

Flexible Pre-Majors

Final Report of the Flexible Pre-Majors Working Group

*Prepared by John FitzGibbon, Associate Director, Transfer and Articulation,
and Jennifer Orum, Special Projects Coordinator,
in consultation with the Flexible Pre-Majors Working Group*

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Flexible Pre-Majors: Final Report of the Flexible Pre-Majors Working Group
is also available on the BCCAT website (bccat.ca/publications).

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Project Team: Flexible Pre-Majors Working Group (*See Appendix 1 for the list of members.*)



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Introduction

The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) supports the development of supplements, such as Flexible Pre-Majors (FPMs), Associate Degree Transfer, and Block Transfer, to the course-to-course arrangements in the BC Transfer Guide. FPMs (see definition in next section) have been developed through BCCAT's Transfer Innovation (TI) Program.¹ BCCAT began to encourage the exploration of FPMs following motions passed by the Council in late 1997 in response to information from academic students indicating that filling the requirements of the pre-major had become their single most problematic area for transfer. This may have been due to degree requirements that were once quite similar across institutions becoming more widely divergent. All institutions review their programs and update them over time, and all offer specializations based upon specific educational goals and departmental expertise. British Columbia students are fortunate in that the range and choice of degree options available to them is expanding. This expansion, however, has increased the complexity of developing curriculum at sending institutions to match that of several receiving institutions or risk disadvantaging their students.

Frank Gelin, BCCAT Executive Director Emeritus, has noted that, of the approaches to effective transfer of students into the third year level, the Flexible Pre-Major is the model that is most likely to facilitate innovation, increase opportunities for credit transfer and student mobility, while respecting institutional diversity.

Beginning in 1999, the TI Fund has provided resources for faculty in a variety of disciplines to explore the FPM as an option for students planning their transfer routes through post-secondary education. The first analysis of the Flexible Pre-Major was done in Music, followed by Earth Sciences, Creative Writing, Sociology/Anthropology, Mathematics/Statistics, English, Economics, Psychology, and Computing Education with projects in other disciplines just beginning.

The number of FPM projects and the issues raised during their analysis and implementation set the stage for a TI Program evaluation that included an examination of the progress made in establishing these agreements among institutions. In February 2010, Al Atkinson completed the *TI Program External Review* for BCCAT containing a number of strategic recommendations. One of these was to convene a representative working group to review the processes needed to support implementation of FPMs and to recommend administrative and advising strategies to address both student and institutional needs. The FPM Working Group met during 2010/2011 and has produced this final report. The Group reviewed the processes needed to support implementation of Flexible Pre-Majors and recommends a number of administrative and student advising strategies and documents for consideration by programs and institutions. The Working Group Terms of Reference and Composition is found in Appendix I and a list of all FPM projects supported by BCCAT is attached as Appendix II.

This document is intended as a reference and guide for articulation committees and institutions interested in examining the use of a Flexible Pre-Major as a means of enhancing student transfer. The first sections of the paper provide background information on what a FPM is and how they are being implemented across the province. This report also identifies key issues highlighted by the Working Group in the areas of institutional decision-making and approval, communication of completion, and student advising.

Information from academic students indicated that filling the requirements of the pre-major had become their single most problematic area for transfer.

Useful Documents:

The appendices contain a number of documents intended to provide support for FPM implementation such as a list of the steps to be taken, an outline of the signoff process, answers to common questions, and an example of a FPM currently being implemented.

¹ For information on Transfer Innovation Projects, visit the [Transfer Innovations](#) section in the *How to Articulate Handbook* at www.bccat.ca/articulation/resources/handbook/innovations/.

1. Flexible Pre-Major (FPM): Definition

Pre-Major refers to the specific lower level pre-requisite courses to third year major courses. A Flexible Pre-Major is a set of flexible requirements that is, a) deliverable by sending institutions and acceptable to receiving institutions, and b) deemed to fulfill the lower level requirements for the major. The nucleus of the FPM is an agreement on a set of courses that all receiving institutions will accept in lieu of their own specific course requirements. The aim of the agreement is to sufficiently prepare students to enter a major program at the third year level with reasonable prospects of academic success. FPMs are generally expected to work in conjunction with Associate Degrees or other models where students transfer after completing 60 credits prior to transfer, although students may be able to transfer successfully into a major at receiving institutions with fewer credits. The FPM is a formal inter-institutional agreement facilitating student transfer into majors and is usually accompanied by a grid of equivalent courses for each category of the major or some similar description of the courses accepted as pre-major equivalents. The FPM does not guarantee acceptance into a program or major by the receiving institution since admission is related to other factors such as GPA. The FPM simply indicates that the student has covered off the lower level requirements for a major in a specific discipline as agreed upon by the articulation committee.

The articulation committee determines the form of the FPM. For example, the committee might agree that a group of courses relating to a set of defined learning outcomes might be more appropriate than a grid of equivalent courses grouped in categories. The committee will also determine the number of institutions that need to be involved in order to make a FPM viable for the discipline.

The implementation of FPMs over the past decade suggests that there are three categories of FPM as illustrated in the chart below.

A Flexible Pre-Major is a set of flexible requirements that is, a) deliverable by sending institutions and acceptable to receiving institutions, and b) deemed to fulfill the lower level requirements for the major.

Category	Methodology	Product	Discipline Example
1.	Conducted analysis and proceeded with implementation phase. Reached agreement on the course categories that meet the FPM requirements (e.g., introduction to the discipline, history of the discipline, methodology) and reached agreement on what specific courses at participating institutions meet each category requirement.	Course grid by institution	Psychology, Anthropology/ Sociology, English
2.	Conducted analysis but did not proceed with a formal FPM and institutional signoffs.	Adopted and advertised as an informal FPM, including the creation of a common core curriculum and course equivalency grids as required for a major.	Mathematics
3.	Conducted analysis of FPM and used a learning outcomes approach during the implementation phase to identify learning outcomes required to enter the major rather than types of courses.	A basket of courses that meet the learning outcomes.	Computing Education

2. Flexible Pre-Major Developments To Date

Since 1999, a number of academic articulation committees have committed to exploring and implementing a Flexible Pre-Major in their discipline. The process has generally consisted of the articulation committee conducting a detailed analysis of the current situation regarding pre-major requirements and then preparing an agreement, including a grid or description of acceptable courses that would be signed off on by all participating institutions. The process starts with an articulation committee investigating the idea of collectively analyzing the possibility of developing a FPM in the discipline and, if approved, moving on to implementing the resulting agreement. The faculty members who attend the articulation committee meetings bring the topic back to their departments for discussion and approval and provide the institutional information necessary to complete the analysis. In the implementation phase, the articulation committee members act as the institutional contacts for forwarding the agreement to decision makers within the institutions for information, discussion, and ultimately for signoff. After signoff, the articulation committee reviews the grid of courses on an annual basis and the FPM agreement on a regular basis.

The FPMs that were completed over the past decade or so took significant periods time to process for a number of reasons including a lack of understanding by articulation committee members of the most appropriate process to follow for engaging institutional staff in discussions about FPMs and for institutional signoff. Experience with developing FPMs led the Working Group to produce a number of documents that are intended to support the process within institutions. One of these is a two-page process description that lists, in order, the steps that an articulation committee would take in developing and implementing a FPM.

3. Institutional Decision-Making Process

A significant issue for the FPM project teams has been that of the signatures that indicate that an institution is party to a FPM agreement and that the institution recognizes its obligations. The position of the person signing the agreement might vary by both institution and type of FPM. For example, a dean could sign a FPM agreement if there were no changes or implications to current courses and programs. However, in a different institution, the FPM might imply enough course revisions that a different level of institutional commitment and signoff is required.

The experience from the various FPM projects was that a number of people within the institution potentially had a formal decision-making role for approving inter-institutional agreements such as the FPM, including registrars, other senior academic administrators, and members of departments and governance bodies, and their committees. The number and types of decision-makers that need to be involved varies from institution to institution and the articulation committee members need to know this before they bring the draft FPM agreement forward for institutional participation. The Working Group felt that it would be helpful for BCCAT to have some sort of 'institutional decision-making map' from each institution to aid the articulation committee to complete the signoff process. Completion of the decision-making map or template does not constitute approval of a FPM.

Useful Documents:

A FPM Process Description is attached as Appendix III. A Flowchart summarizing the steps is attached as Appendix IV.

Recommendation 1:

That an articulation committee contemplating a FPM in its discipline start with reading this guide as background material.

Useful Document:

An institutional decision-making template is attached as Appendix V.

Recommendation 2:

That BCCAT collect and archive institutional decision-making maps in order to aid the signing process for FPMs. BCCAT should continue to aid articulation committees in attaining signoff from all participating institutions.

4. Institutional Signoff

As noted above, the method for gaining agreement from an institution to participate in a FPM may vary by institution. For example, in some institutions, the Senate delegates the authority for these kinds of items to a standing committee or subcommittee. Since FPMs are not programs, the approval process might not be tied to a specific decision-making process in the institution. However, because the FPM is a formal inter-institutional agreement, it might go to the institutional governing body for approval, a process that would also enhance visibility of the agreement. Working Group members noted that a formal process would highlight agreements with senior staff in institutions but would also add significantly to the amount of time required to get all institutions to sign the agreement. The information gathered from the institutional decision-making maps and housed at BCCAT acts as a check for the signature gathering phase, i.e., collecting formal approval from each of the participating institutions. The Working Group developed a signoff sheet to be used by institutions to confirm their participation in specific FPMs.

5. Notation of Completion

A critical issue is the means by which the sending institution indicates to the receiving institution that a student has completed the requirements for a FPM. The BC Registrars Association, although supporting work on the FPM, have reiterated its position that completion of a FPM would not be transcribed. What to provide a student to indicate completion of a FPM is an institutional decision made through collaboration between the department and the Registrar's office. Institutions should choose what they want to accompany the student, perhaps a letter from the department, indicating the courses completed that satisfy the FPM.

6. Admission to the Major

The Working Group noted that admission to the major varies by discipline and institution and can be made at different points in the student's program. For example, students may not actually declare their major until into their final year of study. The purpose of the FPM is to help the student choose courses, not to guarantee entry to the major as completion of the FPM is not a guarantee of admission to another institution.

Useful Document:

An Institutional Signoff Sheet is attached as Appendix VI.

Recommendation 3:

That the process of sending institutions confirming that a student has completed FPM requirements should be piloted with at least one articulation committee.

Recommendation 4:

That the BCRA be requested to review its decision not to support notation of completion of a FPM on the student transcript after a few years of FPM implementation.

7. Student Advising

The goal of the FPM is to provide more information to students contemplating transfer directly into a major at another institution. In order to be useful, student information about FPMs needs to be clear, easy to use, reliable, and consistent. Therefore, the advising of students, both at their initial institution and at the one to which they are seeking to transfer is an important consideration. Providing information about the FPM is made more difficult when receiving institutions do not know students' intentions regarding entering a major until they actually declare it. It is difficult to track declaration of majors once a student is registered, as the admission to the major is often a departmental decision.

Institutions that participate in a FPM may choose to advertise the existence of the agreement in a number of ways. For example, the institution may package the FPM with an Associate Degree, thereby encouraging students to complete and transfer with 60 credits and a credential. However, students who have already determined that they will transfer to another institution as soon as they have completed lower level general degree requirements may choose to transfer before the full two years or 60 credits is completed. In institutions where students routinely transfer with less than 60 credits, the sending institutions might advise students how to complete FPM requirements before they transfer.

In addition to institutional advising for students, FPMs will be included in the BC Transfer Guide as tags on courses that are listed as part of a FPM. When using the BC Transfer Guide search mechanism, if a student clicks on a 100 or 200 level course in a subject with a FPM agreement, for an institution that is participating, the search results will include an information box on FPMs and more information about the FPM in that discipline. The student can click the box and find out more about what a FPM is and the course grid for the discipline. A FPM will be included in the BC Transfer Guide when a critical mass of institutions has signed off. Only participating institutions will be referred to with other institutions added as they sign off on the agreement. Non-participating institutions will not be included.

As articulation committees update the grid of courses on an annual basis, the information should be forwarded to BCCAT staff for inclusion in the BC Transfer Guide as well as any changes to the agreement resulting from the regular review.

Recommendation 5:

That articulation committees developing FPM's should, where possible, establish FPM requirements that do not contradict UT requirements at any of the BC institutions offering a bachelor's degree in that discipline.

Recommendation 6:

That institutions and articulation committees investigate the possibilities of packaging FPMs with associate of arts or science degrees.

Recommendation 7:

That FPM agreements be archived at BCCAT similar to the current arrangement for course-to-course articulation agreements and that the FPM information in the BC Transfer Guide indicates the effective date range for each FPM version.

8. Communication about Flexible Pre-Majors

Articulation committee faculty members have difficulties in drawing issues like FPM to the attention of senior staff in their institutions, thereby holding up the discussion and signoff processes for FPMs. The Working Group suggested that BCCAT act as the conduit for information on FPMs in process to the associations of registrars, academic vice-presidents, deans, governing body chairs, and others likely to be involved as decision-makers. This can be done through presentations or newsletters addressed to these associations, or through presentations to individual institutions or groups of institutions.

Students are the key group to communicate with regarding FPMs. This can be done by notes on the institutional calendar or website, on the BC Transfer Guide site, and in the advising offices of the institutions. Others that should know about FPMs are the deans of the disciplines involved, mostly Deans of Arts and Science. Academic VPs should be aware of the implications of FPMs and know that they are being implemented in their institutions. Generally, the responsibility for disseminating information regarding FPMs in any discipline lies with the articulation committee representative and the faculty involved. In order to aid the communication process generally, the Group elaborated on a set of Frequently Asked Questions initially developed as part of the Psychology FPM.

9. Evaluation

A major issue with implementing FPMs is the question of the number of students who are likely to take advantage of a FPM, both in terms of evaluating the success of FPMs and of determining the cost-benefit for the work put into creating an FPM by an articulation committee. BCCAT's Admissions Committee anticipated this question when contracting for the 2010 study, *Identifying Block Transfer Students in Administrative Data: An assessment of two approaches*, prepared by Jill Lawrance of Agility Consulting. The consultant was asked to identify issues and possibilities for conducting research on student take-up of transfer strategies such as block transfer and FPMs. In the section on FPMs, the consultant concluded:

There are several challenges associated with the use of administrative data to identify students who participate in a FPM. Unlike block transfer, FPMs are granted on the basis of successful completion of a set of courses, rather than a specific credential. Thus, a methodology to identify FPM participants would involve identifying students who completed a certain number of credits from a defined set of courses. This is more complicated than identifying students who complete a particular credential and would require that the list of courses at each institution that meet FPM requirements is kept updated. Even if it is possible to identify students based on the courses they completed, it will not be possible to conclude with certainty that they participated in a FPM because there may be other conditions of admission, such as an audition, a minimum GPA, a portfolio, etc. (P. 15)

Recommendation 8:

That BCCAT staff publicise the existence and progress of FPMs with stakeholder groups such as the associations for registrars and associate registrars, academic vice-presidents, deans, governing body chairs, and others likely to be involved as decision-makers within their institutions.

Useful Document:

A list of FPM FAQs is attached as Appendix VII.

Recommendation 9:

That information provided to students about FPMs be clear, easy to use, reliable, and consistent and available in both the sending institution online materials and in the BC Transfer Guide.

This suggests that one method of determining the number of students accessing FPMs could be to ask the articulation committees to take on this responsibility through their institutional representatives who might be able to provide numbers of students completing FPMs and transferring.

Other evaluative questions relating to the implementation of FPMs are related to student transfer patterns and experiences. For example, has the pattern of student transfer changed as a result of the implementation in a discipline or has there been a change in student attitudes about their choices/pathways through post-secondary education? In order to answer both of these questions, more information is required regarding the number and identity of individuals that transfer credit using a FPM. As noted above, this requires more study.

A major element of evaluation for FPMs relates to the motivation of the articulation committees in deciding to examine and implement a FPM in the discipline. The Working Group suggested that a survey should be conducted of the articulation committees that worked on FPMs: why did they do this, what did they intend to achieve, and what was the value of the exercise? The survey could be used by the articulation committees to evaluate their own project or by institutions and BCCAT to evaluate the value of FPMs as a transfer strategy. A number of approaches such as the above could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing FPMs across the BC Transfer System.

Recommendation 10:

That BCCAT continue to investigate the possibility of identifying students who transfer using a FPM and surveying them for opinions on the usefulness of the strategy, and determining whether transfer patterns have changed as a result of the introduction of a FPM.

Recommendation 11:

That BCCAT conduct an evaluation on the effectiveness of implementing FPMs across the BC Transfer System.

Conclusion

This report provides advice for program areas contemplating the development of a FPM in their discipline. The FPM is another means of aiding student transfer in a system that expects and encourages significant student mobility. The FPM addresses a problematic area for academic students: that of completing the lower level major requirements before transfer when the transfer destination is not yet determined. The process of developing FPMs, in addition to providing support for students, has other positive benefits. For many disciplines, the exercise of agreeing on the core elements of the discipline and determining the sequence of offering has been very useful. Preparing the grid of equivalent courses or determining the program outcomes for the FPM has also enabled articulation committees to focus on the key element of their work, articulation and transfer, and to address longstanding issues of equivalency. As institutions change under new mandates, the decision-making processes and personnel may not be clear, both within the institution and generally. The process of gaining FPM signoff by multiple institutions has aided in understanding the decision-making and approval processes in the system generally. This report attempts to capture this information and provide a useful tool for use in programs and institutions.

List of Recommendations

The Flexible Pre-Major Working Group recommends that:

1. an articulation committee contemplating a FPM in its discipline start with reading this report as background material;
2. BCCAT collect and archive institutional decision-making ‘maps’ in order to aid the signing process for FPMs. BCCAT should continue to aid articulation committees in attaining signoff from all participating institutions;
3. the process of sending institutions confirming that a student has completed FPM requirements should be piloted with at least one articulation committee;
4. the BCRA be requested to review its decision not to support notation of completion of FPMs on the student transcript after a few years of FPM implementation;
5. articulation committees developing FPM’s should, where possible, establish FPM requirements that do not contradict UT requirements at any of the BC institutions offering a bachelor’s degree in that discipline;
6. institutions and articulation committees investigate the possibilities of packaging FPMs with associate of arts or science degrees ;
7. FPM agreements be archived at BCCAT similar to the current arrangement for course-to-course articulation agreements and that the FPM information in the BC Transfer Guide indicate the effective date range for each FPM version;
8. BCCAT staff publicise the existence and progress of FPMs with stakeholder groups such as the associations for registrars and associate registrars, academic vice-presidents, deans, governing body chairs, and others likely to be involved as decision-makers within their institutions;
9. information provided to students about FPMs be clear, easy to use, reliable, and consistent and available in both the sending institution online materials and in the BC Transfer Guide;
10. BCCAT continue to investigate the possibility of identifying students who transfer using a FPM and surveying them for opinions on the usefulness of the strategy, and determining whether transfer patterns have changed as a result of the introduction of a FPM; and
11. BCCAT conduct an evaluation on the effectiveness of implementing FPMs across the BC Transfer System.

APPENDIX I:

FPM Working Group Terms of Reference and Composition

Terms of Reference

Membership

The Working Group will be composed of at least six members including a student advisor or administrator working in the area of student/program advising; two faculty members who have coordinated a Flexible Pre-Major project; a Senior Academic Administrator who has been directly involved in an FPM project; and two Registrars or Associate Registrars, with the Group coordinated by a member of the BCCAT staff.

Purpose

The purpose of the Working Group will be to review the processes needed to support implementation of Flexible Pre-Majors and to recommend administrative and student advising strategies to address both student and institutional needs. The Working Group will address the implications of implementing Flexible Pre-Majors in colleges, institutes and universities in the BC Transfer System, including both public and private institutions that are formal members of the system.

The Working Group will provide reports of its activities and a final report of its deliberations, including an analysis of FPM implementation issues and recommendations for strategies to address student and institutional needs to the BCCAT Transfer and Articulation Committee.

Objectives

1. To identify processes related to the implementation of Flexible Pre-Majors, including but not limited to:
 - 1.1 the process followed to obtain institutional agreement from FPM participants to the definition of the FPM and the grid of courses at participating institutions that meet FPM requirements;
 - 1.2 the process followed to obtain institutional signoff for FPM participation, including the role of the governance bodies at participating institutions;
 - 1.3 the confirmation of a student's completion of FPM requirements;
 - 1.4 the process followed to determine if a student who has completed FPM requirements can be admitted to the selected major at their chosen institution;
 - 1.5 the advising of students, both at their initial institution and the one to which they are seeking transfer;
 - 1.6 the communication about and promotion of FPMs to key stakeholders including students, faculty, advisors and institutional administrators;
 - 1.7 the way in which established FPMs are described in the BC Transfer Guide, and Education Planner, if appropriate.

2. To seek input from key stakeholders on issues related to the processes outlined in 1 above.
3. To identify administrative and student advising strategies to address the issues identified as a result of 1 and 2 above.
4. To develop other recommendations that will further the effectiveness of FPM implementation within the BC Transfer System.
5. To research approaches that could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing FPMs across the BC Transfer System.

Composition

1. *Student advisor or administrator working in the area of student/program advising*

- **Anna-Lee Boulton**, BCCAT Council member; Supervisor, Capilano University Advising Department.

2. *Two faculty members who have coordinated a FPM project*

- **Michael Zastre**, Department of Computer Science, University of Victoria; Team Leader, Computing Education FPM Analysis Project.
- **Graham Rodwell**, BCCAT Council member; Chair of Psychology and Social Science, Douglas College; Project Coordinator of the Psychology FPM Analysis and Implementation Projects.

3. *Senior academic administrator who has been directly involved in a FPM project*

- **Kathy Denton**, Academic Vice-President, Douglas College; System Liaison Person (SLP) for Psychology Articulation Committee.

4. *Nominated by the BC Registrars' Association*

- **Kathleen Boland**, Associate Registrar, University of Victoria.
- **Lori Zehr**, Associate Director of Student Development, Camosun College.

5. *BCCAT Staff*

- **Jennifer Orum**, Special Projects Coordinator (Working Group Chair).
- **John FitzGibbon**, Associate Director, Transfer & Articulation.

6. *Resource Persons:*

- **Frank Gelin**, BCCAT Executive Director Emeritus.
- **Rob Fleming**, BCCAT Executive Director.

APPENDIX II:

FPM Projects Supported by BCCAT

Articulation Committee	Project Type	Contract	Report
Computing Education	Analysis	Dec 1, 2007 - May 31, 2009	December 31, 2009 - decision to proceed
	Implementation	Jan 1, 2011 - May 31, 2012	Pending
Creative Writing	Analysis	Oct 1, 2000 - July 2001	Sept 2001 - decision not to proceed
Earth Sciences	Analysis	March 2000 - March 2001	Sept 2002 - decision not to proceed
Economics	Analysis Phase I	June 15, 2009 - May 31, 2010	March 2010 - further analysis required
	Analysis Phase II	Dec 10, 2010 - Aug 31, 2011	Pending
English	Analysis and implementation	July 1, 2006 - May 31, 2007	March 2010 - complete
History	Analysis	Pending	
Mathematics/Statistics	Analysis	Nov 1, 2005 - May 1, 2006	May 2006 - proceed informally to implement
Music	Analysis	Oct 22, 1999 - May 15, 2000	Jan 2001 - proceed directly to implement (NB: Music cancelled FPM in Spring 2011)
Psychology	Analysis	Nov 1, 2008 - Aug 31, 2009	August 31, 2009 - decision to proceed
	Implementation	Jan 1, 2010 - March 31, 2011	Pending
Sociology/Anthropology	Analysis	Dec 1, 2004 - Sept 1, 2005	April 2005 - decision to proceed
	Implementation	July 1, 2005 - May 31, 2006	Jan 2007 with institutional signoffs still in process

APPENDIX III:

FPM Process Description

(see Appendix IV FPM Flowchart for summary of steps)

The Articulation Committee will normally follow the FPM process steps listed below:

1. Discuss the FPM to determine if there is a reason to investigate. Agree to proceed with a Transfer Innovations grant application to BCCAT.
2. Apply to BCCAT's Transfer and Articulation Committee for TI funding to investigate the possibility of establishing a FPM. Identify a project team/advisory committee, a project coordinator, as well as proposed timelines, budget, activities, deliverables, etc.

Phase I: Analysis

3. Once TAC has approved the Phase I Analysis project, arrange for the appropriate party to sign a project contract with BCCAT.
4. Identify current transfer patterns and problems/issues, including how students typically transfer in the discipline, with reference to hard and soft barriers to transfer.
5. Agree on a rationale that explains how the FPM will assist students, as well as post-secondary institutions.
6. Review the existing pre-major requirements in place at all institutions in the BC Transfer System that offer a degree in the discipline, and determine if current lower-level (first and second year) requirements need clarifying or refining.
7. Identify system-wide expectations of first and second year pre-major courses in terms of content and/or skill sets. Some Articulation Committees may wish to identify learning outcomes at this stage.
8. Develop a FPM model/approach that aims to balance the need for common outcomes (i.e. students being ready to enter third year of a major), without compromising the uniqueness of each institution's offerings.
9. Develop a preliminary list of potential FPM requirements; either (a) the types or categories of first and second courses that students need to have completed in order to be successful when they transfer and enter the major at the third year level; or (b) the "basket of courses" that would meet the defined learning outcomes.
10. Review the potential obstacles to establishing a FPM (e.g., unresolved articulation problems, changes in degree requirements that may not be able to accommodate a FPM.)
11. Prepare preliminary recommendations regarding the possibility of a FPM, the institutions that may be willing to consider participating, a rough draft of what types of courses might constitute a FPM, and suggestions for implementing the FPM in participating institutions.
12. Ensure there has been consultation with key stakeholders such as institutional faculty, deans, registrars and students, regarding plans for the FPM.

13. Obtain agreement from the Articulation Committee that a FPM is feasible in the discipline, that there is sufficient interest and commitment to go to the Implementation Phase (i.e., that there will be a sufficient number of institutions willing to sign on to make the FPM viable,) and that a Transfer Innovations proposal should be submitted to BCCAT for FPM Phase II funding.
14. Prepare a FPM Analysis Interim Project Report approximately half-way through the Phase I project. Prepare a Final Report, summarizing the previous steps and recommending whether the Articulation Committee should proceed to the Implementation Phase.
15. Submit the Final Report to BCCAT's Transfer and Articulation Committee for approval.
16. Once approval of the Phase I Analysis Final Report has been given by TAC, apply for TI funding for the FPM Phase II Implementation project, identifying a project team/advisory committee, a project coordinator, as well as proposed timelines, budget, activities, deliverables, etc.

Phase II: Implementation

17. Once TAC has approved the Phase II Implementation project, arrange for the appropriate party to sign a project contract with BCCAT.
18. Define the requirements of the FPM, as (a) a set of discrete first and second year course types or categories that students need to have completed in order to be successful when they transfer and enter the major at the third year level; or (b) a "basket of courses" that incorporates the required learning outcomes.
19. Develop a grid that outlines the courses offered at each post-secondary institution that meet the requirements of the FPM.
20. Identify distance education/online courses offered through post-secondary institutions in the BC Transfer System that could meet FPM requirements in cases where "sending" institutions do not offer all courses that meet all FPM category requirements.
21. Obtain agreement from the Articulation Committee members on the FPM definition, the course grid and the list of distance education courses that meet FPM requirements.
22. Ensure there has been consultation with key stakeholders such as institutional faculty, deans, and registrars and the institution's curricular review body regarding the definition of the FPM, the course grid and the list of distance education courses that meet FPM requirements.
23. Communicate the implementation plan(s) to post-secondary institutions in the BC Transfer System that offer programs/courses in the discipline.
24. Create a benchmark regarding the number of institutions that need to be signed on as participants to the FPM by a specified date, in order for the FPM to be viable.
25. Obtain signoffs from participating institutions, having the copies of signoff forms submitted to BCCAT.
26. Create a list of post-secondary institutions in the BC Transfer System that have agreed to participate in the FPM.
27. Work with BCCAT, BCcampus and other organizations/agencies, as appropriate, to plan the development of online information resources to support the FPM.

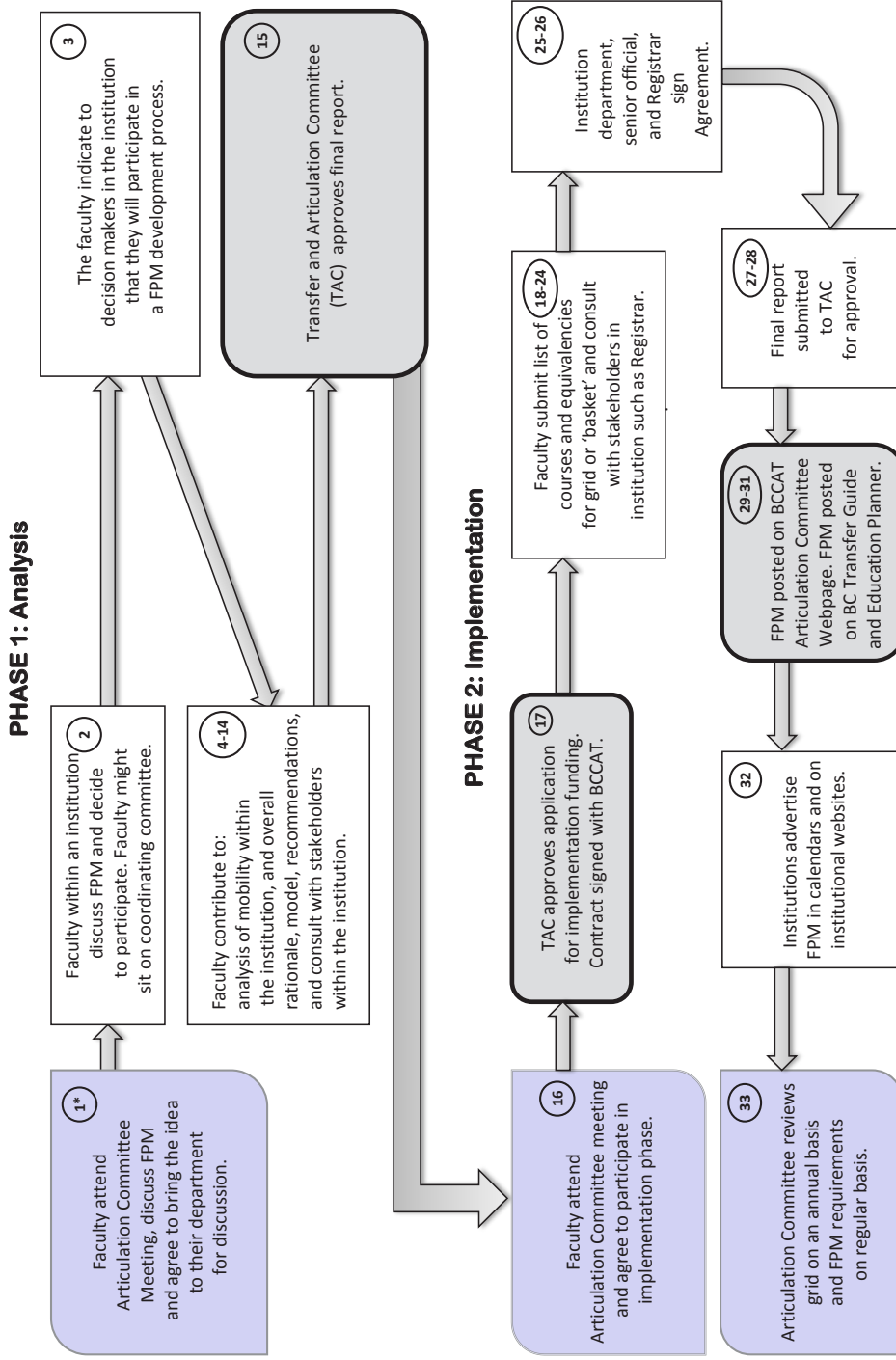
28. Develop a process to ensure that the FPM definition will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Articulation Committee and updated as appropriate, with the review and updating of the course grid normally done annually.
29. Prepare a FPM Implementation Interim Project Report approximately half-way through the Phase II project. Prepare a Final Report that includes a summary of the previous steps and outlines the FPM definition, the course grid and the signed-off participating institutions.
30. Submit the Final Report to BCCAT's Transfer & Articulation Committee for approval.
31. Work with BCCAT to have information on the FPM posted on the BC Transfer Guide and Education Planner websites.
32. Where appropriate, work with registrars and other institutional personnel to use calendars and/or institutional websites to advertise their participation allowing for students to complete lower level (first and second year) requirements for the major through the FPM prior to their transfer to another institution at the third year level as appropriate.

Phase III: Maintenance

33. Review the course grid on an annual basis and the FPM Requirements on a regular basis.

APPENDIX IV: FPM Flowchart

Flexible Pre-Major Institutional Flow Chart



* Numbers refer to the Flexible Pre-Major Process Description list of process steps.

APPENDIX V:

Institutional Decision-Making Template

Flexible Pre-Major Process Institutional Decision-Making Template for:

_____ [name of institution]

Purpose of this template:

Flexible Pre-Majors (FPM) are established by articulation committees to allow students to meet the lower level requirements for a major prior to transfer, typically after the second year of study. They are developed to meet the first and second year major subject area of a number of degree-granting institutions, thus allowing students to keep multiple options open when they transfer into the third year level. Flexible Pre-Majors are intended to create efficient transfer pathways, reducing the likelihood that students will be required to take additional first and second year courses in order to meet degree requirements. Further background on FPMs can be found at: bccat.ca/pubs/sr_feb10.pdf.

Please use this template to identify the steps in your institution's decision-making process relative to participation in a FPM. If one of the levels is not used at your institution, insert 'not applicable.' It is recognized that the order of steps in your institution may differ from the following. The completed template will provide BCCAT with information on how the decision to participate (or not) in each FPM is made at your institution. Completion of this template does not constitute pre-approval of a Flexible Pre-Major.

Initiating the Process:

Subject/Discipline/Program/Department Level

The department representative who participates in the discipline's articulation committee brings the FPM proposal to their department for initial discussion. If there is support for participation in the particular FPM under consideration, a representative of the department will confirm approval to participate in the FPM.

Title of positions that will have signing authority to confirm an academic unit's agreement to participate:

- Department Chair _____
- Department Head _____
- Program Head _____
- Director _____
- Other _____

Faculty/School Administrator Level

If participation in the FPM is approved at the department or program level, it may next require review at the faculty/school level.

Title of position that will have signing authority to confirm the faculty/school's plan to participate, if applicable:

- Dean _____
- Faculty Council Chair _____
- Other _____

Senior Academic Administrator Level

If participation in the FPM is approved by the department or program as well as at the faculty/school level, it may next require review at the vice-president level.

Title of position that will have signing authority to confirm approval to participate at the VP level, if applicable:

- Vice-President Academic ____
- Vice-President Education ____
- Provost ____
- Other ____

Academic Governing Body Level

In some cases institutional policies or processes may require that the decision to participate in a FPM be reviewed by a governing body, or a standing committee of that body after participation in the FPM has been approved at the department and dean and/or vice-president level.

Name of governing body and/or committee, if applicable:

Senate ____

Education Council ____

Curriculum Committee _____ (indicate which body it reports to, e.g., Curriculum Committee of Education Council)

Other _____ (indicate which body it reports to)

Registrar Level

If participation in the FPM is approved by the academic sector of the institution, and, if required by institutional policy, a governing body or standing committee of that body, the decision would normally be reviewed by the registrar or delegate.

Title of position that will have signing authority for the registrar:

- Registrar ____
- Associate Registrar ____
- Other ____

Once the template is completed, please send it to: BCCAT Special Projects Coordinator, #709 – 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 3H6; or e-mail to info@bccat.ca; or fax to (604) 683 0576.

Confirmation that the above template represents the FPM decision-making levels required at the institution:

Name: _____ **Registrar or Designate:** _____

Institution: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

E-mail: _____ **Phone:** _____

APPENDIX VI:

Institutional Signoff Sheet

Flexible Pre-Major Agreement

The Flexible Pre-Major has been established to allow students to meet the lower level requirements for a major prior to transfer, typically after the second year of study. It was developed to meet the first and second year _____ major subject area requirements of a number of degree-granting institutions, thus allowing students to keep multiple options open when they transfer into the third year level. The Flexible Pre-Major is intended to create an efficient transfer pathway, reducing the likelihood that students will be required to take additional first and second year courses in order to meet degree requirements.

Under this agreement, sending institutions may continue to offer distinctive programming without restricting student access to various degree completion options. Students will find it easier to plan their programs and select courses because the pre-major courses are clearly identified, and their possibilities for transfer into a major will be maximized because the pre-major is accepted by a number of participating institutions.

1. None of the courses constituting the requirements for the _____ Flexible Pre-Major may substitute for upper level requirements in the receiving institution.
2. Students are advised that the Flexible Pre-Major does not guarantee acceptance into _____ major programs, as acceptance depends on students obtaining a competitive GPA as specified by the receiving institution and completion of other requirements deemed necessary.
3. The Flexible Pre-Major does not excuse students from non-discipline specific requirements of programs at the receiving institution, such as English, humanities or science credits. Students are encouraged to examine the total program requirements of receiving institutions prior to applying for transfer.
4. The Flexible Pre-Major transfer agreement supplements and does not supersede existing processes for establishing transfer credits, and indeed, other non-program courses will be assessed on a course by-course basis in accordance with the BC Transfer Guide.
5. A student who completes the requirements in every category identified in the Flexible Pre-Major will be deemed to have met the first and second year subject area requirements of the _____ pre-major.

Based on the _____ Flexible Pre-Major as outlined on the reverse, we agree to participate:

Institution: _____

Department approval (e.g. Departmental Chair, Department Head)

Name: _____ Title: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Senior Academic Administrator approval, if applicable:

Name: _____ Title: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Registrar approval (e.g. Registrar or Associate Registrar)

Name: _____ Title: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____ Email: _____

[Page 2 includes the definition of the _____ Flexible Pre-Major,
in terms of:

- (a) A set of discrete first and second year course types or categories that students need to have completed in order to transfer and enter the major at the third year level; or
- (b) A 'basket of courses' that incorporates the required learning outcomes.]

APPENDIX VII:

FPM Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Here are some answers to common questions about Flexible Pre-Majors (FPMs):

Is the FPM a new program?

No. The FPM is a list of courses recommended for students who wish to keep their transfer options open. It provides a clear and explicit route for students who wish to transfer into a degree with a specified major at the end of their second year, but have not yet decided on the institution where they intend to complete their program.

How are FPMs developed?

The BC Council on Admissions & Transfer identified the development of FPMs as a priority innovation given degree requirements across institutions becoming more widely divergent, and the expansion of receiving institutions. Articulation committees, consisting of faculty representatives from most BC universities and colleges, apply to BCCAT for funds to initiate a FPM Analysis Project in their discipline. With the completion of this project, they apply again for funds to initiate an FPM Implementation Project.

Does the FPM replace the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science Degrees?

No. The FPM can be followed by students at the same time as they are taking an Associate of Arts or Science program. Colleges and universities may wish to recommend this option as it has many advantages. On the other hand, students may also complete the FPM without completing an associate degree.

Does the FPM replace other transfer routes?

No. Students can still transfer to a degree program in their chosen major without following a FPM. Most sending institutions provide advice to university transfer students about the courses they need to take in order to transfer to institutions that have degrees in the selected major. If students know for certain where they intend to transfer, and don't need to keep their options open, then they might follow the more specific program of study applicable to their chosen destination.

Does the FPM require universities to change their program or admission requirements?

No. The FPM has been designed and approved by the Articulation Committee in order to fit with as many existing degree programs in BC as possible without requiring changes. It is expected that each University will check the FPM requirements against their institutional requirements for transfer and admission into the major and in most cases they should not find impediments to participation in the FPM or the need to change program or admission requirements.

Does the FPM require sending institutions to change their programs or course offerings?

Not necessarily. Colleges and other sending institutions currently decide whether they will offer all, or only some, of the lower level courses required for majors at the degree-granting institutions. This would not change. Of course if student demand increases, some sending institutions might decide to offer more of the recommended courses.

Participation in the FPM is possible even for colleges who do not offer all the courses. If courses are not available at their home institution or campus, information would be provided to students about alternative course options available through other BC colleges and universities, including both on-site and online course offerings.

What does it mean to 'Sign Off' on the FPM?

'Signing Off' indicates an agreement with the list of courses required for the FPM, as decided by an articulation committee, and a willingness to participate in implementation. The nature of this participation will vary between institutions and will be decided by each institution. As a minimum, sending institutions would be expected to provide information to students, and receiving institutions would be expected to continue to make transfer as straightforward as possible, provided that students have met any additional admission requirements such as minimum GPA levels. Receiving institutions would also be expected to inform the articulation committee, in the usual way, of any changes that might affect the transfer of students who are following a FPM.

For a sending institution 'signing off' indicates that the institution offers courses that cover the FPM requirements. In some cases, an institution can sign off and agree to participate if they offer courses that meet most of the FPM requirements and the students are able to take any FPM requirements not covered at their home institution through other post-secondary institutions.

For a receiving institution, 'signing off' means that if a transfer student has the credits and GPA to be admitted at the third year level to that institution, and has completed the courses covering the FPM requirements, then the student would normally be able to transfer into the third year of the major.

APPENDIX VIII:

FPM Example: Anthropology

ANTHROPOLOGY

FLEXIBLE PRE-MAJOR TRANSFER AGREEMENT (2007)

Overview of the Flexible Pre-Major in Anthropology

The Flexible Pre-Major (FPM) agreement in Anthropology is intended to clarify and simplify transfer arrangements for students wishing to transfer between British Columbia post-secondary institutions in order to undertake a major in Anthropology, typically after the second year of study. Participating departments and institutions have identified core course and credit areas, and have specified the number and type of courses required, without specifying particular course requirements for each institution. This provides a measure of flexibility in course selection, while ensuring that students have a clear idea of the requirements of receiving institutions.

Most post-secondary institutions use a credit format that equates one semester course of three hours a week as a three-credit course, although there are a few exceptions, such as four-credit courses at Simon Fraser University and the University College of the Fraser Valley. The three-credit course is considered the minimum standard for the purposes of this agreement. Full-year, six-credit courses count as two three-credit courses. The agreement focuses primarily on lower level courses – those described as first and second year courses at most institutions. In the short-term, students may ask for a confirming letter from the department chair of the sending institution. In the long term, students may have a notation on their transcripts indicating that the sending institution recognizes that the student has satisfied the pre-major requirements.

The Sociology and Anthropology Articulation Committee meets in the Spring of each year. Prior to this meeting the Articulation Committee will solicit suggested changes or updates to courses or institutions included in this transfer agreement, and bring them forward to the committee at the annual meeting for discussion, decision, and subsequent posting to the BC Transfer Guide website.

At present, the FPM in Anthropology specifies a requirement of fifteen lower level credits, including introductory anthropology in each of three sub-disciplinary areas (nine credits), research methods (three credits), and a lower level elective course (three credits).

In addition to this general overview of the FPM, this agreement includes the following information:

- A listing of requirements for students completing the FPM in Anthropology
- Limitations and caveats of the flexible pre-major in Anthropology
- A comprehensive listing of course equivalencies for institutions participating in the transfer agreement
- A listing of course equivalencies and requirements for all institutions, including those that are not yet eligible to participate in the agreement

The flexible pre-major in Anthropology requires that students take:

- at least one lower level introductory (either first or second year) Anthropology course of at least three credits in each of the three sub-disciplinary areas – social / cultural, biological / physical, and Archaeology. *(In cases where an introductory course combines physical / biological with Archaeology, a second course focusing on one or the other of the two sub-disciplinary areas still needs to be taken. Any or all of these courses may be taken at the second year level.)*
- a second year general introductory research methods course of at least three credits. *(If such a course is not available in the Anthropology department, a comparable course provided through another discipline such as Sociology or Psychology may substitute.)*
- a minimum of five lower level (either first or second year) Anthropology courses, or at least fifteen credits of programming, inclusive of the requirements for introductory courses and research methods. *(For those receiving departments expecting Anthropology majors to take six lower level Anthropology courses, the additional course or credits may be taken in year three of the major program.)*
- in total, a Flexible Pre-Major that consists of five courses (15 credits).

Limitations and caveats of the FPM in Anthropology:

- None of the courses constituting the requirements for the FPM in Anthropology may substitute for upper level requirements in the receiving institution.
- Students are advised that the FPM does not guarantee acceptance into Anthropology major programs, as acceptance depends on students obtaining a competitive GPA as specified by the receiving institution.
- The flexible pre-major does not excuse students from non-discipline specific requirements of programs at the receiving institution, such as English, humanity or science credits. These must still be met prior to graduation with the major, and students are encouraged to examine the total program requirements of receiving institutions prior to applying for transfer.
- The FPM transfer agreement supplements and does not supersede existing processes for establishing transfer credits, and indeed, other non-program courses will be assessed on a course-by-course basis in accordance with the BC Transfer Guide.

COURSE EQUIVALENCIES FOR INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE TRANSFER AGREEMENT

[NB: These tables are included as an example of FPM course equivalencies. The references to specific courses, while valid in 2007, do not necessarily reflect course equivalencies in 2011.]

BRITISH COLUMBIA POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE FLEXIBLE PRE-MAJOR (2007)		TABLE ONE: COURSE EQUIVALENCIES & SUBSTITUTIONS – FLEXIBLE PRE-MAJOR ELIGIBLE						
	Intro Courses	Social / Cultural	Biological / Physical	Archaeology	Methods Course *	Other Eligible Anthropology Courses *		
Simon Fraser University	SA 101, SA 150 (S)	SA 101	ARCH 131	ARCH 201	SA 255	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
University of British Columbia	ANTH 100, ANTH 103, ANTH 140	ANTH 100	ANTH 140	ANTH 103	ANTH 200	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
UBC Okanagan	ANTH 100, ANTH 104, ANTH 111	ANTH 100	ANTH 111	ANTH 104	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
University of Northern British Columbia	ANTH 100, ANTH 101	ANTH 101	ANTH 100, ANTH 200	ANTH 100, ANTH 205	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
University of Victoria	ANTH 100	ANTH 200	ANTH 250	ANTH 240	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Malaspina University-College	ANTH 111, ANTH 112	ANTH 112, ANTH 211	ANTH 111, ANTH 214	ANTH 111, ANTH 213	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
University College of the Fraser Valley	ANTH 101, ANTH 102, ANTH 111, ANTH 112, SOC 101	ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 240	SCMS 255	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Thompson Rivers University	ANTH 111, ANTH 119, ANTH 121	ANTH 121	ANTH 111	ANTH 119	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Kwantlen University College	ANTH 1100, ANTH 1112, ANTH 1211	ANTH 1100	ANTH 1211	ANTH 1112	ANTH 1212	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Camosun College	ANTH 104, ANTH 110, ANTH 140	ANTH 220	ANTH 260	ANTH 240	ANTH 240	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Capilano College	ANTH 121, ANTH 123, ANTH 124	ANTH 121	ANTH 124	ANTH 123	ANTH 241	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Douglas College	ANTH 1100, ANTH 1111, ANTH 1112	ANTH 1100	ANTH 1111	ANTH 1112	?	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Langara College	ANTH 1120, ANTH 1131, ANTH 1132	ANTH 1120	ANTH 1131	ANTH 1132	ANTH 1221, 1222, 1223, 1224	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
North Island College	ANT 150, ANT 151	ANT 150	ANT 151	ANT 151, ANT 251	ANT 290, ANT 291	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		
Northwest Community College	ANTH 101, ANTH 102, ANTH 111, ANTH 112	ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 240	ANTH 245	Any other three credits in Anthropology above the introductory level		

* On-line courses from an institution other than the Sending Institution may also be acceptable to substitute for the research methods course, if accepted by both the Sending and Receiving Institutions.

November 2007

[NB: These tables are included as an example of FPM course equivalencies. The references to specific courses, while valid in 2007, do not necessarily reflect course equivalencies in 2011.]

		TABLE TWO: COURSE EQUIVALENCIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS – ALL INSTITUTIONS (2007)						
BRITISH COLUMBIA POST SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS	Intro Courses	Social / Cultural	Biological / Physical	Archaeology	Methods Course	At Least 5 Anthropology Courses?	Ready for Pre-Major?	
Simon Fraser University	SA 101, SA 150 (S)	SA 101	ARCH 131	ARCH 201	SA 255	✓	✓	
University of British Columbia	ANTH 100, ANTH 103, ANTH 140	ANTH 100	ANTH 140	ANTH 103	ANTH 200	✓	✓	
UBC Okanagan	ANTH 100, ANTH 104, ANTH 111	ANTH 100	ANTH 111	ANTH 104	?	✓	✓	
University of Northern British Columbia	ANTH 100, ANTH 101	ANTH 101	ANTH 100, ANTH 200	ANTH 100, ANTH 205	?	✓	✓	
University of Victoria	ANTH 100	ANTH 200	ANTH 250	ANTH 240	?	✓	✓	
Malaspina University-College	ANTH 111, ANTH 112	ANTH 112, ANTH 211	ANTH 111, ANTH 214	ANTH 111, ANTH 213	?	✓	✓	
University College of the Fraser Valley	ANTH 101, ANTH 102, ANTH 111, ANTH 112, SOC 101	ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 240	SCMS 255	✓	✓	
Trinity- Western University	ANTH 101	ANTH 101						
Thompson Rivers University	ANTH 111, ANTH 119, ANTH 121	ANTH 121	ANTH 111	ANTH 119	?	✓	✓	
Kwantlen University College	ANTH 1100, ANTH 1112, ANTH 1211	ANTH 1100	ANTH 1211	ANTH 1112	ANTH 1212	✓	✓	
Camosun College	ANTH 104, ANTH 110, ANTH 140	ANTH 220	ANTH 260	ANTH 240	ANTH 240	✓	✓	
Capilano College	ANTH 121, ANTH 123, ANTH 124	ANTH 121	ANTH 124	ANTH 123	ANTH 241	✓	✓	
College of New Caledonia	ANTH 101, ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 102	ANTH 102	ANTH 201			
College of the Rockies	ANTH 101, ANTH 102, ANTH 104	ANTH 101	ANTH 102, ANTH 104	ANTH 102				
Douglas College	ANTH 1100, ANTH 1111, ANTH 1112	ANTH 1100	ANTH 1111	ANTH 1112	?	✓	✓	
Langara College	ANTH 1120, ANTH 1131, ANTH 1132	ANTH 1120	ANTH 1131	ANTH 1132	ANTH 1221, ANTH 1222	✓	✓	
Northern Lights College	ANTH 101, ANTH 102	ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 101	?	✓		
North Island College	ANT 150, ANT 151	ANT 150	ANT 151	ANT 151, ANT 251	ANT 290, ANT 291	✓	✓	
Northwest Community College	ANTH 101, ANTH 102, ANTH 111, ANTH 112	ANTH 102	ANTH 101	ANTH 240	ANTH 245	✓	✓	
Seikirk College	ANTH 100, ANTH 101	ANTH 100, ANTH 101		ANTH 210		✓		



Your guide through post-secondary education.

BC Council on Admissions & Transfer
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