

Articulation Committees in the BC Transfer System

An examination of factors contributing to their effectiveness

Prepared by Dr. Fiona McQuarrie, Special Projects Coordinator, BCCAT

October 2014



Research by
BCCAT

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BC COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER
709 – 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver BC Canada V6B 3H6
bccat.ca | educationplanner.ca | bctransferguide.ca
t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576 | e info@bccat.ca

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BCCAT

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INTRODUCTION

Discipline-based articulation committees have been part of the British Columbia post-secondary educational landscape since the late 1960s. The BC Transfer System, which now includes 67 of these committees, has been recognized as “possibly the most extensive credit accumulation and transfer arrangement in the world” (Bekhradnia, 2004). Articulation committees play a significant role in the BC Transfer System by facilitating the creation of transfer agreements, and by developing and maintaining relationships among post-secondary programs and institutions.

Because the success of articulation committees is vital to the overall success of the BC Transfer System, there is interest within British Columbia in assisting articulation committees to identify and develop practices that maximize their effectiveness.

Additionally, as other jurisdictions are incorporating articulation committees into the development of their own transfer systems, there is interest outside British Columbia in identifying the characteristics and practices of effective articulation committees. Thus, this paper has three purposes:

- 1) To identify factors influencing the effectiveness and continued functioning of BC’s articulation committees;
- 2) To provide ideas and guidance to other transfer systems implementing articulation committees; and,
- 3) To provide ideas and guidance to new or existing articulation committees seeking to improve their committee’s functioning.

Articulation committees play a significant role in the BC Transfer System by facilitating the creation of transfer agreements, and by developing and maintaining relationships among post-secondary programs and institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

to Enhance Articulation Committees' Effectiveness

The final section of this paper provides some recommendations for actions and practices to enhance articulation committees' effectiveness. The information in this section draws not only on the data analyzed in the previous sections, but also from ideas and insights provided by articulation committee chairs and System Liaison Persons during a workshop session at the 2013 JAM meeting.

- 1) Articulation committee meetings should allow time for professional networking as well as for committee business. Opportunities for attendees to interact with each other, and to learn more about each other's institutions, programs, and courses, build the inter-institutional trust that is essential to an effective and efficient articulation system.
- 2) Interaction with members of other articulation committees can generate ideas on how to best operate one's own committee. These interactions can also identify trends or issues that one's own committee should be aware of or acting on.
- 3) Although the articulation committee might meet only once or twice a year, it is essential to have continual contact with the committee members throughout the year.
- 4) Articulation committees are more effective in their work if their meetings include representatives from other sectors that are relevant to the committee's discipline. These individuals do not have to be voting representatives, or to be present for the entire meeting, but it is beneficial to include these representatives in discussions of issues that are relevant to their concerns.
- 5) Institutional reports should be submitted to the committee chair or secretary ahead of the committee meeting, and then distributed to the committee in advance of the meeting date. At the meeting itself, members should be encouraged to provide only a brief verbal report.
- 6) Notice of the date and time of articulation committee meetings should be distributed well in advance of the meeting. Calls for agenda items for the meeting should be circulated in time for members to add items. The final meeting agenda should be circulated at least a week before the meeting date.
- 7) Committees should be facilitated pro-actively by their officers and System Liaison Person.
- 8) Committee officers should be active and engaged throughout the year.
- 9) Committee members should actively promote the value of committee participation to their institutions.

Methodology

The data used in this analysis were drawn from two sources. The first source was the archived minutes of 72 BC articulation committees: the 67 committees that are currently active, and five committees that have been deactivated or that merged with other committees. These sets of minutes are stored on paper at the offices of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), the organization established in 1989 by the provincial government which provides administrative oversight to the operations of the BC Transfer System and of BC's articulation committees.

Most BC articulation committees meet yearly, with a small number meeting twice a year. The archived minutes cover meetings that were held from approximately 1990 through 2005.¹

After 2005, articulation committee minutes were submitted electronically rather than on paper.² However, only the pre-2005 minutes were reviewed, since the purpose of this phase of data collection was to identify common events and themes in articulation committees' origins and development. It was felt that the pre-2005 period would provide more insight into factors influencing the committees' development and continuance. After 2005, most articulation committees had been functioning for more than two decades, and were well integrated into the BC Transfer System.

Each committee's set of minutes was reviewed to identify consistent themes that reoccurred throughout the meetings' agenda items and discussions. Significant events in the committee's history were also identified and recorded. Once the review of all committee minutes was completed, the themes and events from each committee's minutes were compiled into a single document. The contents of this document were then sorted into categories representing themes and issues that occurred across multiple committees' histories.

Each committee's set of minutes were reviewed to identify consistent themes that reoccurred throughout the meetings' agenda items and discussions. Significant events in the committee's history were also identified and recorded.

The second set of data came from archived documents for the two articulation committees with the most complete and accessible sets of records. These articulation committees are History, whose archives are held by the University of British Columbia's Rare Books and Special Collections Library, and Mathematics-Statistics, whose archives are stored at the BCCAT offices. (The Mathematics-Statistics Articulation Committee is also known as the BC Committee on the Undergraduate Program in Mathematics and Statistics [BCcupms]).

¹ Some committees were meeting prior to 1990. Also, while most committees had at least one yearly meeting, some committees did not meet in some years (usually due to logistical issues) or did not submit minutes for every meeting.

² The electronic versions of the post-2005 minutes, indexed by committee name, are available at bccat.ca/articulation/committees/

The History Articulation Committee's archives at UBC cover the period of 1973 to 2002, and the Mathematics-Statistics Articulation Committee's archives at BCCAT cover the period of 1969 to 2005. These two sets of documents include not only minutes of committee meetings, but also handouts distributed at the meetings, correspondence sent and received by the committee, and documents from other events which articulation committee representatives participated in, such as articulation-related conferences.

These two committees' archives were chosen for more detailed examination partly for convenience, because of the availability of the extensive records of these two committees. However, the histories of these two committees are also particularly insightful, because both committees:

- Existed informally before there was a formal system of articulation committees in BC;
- Have long-established relationships with educational institutions in other parts of the BC education system (e.g., elementary and secondary schools, private post-secondary institutions);
- Have discipline-related professional associations, organizations, and/or conferences that they regularly interact with;
- Represent disciplines whose core content is relatively stable, so the committees' effectiveness/existence is not significantly impacted by the need for regular major curriculum revisions; and,
- Have used types of transfer credit agreements other than course-to-course transfer (e.g., Flexible Pre-Majors [FPMs] and transfer grids).

The data collection process for the data from the second source followed the format for data collection used for the data from the first source. The themes and events recorded from the second source were then assigned to the previously developed thematic categories.

The histories of these two committees are particularly insightful [as] both existed informally before there was a formal system of articulation committees in BC [and both] represent disciplines whose core content is relatively stable.

A History of Articulation Committees in BC

In order to fully understand the current role of articulation committees in the BC Transfer System, it is helpful to understand how these committees began and how their structure and function has evolved.

The idea of provincial articulation committees for British Columbia was first suggested at a Conference on University-College Articulation held in Vancouver in 1968 (Academic Board, 1970). At that time, BC had four degree-granting post-secondary institutions, four community colleges offering one- or two-year diploma and certificate programs, and three special-purpose institutions. Among the programs at most community colleges were programs intended to prepare students for university transfer, including programs and courses designed to receive academic credit at universities. The Conference on University-College Articulation was sponsored by the Academic Board, a provincial government agency created in 1964 to oversee “academic standards” in BC’s post-secondary education system, “particularly with respect to university transfer programs in the new community colleges” (Cowin, 2012, p. 20).

The idea of provincial articulation committees for British Columbia was first suggested at a Conference on University-College Articulation held in Vancouver in 1968 (Academic Board, 1970).

However, prior to that time, a number of academic disciplines represented in BC colleges and universities had already established informal province-wide academic conferences which the committee members attended in their role as faculty members. Other committees were started by faculty members who saw a need for colleges and universities to communicate on issues of common curriculum and program content. For example, the BC Committee on the Undergraduate Programme in Mathematics (BCcupm) began on the initiative of Ralph James from the mathematics department at the University of British Columbia. In 1967, James called a meeting of representatives of post-secondary math programs “for the Departments of Mathematics in the universities to extend a helping hand to their colleagues in the two-year colleges” (British Columbia Committee, 1973, p. 2). The attendees at the first meeting found enough value in their initial discussion of “communication and cordial professional relations between mathematicians at all post-secondary institutions in the Province” (British Columbia Committee, 1973, p.2) that an ongoing committee was created to support future meetings and discussions.

In 1974, the Academic Board was dissolved, and a Post-Secondary Articulation Coordinating Committee was formed by the provincial government. This committee’s responsibilities included overseeing transfer and articulation activity in BC, and developing a set of principles and guidelines for transfer among public colleges and universities. In 1978, provincial-level responsibility for transfer and articulation was assigned to a new government agency, the Academic Council (Cowin, 2012). The Academic Board made some attempts to start articulation committees, and it also requested that some of the existing disciplinary committees become sub-committees of the Board. However, this request was rejected by some committees, such as the BCcupm, who feared a loss of

independence (BCcupm, 1969). At this point, informal articulation agreements in a number of subjects existed between several colleges and universities, but these agreements were generally only recorded in the internal documents of the departments or programs involved in the agreements. These documents were brought to articulation committee meetings as necessary, primarily for the purpose of informing other committee members of the existence of the agreements, and/or to review and update them.

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The first formal province-wide articulation committees established by the Academic Board were initially sub-divided into committees in “technical/vocational” and “academic” categories. When the Academic Council was created, the responsibility for approving new committees in these two areas was assigned to two separate agencies: the Occupational Training Council and the Academic Council (Couch, 1982). However, in 1982, the Academic Council took over administrative responsibilities for all articulation committees, and removed the distinctions between the two types of committees. At this time, there were 35 articulation committees.

The mandate of the committees, as expressed by the Academic Council, was:

- “1. To develop and maintain an understanding of the program objectives and of courses designed to achieve these objectives; entry requirements; measures of achievement; textbooks; changes contemplated in courses and programs of the colleges, institutes and universities offering instruction in the discipline.
2. To provide a forum for the exchange of information on common problems, and to identify the needs and opportunities for course development.
3. To provide for liaison among teachers of the subject at all levels.
4. To work towards an orderly implementation of the stipulations of the “Transfer Guidelines” [quotations in original];
5. To maintain liaison with any external certification bodies.
6. To keep the Academic Council informed of the activities of the committee through the regular transmission of minutes.
7. To make recommendations to the Academic Council.
8. If thought useful by the articulation committee, to provide for professional development activities in association with its meetings.” (Academic Council, 1982)

The membership of each articulation committee was defined as:

- a) Representatives of all departments teaching the discipline/program in its own right or as an applied field in the post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
- b) Representatives of allied professional bodies or of specialist teachers' organizations as considered appropriate.
- c) Representatives of the Ministry of Education and of the Academic Council as observers (i.e. non-voting members).

The appropriate department or division of each member institution shall appoint a senior member as its official delegate. Preferably, delegates should be appointed for a period of at least two years so as to build a body of understanding and continuity." (Academic Council, 1982)

The Academic Council served as the repository for the minutes and any other records of the articulation committees. It provided \$50 for each committee's meeting to cover the cost of secretarial support for minute-taking (McPherson, 1980), and also covered the costs for each committee to send a representative to an annual meeting of articulation committee chairs. While the Academic Council recognized the value of professional development activities that might take place at articulation committee meetings, as permitted by the committees' mandate, it was necessary for the Council to clarify that "the Council is opposed to registration fees for articulation meetings [emphasis in original]...The Academic Council has ensured that funds for articulation meeting purposes are provided to, and by, each institution for that specific function. Funding for professional development purposes is an institutional decision" (Couch, 1980).

In 1983, the Academic Council was dissolved, and its functions were taken over by the post-secondary division of the Ministry of Education (Cowin, 2012). This left the articulation committees with no specific body assigned to facilitate and support their operation. The Ministry then "reconstituted" the Post-Secondary Articulation Coordination Committee as an "advisory group to the Ministry on all matters relating to articulation". Articulation committees would "operate under the aegis" of the PSACC, would maintain committees' records, and would "[monitor] the process of articulation for trends across all committees and for general suggestions for improvements to the process" (Fisher, 1984).

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At this time, the Ministry appeared to be taking a more interventionist role in the committees' operations. Nevertheless, by 1988 there were 40 articulation committees recognized by PSACC, and there was a significant amount of transfer activity in BC's post-secondary system, to the point where "university academic vice presidents form[ed] a transfer credit subcommittee to develop a set of policies and procedures which had to be met by private colleges before their courses could be considered transferable to universities" (Gaber, 2010, p. 4). Then, in 1989, BC's provincial government released the *Access for All* policy, which, as part of its "emphasis on increasing the number of learners in academic, degree oriented programs of study" (Schuetze & Day, 2001), recommended the creation of an agency specifically mandated to facilitate the post-secondary articulation and transfer process in BC. This led to the creation later that year of BCCAT, which has provided oversight and coordination to articulation committees since then.

BCCAT's position in relation to articulation committee operations has always been a deliberate one of "coordination... using a facilitative approach".

BCCAT's creation meant the formalization of staff resources to coordinate transfer activity (Gaber, 2010). However, BCCAT's position in relation to articulation committee operations has always been a deliberate one of "coordination...using a facilitative approach" (Gaber, 2010, p. 10). BCCAT currently supports the work of articulation committees in the following ways:

- Appointing a System Liaison Person – usually an administrator in the relevant subject area - for each articulation committee, on the recommendation of the committee members;
- Convening the Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) of articulation committee chairs, System Liaison Persons, institutional transfer contracts, and other participants in the BC post-secondary transfer system (BCCAT pays the expenses of articulation committee chairs attending the meeting);
- Maintaining articulation committee information on the BCCAT website, including posting meeting minutes and other relevant documents;
- Maintaining a BCCAT file for each articulation committee containing meeting minutes, correspondence, and other documents (e.g., reports produced by the committee);
- Sending a representative to articulation committee meetings to provide updates on BCCAT and BC Transfer System activities, and/or to address issues related to articulation projects undertaken by the committee or to committee procedures;
- Tracking attendance at all articulation committee meetings and analyzing that data to identify trends across time;
- Keeping articulation committees informed on opportunities related to transfer and articulation, such as Transfer Innovations (TI) project funding to support articulation committees wishing to develop innovative forms of transfer in their discipline; and,
- Providing information to articulation committees, committee chairs, and committee members on articulation and transfer practices and on articulation committee operations. (BCCAT, 2013, p. 10)

BCCAT also maintains an online Articulation Information Centre website (bccat.ca/articulation) which provides resources to support the work of articulation committees. These resources include the *Articulation Committee Companion* (bccat.ca/companion); this handbook provides information to articulation committee members on the committees' mandates, functions, and operations.

BCCAT also maintains the online BC Transfer Guide (bctransferguide.ca), which, as a centralized site listing transfer agreements, is both a resource for and a by-product of the work done by articulation committees. The institutional contact and interaction supporting the BC Transfer Guide entries is facilitated by the Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES), also operated by BCCAT. Through the TCES, institutions can send, receive, and assess articulation requests.

In BCCAT's administrative structure, the Transfer and Admissions Committee (TAC) – one of BCCAT's four standing committees – is responsible for overseeing articulation committees, and for “provid[ing] advice and counsel to articulation committees and BCCAT on issues of articulation and transfer policy and practice” (BCCAT, 2013, p. 1). TAC is also responsible for approving the creation of new committees and for delisting inactive committees. The steps in this process are outlined in Appendices B and C of the *Articulation Committee Companion*.

Additionally, the BCCAT staff includes a Committee Coordinator position. This position is the designated BCCAT liaison for the 67 currently active articulation committees, which are listed in Appendix I of this document.

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Articulation Committees' Themes and Issues

This section will discuss the five themes identified in the analysis of the articulation committees' histories. The discussion of each theme will review recurring issues around the theme that multiple articulation committees have dealt with during their existence.

It is notable that, despite the designation of “articulation” in the committees' name, after the very early years of each committee's existence there is very little actual formal articulation activity recorded in the minutes. “Articulation” in this context is defined as establishing or updating agreements on the transferability of specific courses or programs. It is obvious that discussions of transfer-related issues at articulation committee meetings have contributed greatly to the dialogue, understanding, and trust between institutions and programs which is essential to the success of the BC Transfer System. However, when articulation is discussed in the later years of each committee's existence, it is generally in the context of a specific articulation-related project (such as a Flexible Pre-Major), or as part of a regular review to ensure that the content of existing transfer documents, such as program-specific transfer grids, are up to date. The actual establishment or updating of articulation agreements has largely moved from the annual articulation committee meetings to the year-round inter-institutional processes facilitated by the TCES. Trades-related committees have more articulation-related discussions recorded in their minutes than other types of articulation committees, but these discussions are usually in the context of how individual programs or courses fit with external regulatory or certification requirements.

The five themes identified in the analysis are: autonomy, administration/committee structure, activism, meetings, and operational support. Each of these will be discussed individually.

Autonomy

The theme of autonomy emerged as articulation committees evolved and worked out for themselves the nature of their relationship with BCCAT (or one of its predecessor oversight agencies); with the programs and institutions represented on the committee; and with the relevant provincial government ministry.

Often, autonomy became a concern for committees around issues of committee membership. Two examples that both occurred in several committees demonstrate the tensions around issues of committee autonomy: the 1997 initiative to include secondary school instructors on articulation committees, and the integration of representatives of additional private institutions into committee membership after 2005, when they became members of the BC Transfer System.

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In 1997, the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer, and Technology (C2T2), an agency of the Ministry of Advanced Education, undertook an initiative, in partnership with BCCAT, to include secondary school teachers on articulation committees. At this time, several articulation committees already included a secondary school representative as a non-voting member in their meetings, but the C2T2 initiative attempted to increase that representation on a larger scale. C2T2, with input from various secondary education organizations, selected representatives for appointment to the articulation committees whose disciplines were also taught in the BC secondary school curriculum. The committees, via BCCAT, were given the contact information for the appointee and asked to invite that individual to their meetings. For the initial years of this initiative, C2T2 also funded the cost of a substitute teacher to replace the appointee at work for the day of the meeting.

A subsequent assessment of this initiative (BCCAT, 2002), based on a survey of chairs of participating committees, indicated that a majority of chairs supported the concept of a secondary school representative on articulation committees, and felt that the representative provided the committee with some perspective on how the relevant subject was delivered at the secondary school level. However, the minutes of several committees indicate some discomfort with the operational implications of the initiative. Some committees' members expressed resentment at a representative being added to the committee without the committee requesting or approving such an addition.

Others expressed skepticism about the usefulness of the initiative, particularly if the appointed representative did not attend meetings; when the representative changed from year to year; or when the representative did not seem particularly well-informed about the reason for their attendance or about the BC Transfer System in general (BCCAT, 2002). And although the initiative was intended to create reciprocal relationships between articulation committees and their counterparts at the secondary school level, there is little evidence of such reciprocity being established (e.g., articulation committee representatives being invited to secondary school teachers' meetings). The formal initiative ended after three years when its funding was cancelled. However, several articulation committees continue to invite a secondary school representative to their meetings.

A number of private post-secondary institutions have been members of the BC Transfer System for some time, and their representatives have attended or participated in a number of articulation committees throughout those committees' histories. In addition, some committees invited relevant non-member private institutions to participate in their meetings. For example, the Early Childhood Education articulation committee regularly invited representa-

tives to its meetings from private institutions whose programs delivered the standardized curriculum content required for students to qualify for the provincial Early Childhood Educator license. In 2005, three additional private institutions were given consent by the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) to offer degree programs. Under BCCAT policy, this consent allowed those institutions to negotiate transfer agreements for specific degree programs and to have those agreements listed in the BC Transfer Guide (Gaber, 2010). Subsequent to 2005, specific

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degree programs at several other private institutions were approved by the provincial Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) facilitating their eligibility to articulate within the BC Transfer System. The minutes of several committees - committees that did not already invite representatives of private institutions to their meetings - contain extensive debate about private institutions' inclusion, even when, as participants in the BC Transfer System, those institutions were authorized to have a representative as a voting member of the committee. These debates centered on committee members' perceptions of the quality of the private institutions' programming and the qualifications of their instructors; the perceived lack of compatibility between the mandates and purposes of public and private institutions; and the perceived differences between public and private institutions in program and course content and delivery. The committees for whom private institution representation was an issue appeared to resent "having" to include such representation among their membership. They perceived a lack of consultation with articulation committees prior to the private institutions' approval to participate in the BC Transfer System, even though such consultation would be well beyond the committees' mandates.

These examples demonstrate that BC's articulation committees place a high value on autonomy in their operations and in their membership. BCCAT's policy in respect to overseeing the articulation committees is one of facilitation and coordination but not direct intervention.

These examples demonstrate that BC's articulation committees place a high value on autonomy in their operations and in their membership. BCCAT's policy in respect to overseeing the articulation committees is one of facilitation and coordination but not direct intervention, and is framed within the expectation that all eligible members participate in the business of their relevant articulation committees. For example, while BCCAT may suggest agenda items for particular articulation committees, it does not set the committees' meeting agendas or require items to be discussed. BCCAT representatives attend articulation committee meetings, and BCCAT asks the committee for an invitation to attend. The BCCAT representative attends the meeting as a non-voting observer and resource. BCCAT also assists committees with operational issues – for example, facilitating a discussion with an institution that is not regularly sending representatives to meetings, or assisting the committee in identifying an appropriate individual to serve as the committee's System Liaison Person – but does not formally resolve intra- or inter-committee disputes. Thus, the value of autonomy is also upheld in how BCCAT interacts with the articulation committees.

Administrative Structure

A key feature of BC's articulation committees is the officers that facilitate the work of each committee. The two officers that are in nearly every articulation committee's administrative structure are the Chair and the System Liaison Person (a non-voting position). Other committees may have additional administrative positions such as a Co-Chair, a Vice-Chair, or a Conference Chair. These additional positions have emerged across time, usually as the number of committee members has increased. Most committees have gravitated toward having at least one officer in addition to the Chair. This additional officer is often the representative from the institution that will host

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the articulation meeting next year, or is the individual that will move into the position of Chair next year.

Some committees that represent more than one discipline have an officer position for each discipline, to ensure that the committee's leadership is inclusive of all of the relevant disciplines.

The length of the appointment for articulation committee officers is the articulation committee's deci-

sion. Some committees' officers serve for a single year; others serve for two or more years, often with the terms of office timed so that there is overlap between the terms of different officers; and on other committees, officers serve for as long as they are willing to do so, with their appointment re-affirmed at each year's committee meeting. Smaller committees tend to have only a Chair, as the work of administering the committee is usually not too onerous for a single individual.

Having at least two committee officers in addition to the System Liaison Person not only shares the work of administering the committee, but also gives the committee the benefit of continuity in leadership. This benefit is particularly noticeable if one of the other officers is the incoming Chair or the representative of the next year's meeting location. Having next year's meeting host represented on the committee's leadership appears to be especially beneficial. It secures the location of the meeting well in advance, which allows for the committee members to plan their meeting attendance, and for the host institution to be fully prepared for the meeting. It also affords the next meeting's host the opportunity to see how the articulation committee meeting usually operates; this information can then guide their subsequent planning and preparation.

Most committees have encountered occasional difficulties around their administrative structure. These tend to occur in relation to:

- No committee members being willing to serve as an officer;
- Committee members being unable to make a commitment at the articulation committee meeting to being an officer (e.g., needing approval from their institution or academic unit). While many individuals in this situation are able to obtain approval after the meeting, and then start their service to the committee, not being able to make the appointment or decision at the meeting itself can lead to confusion and/or miscommunication on the part of committee members who were not at that particular meeting;
- An individual being unwilling to step down from their position as an officer;
- An officer resigning between meetings, or otherwise being unable to complete the duties associated with their position; and/or,
- An officer misrepresenting a position that the committee has taken, or speaking on behalf of the committee without adequate consultation of the committee members.

Generally, these difficulties have been resolved by discussions after the committee meeting (e.g., through emails to the entire committee, or conference calls among the committee officers) or by motions and votes at a subsequent committee meeting. As mentioned, BCCAT is available to mediate these types of disputes, with the goal of reaching a resolution that is satisfactory to all involved, although it appears that BCCAT has rarely had to become involved in this role.

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Another issue related to administrative structure is the decision of which discipline or disciplines the committee should represent. When committees were initially formed or recognized, they were generally structured around a single discipline. However, as the committees evolved and as BC's post-secondary system grew, some committees subdivided or merged to be better able to represent their relevant disciplines.

The most obvious example of this structural evolution is the changes to the Adult Basic Education articulation committee. The committee started as a single committee for all Adult Basic Education programs, but the committee members eventually found it too challenging for one committee to adequately address all the concerns related to the individual subjects offered within most Adult Basic Education programs. As a result, as shown in Appendix I, the discipline of Adult Basic Education is now represented in BC's articulation committee system by a steering committee and eight working groups, with each working group formed around a single Adult Basic Education subject area.

The most recent committee merger was between the former Communications and Media articulation committees. The members of these two committees determined that there was sufficient overlap between the content of these programs at most BC post-secondary institutions to justify merging into one committee, rather than having most of the same representatives attend two separate meetings. It should be noted that while decisions around such structural issues are made by the committees themselves, the decision must be ratified by TAC before any change is officially recognized by BCCAT.

Advocacy

A number of articulation committees have undertaken activities to communicate the committee's opinions or reactions to events involving their discipline, or involving the institutions represented on the committee. An illustrative example of this activism occurred in 1994, when the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE) wrote a letter to all Canadian university English programs stating that "*caution* [emphasis in original] should be exercised in granting transfer credits for English courses completed at [BC's four university-colleges]...because it is unclear...whether the administrations of the university-colleges will have either the money or the will to maintain the upper-division standards previously insisted upon by the affiliated universities" (ACCUTE, 1994). ACCUTE's letter also expressed concern that faculty workloads at the university-colleges were so large that faculty members would not have time to conduct research.

It appears that most of the larger articulation committees have undertaken similar types of advocacy at least once during their existence.

While ACCUTE later claimed that the intent of its letter was to draw attention to the negative effects of underfunding in BC's post-secondary system ("Much response", 1995), the letter was interpreted by several articulation committees as an unwarranted slur on the quality of courses at the university-colleges. The History Articulation Committee passed a motion at its 1995 meeting to "(a) support the ACCUTE position that research is an integral part of teaching [and] (b) contact

the Canadian Historical Association to ascertain how we can best co-operate with them in pursuing this project". Another motion directed the committee to "write to the presidents of the University Colleges to praise those who have encouraged research, and remind all of them that research must be considered integral to good teaching". It appears that several articulation committees, including the English Articulation Committee, also expressed their concerns about the ACCUTE letter directly to BCCAT.

This particular series of events was notable because it involved several articulation committees undertaking advocacy activity around the same issue. A similar situation occurred in 1979 when the Psychology Articulation Committee sent a memorandum to all other articulation committees regarding the newly formed Open Learning Institute (OLI). The memo expressed concern about OLI's curriculum potentially duplicating existing curriculum at BC colleges and universities, and encouraged committees to speak out in support of a "cooperative relationship" in which OLI and post-secondary institutions "could aid and complement each other" (Psychology, 1979). The 1979 and 1980 minutes of several other articulation committee meetings indicate that the Psychology Committee's memorandum, and related concerns around OLI, were discussed at those meetings, although most committees appear to have received the memorandum after their 1979 meetings; thus, the discussions in 1980 had a somewhat different tone because OLI and its operations were better understood by that time.

There have been other events that have also generated discussion and activity at more than one articulation committee – for example, when Simon Fraser University changed its degree requirements in 2006 to include at least six credits in courses designated as writing-intensive and six credits in courses designated as quantitative-intensive (SFU, 2006). However, other instances of advocacy usually involve issues specific to the individual articulation committee. For example, in 1996 the Human Service Worker Articulation Committee conveyed to the Assistant Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Social Services that the Committee "strongly object[ed]" to a reduction in the level of education required for job applicants to be eligible for the position of Financial Assistance Worker (Levine, 1996). In the same year, the Mathematics-Statistics Articulation Committee wrote to all BC post-secondary institutions, in light of changes to the provincial K-12 mathematics program, to recommend that Principles of Mathematics 11 or Applications of Mathematics 12 be accepted for entrance to BC colleges and universities (Neufeld, 1996). It appears that most of the larger articulation committees have undertaken similar types of advocacy at least once during their existence.

Meetings

As the committee meeting is the largest single annual or bi-annual event for most articulation committees, committees often face issues around organizing and conducting these meetings. These issues primarily involve hosting/organizing the meeting, and attendance at the meeting.

Articulation committee meetings are generally held on the campus of an institution represented on the committee, or at another site (e.g., a hotel or conference centre) with meeting logistics being handled by the nearest institution. Meeting hosts generally provide meeting room space (including Wifi access and/or audiovisual support), meals/snacks, and hotel recommendations. Depending on the resources available, meeting hosts may also arrange for transportation to and from the airport or other transportation hub, may provide meeting items such as pens or notepads, or may subsidize a group meal. Most meeting schedules include a social event such as a dinner or a field trip, which delegates generally pay for themselves.

The location of the meeting is sometimes dependent on which institution is available or willing to host the meeting. For some committees the meeting site regularly rotates through specified regions (e.g., the Lower Mainland, the Interior, and the North), with meeting hosts being solicited from institutions within the region identified as the host region for that year. BCCAT research indicates that committee attendance does not appear to vary significantly across meetings held in different regions of the province.

Most articulation committees that meet annually schedule their meetings between late April and early June. That period is after the end of the September-April academic year, and at least part of that period generally will not conflict with faculty commitments such as final examinations and graduation ceremonies. Some committees will attempt to time their articulation committee meeting so that the dates are close to the dates of another professional event in their discipline, such as an academic conference. In this situation, the articulation committee meeting will often be held in the same location as the professional event, to maximize attendance. Articulation committees that meet twice a year will generally meet once during the April-June period and once in late fall or early winter.

The agenda for the articulation committee meeting is set by the committee chair or committee officers, in consultation with the committee members. Most articulation committee agendas regularly include these items:

- A formal welcome to the meeting from an administrator at the host institution, which may also include a greeting from a First Nations representative;
- Institutional reports from each delegate on events at their institution, including course or curriculum changes;
- A report from the System Liaison Person;
- A report from the BCCAT representative (if one is present), including the distribution of a list of currently unresolved transfer requests in courses related to that committee;

The agenda for the articulation committee is set by the committee chair or committee officers, in consultation with the committee members.

- Discussion of issues involving courses in the discipline or at the institutions represented on the committee;
- Discussion of trends/events in the BC post-secondary system or in post-secondary education in general;
- Reports from any subcommittees that have been assigned to address specific issues;
- Reports from attendees such as representatives of professional organizations, government agencies, or secondary school teachers;
- Selection of new committee officers; and
- Identification of the meeting site for the next year or for several years in advance.

A number of committees also include professional development seminars, presentations, or other events in their agenda.

Some committees offset the cost of hosting the meeting by charging a registration fee. It is important to note BCCAT's policy that, if there are other events on the agenda with an admission fee, attendance at the actual meeting of the articulation committee should be free of charge. Some committees offset the cost of hosting the meeting in other ways, e.g., by soliciting sponsors for coffee breaks or meals, or by inviting publishing company representatives to have a display and charging a fee for the use of the display space.

Meeting attendees are generally responsible for their own expenses related to travel and accommodation. Throughout the articulation committees' histories, this has occasionally proved to be a topic of substantial discussion. The institutional funding provided by the provincial ministry responsible for post-secondary education includes an allocation for articulation committee meeting attendance. However, the allocation is distributed in different ways at different institutions. At some institutions, delegates must apply to a centralized source to receive funding, while at others the funding is directly allotted to individual programs or departments to spend appropriately. The costs for each institution to send delegates to meetings can vary each year, depending on where each committee decides to meet.

As noted above, each BC Transfer System member institution that has a program or course(s) in the relevant discipline is entitled to have a voting representative on the committee. Some committees invite other participants to their meetings, e.g., representatives from relevant professional organizations; secondary school teachers; representatives from relevant community organizations; representatives from private institutions that offer relevant programming but who are not BC Transfer System members.

Each BC Transfer System member institution that has a program or course(s) in the relevant discipline is entitled to have a voting representative on the committee.

While BCCAT policy states that the representatives of BC Transfer System member institutions are the voting members of the committee, some committees extend voting rights to other attendees at the meeting, usually through a motion voted on at the meeting by the BC Transfer System member representatives.

Two recurring concerns throughout the history of many committees are the consistency of representation from member institutions, and appropriately qualified delegates. In the early years of most articulation committees, when some institutions were “sending” institutions and some were “receiving” institutions in transfer credit agreements, there were frequent complaints at meetings when the “receiving” institutions did not send delegates at all, or did not send them on a regular basis.

Sending institutions found this problematic because they did not receive the information they needed to increase the transferability of their courses, or were not notified of curriculum changes at the receiving institution that might also affect transferability. This problem has been addressed somewhat with the implementation of the TCES, which allows electronic communication between institutions throughout the year around transfer-related requests and changes. However, non-attendance is still problematic for committees if considerable transfer activity in their disciplines involves the absent institutions.

Consistency in attendance, in terms of having the same individuals attend the committee meeting, has also been a concern for a number of committees. Generally, the individual representing the institution is a faculty member or program chair in the relevant discipline. However a particular individual may not be able to attend the meetings consistently every year, or a specific institution’s representative may change every year. This can cause difficulties and delays at the meeting if the new delegate must be brought up to date on the issues the committee is currently dealing with, or must be informed as to how or why the committee operates as it does. It appears that some institutions ensure that a new delegate is given information in advance to be prepared for the meeting, while other institutions do not provide this sort of preparation. Frequent changes in delegates, or erratic attendance by delegates, is also a problem for committees conducting projects or initiatives that involve work outside of the committee’s regular meeting, such as the development or implementation of a Flexible Pre-Major.

Consistency has also been an issue for some committees in terms of the transfer-related experience of delegates. BCCAT has no authority to assign specific individuals as institutional representatives at articulation committee meetings. It recommends that institutional delegates have experience with transfer issues in their program at their institution, and familiarity with their institution’s curriculum or programming in the relevant subject area. In practice, this usually means that the delegate should have some experience with articulation processes (e.g., evaluating transfer requests) and/or with the institution’s curriculum (e.g., developing or refining course or curriculum content). Several committees’ minutes indicate difficulties in conducting informed discussions at articulation committee meetings when institutional delegates do not have this type of background. For example, in the past some institutions’ delegates to committee meetings were administrators responsible for overseeing transfer processes, or who administered a program which generates transfer activity. The concern of some committees is that delegates with this type of experience may have experience with the operational side of transfer agreements, but may not have the subject or disciplinary knowledge to meaningfully participate in discussions of comparability of courses or appropriate curriculum content.

Two recurring concerns throughout the history of many committees are the consistency of representation from member institutions, and appropriately qualified delegates.

It should be noted that experience as an articulation committee member appears to be a meaningful developmental experience which can lead to further participation in other roles within the BC Transfer System.

A final point involving meeting format is whether face-to-face meetings are still necessary when technologies such as Skype, conference calls, or other computer-based functions can facilitate “virtual” attendance. In 1998, BCCAT and C2T2 sponsored a research project on telecommunication and articulation. The resulting report (BCCAT & C2T2, 1999) described a pilot project in which two articulation committees’ meetings were held by videoconference. The participants in these meetings felt that this meeting format was appropriate to carry out

committee business, but “it would [not] be able to replace a regular all-day or two-day meeting” (p. 3). Since then, there is no evidence of articulation committees regularly using a virtual meeting format, with the exception of delegates occasionally “attending” meetings via Skype if they are not able to physically travel to the meeting site. The 1999 report identified several technological problems hampering committee communication via email and websites, but many of those problems (e.g., committee members not having a computer or not having email accounts) have more than likely disappeared as computing technology has improved and become more accessible.

Finally, it should be noted that experience as an articulation committee member appears to be a meaningful developmental experience which can lead to further participation in other roles within the BC Transfer System. At the time of writing (May 2014), three of BCCAT’s nine staff members and five of 16 BCCAT council members are former articulation committee members or chairs.

Operational Support

BC’s articulation committees receive support from BCCAT, as the agency providing administrative oversight for their operations, and from the institutions whose programs or courses are represented on each committee.

BCCAT’s support to committees appears to be particularly valuable in offering year-round support, e.g., by having a staff position as the designated committee liaison, and by having information and resources available on its website. The availability of this ongoing support is particularly valuable in a system where most committees only meet once a year. This support can also include administrative guidance. For example, the BCCAT Committee Coordinator will contact articulation committees who have not submitted annual meeting minutes to ensure that BCCAT has complete and up to date records of each committee’s activities. BCCAT also organizes the Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) and supports attendance at this meeting by paying for articulation committee chairs’ travel and accommodation. The JAM is not only a source of information and resources; it also gives articulation committee representatives the chance to meet and interact with representatives from other committees.

BCCAT has also facilitated the work of articulation committees by bringing issues or information to committees’ attention. For example, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, BCCAT’s Executive Secretary, who at the time was the designated committee liaison, would write to each articulation committee to acknowledge receipt of their meeting minutes. In those letters, she would also comment on issues raised in the minutes and suggest possible follow-up

actions or other sources to contact during the committee's work on the issue. This sort of interaction is remarked upon in several committees' minutes for not only creating a sense that BCCAT is supporting the committees' work, but also actively working to help the committees be a productive and influential part of the BC Transfer System.

Institutions also support articulation committees in a number of different ways. One is, as previously mentioned, by providing funding for delegates to attend articulation committee meetings. Institutions have also offered support for meeting attendance by allowing delegates to change their work schedules or workload allocations in order to attend meetings. Another form of institutional support is hosting articulation committee meetings. A number of BC Transfer System member institutions have observed that hosting a meeting not only provides a service to the system, but also gives the institution an opportunity to "show itself off" to articulation committee members who may not know much about the institution or its activities. Institutions may also provide support by subsidizing institutional resources used for articulation committee work (e.g., photocopying) or by allowing articulation committee officers to adjust their work schedules or workloads to accommodate committee responsibilities.

More recently, some institutions have acknowledged that they do not always get the full benefit of knowledge and feedback from the articulation committee meetings which they have funded delegates to attend. In the past, some institutions have required delegates, as a condition of having their meeting attendance funded, to report orally or in writing on the meeting to their program or faculty. Two BC Transfer System member institutions (Thompson Rivers University and the University of the Fraser Valley) have recently initiated faculty- or institution-level post-articulation meetings. At these meetings, all representatives who attended articulation committee meetings that year discuss events and issues at the individual meetings they attended. These meetings are intended to promote the sharing of articulation-related information across different parts of the institution, and also to encourage articulation committee delegates from the same institution to support and learn from each other.

Two BC Transfer System member institutions have recently initiated faculty- or institution-level post-articulation meetings. These meetings are intended to promote the sharing of articulation-related information across different parts of the institutions, and to encourage articulation committee delegates from the same institution to learn from each other.

Recommendations to Enhance Articulation Committees' Effectiveness

The final section of this paper provides some recommendations for actions and practices to enhance articulation committees' effectiveness. The information in this section draws not only on the data analyzed in the previous sections, but also from ideas and insights provided by articulation committee chairs and System Liaison Persons during a workshop session at the 2013 JAM meeting.

1. Articulation committees support the articulation system more effectively when they allow for professional networking as well as for committee business. Attendees' opportunities to interact with each other, and to learn more about each other's institutions, programs and courses, build the inter-institutional trust that is essential to an effective and efficient articulation system.
2. Interaction with other articulation committees' members – e.g., through a formal event like JAM, or through discussion at one's own institution with members of other articulation committees– is very important in getting ideas on how to best operate one's own committee. It is also very useful in identifying trends or issues that one's own committee should be aware of or acting on.
3. Although the articulation committee might meet only once or twice a year, continual contact with the committee members throughout the year is essential. This contact reminds committee members and institutions that articulation is an ongoing process, and also reminds them of the committee and its work. Most committees rely on an email mailing list for this year-round contact, so it is important to have a designated list administrator to keep email addresses up to date and to deal with problems such as non-delivery or message bounces.
4. Articulation committees are more effective in their work if their meetings include representatives from other sectors that are relevant to the committee's discipline (e.g., professional associations, secondary schools, First Nations, private institutions). These individuals do not have to be voting representatives or be present for the entire meeting, but it is beneficial for all to include these representatives in discussions of issues that are relevant to their concerns.
5. Institutional reports at meetings can take up a great deal of time if each representative gives an oral report. Meeting delegates can be encouraged to submit written reports ahead of time, to the committee chair or secretary, and these reports can then be distributed to the committee in advance of the meeting date. Members may then be encouraged to provide only a brief verbal report at the meeting itself. Some committees provide a template for institutional reports to ensure that all relevant information is included in each delegate's report.

6. A well-organized articulation committee meeting is crucial, especially if new delegates are attending. If new attendees receive a less than positive perception of the committee from the meeting, that may have negative impacts on the committee's effectiveness later on. The notice of the meeting, with full information (dates, location, meeting times, suggested agenda items or meeting schedule, hotel/transportation options) should be distributed well in advance of the meeting, ideally two or three months before the meeting date. A call for agenda items should also be circulated in time for members to add desired items to the meeting agenda. The finalized agenda and any supporting materials, such as institutional reports, should be circulated at least a week before the meeting date.
7. Committees should be facilitated pro-actively by their officers and System Liaison Person. For example, if an institution regularly does not send delegates to an articulation committee's meetings, or sends delegates who are not well-informed or prepared, the committee chair or System Liaison Person should contact the relevant program at that institution and work with them to improve the situation.
8. Committee officers should be active and engaged throughout the year, not just around the time of the annual meeting. Committee officers should also take advantage of support and opportunities available to them and to the committee: for example, by attending a meeting such as JAM, or ensuring that the committee is represented at such events if the chair or another officer cannot attend.
9. Committee members should actively promote the value of committee participation to their institutions. For example, meeting delegates should always report the meeting's outcomes to their colleagues, program chair, dean, and/or other appropriate administrator – even if such a report is not required. Sharing this kind of information emphasizes the importance and relevance of the articulation committee's work to the individual program and institution, and to the success of the BC Transfer System as a whole.

Conclusion

BC's articulation committees are an integral and necessary part of the BC Transfer System. The committees have evolved through different committee formats and different forms of administrative oversight, resulting in the current well-established and effective articulation committee system. Since 1989, BCCAT has provided administrative oversight and support to BC's articulation committees. BCCAT makes resources available to support the committees' operations and maintains its philosophy of facilitating and coordinating committee operations without direct intervention. These conditions allow articulation committees to effectively address the issues and concerns directly relevant to their discipline and to their member programs and institutions. The recommendations that conclude this paper will ideally be of interest not only to articulation committees in BC that wish to improve or maximize their effectiveness, but also to transfer-related organizations in other jurisdictions that are developing their own articulation committees.

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[NB: Any documents in archives from articulation committees other than History are held at BCCAT's offices. Documents listed as being in the History Articulation Committee archives are held at UBC's Rare Books and Special Collections division: <http://rbscarchives.library.ubc.ca/index.php/history-articulation-committee-fonds;rad>]

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APPENDIX 1

List of Currently Active BC Articulation Committees

Adult Basic Education (Computer Studies) Working Group	Electronics Technician
Adult Basic Education (Education & Career Planning) Working Group	Engineering
Adult Basic Education (English) Working Group	English
Adult Basic Education (Fundamental) Working Group	English as a Second Language (ESL)
Adult Basic Education (Indigenous) Working Group	Environmental Programs
Adult Basic Education (Math) Working Group	First Nations Studies
Adult Basic Education (Science) Working Group	Forestry and Sustainable Resources Management
Adult Basic Education (Social Science) Working Group	Geography
Adult Basic Education Steering Committee	Health Care Assistant Programs
Applied Business Technology/Office Administration	Health Educators (Anatomy & Physiology)
Adult Education	Heavy Duty /Commercial Transport /Diesel Engines
Adult Special Education	History
Adventure Tourism	Hospitality Management
Agriculture / Horticulture	Human Service Programs
American Sign Language	Mathematics-Statistics (BCcpms)
Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing	Millwright/Machinists
Automotive Service Technician	Modern Languages (SCOLA)
Biology	Music
Business and Commerce	Nursing
Carpentry	Philosophy
Chemistry	Physical Education & Kinesiology
Communications and Media (CAMAC)	Physics & Astronomy
Computing Education	Piping Trades
Creative Writing	Political Science
Criminology	Practical Nursing
Dental Assisting	Professional Cook Training
Dental Hygiene	Psychology
Drafting Technologies	Sheet Metal
Early Childhood Education	Sociology/Anthropology
Earth Sciences	Theatre
Economics	Tourism Management
Electrical	Visual Arts & Design
Electronics Engineering Technology	Welding
	Women's Studies

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BC Council on
Admissions & Transfer **BCCAT**

709 – 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3H6

bccat.ca | educationplanner.ca | bctransferguide.ca | t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576 | e info@bccat.ca