



Costs and Benefits:

*Assessing the costs and benefits
of participation in the BC Transfer System*

*Prepared by Dr. Fiona A. E. McQuarrie, Special Projects Officer, BCCAT
September 2026*

BCCAT

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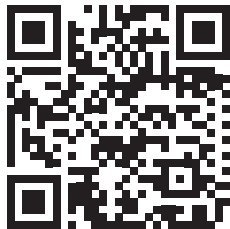
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Introduction

The BC Transfer System (BCTS) has been recognized as “possibly the most extensive credit accumulation and transfer arrangement in the world” (Behkradnia, 2004). The BCTS is overseen by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). BCCAT was created in 1989, but transfer credit agreements between BC post-secondary institutions have existed since the late 1960s.

The BCTS encompasses 40 public and private post-secondary institutional members and more than 60 articulation committees. BCCAT maintains the online BC Transfer Guide (BCTG) which, as of December 2025, contains more than 375,000 course-to-course transfer agreements, as well as subject-specific transfer guides and information on block transfer agreements (BCCAT, 2025). The Council itself consists of 20 appointed members representing different sectors of the BC post-secondary system, and it has three standing subcommittees (Transfer and Articulation, Admissions, and Research). BCCAT also supports more than 60 subject-specific provincial articulation committees, with representation on each committee from every BCTS member institution with courses or programs in the relevant subject area.

Operating and maintaining this mature, multi-faceted transfer system requires ongoing commitments of resources across the entire BC post-secondary system. In recent years, several trends have arisen within the system which potentially affect the continued stability of the BCTS. These include:

- Rising operational costs at many institutions, leading to financial constraints
- Decreased revenues at many institutions, partly because of lower numbers of international students
- Decreasing numbers of full-time and permanent faculty members at institutions, including long-time faculty with extensive knowledge of, and experience with, the BCTS
- Increasing institutional responsibilities for faculty, administrators, and staff, reducing their availability for other activities
- At some institutions, restrictions placed on the availability of funding for representatives to attend articulation committee meetings

This research report was commissioned by BCCAT’s Transfer and Articulation Committee (TAC). The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits received from institutional and personal participation in the BCTS, and to contrast those with the resources necessary to support the continued operation and well-being of the BCTS. The outcomes are



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intended to assist readers in understanding the scope and importance of contributions from various participants in the BCTS, and to provide information on the value received from participation in the BCTS.

This report does not estimate the financial cost of resources and benefits associated with BCTS participation. These costs would be different for each BCTS institution and for each individual participant. Because of these variations, cost estimates, and averages of those estimates, would not be reliable indicators of costs. It would also be challenging to assign meaningful values to intangible benefits such as network building or goodwill. The resources and benefits described in this report can be used by interested parties as a basis for calculating their own financial valuations, if they so choose.

The report is divided into five sections. The first is a brief overview of transfer credit systems in other jurisdictions and in Canada. This is followed by a brief overview of the structure of the BCTS and BCCAT, and then by a review of published research on the costs and benefits of participating in transfer. The next section identifies specific groups of participants in the BCTS and outlines the resources and benefits associated with each group's participation. The report concludes with a discussion of the findings and provides recommendations to support ongoing stability for the BCTS.

Overview of Transfer Credit Systems in Other Jurisdictions

The structure and scope of transfer credit systems vary significantly around the world. In Europe, the Bologna process, implemented in 1999, established the European Higher Education Commission. The commission currently has 49 member states (European Higher Education Commission, 2025). This system of structural alignments includes the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), which facilitates students' transfer of credits across jurisdictions and between types of institutions (European Union, 2015). The ECTS has been praised for increasing opportunities for student mobility, but has also been criticized for implicitly endorsing standardized curricular features, such as specific types of learning outcomes, that may not be suitable for regional student demographics or for individual programs or institutions (Gleeson, Lynch, & McCormack, 2021). In 2022, over 150,000 baccalaureate graduates in European Union countries used ECTS-facilitated transfer credit to complete their credentials (Eurostat, 2024).

In the United States, transfer credit systems take a variety of forms. An important characteristic of the US post-secondary system is the division between community colleges and universities, which means that the most visible form of transfer is from colleges to universities. Community college programs generally focus on two-year credentials and job-specific training, but colleges may also offer programs that allow students to transfer into four-year undergraduate degree programs elsewhere (González Canché & Zhang, 2025).

Some US community colleges offer two-year associate degree programs. These may or may not be designed to be transferable, although credits from individual courses within these programs may be transferable regardless of whether the degree itself transfers. More recent innovations, such as advanced placement courses for secondary school students, and dual enrollment courses offered by partnerships of colleges and secondary schools, provide transfer opportunities beyond the "traditional" pathway of college to university transfer. US post-secondary students have also transferred between the same types of institutions, transferred from universities to colleges, and enrolled at multiple institutions simultaneously, either within the same transfer system or across systems (Katsinas, Bray, Hagedorn, Dotherow, & Malley, 2019).

In some US states, in-state transfer agreements have been established between public post-secondary institutions, primarily with community colleges as sending institutions and universities as receiving institutions. Some states also have state-level transfer policies that apply to all public institutions. These include policies that establish a common core curriculum at both colleges and universities for lower-level courses, and policies that ensure a completed associate degree will transfer to any public four-year institution in the state (Education Commission, 2023). Private for-profit institutions also participate in US transfer agreements, either with other for-profit institutions or with public colleges or universities. Notably, transfer agreements involving private for-profit institutions are more likely to offer transfer between or across states than agreements involving public institutions (González Canché & Zhang, 2025).

In other US states, there are transfer agreements between post-secondary institutions belonging to the same state system. Some examples of these are the transfer agreements among the 25 post-secondary institutions that are part of The City University of New York (CUNY, 2025), and the 23 universities that are part of The California State University (Cal State, 2025). Many of these systems or institutions also have transfer agreements with institutions outside the system. Finally, there are also program- or discipline-specific “informal bilateral agreements”, mutually agreed upon by the participating institutions. These agreements provide transfer between specific programs or credentials, independent of any other transfer structures involving the participating institutions (Canché, Qiu, Zheng, Gong & Zhang, 2025).

There are limited data on how many students use each of these types of transfer, and on how many credits are transferred. Some data indicate that approximately 13% of all US undergraduate students are transfer students, with the majority of these being students in two-year programs that transfer into four-year programs (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2025).

Overview of Transfer Systems in Canada

In Canada, transfer systems are provincial or territorial, because funding for post-secondary education is largely a provincial responsibility. Most of Canada’s provinces and territories have their own transfer credit systems, overseen by agencies similar to BCCAT and usually supported by the ministry responsible for post-secondary education. Cross-jurisdictional transfer is informally facilitated by system-wide collaboration: for example, through the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions & Transfers (PCCAT) and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). The CMEC has issued a “ministerial statement on credit transfer in Canada”, approved by all provincial and territorial Ministers of Education. The statement establishes principles intended to “increase opportunities for students to access post-secondary education by facilitating student mobility between institutions and sectors” (CMEC, 2009, p. 1).

It has been suggested that Canada’s federal government could be more assertive in ensuring adoption of these principles. For example, it could collect data to track nationwide transfer activity between institutions or types of institutions (Pizarro Milian & Munro, 2020). Currently, however, transfer systems in Canada largely rely on mutual trust between and across institutions in establishing and maintaining transfer agreements.

Research on transfer between post-secondary systems in Canada indicates varying amounts of student mobility within and between provinces (Junor & Usher, 2008). It is challenging to determine the actual amount of credit transferred when students move, because not all provinces track the same kinds of transfer credit activity, or track transfer activity in the same way. National-level studies tend to focus on comparative analyses of factors that may affect transfer activity.

For example, the rate of BC students entering public post-secondary institutions within two years of high school graduation steadily declined from 2008 to 2019, while in the rest of Canada the post-secondary enrolment rate increased for the same demographic group (Heslop, 2025). Research has also indicated that in the Canadian post-secondary system, factors such as a student's geographical proximity to post-secondary institutions, and the student's ability or opportunity to relocate, may be more influential on their propensity to transfer than the existence of transfer agreements (Sano, Hillier, Pizarro Milian & Zarifa, 2023).

Overview of BCCAT and the BCTS

The BC Transfer System is the oldest of Canada's provincial and territorial transfer systems. The first record of informal meetings related to credit transfer between programs in BC is a record of a meeting of college and university mathematics instructors in 1967 (McQuarrie, 2014). BCCAT's predecessor, the Post-Secondary Articulation Coordinating Committee, was formed in 1974 and developed its first principles and guidelines for transfer in 1976. The first printed BC Transfer Guide (BCTG) was published in 1990 (Gaber, 2005). The online BC Transfer Guide currently lists more than 300,000 domestic and 88,000 international course-to-course transfer agreements, along with more than 1,700 block transfer agreements. In 2025, the BCTG had 2.3 million page views and 382,000 active users (BCCAT, 2025).

BCCAT's operations are carried out by its staff members, most of whom have experience as administrators, instructional faculty, or staff at one or more BC post-secondary institutions. BCCAT itself is generally recognized as operating efficiently and productively with a relatively small staff, in comparison to similar agencies elsewhere in Canada.

BCCAT's mandate is to support and facilitate BC's post-secondary transfer system. Thus, BCCAT and the BCTS are structured around the principle of institutional autonomy. This fundamental principle respects differences within the BC Transfer System across institutions, geographic regions, mandates, program structures, and student demographics. BCCAT does not establish or approve articulation agreements. It does not arbitrate articulation-related disputes, and it does not set agendas for articulation committee meetings or direct the committees' activities.

As part of the process of joining the BCTS, new member institutions sign a letter of assurance. The letter affirms their commitment to upholding the BCTS Principles and Guidelines for Transfer (BCCAT, 2023b), and to following the norms of the BCTS. BCCAT may suspend or revoke an institution's membership in the BCTS if an institution no longer meets the BCTS requirements for membership: e.g. if the provincial government withdraws its consent for the institution to grant degrees. BCCAT may also remove a transfer credit agreement listed in the BCTG if any of the participating institutions withdraw from the agreement, or if institutions refuse to award the transfer credit specified in the agreement.

Institutional members of the BCTS are connected online through the Transfer Credit System (TCS). This platform allows member institutions to send, receive, and evaluate articulation requests, and to submit completed agreements for publication in the BCTG.

The provincial articulation committees supported by BCTS meet at least once per year to discuss transfer-related issues in their program or discipline. Every BCTS member institution with a program or a course in the relevant subject area is expected to send a representative to each meeting of the committee. In the past, articulation agreements were created and finalized at these meetings (McQuarrie, 2014). However, now that articulation activity is primarily conducted online

through the TCS, articulation requests can be submitted and assessed year-round. Articulation committee meetings have thus evolved into opportunities for instructors and administrators to share transfer-related information, including notifications of upcoming program or course changes, and to build connections. BCCAT representatives attend articulation meetings as invited non-voting guests.

BC also has a well-developed system for collecting and analyzing transfer-related data. The provincial government's Student Transitions Project uses institutional data and student enrollment data to track transfer activity involving public post-secondary institutions. Collectively, these data sets provide much more detailed and reliable information on student mobility than is available in other jurisdictions. In 2024, approximately 50,000 students moved between BC public post-secondary institutions, and transferred approximately 400,000 credits, averaging around 46 credits per student (BCCAT, 2025).

Previous Research on the Benefits and Costs of Transfer System Participation

In 2004, BCCAT commissioned a report on "articulation costing" (Jarvis, 2004), which attempted to assign a monetary value to each step in the process of course articulation in BC. The values were calculated using the estimated amount of time spent on each step and the cost of each participant's contribution to that step, based on the participant's pay rate. Research participants provided self-reported data such as the average amount of time they spent assessing a transfer credit request and determining the appropriate amount of transfer credit. These self-reporting data were then averaged across institutions to provide an estimate of articulation costs for the entire BC Transfer System. Other expenses included in the estimate were the cost of hosting and attending articulation committee meetings, and the cost of adjusting established articulation agreements when course or program content changed.

The report's authors estimated that the average cost of establishing or maintaining an articulation agreement in the BCTS – including BCCAT staff time and resources, institutional staff time, and resources to support articulation committee meetings – was \$795 per articulated course (approximately \$1,200 in 2025 dollars). However, the authors cautioned, there could be large variations in this cost, depending on the salaries and benefits of the staff involved, the number or types of courses involved in the articulation request, and the complexity of the articulation request. For example, a previously unpublicized change to a sending institution's course or program might require an unexpected allocation of time and resources at receiving institutions to update their equivalent courses or programs, to maintain transferability. One of the institutional representatives surveyed for the study estimated that assessing the equivalency of a course that did not already have a transfer agreement took three and a half times longer than revising or updating an existing agreement.

The authors noted that the study was conducted while BCCAT was implementing a "web-based articulation request form" (Jarvis, 2004, p. 6), and suggested that a web-based system might create efficiencies that could reduce some of the costs associated with articulation. They also emphasized that "[w]hile this study has shed some light on the costs associated with articulation, any judgement about the appropriate level of expenditure should be deferred until the associated benefits have been quantified more rigorously than has been attempted in this report" (Jarvis, 2004, p. 20). The benefits of transfer identified in the report included clear information for students on the amount of credit available

for transferred courses, and published articulation agreements saving institutions from using their own resources on assessing every individual request for articulation.

Another BCCAT-funded report (Mugridge, 2005) addressed the possibility of “charging for articulation”: specifically, whether BCTS member institutions should charge fees to private and out-of-province institutions for processing articulation requests, and whether BCCAT should charge those institutions fees for arranging and maintaining transfer agreements. The study was conducted during a time when the number of private post-secondary institutions in BC was expanding, and when four private post-secondary institutions were already BCTS members.

The data collected for the report, primarily through surveys, reflected a range of views on these questions. Most survey respondents acknowledged that participating in articulation incurs costs for institutions and for the BCTS, but there were differing opinions on who should be responsible for those costs. Respondents from public institutions, particularly receiving institutions, were concerned about the resources that could be needed to assess large numbers of new transfer requests from private post-secondary institutions. Respondents from private institutions expressed concerns about the potential for an inequitable two-tier system, and felt that fees for articulation activity should be charged to all post-secondary institutions, or to none.

The report recommended that “public institutions should have the option of charging private or out of province institutions for costs associated with articulation....and with maintenance [of agreements]” (p. 15). It also recommended that BCCAT should develop fee guidelines for any institutions considering this option. However, “charges should be seen only as a means of recovering real costs associated with articulation and maintenance” (p. 15). The report also suggested that BCCAT itself should not charge fees for institutional participation in the articulation system or in articulation agreements.

Neither report explored the value gained by institutions or individuals from participating in articulation agreements or in the BC Transfer System (BCTS); however, both acknowledged that participation in the BCTS involves explicit and implicit use of resources. Since the publication of these reports two decades ago, significant structural and operational changes have occurred in the BCTS. The BCTS itself has expanded to include 13 private institutions and two out-of-province institutions as members. The BCTG is now entirely online and can be updated almost instantaneously, and the TCS allows articulation requests to be distributed, processed, and returned electronically. The TCS also enables institutions to easily maintain existing articulations, update articulations when course numbers or prefixes change, and automate reminders for reviews of articulation agreements.

Benefits and Costs of Participation in the BCTS

This section of the report will look at the groups of participants in the BCTS’s operations, and identify the benefits and costs associated with their participation.

The data in this section are drawn from the experiences and observations of BCCAT staff, who regularly interact with each of these groups.

Registrars and Registrarial Staff

These participants generally manage transfer credit activity and transfer-related policies at their own institution.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Managing requests for articulation, which includes: - Receiving transfer credit requests, assigning the requests to subject matter experts (SMEs) for evaluation, recording the evaluation results, and submitting completed articulation agreements to the BCTG and/or communicating results to relevant parties - Providing students, administrators, faculty and staff with transfer-related advice and assistance - Administering and revising the institution's transfer-related policies and practices - Providing training to SMEs on how to submit evaluations through the TCS	Developing knowledge and skills that support efficient and informed transfer credit processes, including: - Broader understanding of BC post-secondary institutions, programs, and curricula - Broader understanding of post-secondary institutions and systems in other jurisdictions - Familiarity with the TCS (Transfer Credit System) and its operation	Salaried work time May require additional work time for specialized training (e.g. TCS user training)
Participating in BCCAT initiatives, committees, and events	Developing in-depth knowledge of the transfer system Networking with staff at other institutions	Time away from regular work duties to participate in initiatives, meetings and events (may occasionally require travel) Providing data or participating in surveys for BCCAT research projects. Completing these activities requires time away from regular duties, and may require additional research or data collection to provide the requested information

BCTS participants in this category usually also participate in other organizations with mandates that include transfer-related issues. These include the BC Registrars Association (BCRA), the BC Associate Registrars and Managers Association (BCARMA), and the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC). They may also participate in transfer-related committees or initiatives at their own institution.

Institutional Representatives on Articulation Committees

Generally, the institutional representatives that attend articulation committee meetings are department, program, or area chairs, or faculty members, in a subject area related to the discipline(s) that is the focus of the articulation committee. They usually also have experience in articulating courses or programs to and from their own institution. Institutional representatives may also participate in curriculum and course design at their institutions. BCCAT recommends that representatives “should have enough familiarity with the relevant programs and/or courses at their institution to be able to share up-to-date information, and to knowledgeably participate in discussions at the articulation committee meeting. Ideally, the representative has been employed at the institution they represent for at least five years” (BCCAT, 2023b).

Each BCTS member institution with a program or course in the relevant subject area is entitled, and expected, to send one voting representative to every articulation committee meeting. Some institutions send more than one representative, particularly if the committee’s mandate includes more than one academic discipline, but only one representative can vote on behalf of the institution at the meeting.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Attending articulation committee meetings (usually held once or twice a year)	Networking with representatives in similar subject areas at other institutions Increased knowledge of curriculum and program content of similar programs at other BCTS member institutions Knowledge of upcoming changes to programs, courses, or licensing requirements that could affect course transferability Knowledge of system-wide events, trends, and issues Some institutions designate participation in articulation committees as applicable to fulfillment of institutional or academic service requirements for faculty members	Time away from regular work duties to attend meetings Time to prepare for the meeting. This includes writing and submitting the institutional report that is presented at the meeting, and reading material circulated in advance of the meeting. Issues on the meeting agenda (e.g. program curriculum redesign) may require research in advance of the meeting, for the representative to be able to contribute relevant information from their institution Travel time to and from meetings, if the meeting is in person Attending meetings or travelling may require adjustments to non-work commitments, such as care for elders or children Travelling to and from meetings may involve time and resources to book reservations, and time and effort to request reimbursement for expenses incurred. Depending on their institution’s policy, the representative may need to use their own financial resources to pay up front for reimbursable expenses

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Participating in discussions and other committee activities throughout the year [usually these take place through an online site or an email listserv]	Up-to-date knowledge of events and trends at other BCTS institutions or within a specific discipline Opportunity to share information relevant to own institution (e.g. instructor job postings) – particularly useful for time-sensitive issues Opportunity to share information on own institution's practices or conditions as requested by other representatives, e.g. institutions' standards of appropriate qualifications for instructors	Time spent on participating in discussions and activities Time spent collecting and posting relevant information as requested
Evaluating articulation requests throughout the year at their own institution*	Up-to-date knowledge of curriculum and/or program standards and content at other institutions, as represented by the requests	Time spent on assessing the request and selecting the appropriate type and amount of transfer credit. Requests involving previously unarticulated courses may require additional research to assess the legitimacy of the sending institution, to assess the content of the course, and/or to better understand the curriculum or structure of the program in which the credit was acquired

* Articulation requests are generally assessed by a subject matter expert (SME) at the receiving institution. This may or may not be the representative that participates in the relevant articulation committee, but requests are often directed to these representatives because of their broader knowledge of programs, courses, and curricular norms.

Many institutional representatives also regularly attend academic or practitioner events related to their academic discipline, or to their specific area of expertise or research. If the articulation committee is related to a professionally regulated occupation, representatives may also participate in the organization responsible for professional oversight or licensing of practitioners.

Articulation Committee Leaders (chair, vice-chair, meeting host, Moodle administrator)

Generally, articulation committee leaders are institutional representatives that have attended previous meetings of the committee. To ensure that articulation committee leaders have sufficient knowledge of the BCTS and the BC post-secondary systems to be effective in their role, BCCAT requires articulation committee leaders to be representatives of BC Transfer System member institutions, and preferably to have worked at a BC Transfer System member institution for at least five years (BCCAT, 2023a).

Some committees' leadership consists only of a chair. For those committees, the chair usually also acts as the Moodle or email list administrator. BCCAT hosts a Moodle site where committees can have their own page to share communications and documents among institutional representatives; currently, 44 committees have pages on this site.

The host of a committee's meeting can be the chair of the committee, or a representative from the host institution. When the chair is not the meeting host, they generally work closely with the host institution's representative to plan and run the meeting. The position of meeting host is not a formal leadership position in most articulation committees, but the activities of the meeting host are included in this section because at least some of the chair's work usually includes these activities.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Participating in BCCAT initiatives and events	Knowledge of the system Networking with staff at other institutions Knowledge of system-wide events, trends, and issues	Time away from regular work duties to attend initiatives and events, which may include travel
Organizing the articulation committee's meetings (at least one per year)	Develop event management and organizational skills Acquire greater familiarity with each institution or program represented on the committee Develop relationships with representatives from each institution or program Committee chairs' attendance at JAM each year is covered by BCCAT, when JAM is partly or fully in-person (BCCAT covers cost of travel to and from the event, and one night's accommodation)	Time and effort to schedule, plan, and run the meeting. In addition to organizing the meeting itself, this may also entail tasks such as arranging for accommodation, arranging parking, arranging catering (either booking it from the institution's food services or personally providing it), booking field trips and transportation if necessary, and booking an appropriate meeting space and/or online platform The meeting chair is responsible for identifying and contacting attendees, and for setting and distributing the agenda, along with any materials that will be discussed at the meeting They may also recruit a vice-chair to assist in running the meeting, especially if the meeting is hybrid. They are also usually responsible for finding a minute-taker at the meeting (BCCAT requires committees to submit minutes of each meeting) Meeting organizers have noted that unexpected events (e.g. late registrants; outdated or missing contact information for representatives; representatives not providing institutional reports on time; connectivity issues; no volunteers to take minutes) can result in them spending considerably more time and effort on the meeting than anticipated
Maintaining Moodle site and/or email list	Developing or expanding communication and organizational skills Developing Moodle page management and administration skills	Time and effort in moderating the Moodle site, including posting documents, organizing discussion threads, and organizing documents Time and effort in facilitating the email list, including updating addresses/contacts as needed

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Liaising with BCCAT on committee-related issues	Developing or expanding communication, networking and organizational skills	Time and effort. Occasionally this role involves problem-solving (for example, communicating with institutions that do not send representatives to articulation meetings). Depending on the nature of the problem, these situations may require additional time and effort to resolve

Articulation committee leaders are appointed in different ways. In some articulation committees, the chair and vice-chair are volunteers chosen at the meeting or between meetings; in other committees, these positions are elected positions.

On some committees that have both chairs and vice-chairs, these positions are held for two years, with the appointment terms overlapping. When the chair concludes their term, the vice-chair takes the role of chair for the remaining year of their own term, and a new vice-chair is appointed. On other committees, a new chair and vice-chair are appointed every year.

Host institutions for the committee's next meetings are identified at the meeting. Some committees designate host institutions at least two years in advance, to encourage all institutions represented on the committee to share the responsibility of hosting, and to give host institutions sufficient time to prepare for the meeting.

Some representatives have reported reluctance on the part of institutions to host articulation committee meetings, because of concerns about the cost of hosting. BCCAT does not cover the costs of holding these meetings, or cover the attendance or travel costs of representatives, guests, or other attendees. Institutions hosting articulation committee meetings are expected to cover any costs associated with hosting or running meetings.

System Liaison Persons (SLPs)

Each articulation committee has a system liaison person. SLPs are usually associate deans, deans, or administrators responsible for the oversight of at least one program at their institution that relates to the articulation committee's academic discipline. BCCAT appoints SLPs in consultation with the relevant articulation committee.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Participating in BCCAT initiatives and events	Develop more extensive knowledge of the BC post-secondary system and the BC Transfer System Opportunities to network with staff at other institutions, and to create connections among staff with similar responsibilities	Time away from regular work duties to attend initiatives and events
Attending articulation committee meetings	Develop connections with faculty and administrators in the same discipline at other post-secondary institutions	Time away from regular work duties to attend meetings Time and effort to assist committee leaders with organizing and running the meeting Time and effort to prepare and present system-level updates and information at the meeting
Assisting committee and committee leaders throughout the year	Develop communication and problem-solving skills	Time and effort to support the committee's activities, especially if the committee undertakes actions that can be facilitated by the SLP's connections in and knowledge of the broader post-secondary community Time and effort may also be needed to assist committee leaders in resolving issues that arise throughout the year. This can represent more of a commitment than expected if the committee experiences significant challenges (e.g. unexpected resignation of chair)

SLPs usually participate in other provincial-level organizations, such as the BC deans' sector groups, related to the programs or subjects they administer at their own institution. If their role involves administration of a program with professional or occupational regulation, they may also participate in the relevant regulatory organization. They also participate in initiatives that link post-secondary institutions and programs to communities and employers, as well as having significant administrative responsibilities within their own institutions.

If the chair of the articulation committee is unable to complete their term in office, or is unable to chair a committee meeting, the SLP is expected to step into that role until a replacement can be appointed.

Department/Program Heads

As described earlier, department or program heads may participate in the BCTS as institutional representatives on articulation committees. However, they also participate in the BCTS even if they do not take on that role.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Participating in BCCAT initiatives and events	Knowledge of the system Networking with staff at other institutions, which facilitates transfer and student mobility by creating connections among staff with similar responsibilities	Time away from regular work duties to attend initiatives and events, which may include travel time
Facilitating assessment of transfer credit requests directed to their department/program	Develop knowledge of transfer credit systems in BC and elsewhere Improved understanding of trends in transfer credit relevant to their own program or institution Develop knowledge of appropriate criteria for assessing transfer credit requests Improved knowledge of department/program faculty members' disciplinary expertise	Time and effort. Transfer credit requests for previously unarticulated courses or for courses that are exceptional (e.g. multidisciplinary course; course taken at a non-Canadian institution) usually require additional effort to identify an appropriate evaluator. For any articulation request, a follow-up with the evaluator may be necessary to ensure that a timely evaluation is provided, or that the recommended transfer credit award is appropriate
Attending articulation committee meetings	See above	Time and effort, as noted above. The department/program head may also be responsible for identifying an appropriate representative to attend the meeting, and facilitating their attendance (e.g. rescheduling their work commitments to give them time to attend)

Faculty Members at BCTS Institutions

As indicated earlier, faculty members may participate in the BCTS as institutional representatives on articulation committees. However, they also participate in the BCTS even if they do not take on that role.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Evaluating articulation requests	Improved knowledge of curricular, program, and institutional norms across the BCTS Improved knowledge of own program/curriculum, to be able to make informed decisions on course/program equivalency Improved knowledge of the BC Transfer System and its operations	Time away from other work tasks. The time needed to evaluate a request is generally longer when the request involves an unknown institution, as the evaluator may have to research the institution, its qualifications or accreditation, and its curriculum or programs. The evaluation process may also take more time if the request is not accompanied by enough documentation to make an informed decision on equivalency. Informed evaluations also require the evaluator to be familiar with the norms and procedures of the BC Transfer System (e.g. understanding different forms of transfer credit, and when each form is appropriate to use) and with their own institution's transfer credit policies

As outlined in the table above, it is helpful for a faculty member conducting an evaluation to be familiar with the BCTS, with curricular norms in their own discipline, and with their own institution's transfer credit policies. Most of this knowledge is acquired through experience, which makes the evaluation process challenging if a department or program has relatively few full-time, permanent, or long-serving faculty members.

It should also be noted that the time commitment associated with evaluating articulations may be evolving. One notable result of the BCTS being a mature and well-developed system is that most relatively standardized courses commonly offered in most academic disciplines, such as lower-level introductory courses, have already been articulated. As a result, more articulation requests now involve non-standard courses, such as new courses and courses taken at institutions outside of Canada – and, as shown above, these requests may take more time for an evaluator to assess. Thus, depending on the institution, the academic discipline, and the number of requests, evaluating articulation requests may represent more of a time commitment for faculty members than it has in the past, even as the BCTS itself has become more efficient.

BCCAT Council and Subcommittee Members

Council members represent different sectors, occupations and regions within the BC post-secondary system, and are appointed by the provincial minister responsible for post-secondary education. Each of Council's three standing subcommittees (Transfer and Articulation, Research, and Admissions) is chaired by a Council member. Subcommittee members usually work in occupations related to the mandate of the committee (e.g. registrarial staff participate in the Transfer and Articulation and the Admissions committees) and represent different regions and types of institutions in the BC post-secondary system. Subcommittee members are appointed by BCCAT staff.

Activities	Benefits	Costs
Participating in BCCAT initiatives and events	Knowledge of the system Networking with staff at other institutions, which facilitates transfer and student mobility by creating connections among staff with similar responsibilities	Time away from regular work duties to attend initiatives and events
Attending Council meetings and/or subcommittee meetings	Develop knowledge of BC post-secondary system, including trends and activities relevant to their own institution	Time away from regular work duties to attend meetings (may include travel) Time away from regular work duties to prepare for meetings
Participation in Council and/or subcommittee activities, e.g. serving on ad hoc committees, acting as peer reviewer for research reports	Develop more in-depth knowledge of specific post-secondary issues	Time away from regular work duties to carry out tasks such as reading and evaluating research reports presented for feedback or approval

Collectively, the information in these tables demonstrates that participation in the BCTS provides benefits for individuals and institutions in the form of increased knowledge and access to professional and academic networks. However, these benefits are only acquired if participants have the time and the capacity to meaningfully participate.

Discussion

Participants in the BCTS gain knowledge and skills that benefit themselves and their institutions. Even when benefits from participation are gained by the individual, those benefits can extend to the individual's institution. For example, when individual participants acquire knowledge of other institutions' programs and curricula, and of program content norms and structure in specific subject areas, that knowledge can assist their own institution in designing or revising its programs.

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It should be remembered that one of the original reasons for the creation of the BCTS was to generate financial efficiencies across the entire BC post-secondary system.

Although this report did not assign financial values to benefits, it is apparent that many of the identified benefits of participation generate financial efficiencies. For example, a faculty or staff member with knowledge of post-secondary systems through BCTS participation may not need to conduct extensive additional research to evaluate a transfer credit request. Networks of contacts among BCTS participants facilitate development of cross-institutional collaborative programs and activities, and facilitate efficient processing of transfer credit requests. An evaluator with a question about another institution's request for course or program articulation can quickly contact the person they know at the sending institution, instead of spending time trying to identify an appropriate contact.

It should be remembered that one of the original reasons for the creation of the BCTS was to generate financial efficiencies across the entire BC post-secondary system. The impetus for the first recorded meeting of what later became an articulation committee, in 1967, was instructors' concerns about students being required to take university courses they had already taken at college (McQuarrie, 2014). Transfer agreements mean not only that students save money by not having to take duplicate courses, but also that institutions save money by allocating their course-related resources more efficiently. For example, they do not have to schedule course seats or sections for students that have already taken an equivalent course.

The current structure of the BCTS continues to generate financial efficiencies by streamlining the processing of transfer requests and providing a centralized system for managing articulations. The TCS allows BCTS member institutions to electronically distribute and evaluate transfer credit requests, and to post completed articulation agreements to the online BC Transfer Guide. This saves institutions considerable amounts of time and effort. The TCS also has features that help users reduce inefficiencies. For example, if an institution receives an articulation request for a course that does not fit the institution's programming, such as a request to articulate a third-year course in a subject where the institution only offers first- and second-year courses, the institution can close the request without sending it for evaluation (BCCAT, 2023c). TCS features such as these help institutions avoid unnecessary expenditures of transfer-related resources.

A larger intangible benefit of institutional and individual participation in the BCTS is the broader trust that it builds between and across BC post-secondary institutions. This is generated by, for example, institutional representatives seeing each other for years, even decades, at their articulation committee's meetings; staff or administrators attending BCCAT events such as the annual Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) and meeting staff or administrators at other institutions; and

staff or administrators becoming familiar with policies or practices at other BC post-secondary institutions through reading or participating in BCCAT research. Trust and its indirect benefits may be difficult to quantify, but these are essential to the BCTS continuing to be a world-leading transfer system.

However, because the BCTS is a long-running and generally reliable system, its continued well-being may be taken for granted. The creation and maintenance of articulation agreements, and students' movements between post-secondary institutions, are ongoing activities that are mostly invisible except to those directly involved in them. Similarly, the benefits from participation in the BCTS may also be largely invisible to those not directly involved.

There may also be individuals in the BC post-secondary system who see the BCTS continuing to function effectively without their involvement – as in, for example, transfer students continuing to enrol in their program or institution without institutional representatives attending articulation committee meetings. These individuals may decide that participating in BCTS activities is not necessary or is not a priority, because they receive the benefits of the system without contributing to its operations. Additionally, there may be individuals in the BC post-secondary system whose previous experience was in other jurisdictions, and who thus may not understand the importance of supporting the BCTS.

The BCTS is an interdependent system. The work of many groups of participants in the system depends on other groups of participants being willing or able to do their work. The overall success and efficient functioning of the entire BCTS relies on contributions from every group of participants, because a change in one part of the system can have effects on many other parts of the system. As the saying goes, dripping water can wear away a stone. A challenge faced by one group of participants in the BCTS, like a single drop of water on a stone, may not threaten the long-term well-being of the entire system. But when multiple groups of participants in the BCTS are facing multiple challenges, the cumulative impact of those challenges has the potential to damage the ongoing well-being of the BCTS, and affect the value it provides to BC's post-secondary system.

It should also be noted that a considerable number of participants in the BCTS are participating as unpaid volunteers. Their participation may be considered service activity by their institutions, but generally this work is not compensated, beyond BCTS-related tasks, such as managing transfer requests, that are part of regular job responsibilities. Many BCTS participants volunteer their time and effort because they recognize the importance of the BCTS and want to see it continue to be a world-class transfer system. Some participants have indicated that because their institution or program benefits from transfer activity facilitated by the BCTS, they understand the importance of ensuring that those benefits continue. Their contribution to the system's well-being is by participating in the work of the BCTS.

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But participating in the work of the BCTS is only feasible if the individual has the time and resources to participate, especially if they are participating as an uncompensated volunteer. In recent years, faculty members attending articulation meetings have reported that their institutions expect them to undertake more activities. These include, for example, participating in institutional governance, supporting students' mental health, contributing to or leading student recruitment and program marketing, and working on course, program and curriculum development or revision. At some institutions, permanent or continuing faculty also have more instructional responsibilities because other faculty members have retired and their vacant positions have not been posted or filled, or replacements being appointed, or because non-permanent faculty have not had their contracts renewed. Staff and administrative participants in the BCTS participants also have significant amounts of institutional responsibilities, and these responsibilities may be increasing if the institution is facing financial or operational challenges, or if there are fewer administrators or staff members to share departmental or area workloads. Faculty, staff and administrators may recognize the importance of participation in the BCTS, and may want to participate, but they may also see BCTS participation as a low priority if they are already expending significant time and effort within their own institutions.

Institutional representatives at articulation committee meetings have raised other issues around the effect of uneven or erratic BCTS participation. One is that some institutions do not regularly send representatives to these meetings, or rarely if ever send representatives. These absences are particularly problematic for sending institutions, if the institutions not sending representatives to articulation meetings are the receiving institutions that students transfer to. Connections between sending and receiving institutions are important for facilitating student transfer, and for sharing information such as upcoming curriculum changes which may require adjustments to courses or program content to retain transferability.

BCCAT maintains a database of institutional representation at articulation committee meetings, using the attendance list that is submitted with each set of meeting minutes. However, the only formal regulatory requirement relating to articulation committee attendance is that private institutions with degree-granting status self-report attendance to the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) as part of that organization's oversight of these institutions. There is no similar reporting or regulatory requirement for public institutions.

Another issue related to articulation meeting attendance is meeting formats. During the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly every articulation committee met online. After the shutdowns ended, many committees shifted to a hybrid meeting format: an in-person meeting streamed online to facilitate remote attendance on Zoom or Teams. BCCAT has encouraged committees to use the hybrid meeting format, to allow participation by representatives who are unable to attend in person or who have health-related concerns about spending long periods of time in enclosed indoor spaces.

Many representatives prefer to attend articulation committee meetings in person. They say that valuable connections are developed during informal conversations in person that are difficult to replicate in an online setting. These representatives also report that in-person conversations around specific issues (e.g. upcoming program changes) are much more productive and efficient than discussing the same issue online or via email. If similar issues are occurring across institutions, such as program or course cutbacks, in-person discussion facilitates the process of planning collective responses and strategies – which may be especially important during times of system-wide uncertainty. Representatives also appreciate the opportunity to visit other post-secondary institutions in person and see these institutions' facilities, which may inspire innovations at their own institutions.

The issue of attendance in person also relates to the cost for institutions to send representatives to articulation committee meetings. “[I]t is the position of the Ministry responsible for secondary education and of BCCAT that funding for articulation activities, including attendance at articulation committee meetings, is included in the provincial funding provided to BC public post-secondary institutions. Therefore, institutions are expected to pay travel and attendance costs for their representatives to attend articulation meetings” (BCCAT, 2023a, p. 19). The Letter of Assurance that institutions sign when joining the BCTS also confirms that member institutions will “send faculty representatives to relevant articulation committees as appropriate” (BCCAT, 2023b, p. 11).

Nonetheless, BCCAT regularly receives questions from articulation committee representatives about funding for travel to articulation committee meetings. Among the reasons for these questions is that the budget allocation by the provincial government for articulation-related travel is not explicitly identified in the annual amount of funding provided to each public post-secondary institution. Additionally, in recent years, some BCTS member institutions have indicated to faculty members and program administrators that travel for articulation committee meetings will not be funded, or that funding will only be provided in specific situations. For example,

- Funding will only be provided if the meeting is fully in person and no online option is available
- Funding will only be provided to one representative from the institution for each meeting, regardless of their roles on the committee
- Funding is provided on a “first come first served” basis across the institution, and once the total funding has been allocated, any subsequent requests for funding will be denied
- Funding will only be provided for one meeting per year
- Funding for travel to each meeting is set at a specific amount, and expenses above that amount will not be reimbursed

Some BCTS member institutions have indicated to articulation committee representatives that representatives should use their own professional development funding, or other non-articulation-related institutional funding, to pay for some or all of their articulation-related travel.

These restrictions create multiple barriers to participation for articulation committee representatives. They are particularly problematic for representatives whose articulation committees meet more than once a year to stay up to date with rapidly evolving courses or programs, or whose mandate includes more than one academic discipline and thus are attended by multiple representatives from different departments at the same institution. Depending on the location of the articulation committee meeting, these restrictions can also be problematic for representatives in regions with exceptionally high travel costs.

In addition to institutional constraints on funding to attend articulation committee meetings, another concern is the ability of the most appropriate faculty members to attend these meetings. Faculty members that regularly attend articulation committee meetings are generally faculty members that hold permanent positions at their institutions. These faculty members usually have sufficient familiarity with their own institution’s programs and curriculum to make meaningful contributions to discussions at the meeting. BCCAT also recommends that articulation committee representatives should have at least five years of employment at their current institution (BCCAT, 2023a), to ensure that the representative has an appropriate level of knowledge of the programs, courses, and institution they represent.

If institutions decide not to fill vacant full-time faculty positions, or if institutions reassign work formerly assigned to non-permanent faculty to permanent faculty, that increases the teaching, administrative, and service workload of permanent faculty. Increased workloads or institutional responsibilities may make it difficult for qualified or willing faculty members to find the time to attend articulation committee meetings, or to participate in the work of an articulation committee throughout the year.

BCCAT staff have noticed in recent years that it is increasingly difficult for some committees, especially large committees, to find a representative willing to take on the role of committee chair. Generally, this reluctance is because representatives feel they are already overloaded with work-related commitments. Representatives have also noted that it is increasingly difficult to find BCTS member institutions to host articulation committee meetings, because of the perceived costs associated with hosting.

All these conditions potentially damage the long-term well-being of the BCTS. They have the potential to affect the amount of participation in the BCTS, and thus to affect BCTS' connections to BC's post-secondary institutions and BCCAT's ability to appropriately respond to the needs of the BC post-secondary system.

As an independent agency with no formal regulatory authority, BCCAT has limited ability to direct or control other organizations. Thus, the recommendations below are presented to encourage organizations involved with the BCTS to allocate resources appropriately to support the continued well-being of the BCTS.

Recommendations

1. That the ministry responsible for post-secondary education emphasize its support for articulation committee activities, and encourage institutions to budget appropriately for representation at articulation committee meetings, in the annual budget letter sent to every BC public post-secondary institution.
2. That the ministry responsible for post-secondary education emphasize the requirement for institutions with relevant courses or programs to send representatives to articulation committee meetings, in the annual budget letter sent to every BC public post-secondary institution.
3. That BCCAT annually review institutional representation at articulation committee meetings from both public and private post-secondary degree-granting institutions, and identify institutions that do not regularly send representatives to the articulation committees on which they have representation.
4. That BCCAT provide the information collected under recommendation (3) to the relevant institutions and/or regulatory bodies, as appropriate.
5. That BCTS member institutions guarantee sufficient institutional funding for their representatives to attend all relevant articulation meetings in person at least once a year.
6. That BCTS member institutions develop policies to formally recognize BCTS participation by their employees as part of employees' assigned workloads.

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