BC Transfer System: New Members Policy[1]

Preamble

The mandate of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) includes the responsibility to manage and coordinate the BC Transfer System. Upon its inception in 1989, the Council inherited a Transfer System that included all BC public institutions, Yukon College, and three private institutions. Since then, new institutions have been approved to articulate within the BC Transfer System once they have undergone a quality assurance (QA) process acceptable to the Council. To date, acceptable QA processes have been The University Presidents' Council "Policy on Transfer Credit" (now defunct), the current QA processes of the Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB), both of which have focussed on private institutions, and BCCAT's "Inclusion of Alberta Institutions in the BC Transfer System: Policy and Process" which outlines the conditions under which an Alberta institution may be approved to articulate. Other QA processes, whether focussed on public or private institutions, may be found acceptable in the future as a basis for approval.

Once approved to articulate, the institution becomes *de facto* a member of the BC Transfer System. Membership includes approval to request articulation with other members and to record those agreements in the BC Transfer Guide, and (for BC institutions) approval to apply to be listed in Education Planner on a cost-recovery basis. Membership also carries responsibilities: new members must undertake to abide by the commonly accepted standards of the system and to meet the expectations of BCCAT as detailed in this policy, in the Contract/Letter of Assurance, and in the Principles and Guidelines for Transfer. Taken together, these three documents describe the norms, standards, and expectation for all members of the BC Transfer System, public or private, however and whenever admitted to membership. BCCAT holds all members, not just those who have signed the Letter of Assurance, to these standards.

Provisions of the Policy

1. Private Institution Degree Programs with Minister's Consent
The Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) website records each time a new degree program at a private institution is approved. The website specifies whether the degree program has undergone the DQAB's quality assessment process with a recommendation for approval, and whether it has received Minister's Consent. Both

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[1] Previously titled: *Private Degree-Granting Institutions Policy*

conditions must be met before an appropriate degree program, and the courses within that program, can be articulated within the BC Transfer System (see Item 4: Institutions/Programs Appropriate for Articulation). A private institution with an appropriate program meeting these conditions can request that BCCAT list it as a new member of the BC Transfer System, approved to request formal articulation within the system. New members will be listed in the BC Transfer Guide and can also apply to be listed in Education Planner on a cost-recovery basis.

The provisions of this policy apply equally to new members' inclusion and participation in both services. However, policies related to inclusion in Education Planner may contain additional provisions unique to the contractual nature of participation in Education Planner.

2. Membership Limited to Approved Programs
The approval to request articulation and the approval for inclusion in Education Planner extends only to programs meeting the conditions stipulated in Provision 1 above. In the case of a private institution included through the DQAB process, membership is not extended to non-degree programs at the same institution. Thus, in the case of some institutions, it is not the institution per se that is approved for inclusion but the authorised degree program(s) delivered at the institutional location(s) indicated in the Minister's Consent. However, it is understood that the institution bears responsibility for program(s) and for administrative support of articulation and transfer processes, therefore the term "new member" is used in this document, to denote the institutional entity responsible for operating within the BC Transfer System.

3. Special Conditions Associated with Consent
Any special conditions associated with Consent (such as a requirement to articulate courses successfully before final Consent is given, or requirements concerning learning resources, instructors, or physical plant) will be taken into account and may be reflected in the Letter of Assurance (see item 6 below).

4. Institutions/Programs Appropriate for Articulation
Programs at institutions with unique or specific missions, those offered only at the graduate level, or those with no parallels within the BC Transfer System, may not be appropriate for articulation within the BC Transfer System. In such cases, BCCAT reserves the right not to proceed with the institution's listing in the BC Transfer Guide. BCCAT also reserves the right to refuse or delay membership to an institution where, in the course of the admission process, concerns are raised such as those outlined in items 14 and 15 of this policy.

Courses and programs to be included in the BC Transfer Guide must be delivered (including registration, instruction, student assessment) entirely by the institution seeking access to the BC Transfer System, not by other institutions through partnership, affiliation or subcontracting agreements unless otherwise approved by Council. The institution should provide a list of all such agreements to BCCAT, whether with public or private institutions.

5. <u>Formal Articulation and the BC Transfer Guide</u>

"Formal articulation" refers to the process whereby one institution submits course or program outlines to another institution and requests transfer credit though BCCAT's Transfer Credit Evaluation System. Resulting transfer credit agreements are recorded in the BC Transfer Guide. A variant of formal articulation involves the "Transfer Protocols," discussed in item 10, below.

6. <u>Provision of Assurances to BCCAT</u>

Before a new member can be listed in the BC Transfer Guide or in Education Planner, and before it can arrange formal articulation agreements, it must provide assurances to BCCAT that it will undertake to abide by the Principles and Guidelines for Transfer and the norms and standards of the BC Transfer System by signing the *Letter of Assurance*. The Letter constitutes a contract between the new member and BCCAT.

7. <u>Designation as Sending or Receiving Institution in the BC Transfer Guide</u>

Institutions are listed in the course-to-course section of the BC Transfer Guide as either "*sending institutions*" or "*receiving institutions*" depending on their primary function. Traditionally, with regard to transfer, colleges *send* their students to universities who *receive* students for degree completion.

    a) <u>Baccalaureate Degrees - Receiving Institutions</u>
       Where baccalaureate programs receive Minister's Consent and subsequent approval to request articulation in the BC Transfer System, it is assumed that the primary function of a degree-granting institution within the BC Transfer System will be, upon request, to assess the equivalency of courses offered by sending institutions and to grant (or deny) transfer credit for those courses. For this reason, new members with approved baccalaureate degree programs will be designated as receiving institutions.

    b) <u>Associate Degrees - Sending Institutions</u>
       Since the BC Associate Degree ladders into baccalaureate arts and science degrees and can be equated to the first two years of many baccalaureate degrees, new members with provisional Minister's Consent[2] to confer a BC Associate Degree are designated as sending institutions. These members are initially eligible to seek formal articulation with BC Research Universities only (SFU, UBC, UBCO, UNBC & UVIC), until such time as the terms of their provisional Consent are fulfilled.

Once successfully integrated into the BC Transfer System[3], a new member can apply to BCCAT to add the sending institution or the receiving institution designation. The

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[2] Each course in the BC Associate Degree must be articulated with one or more of the BC research universities. Therefore, until the institution can articulate 20 or more courses with one or more of these universities, consent is not finalized.

[3] An institution is deemed to have been successfully integrated when it is articulating successfully, as appropriate to its programs and its status as a sending or receiving institution, when its faculty are participating in articulation committee meetings, when it is communicating as necessary with BCCAT through the Institutional Contact Person (ICP) and others, when students have started to transfer successfully, and when no significant concerns have been raised about its membership in the system.

process for adding a receiving institution designation is described in the BCCAT document "Designation as a Receiving Institution in the BC Transfer Guide." The process for adding a sending institution designation is yet to be developed.

8. Reciprocity

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

9. Block Transfer and Other Transfer Guides

New members are also approved to negotiate block transfer agreements with other institutions in the BC Transfer System. According to such an agreement, the new member can be listed as a sending or receiving institution in the Block Transfer section of the BC Transfer Guide. New members may also apply, to the articulation committee that manages it, to participate in any relevant program-specific transfer guides.

10. Transfer Protocols

If, in the opinion of a receiving institution, a sound business case does not exist for course-to-course articulation (that is, it is unlikely that enough students will transfer to justify the time and expense of articulation), a receiving institution may opt to provide assurances to a new or existing member that its courses/programs will be recognised for transfer credit on a case-by-case basis.

If the new member wishes to formalise such an understanding, in order to provide appropriate assurance to its students, it can request that institutions sign a "transfer protocol." BCCAT can supply suggested protocol templates. A transfer protocol states that transfer between the two institutions will occur, but will be managed on a case-by-case, student-request basis, such as currently happens between universities in BC. The signing of such a protocol does not prevent institutions from formally articulating specific courses where warranted. Transfer Protocols may be recorded, as requested and as appropriate, in the BC Transfer Guide.

11. Declining to Articulate Requires a Sound Rationale

While any decision to articulate rests with the receiving institution, any institution that declines to articulate with a new member (either through formal articulation or through a Transfer Protocol) should provide a sound rationale for its decision, and indicate what issues must be addressed before the institution can re-apply. If the new member perceives the decisions to be unreasonable or unfair, and is unable to resolve the issues, it can request that BCCAT mediate the dispute.[4]

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[4] Terms or criteria established by professional accrediting bodies can impact on an institution's ability to grant transfer credit and in such cases neither the institution nor BCCAT may be in a position to affect the decision. Mediation entails facilitating further discussions between the institutions with the goal of achieving a mutually acceptable outcome. Although BCCAT may suggest possible solutions, it has no authority to impose a binding resolution to the issues in dispute.

12. BCCAT Fees
BCCAT does not currently charge any institution, public or private, directly for the costs involved in being listed in the BC Transfer Guide, for mediation services, or for assistance with other aspects of participation in articulation processes. BCCAT charges all private institutions for the costs involved in including their programs in Education Planner.

13. Institutional Articulation Fees
In addition to possible charges from BCCAT, each institution will make its own determination as to whether and how much to charge private institutions for the costs associated with negotiating and maintaining articulation agreements.

14. Yearly Review and Monitoring
The DQAB conducts an Annual Review of each institution with Minister's consent, and conducts a Renewal of Consent Review every five years. For those new members admitted though the DQAB process, BCCAT will provide input for those reviews by reporting annually to the DQAB on each new member's articulation activities, on its adherence to the Letter of Assurance and to the Principles and Guidelines for Transfer, and on any other matters relevant to its membership in the BC Transfer System. It is understood, however, that new institutions will take some time, and possibly three to five years after Consent is granted, to be fully functioning members of the BC Transfer System. BCCAT's review will take institutional maturity into account and will normally focus on facilitating the induction and integration of the new member into the BC Transfer System.

If there is evidence that any new member:
- is not adhering to the Principles and Guidelines for Transfer;
- is not fulfilling its obligations as detailed in the Letter of Assurance or the Education Planner Contract;
- has demonstrably failed to meet the academic standards expected in the program/discipline;
- has plagiarised the work of other institutions;
- has made false or misleading claims about the transferability of its courses or programs or about the nature of its participation in the BC Transfer Guide or in Education Planner; or
- has been the subject of legitimate concerns or complaints raised, or investigations undertaken, by other institutions, professional accrediting bodies, the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA), government, police or border services, or any other relevant body inside or outside BC, that have not, in the opinion of the Council, been adequately addressed;

BCCAT will report the concerns about DQAB-approved institutions to the DQAB with the request that the DQAB take this report into consideration when conducting an annual review and /or a five year Renewal of Consent Review, or when taking other steps or actions within the scope of its authority.

If the institution is not DQAB-approved *or* whenever concerns arise with any institution that require immediate action, BCCAT will communicate directly with the institution with the purpose of identifying clearly the nature of the concern and clarifying expectations, and will work with the institution to ensure the situation is rectified.

15. Discretion of BCCAT to Suspend Membership

If the concern is of sufficient magnitude BCCAT reserves the right to deliver to the new member a notice of suspension by the Council from the BC Transfer Guide and/or Education Planner, with a copy to the DQAB and any other relevant agency (e.g. PCTIA). If the new member does not satisfactorily address the concerns or deficiencies within 60 days of dispatch of the notice, membership in the BC Transfer System may be suspended[5]. In cases where there is evidence of a clear and egregious violation of the Letter of Assurance membership may be suspended immediately, subject to confirmation by motion of Council. Every effort will be made to safeguard the educational interests of students enrolled in institutions whose membership is suspended.

16. Changes to Minister's Consent

Suspension, revocation or amendment of Minister's Consent will result in the *de facto* suspension, revocation or amendment of the institution's membership in the BC Transfer System. Any similar change to the authorization of an out-of-province institution will have similar consequences.

17. Duty to inform
   a) BCCAT will inform the DQAB, the PCTIA and the BC ministry responsible for advanced education (or responsible ministry in any other Canadian province) about any disciplinary action involving the new member.
   b) The new member must inform BCCAT immediately of any disciplinary action or censure it incurs, or any investigation into its operations undertaken by government, DQAB, PCTIA, any professional accrediting organization, or any other relevant body inside or outside BC.

18. Requesting Reconsideration

The new member may request reconsideration of decisions or actions of BCCAT in writing to the Council. The Council may appoint a panel to review the case and recommend outcomes.

19. Revisions to this Policy

BCCAT may review, from time to time, the provisions of this policy, and make such changes as deemed necessary by the findings of such review.

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[5] Suspension may involve removal of the institution from the BC Transfer Guide or Education Planner until stipulated criteria have been met, or sanctions of other kinds at the discretion of the Council.

BCCAT BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

CONTRACT/LETTER OF ASSURANCE

Between _____

and the

BC Council on Admissions and Transfer

Institution Address: _____

Degree Program(s) to be listed in the BC Transfer Guide: _____

As new members of the BC Transfer System, we undertake to adhere to the norms of the system and to follow, to the best of our ability, best institutional practice in participating in articulation and transfer and in providing information about programs. We will:

1. Familiarise ourselves with BCCAT's *New Members Policy,* and adhere to the requirements of this policy.

2. Comply with the BC Principles and Guidelines for Transfer.

3. Follow best practice, as described in BCCAT documents such as the *Best Practice Guide for Receiving Institutions*, the *How to Articulate Handbook*, the *Articulation Committee Companion*, and the *Articulation Framework* with regard to the articulation of courses and programs.

4. Implement, in a timely fashion, the internal administrative processes necessary to have all formally articulated courses listed and updated as required in the BC Transfer Guide and in Education Planner (if participating).

5. Name an Institutional Contact Person (ICP) for BCCAT. This person will initially be _____ (email address:) and he/she will fulfill the role of ICP as laid out in the Terms of Reference for the ICP Committee.

6. Name an Institutional Contact Person (ICP) for Education Planner, if participating. This person will initially be
_____ (email address:)

7. Use the BCCAT web-based Transfer Credit Evaluation System for all formal articulation requests, and provide BCCAT with the name of a Transfer Credit Contact (TCC) Person. This person will initially be _____ (email address: _____). This person can be the same as the ICP.

8. Use a sufficiently detailed course outline form [such as the BCCAT Provincial Transfer Friendly Course Outline: http://www.bccat.ca/outline] for all courses for which articulation is being requested.

9. Provide, as requested, all other curricular and academic information that an articulating institution may deem necessary for the assessment of course or program equivalence.

10. Be informed by existing course outlines as appropriate to the discipline, but will ensure that our course outlines do not contravene intellectual property laws; nor will we use the curricular or instructional materials of others without their written consent.

11. Use the Transfer Credit Evaluation System to articulate only courses and programs clearly related to the degree program(s) with Minister's Consent.

12. Transmit and receive student transcripts and award transfer credit in a timely manner. [For transcript standards, BCCAT recommends the National Transcript Guide (http://www.arucc.unb.ca/documents/transe.pdf) endorsed by the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges Canada (ARUCC).] Where feasible, transcripts should be transmitted electronically.

13. Send a representative to relevant articulation committees. This representative will be a full voting member of the committee. All details about articulation committees and the role of representatives can be found in the *Articulation Committee Companion*. (Please contact articulation@bccat.ca for more information.)

14. Respect provincial norms regarding instructor qualifications for courses and programs to be articulated. BCCAT's position statement on *Instructor Qualifications for Transferable Courses* can be found at: http://www.bccat.ca/articulation/qualification.cfm.

15. Agree to assess and accept for transfer credit, on a case-by-case basis, *equivalent* courses completed at other institutions in the BC Transfer System where course-to-course articulation has not been established and recorded in the BC Transfer Guide for structural (e.g. articulation between two receiving institutions not normally recorded) or business (not enough students to justify articulation) reasons. This can be done through a *Transfer Protocol*.

16. Provide clear and accurate information to current and prospective students about transfer agreements and will not, in any print, web-based, audio, video or other publications, or when recruiting or advising students, make false, overstated or misleading claims about the nature of our participation in the BC Transfer System and/or the benefits accruing to students.

17. Engage in articulation and transfer processes as sincere members of the BC Transfer System, with the aim of facilitating appropriate student mobility and transfer, and not use this membership for purely promotional or marketing purposes.

18. Alert BCCAT immediately to any situations that may impact on our ability to participate fully in the BC Transfer System.

19. Inform BCCAT of any investigation of our operations undertaken by government, DQAB, PCTIA, any professional accrediting organization, or any other relevant body inside or outside BC, and inform BCCAT of the outcomes of any such investigation.

Signed on behalf of the Institution by: _____

Please print name: _____

Title: _____
Date: _____

Copies: 1: Institutional Registrar
               2: Transfer & Technology Manager, BCCAT