Transfer System members or for which articulation agreements are already in place or are proposed.
 - c) Number of block transfer agreements in place or proposed by the applying institution.
 - d) Number of students who transferred credit to BC institutions from the institution and vice versa or projected level of student transfer.
 - e) Evidence of the success of students in the institution that they have transferred to or vice versa or plans to track the success of transfer students in the future.
 - f) Number of post-secondary institutions from the BC Transfer System involved in or proposed for articulation and transfer arrangements. (If evidence points to only one or two BC Transfer System institutions involved, the institution may be asked to negotiate bilateral arrangements with those institutions outside the BC Transfer Guide).
 - g) A description of the institutional procedures, processes, and resources established to perform transfer and articulation functions. For reference see APPENDIX I: BC Transfer System Procedures and Practices. These include transfer credit assessment, processing, recording, advice, and appeal policies and procedures and individuals designated as Institutional Contact Persons.

- h) Confirmation that courses and programs to be included in the BC Transfer Guide will be taught (delivered, evaluated, transcribed) entirely by the institution seeking access to the BC Transfer System, not by other institutions through partnership or affiliation agreements.
- i) Confirmation that the faculty teaching at the institution will attend appropriate articulation committee meetings.
 - i. Canadian public institutions not operating in BC are expected to participate regularly in relevant articulation committee meetings or activities in their home jurisdiction, and to attend relevant BC articulation committee meetings as appropriate to establish and maintain articulation agreements with BC Transfer System member institutions.
 - ii. Private or out-of-province public post-secondary institutions operating in BC are expected to participate regularly in articulation meetings relevant to their ministerial consent degree program curriculum.
- j) Evidence that the institution understands that reciprocity of transfer credit among individual institutions may occur in practice, but is not required and that the applying institutions that already assign or plan to assign transfer credit from a current BCTS member will not assume or represent that their courses, in turn, will receive transfer credit at BC Transfer System member institutions.
- k) Any other evidence deemed relevant by BCCAT.

Process for Assessing Applications from Prospective Institutions

The following process will be used by BCCAT to assess applications:

- 1) Institutions should submit a formal application to BCCAT c/o the Executive Director and Co-Chair, addressing the above criteria.
- 2) BCCAT will review the evidence provided in the application to determine if membership is appropriate and would be of significant benefit to students. Additional information may be requested.
 - a) BCCAT will determine whether or not the existing level of transfer activity warrants inclusion in the BC Transfer System. Normally institutions with a substantial level of activity will be considered.
 - b) BCCAT's decision may be influenced by workload implications for existing institutions in the system.
- 3) Following staff review, the application will be considered by the Transfer and Articulation Committee (TAC). BCCAT will then make a decision on the application for membership taking into consideration recommendations from the TAC.
- 4) BCCAT's Executive Director and Co-Chair, or designate, will inform the applicant of the decision and rationale.

Process Following Admittance as a Member Institution of the BC Transfer System

For those post-secondary institutions granted membership in the BC Transfer System within the scope and limits of this policy, the following process and conditions will apply:

- 1) Institutions will be required to sign the *Letter of Assurance*, which includes a clear description of expectations attendant with their membership in the BC Transfer System. Subject to BCCAT review, institutions will be required to demonstrate that they have met expectations and to renew their

commitment by signing a new Letter of Assurance normally every five years, or at the discretion of BCCAT. The *Letter of Assurance* is attached as APPENDIX II.

- 2) BC Transfer System member institutions will be asked by BCCAT to indicate whether they intend to enter into articulation agreements with the approved new member institution.
- 3) Decisions on whether or not to award transfer credit are made by each institution according to its own policies and regulations. However, member institutions would be expected to deal fairly with approved institutions and to provide a rationale for decisions.
- 4) Approved institutions will be expected to designate an Institutional Contact Person (ICP) to respond to BCCAT requests for information and be the key contact for other member institutions.
- 5) Approved institutions will be expected to send suitable representatives to appropriate committee meetings (e.g., articulation committees, Institutional Contact Persons).

New member institutions must develop professional relationships with peers and an articulation infrastructure to participate fully in the BC Transfer System. To focus the articulation activity and lessen demands on members, for a transitional period BCCAT may limit institutions with approved baccalaureate degree programs to a receiving-only function and institutions with approved associate degree programs to a sending-only function in the BC Transfer Guide, in keeping with the primary pathways anticipated by the degree programs.

An institution is deemed to have been successfully integrated into the BC Transfer System when it is articulating successfully as appropriate to its programs; when its faculty are participating in relevant articulation committees; when it is communicating as necessary with BCCAT through the Institutional Contact Person (ICP) and others; and when students have started to transfer successfully.

Monitoring of Membership

If concerns from member institutions arise regarding articulation practices or participation by another member that are not in keeping with the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*, BCCAT will communicate directly with the institution with the purpose of identifying the nature of the concern and clarifying expectations. If concerns are not addressed adequately, or if BCCAT determines that a member is not fulfilling its obligations as agreed to in the *Letter of Assurance*, BCCAT will, at its discretion, report this evidence to the appropriate provincial or educational authority for its consideration when taking steps or actions within the scope of its authority.

For those private and out-of-province public institutions admitted to the BC Transfer System based in part on the DQAB review and ministerial consent processes, BCCAT will report annually to the DQAB on each new member's articulation activities; on its adherence to the *Letter of Assurance* and to the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*; and on any other matters relevant to its membership in the BC Transfer System.

BCCAT may suspend membership and participation by Canadian public post-secondary institutions not operating in BC as well as private and public post-secondary institutions authorized to offer a degree program in BC if they are not meeting BCCAT's expectations as set forth in membership policy, the *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*, or the *Letter of Assurance*. A notice of suspension will outline the circumstances and the conditions that must be met for reinstatement or privileges. A copy of the notice will also be sent to the relevant provincial authority or agency. If the member does not satisfactorily address the concerns or deficiencies within 60 days of dispatch of the notice, membership may be revoked. Revocation of membership will be confirmed through a motion of Council.

Member institutions must inform BCCAT immediately of investigation into its operations undertaken by government, professional accrediting organizations, or any other relevant bodies inside or outside BC. Suspension, amendment, or revocation of approval to offer programs will result in the *de facto* suspension, amendment, or revocation of the institution's participation or membership in the BC Transfer System. As appropriate, BCCAT will inform the appropriate authorities about suspension or revocation of membership.

PROCESS INFORMATION

Articulation Committee Companion bccat.ca/pubs/companion2013.pdf

How to Articulate (PDF and HTML) available at bccat.ca/articulate

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

BC/Alberta Transfer System Protocol (bccat.ca/pubs/BC-ABprotocol.pdf)

BC Degree Authorization Act

([http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02024_01/search/CIVIX_DOCUMENT_ROOT_STEM:\(BC%20Degree%20Authorization%20act\)?14#hit1](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02024_01/search/CIVIX_DOCUMENT_ROOT_STEM:(BC%20Degree%20Authorization%20act)?14#hit1))

Campus Alberta Quality Council (caqc.gov.ab.ca/)

RELATED POLICIES

3B: Listing of Transfer Agreements with Non-Member Institutions in the BC Transfer Guide
bccat.ca/pubs/POL3B_NonMembers.pdf

APPENDIX I

BC Transfer System Procedures and Practices

The following procedures should be in place in all institutions articulating formally through the BC Transfer Guide. In all cases, where possible and appropriate, institutions will:

- a) have institutional transfer credit policies in place that are consistent with BCCAT policies and that facilitate access to BCCAT and institutional resources, materials, and services necessary to support transfer and articulation.
- b) have in place a process to inform decisions to request formal transfer agreements, including steps to identify and prioritize those courses and institutions where articulation would be mutually beneficial. Institutions should identify suggested transfer credit where possible and provide a sound rationale for requesting articulation, such as:
 - i. evidence of existing student mobility;
 - ii. significant student interest in transferability of specific courses;
 - iii. reasonably similar course or program offerings between the institutions;
 - iv. historic agreements or partnerships between the institutions; and
 - v. regional proximity between the institutions.
- c) conduct an analysis of the kind and amount of transfer credit best suited to the strategic objectives of the institution. For example, the institution could limit its activity to one or more of the following:
 - i. course-to-course agreements;
 - ii. block transfer agreements;
 - iii. program-specific transfer information; and/or,
 - iv. transfer information limited to certain institutions.
- d) conduct a review of existing equivalencies in internal database(s) for accuracy and currency and consider entering these equivalencies into the BC Transfer Guide if course learning outcomes and content are commensurate. Internal databases of credit equivalencies may be used to inform and prioritize formal articulation requests. Once equivalencies are published in the BC Transfer Guide, institutions are committing to maintain and honour these equivalencies over the period for which the formal articulation agreements are valid.
- e) use triangulation, where appropriate, to extrapolate equivalencies from the BC Transfer Guide. However, institutions are not obliged to accept transfer credit for a course simply because it is articulated with another course at a separate institution⁴.
- f) have an institutional transfer credit assessment system in place, including processes for how credits are recorded, by whom, and for which categories of student.
- g) have a procedure in place to process transfer credit applications and to advise students of transfer credit granted after registrarial approval.

⁴ Detailed examination of outlines can sometimes reveal significant differences in learning outcomes and / or course content that would prevent the triangulation of course credit equivalency from occurring.

- h) have a process in place for ensuring that articulation agreements are current and comprehensive.
- i) have in place institutional service standards and procedures to remind individuals to respond to requests in a timely manner when dealing with articulation and transfer requests, while respecting the workload and other priorities of the evaluators.
- j) have transfer credit appeal processes in place, including ensuring that these are advertised and are understood by students.
- k) identify or have in place an Institutional Contact Person (ICP) and Transfer Credit Contact (TCC), if appropriate for receiving and sending requests through a secure Transfer Credit System (TCS) account (for description of ICP and TCC roles see: bccat.ca/articulation/icp/).
- l) identify or have in place a contact person for each academic unit or department who will facilitate the assignment and completion of articulation requests.
- m) have in place a credit assessment process for determining whether to grant unassigned or general credit by academic area (department, program, or school) or faculty, and year level (e.g., ARTS 1xx) for a prospective articulated course that is not directly equivalent to a course offered at the institution and / or does not correspond to a field of study offered by the institution.
- n) use BCCAT training materials and web resources as appropriate to orient and train staff for course assessment, student advising, admissions, and use of the TCS and BC Transfer Guide.
- o) record existing and new transfer credit agreements and other transfer credit assessments in the institution's student information system.
- p) participate in articulation committee and ICP/TCC meetings as appropriate.

APPENDIX II

LETTER OF ASSURANCE

This *Letter of Assurance* is established between the **BC Council on Admissions and Transfer** and

Institution Name: _____

Institution Address: _____

Degree program(s) the institution is authorized to offer in BC by the Minister responsible for advanced education (if applicable):

As a new member of the BC Transfer System, the institution will undertake to adhere to the norms of the system and to follow best institutional practice in participating in articulation and transfer and in providing information about programs to students and BC Transfer System members. The institution will abide by the terms and conditions of membership in the BC Transfer System as set forth in the policy, *Membership in the BC Transfer System*. The institution will:

1. Familiarize itself with BCCAT's *Membership in the BC Transfer System* policy, and adhere to the requirements with special reference to Appendix I, BC Transfer System Procedures and Practices.
2. Comply with BCCAT's *Principles and Guidelines for Transfer*.
3. Follow best practice, as described in BCCAT materials and resources, with regard to the articulation of courses and programs.
4. Implement, in a timely fashion, the internal administrative processes necessary to have all formally articulated courses listed and updated as required in the BC Transfer Guide.

5. Name an Institutional Contact Person (ICP) for BCCAT. This person will initially be _____ (email address: _____) and he/she will fulfill the role of ICP.
6. Use the BCCAT web-based Transfer Credit System for all formal articulation requests, and provide BCCAT with the name of a Transfer Credit Contact (TCC) Person. This person will initially be _____ (email address: _____). This person can be the same as the ICP.
7. Use a sufficiently detailed course outline form for all courses for which articulation is being requested.
8. Provide, as requested, all curricular and academic information that an articulating institution may deem necessary for the assessment of course or program equivalence.
9. Be informed by existing course outlines as appropriate to the discipline, but ensure that course outlines do not contravene intellectual property laws and that neither curricular nor instructional materials of others are used without their written consent.
10. Use the Transfer Credit System to articulate courses within the degree program(s) that the institution is authorized to offer.
11. Transmit and receive student transcripts and award transfer credit in a timely manner. [For information on transcript standards and practices, BCCAT recommends the *National Transcript Guide* found at arucc.com/uploads/PDF/transe.pdf]. Where feasible, transcripts should be available through electronic transmission.
12. Send faculty representatives to relevant articulation committees as appropriate⁵. These representatives will be full voting members of the articulation committees. All details about articulation committees and the role of representatives can be found in the *Articulation Committee Companion*. (Please contact articulation@bccat.ca for more information.)
13. Respect provincial norms regarding instructor qualifications for courses and programs to be articulated. BCCAT's position statement on *Instructor Qualifications for Transferable Courses* can be found at bccat.ca/articulate/request/instructor.
14. Agree to assess and accept for transfer credit, on a case-by-case basis, equivalent courses completed at other institutions in the BC Transfer System where course-to-course articulation has not been established and recorded in the BC Transfer Guide for structural reasons (e.g., articulation between two receiving institutions not normally recorded) or business reasons (too few students to justify articulation).
15. Provide clear and accurate information to current and prospective students about transfer agreements, and refrain from making false, overstated or misleading claims about the nature of institutional

⁵ Canadian public institutions not operating in BC are expected to participate regularly in relevant articulation committee meetings or activities in their home jurisdiction, and to attend relevant BC articulation committee meetings as appropriate to establish and maintain articulation agreements with BC Transfer System member institutions. Private or out-of-province public post-secondary institutions operating in BC are expected to participate regularly in articulation meetings relevant to their ministerial consent degree program curriculum.

participation in the BC Transfer System and/or the benefits accruing to students in any print, web-based, audio, video, or other forms of publication, or when recruiting or advising students.

16. Engage in articulation and transfer processes as sincere members of the BC Transfer System, with the aim of facilitating appropriate student mobility and transfer, and refrain from using this membership for purely promotional or marketing purposes.
17. Alert BCCAT immediately to any situations that may affect institutional ability to participate fully in the BC Transfer System.
18. Inform BCCAT immediately of any investigation of institutional operations undertaken by government, any professional accrediting organization, or any other relevant authority or agency inside or outside BC, and inform BCCAT of the outcomes of any such investigation.
19. Inform BCCAT immediately of any suspension, amendment, or revocation of government approval to offer programs, which will result in the *de facto* suspension, amendment, or revocation of the institution's participation or membership in the BC Transfer System.

Signed on behalf
of the Institution by:

Print name:

Title:

Date:

Copies: 1: Institutional Registrar
 2: Director, Transfer and Articulation, BCCAT
 3: Director, Information Technology, BCCAT