

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

A Resource for Receiving Institutions

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. HISTORY	7
2. CURRENT SITUATION	7
3. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE	8
4. POLICY, PROCEDURE AND RECORD-KEEPING	9
4.1. Transfer Credit and Advanced Standing	10
4.2. Appeal Process	10
4.3. The Student Record	11
4.4. Applicability of Transfer Credit	11
5. ASSESSING TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION REQUESTS	13
5.1. Transfer Credit Beyond the Curricular Range	14
6. FORMAL ARTICULATION VERSUS CASE-BY-CASE ASSESSMENT	15
6.1. Maintaining Internal Transfer Records	16
7. FUNCTIONALITY OF THE TRANSFER CREDIT EVALUATION SYSTEM (TCES)	19
7.1. Is The TCES Sufficient?	20
8. TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSFER CREDIT	21
8.1. Electronic Data Interchange	21
8.2. BCcampus Connector	22
8.3. Automated Transfer Credit Evaluation	22
9. TRAINING NEEDS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS	24
10. EFFECTIVE DATE RANGES	25
10.1. Special Responsibilities of Receiving Institutions	25
11. CONSISTENCY OF PROCESS	27
12. VOLUME OF ARTICULATION REQUESTS	28
12.1. Evaluating a Large Stock of Existing Courses	30
13. TIMELINESS	32
14. COST OF ARTICULATING	33
14.1. Staffing Levels	33
15. SOME PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY	35
APPENDIX 1 Readiness Checklist for a New Receiving Institution	36
APPENDIX 2 List of Best Practices for Receiving Institutions	38

1. HISTORY

Traditionally in the BC Transfer System, only universities granted undergraduate and graduate degrees and were exclusively the receiving institutions in the transfer equation. The senders were the institutes and community colleges that offered post-secondary certificates and diplomas and university transfer courses. Senders request articulation and receivers grant or deny the requests. The significant flow of students then was from the institutes and colleges to the universities, enabling access to degree completion. Articulation agreements were printed in hardcopy transfer guides and reflected this relatively simple relationship.

In 1995, the provincial government empowered BCIT, ECU and several of the community colleges, subsequently called “university-colleges” and now “special purpose universities” (SPUs), to grant four-year undergraduate degrees. Two-year undergraduate degrees and private institutions having Minister’s consent to offer undergraduate programs are also relatively recent developments. These developments allowed some traditionally sending institutions to become receivers and some to also become both senders and receivers. The BC Transfer Guide grew in both volume and complexity becoming increasingly unwieldy and an online public database was developed to record and publish the thousands of course-to-course and other transfer relationships. The BC Transfer Guide is now published exclusively online and the underlying database structure is scalable to manage a large number of transfer agreements.

As the transfer system evolved, so have student mobility patterns. With more institutions, program types and transfer options available, students are moving more often and in different directions than before. This requires multi-directional articulation.

Students are moving more often and in different directions. This requires multi-directional articulation.

2. CURRENT SITUATION

The BC Transfer System refers, collectively, to the group of institutions in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory between which students transfer under formal articulation agreements. Member institutions articulate post-secondary and undergraduate level transfer credit primarily at the first and second year level. Table 1 (next page) lists all system institutions by type and defines which are senders, receivers or both. The institution’s code is shown after each institution’s name and is used throughout this guide.

Province-wide consultations were held on whether the BC post-secondary transfer system, as reflected in the BC Transfer Guide, was in need of expansion, renewal or radical change (BCCAT 2006). The developing consensus was that planning should occur for multi-directional and multi-level transfers, and that an expansion in the roles of some institutions is acceptable. Further, care must be taken not to compromise the existing system and not to create undue or unsustainable workloads at institutions. Incremental change is seen as more likely to yield success than wholesale reform.

Table 1. Member Institutions in the BC Transfer System

Institution	Code	Sends	Receives
Alexander College*	ALEX	o	
BC Institute of Technology	BCIT	o	o
Camosun College	CAMO	o	
Capilano University	CAP	o	
College of New Caledonia	CNC	o	
College of the Rockies	COTR	o	
Columbia College	COLU	o	
Coquitlam College	COQU	o	
Corpus Christi College	CCC	o	
Douglas College	DOUG	o	
Emily Carr University of Art & Design	ECU		o
Fairleigh Dickenson University*	FDU	n/a - has no course-to-course articulations	
Justice Institute of BC	JIBC	n/a - has no course-to-course articulations	
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	KWAN	o	o
Langara College	LANG	o	
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology	NVIT	o	
North Island College	NIC	o	
Northern Lights College	NLC	o	
Northwest Community College	NWCC	o	
Okanagan College	OC	o	
Quest University*	QU	n/a - has no course-to-course articulations	
Royal Roads University	RR	n/a - has no course-to-course articulations	
Selkirk College	SELK	o	
Simon Fraser University	SFU		o
Sprott-Shaw Community College*	SSCC		o
Thompson Rivers University	TRU	o	o
Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning	TRU-OL	o	o
Trinity Western University	TWU		o
University Canada West*	UCW	n/a - has no course-to-course articulations	
University of BC - Okanagan Campus	UBCO		o
University of BC - Vancouver Campus	UBC		o
University of Northern BC	UNBC		o
University of Phoenix*	UOP		o
University of the Fraser Valley	UFV	o	o
University of Victoria	UVIC		o
Vancouver Community College	VCC	o	
Vancouver Island University	VIU	o	o
Yukon College	YK	o	

*Articulation limited to program(s) with Minister's consent

3. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been developed primarily for institutions in the BC Transfer System interested in seeking designation as receiving institutions. Institutions are encouraged to consult this guide and use those sections most relevant to their needs. In addition, BCCAT's excellent handbook *How to Articulate* (Finlay, 2005) contains a wealth of practical advice on most process and policy issues surrounding articulation. It would be redundant for the Best Practice Guide to cover the same topics; therefore this guide should be used in combination with *How to Articulate*.

4. POLICY, PROCEDURE AND RECORD-KEEPING

Many institutions have already developed their own policies governing transfer credit, but these could require adjustments for their new roles as receiving institutions.

It is standard but not universal practice to deny transfer credit in some cases. For example:

- to certain categories of students e.g.
 - » those not seeking a credential (visiting, casual)
- for certain types of study e.g.
 - » course work considered to be not at the undergraduate level
 - » course work outside a defined curriculum range (e.g. biblical studies)
 - » practicum courses
 - » duplicate courses
- based on the sending institution e.g.
 - » course work taken at an unrecognized institution
- for insufficient performance e.g.
 - » marginal passing grades
 - » incomplete or failed courses
- for elapsed time e.g.
 - » work completed more than n years prior
- if a credential has already been awarded e.g.
 - » course work was part of a completed degree
- for course for which the credit cannot be applied to fulfilling degree or graduation requirements e.g.
 - » transfer credit towards a science credential may not count towards a social work credential

In addition, many institutions deny transfer credit based on the degree or graduation requirement for the student's faculty or program e.g.

- in excess of x units overall
- in excess of y upper level units
- in excess of z units of unassigned credit in a discipline

For institutions with functioning audit systems best practice is to award all transfer credit earned, and to use residency and credential requirements to establish which credits can apply to a student's program.

Institutions should be aware of several protocols on transfer credit adopted to address barriers to student mobility within Canada (bccat.ca/links/transfer.cfm). Transfer credit policies should reflect the receiving institution's stance with respect to these agreements.

An institution must decide if there is any need to place restrictions on its students who choose to take courses externally, intending to transfer them back to the home institution. The Letter of Permission procedure is standard practice at many institutions, for a variety of reasons. Even institutions that have a history of fostering student access and program flexibility might consider imposing some limits, if there is a potential for their key courses to have their enrolments impacted by readily-available equivalent courses offered by sister institutions or even different branches of the same institution.

Best practice is to award all transfer credit earned.

The institution's residency requirement is the preferred tool for upholding the credibility and integrity of the institution's credential.

However, best practice is to refuse Letters of Permission only where there are solid and justifiable reasons to do so, and based on the best interests of the student rather than the institution.

There are long-standing notions of double counting which constrain whether work already used to earn a credential may be used a second or subsequent time. There are many students in BC institutions who already hold bachelor's degrees and are seeking further bachelor's degrees or lesser credentials. Concern over double counting has diminished in recent years and it is now more common for institutions to grant transfer credit for applicable course work, regardless of whether it was already used to earn another credential. The institution's residency requirement (minimum credit to be completed at the home institution) is the preferred tool for upholding the credibility and integrity of the institution's credential.

If it is commonplace for students to change programs after admission, greatest flexibility seems to be gained when an institution's policy is to evaluate for possible transfer credit the full record of each incoming academic student at the time of admission, regardless of the student's intended program. This should require no specific request on the student's part, but instead should be a routine procedure as a student is admitted. The admission offer sent to the applicant should ideally include the transfer credit details, enabling a better-informed decision about whether or not to attend.

A transfer student might apply to more than one receiving institution. Workloads at receiving institutions could be reduced if full transfer credit evaluations were postponed until the new student is about to enroll and has paid a tuition deposit or fee, but it is not in the student's interest to commit to an institution without knowing what transfer credit is to be awarded.

4.1. Transfer Credit and Advanced Standing

Transfer credit helps students achieve educational goals in the following ways:

- it may satisfy specific requirements for a credential;
- it may satisfy requirements for promotion by year class or enrollment priority;
- it may satisfy course prerequisites.

However, as can be seen above, there are many situations in which an institution might choose not to grant transfer credit to certain categories of student. If an institution has an enrollment process that uses prerequisites, an alternate way to record prior learning is needed. This could be in the form of advanced standing or course exemption. That is, recognition that a course has been completed elsewhere, but the course itself carries a zero credit value. The student is not required to re-take that course and its completion is recognized in the Student Information System (SIS) as a course pre-requisite, to enable the student to proceed in that subject. Depending on the SIS in use, another valuable tool might be an all-time prerequisite waiver for a student. In some SISs, this waiver is not self-sustaining and must be re-set each term, greatly reducing its effectiveness.

4.2. Appeal Process

A procedure for students to formally appeal transfer credit decisions seems to be desirable and exists at some institutions (SFU Senate, 2007). The decisions and reasons of the body that arbitrates the appeal should be communicated internally and need to be well-documented so that the volume of future appeals is minimized.

Students cannot wait indefinitely for decisions. A valid ground for appeal should be that a full assessment of a student's transfer credit has not been made after a lengthy period, perhaps four months.

4.3 The Student Record

Transfer credit is very important to students, who need to verify the transfer credit they received as soon as possible after admission and whenever they have completed a course outside the institution for which they are expecting transfer credit.

Transfer credit becomes part of a student's record, frequently used for advising, checking course prerequisite and assessing progress made towards a credential (ARUCC 2003). Most institutions are capable of producing an unofficial student record, often referred to as an internal or advising transcript. These should be available online to the student and to advisers. Details of transfer credit awarded should appear prominently. Credit totals should include transfer credit as appropriate to the record system.

Some institutions use an additional feature of their SIS, a transfer evaluation summary, that gives a student or adviser the clearest indication of where each part of their transfer credit came from, by listing in one column the external course, its institution, course number, course title and grade achieved and in another column the internal equivalent course, amount of credit awarded, any characteristics of that credit and the internal grade recognized. This online PDF document can be sent by email to a student on admission. If transfer credit for any external course is uncertain at the time of admission, the institution should indicate that the credit is "currently being evaluated" or "to be determined". If no credit is to be awarded for a course, the summary should state that explicitly and should not give the impression that credit might be awarded at a later date.

The official record, released at the student's request to prospective employers and to other educational institutions, need not contain full details of transfer credit, but most institutions will summarize the discipline, quantity and source. SFU takes the summary principle further by eliminating almost all detail and indicating only that "n units of transfer credit have been applied" without indicating their source or nature. This avoids issues relating to the endorsement or validation of another institution's record, but seems to be unreasonably sparse in conveying valuable information about the student.

4.4. Applicability of Transfer Credit

If transfer credit is awarded to students entering diverse programs, each of which has its own requirements, it is likely that some of the transfer credit will not apply to the student's current program. Transfer credit could be restricted to a specified program and this is the way that some institutions tackle the issue of applicability. Program requirements can be very complex and students often make choices that seem minor yet might have negative transfer credit consequences.

e.g. At one institution, a higher maximum amount of transfer credit is permitted for an Honors degree compared with a general degree. In the student's last term s/he might receive an attractive job offer and decide to opt out of the Honors degree to take the job. This could affect the amount of transfer credit applicable to the degree.

An unofficial student record should be available online to the student and to advisers..

Accuracy is paramount.

The best solution for both students and advisers is to use the functionality of a degree audit system, often part of the SIS. An on-line product in use at UBC allows students in some faculties to view a dynamic spatial representation of the degree requirements already completed and those yet to be met. Students can follow realistic ‘what if’ scenarios by changing key parameters, such as “what if I were to move to another program or faculty – would I be closer to or further from graduating?” Degree audit systems require meticulous setup, rigorous testing and ongoing maintenance. Their nemesis is any rule that is ambiguous, subjective or ill-defined. The alternative to this is to have a procedure that requires a review of credit whenever a student changes goal, perhaps triggered only when a negative impact is possible. This could involve both credit earned at the institution and transfer credit.

Accuracy is paramount. An audit of a student’s transfer credit by a well-trained adviser is necessary early in the student’s program. It is advisable to place part of this onus on each new student, requiring that s/he actively seeks advising and clarification of any transfer credit awarded and how it applies towards the academic goal.

e.g. At a major university, errors in transfer credit would sometimes go unnoticed for years, until the student applied to graduate, when the entire record was checked to ensure that all graduation requirements had been met. This has the potential to leave the student in an impossible situation.

Whatever process is used, students and advisers need to be clear about how the transfer credit can be applied towards the credential and what requirements remain outstanding.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- has a well developed, published transfer credit policy;
- assesses new students for transfer credit at the time of admission;
- has timely process for adjudicating transfer credit appeals;
- clearly shows student how transfer credit is determined and how decisions can be appealed;
- clearly shows student how transfer credit applies to the current credential;
- allows student to compare progress towards different goals;
- audits transfer credit early in the student’s career;
- uses residency, degree and graduation requirements to delimit applicability of transfer credit awarded rather than restricting the number of transfer credits awarded (e.g. to 60 credits);
- refuses Letters of Permission only in justifiable situations.

5. ASSESSING TRANSFER AND ARTICULATION REQUESTS

With few exceptions, articulation requests are assessed by faculty in the academic department most closely aligned with the course content. The assessor must have knowledge of

- discipline content;
- comparative educational systems;
- institution policies;
- processes for resolving issues.

The assessor should have access, for advice and guidance, to

- an experienced department head, or academic dean;
- Institutional Contact Person (ICP);¹
- administrative staff member who handles transfer credit matters.

It is important that the assessor regularly attends provincial discipline articulation meetings. This fosters better understanding of the nature of other institutions and their courses and establishes collegial contacts, vital to the articulation process.

It is not as clear whether course-by-course or student-specific transfer credit assessments need to be conducted always by faculty. As will be shown later, the volume can be high and the documentation varied. A large volume of assessments must sometimes be completed urgently, often in the summer months when faculty assessors are less available. Admissions staff members could make many of these decisions.

e.g. A student is admitted who has successfully completed a second year European history course at an accredited US university. The course covers the period 1789 – 1845. By agreement with the institution's history department, admission staff are pre-authorized to award transfer credit as 'HIST 2nd year' (unassigned) with a preclusion on further credit for 'HIST 333, The French Revolution and First Republic'.

If there is any trade-off between the exactness of an assessment and the timeliness of that assessment, the interest of the student needs to be considered. A reasonable, balanced process might permit the award of unassigned credit by non-experts in a discipline and restrict course specific transfer credit, or the assessment of unusual courses, to instructors in that discipline.

In some departments within some institutions, staff rather than faculty make the majority of both student-specific transfer credit assessments, and also deal with requests for articulation. Hence, the role of the assessor appears to depend more on institutional culture, collective agreements and history rather than on strictly academic principles. Regardless of who is responsible for articulating courses or for granting transfer credit, she or he must have a thorough understanding of the relevant curriculum.

It is important that the assessor regularly attends articulation meetings.

¹ Each institution in the BC Transfer System is required to identify an Institutional Contact Person who has authority to handle transfer credit matters. In many cases, the institution's Registrar is the designate.

5.1. Transfer Credit Beyond the Curricular Range

An institution must establish policy on whether and what type of transfer credit should be granted if the content of the course deals with disciplines that are not offered by that institution.

e.g. Institution A is asked to articulate Institution B's course on Maritime Law, but offers nothing related to it.

Best practice, as described in *How to Articulate* indicates the need to establish whether the nature of the course merits institutional credit, where the criteria might include the general level and nature of the course and some form of academic endorsement that the credit is appropriate. This might best be done under the authority of an academic dean or perhaps the ICP. If administrative staff makes the determination (which will likely be generalized or unassigned credit or 'No Credit') clear criteria should be approved by the institution to provide a firm basis for these decisions.

e.g. (hypothetical) Articulation requests shall be determined by the Chair of the academic department most closely associated with the course material, but no department shall determine credit on behalf of another department without prior agreement. Where no unit has clear jurisdiction, the determination shall be made by the dean of the faculty.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- establishes clear responsibilities for transfer articulation;
- involves instructional staff (faculty);
- ensures that faculty attend articulation committee meetings;
- has a process for assessing non-equivalent curriculum.

6. FORMAL ARTICULATION VERSUS CASE-BY-CASE ASSESSMENT

Although the processes are often similar and mostly the same players are involved, course-to-course articulation is not synonymous with the assessment of transfer credit in a specific instance. Articulation usually occurs in the absence of any student, and often before a course has been offered. It forms an agreement that binds the parties should a student subsequently move from the sending to the receiving institution. It is a public, transparent agreement, involving responsibilities on both institutions

On the other hand, when an institution receives an application from a student who has taken a course that is not listed in the BC Transfer Guide (whether the institution is within BC, in another part of Canada, or is elsewhere in the world) the institution may employ agreed criteria to decide whether to assess the course and potentially award transfer credit to the student.

e.g. an institution might have a policy to award an equivalent quantity of transfer credit for any course successfully completed in an arts or science program leading to a bachelor's degree, taken at any recognized degree-granting institution in North America. An applicant has a year of Finnish language credit towards a B.A. at the University of Minnesota. This is accepted as 30 credits of unassigned transfer credit towards the BC institution's bachelor degree in Computer Science.

Most institutions record the transfer credit assessment internally and use it as a precedent in the event that another student or applicant takes the same course, but such assessments are not normally published publicly and are not considered formal agreements. The receiving institution usually does not advise the source institution of the assessment, nor does either party bear any responsibility to keep the other advised of curriculum changes, course numbering changes, etc. This process is sometimes referred to as a "student-specific transfer credit assessment", "non-articulated transfer credit" or "case-by-case" transfer credit.

For expediency, UVIC initiates these assessments using calendar descriptions alone, if the source is a university or college in North America. Most other receiving institutions expect the student to provide an official course outline, which can be a burden for a student. It seems reasonable, and is the practice at UVIC, to request a course outline only if there is doubt about the nature of the course. In many cases, the calendar description will be sufficient to yield an assessment, especially if that assessment is without prejudice in other cases. That is, no guarantee is given or implied that the same evaluation would be used in every other case. However, for true articulation of a course, implying a contract between the sending and the receiving institution, the current standard practice of requiring a course outline is prudent.

An institution is free to use a case-by-case assessment as a precedent but is not bound to do so. Often such courses are seen again only sporadically. Institutional policy or the judgment of staff will determine whether a preceding assessment is sufficiently current to be re-used. Generally, an assessment should have been made within the previous five years for it to be used as a precedent, but this will vary by discipline. A Latin course, for example, might have changed very little, but within a few years a Computer Systems Design course might be completely different.

Course-to-course articulation is not synonymous with the assessment of transfer credit in a specific instance..

Publishing internal transfer lists in the form of a simple, searchable, public database is a benefit to staff, prospective students, and current students, and represents best practice.

Although institutions receive these two types of assessment requests from quite different sources and in completely different forms, internal processes frequently mingle these together, so that at the academic department level, the assessor might see little difference between them.

Sometimes transfer credit assessment receives a higher task priority than a request for articulation, because actual rather than potential students are involved. The immediate needs of students have more urgency, so when resources are stretched, delays in articulation can occur.

Many BC institutions have expanded their recruitment efforts both nationally and internationally. The resulting greater diversity of the educational backgrounds of applicants and new students places increased demands on those involved in transfer credit and credential assessment. If an institution is under-resourced to cope with these demands, articulation and transfer requests cannot be responded to in a timely manner.

6.1. Maintaining Internal Transfer Records

Each evaluation must be recorded. Although it would be possible to rely solely on BCCAT's Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES) for maintaining a record of the institution's articulation agreements, no receiving institution does. They record a much broader range of transfer credit assessments such as courses offered by other receiving institutions, out-of-province institutions and unarticulated upper level courses within BC.

This record must be consulted for every subsequent similar case to ensure consistency in evaluations. For courses articulated within BC, the institutional database should match the BC Transfer Guide database exactly, but if a discrepancy should arise, the published database should prevail or the benefit of the discrepancy should be in favour of the student. Any errors in either database should, of course, be corrected.

Most institutions, then, have a searchable internal database of previous assessments that is accessible to some staff who then use previous assessments as precedents, saving considerable effort in re-assessing the same course multiple times. If this is not available to staff, each unarticulated course taken by an incoming student will require assessment, increasing the load on those responsible for this task and potentially delaying requests from sending institutions for articulation.

Mostly, these searchable lists are not available to prospective or enrolled students but are limited to access by authorized staff. Notable exceptions exist: UVIC and TWU publish their internal transfer lists in the form of a simple, searchable, public database. This is a benefit to staff, prospective students, and currently enrolled students, and represents best practice.

To some extent, limiting access to internal tables represents a failure to use readily-available technology, possibly a consequence of inadequate resources. To avoid duplication and possibly inconsistency of information, the public database should refer or link the user to the BC Transfer Guide, if the equivalency rule exists there. If the rule does not exist there, a valid date range would ensure that users are not misled by out-of-date entries.

A typical result from the UVIC query is for the following course from an Ontario university:

Institution: Brock University

TCCourses#: 89647 **Location Code:** CANINST **Year Course Evaluated:** 2001

Year	Required	Source Course	Course Title	UVic	P or LVL	UVic Units
1997		PSYC 1F90	Introduction to Psychology	PSYC 100A PSYC 100B		1.5 1.5

Another example is the following assessment conducted for a UVIC student planning to broaden her/his choice of third year Anthropology courses, using the Letter of Permission procedure. Because this is an unarticulated assessment between two receiving institutions and is at the third year level, it cannot be found in the BC Transfer Guide.

Institution: University of British Columbia

TCCourses#: 246649 **Location Code:** BCUNI **Year Course Evaluated:** 2007

Year	Required	Source Course	Course Title	UVic	P or LVL	UVic Units
2007		ANTH 304	Ethnography of the North - West Coast	ANTH 391		1.5

Nevertheless, institutions should be cautious about publishing transfer credit assessments that have not been formally articulated. These assessments might be idiosyncratic or out-of-date and could potentially mislead someone who might assume them to be current and accurate. The institution must clearly state their conditions of use, such as when the listed credit might not be applicable. Generally, once published in this manner, the institution must be prepared to stand by the stated equivalencies.

The principle of a single data source or knowledge base is important. There are many examples of receiving institutions that have fragmented records of transfer credit precedents maintained by different departments.

e.g. A large research university that has an international student exchange program determines transfer (exchange) credit for its students who take courses elsewhere, but the institution chooses to not record these in the transfer credit precedent database used by admission staff. The unfortunate consequence is that another student, admitted from that same overseas university, but not an exchange student, might receive different credit for the same course.

Several of the institutions take advantage of automated transfer credit modules in their SIS, so the transfer relationships are entered directly to those systems. A data feed is currently available to enable TCES data to be uploaded to the institutions' various SIS databases, but most institutions appear not to use this function. The reasons for this are not clear but likely relate to the relatively small volumes of routine changes that are available in TCES, compared with the greater volumes of unarticulated or case-by-case evaluations, the need to change tables immediately after a decision is made and possible lack of complete data in TCES, as required by the SIS vendor. In addition, some SIS transfer credit modules do not provide exactly the fields necessary to track the progress of requests and to whom they were sent, and to record when the evaluations were reviewed and by whom.

The principle of a single data source or knowledge base is important.

Consequently, some institutions maintain several separate databases, each requiring manual data input, to keep track of transfer rules, resulting in a multiplication of effort. Institutions should not need to maintain any more than their SIS and TCES, depending on how flexible their SIS is.

Both UVIC and SFU use a small-scale database to keep track of requests. In UVIC's case, the database is their complete transfer credit precedent database, because none of these records is kept in their legacy SIS, currently being replaced by SCT Banner. It appears to be an efficient and cost-effective tool for reference purposes.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- maintains single source precedent database of both articulation agreements and case-by-case evaluations;
- honours the BC Transfer Guide if a discrepancy arises;
- establishes conditions under which precedents are used in the absence of an articulation agreement;
- uses similar evaluation processes for formal articulation and for case-by-case;
- allows public on-line access to its precedent database, linking to the BC Transfer Guide whenever appropriate, presenting a single source of information;
- distinguishes in its precedent database between articulated evaluations and case-by-case evaluations and provides date ranges.

7. FUNCTIONALITY OF THE TRANSFER CREDIT EVALUATION SYSTEM (TCES)

There is unanimous agreement among the receiving institutions that BCCAT's TCES is effective and efficient. Staff members who recall using earlier processes, especially those that were paper-based, never wish to return to those days. Nevertheless, many institutions still use a paper-based process internally, when referring the request from the ICP to an academic department. The reasons given are that the Transfer Request Form is too long and confusing and that departments prefer to handle paper. This does not appear to be an issue at UVic, where the academic departments receive requests by email, saving the Registrar's staff considerable time, materials and effort. BCCAT plans to streamline the Transfer Request Form in future.

Sometimes an institution will not respond to an articulation request because there might be no curriculum match at the receiving institution. TCES gives only the following three options for each new request, which some receiving institutions find too restrictive:

- Establish credit
- Deny credit
- Return for more information

Normally, a receiving institution would respond by either denying credit or by establishing credit as some type of unassigned credit. Another option that could be considered by BCCAT is to permit a receiving institution to respond with:

- Evaluation request declined – curriculum does not match
- To be evaluated at request of student or applicant

The advantages of this form of decision deferral might be

- fewer incomplete evaluations requests;
- faster turnaround at the receiving institution;
- reduction in the number of “no credit” evaluations;
- less resources expended on evaluations that might never be utilized.

Once a “no credit” evaluation has been made, and recorded in the BC Transfer Guide, a student will usually not receive transfer credit for that course. However, if the course had not previously been evaluated, a case-by-case evaluation might result in transfer credit for a student.

Another option currently being considered by BCCAT is the implementation of a time limit for pending articulation requests. It appears that many sending institutions submit articulation requests that may not have a suitable match at the receiving institutions. As such, many receiving institutions have not been responding to these requests, leading to a backlog of articulation requests. BCCAT is considering a one year time limit on articulation requests by sending institutions. If a receiving institution has not responded to the request within a one year period, the request will be archived and a notification will be sent to the sending institution. It is the hope that this will help mitigate the current backlog of pending articulation requests.

At UVic, the academic departments receive requests by email, saving the Registrar's staff considerable time, materials, and effort.

7.1. Is The TCES Sufficient?

The BC Transfer Guide and the TCES infrastructure behind it are practical applications of current technology but do not integrate directly with any existing SIS. Each institution needs to either import the TCES data in XML or another format or key the data separately to their SIS. In at least some cases, it would not be a simple matter to integrate the mostly textual data output of TCES to provide a compatible data feed to all proprietary SISs. Further, even if this could be done, the TCES evaluations represent only a small minority of all transfer table entries to the SISs in the larger institutions, so the savings of effort would be limited and not necessarily cost-effective

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- uses functionality of TCES to forward requests electronically to departments;
- participates in regular evaluations of BCCAT's TCES and suggests improved functionalities.

8. TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSFER CREDIT

8.1. Electronic Data Interchange

Some institutions use Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to send and/or receive student records electronically. The sending institutions map and encode their transcripts, using an agreed standard. This is then encrypted and transmitted electronically. The receiving institution receives, decodes and acknowledges the transcript. The EDI process requires significant set-up effort but, where volumes are high, the benefits justify the cost. Currently, partners in BC use an encrypted internet transmission protocol via the University of Texas at Austin operating under the authority of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). Recent transcript volumes were considerable:

Transcript Volume 2007					
Sender	Receiver	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
DOUG	SFU	120	126	415	135
DOUG	UBC	79	65	231	55
DOUG	UFV	3	10	0	6
KWAN	SFU	108	195	270	101
KWAN	UBC	68	78	319	131
KWAN	DOUG	0	0	8	9
LANG	SFU	92	344	146	105
LANG	UBC	143	691	284	188
VIU	n/a	0	0	0	0
VCC	SFU	6	6	6	0
VCC	UBC	17	16	22	0

Sending and receiving transcripts electronically is a faster and more accurate way to ensure that all applicants receive transfer credit according to the published articulation agreements.

The advantage with this format is that a receiving institution may import an entire student record without the need to re-key it and hence may assess every course the applicant has taken for possible transfer credit, using the automation provided in its SIS. This is a faster and more accurate way to ensure that all applicants receive transfer credit according to the published articulation agreements.

Recently there has been concern that the US Patriot Act, enacted after this process was adopted, makes the internet transmission via a US university potentially insecure, despite the strong encryption used. The concern would be equally valid if the same routing was used with the more sophisticated XML format being adopted widely in the USA. Efforts to expand the use of EDI have therefore been temporarily suspended, pending a solution to the routing of student data between BC institutions.

Automated transfer credit evaluation system modules yield fast, consistent service to transfer students.

8.2. BCcampus Connector

BCcampus manages a service known as the Post-Secondary Application Service of BC (PASBC). It is based on a federated network of servers (Porter, 2006) that integrates the student's admission application with the transmission of a student record. While this probably does not directly affect course articulation, it could replace the current EDI process and be scalable so as to have significant impact on admission processes and the assessment of unarticulated courses for transfer credit throughout the BC post-secondary system.

The Connector project design allows institutions to choose which of twelve separate transactions to utilize, where each transaction represents a distinct business process in their students' interactions with their respective educational institutions. It is based on a core group of three student-centred transactions, initiated when a student applies for admission to a BCcampus partner institution or requests to take a course as a visiting student:

- validates student identity (confirms he/she has a record at that institution);
- gets the student's record and moves it to another institution of choice;
- shows courses available at the second institution. (An institution may choose to make some courses widely available to students of other institutions.)

Current discussions are occurring on the nature of the academic record that is to be released to a member institution. The institutions prefer to receive a full secondary and post-secondary record, including any awarded transfer credit for a student or applicant who has previously attended a BCcampus partner institution or a BC secondary school.

This development promises to yield dividends to those public institutions that have already implemented the transfer credit automation modules in their SIS and provides a strong incentive for the remainder to do so.

8.3. Automated Transfer Credit Evaluation

Automated transfer credit evaluation system modules are available to institutions that use a proprietary SIS package, such as SCT Banner, but few BC institutions have yet implemented them. Some institutions such as UBC have built their own transfer evaluation systems with considerable success. This technology does not directly affect course articulation, but can yield fast, consistent service to transfer students. The implementation effort is considerable, but for a large receiving institution it is a worthwhile investment.

e.g. SFU's highly positive experience with such automation dates back to 1990, when that institution designed and built its own automated evaluation software. Based on simple but massive tables, the software automatically calculated a transfer average and assigned all appropriate transfer credit in a fraction of a second. (Although the proprietary system that replaced this legacy system boasted similar functionality, its generic nature and multiplicity of steps has, so far, been unable to match the efficiency of the older software for this task.)

As a result of this commitment to automated evaluations, even if a sending institution is not an EDI partner, the entire student transcript is routinely keyed into the SFU SIS in order to determine whether the work will receive transfer credit and to calculate an admission grade point average (GPA). Precedents are identified and assessed quickly and those courses with no match in the transfer tables are assessed separately and later set up in the SIS as possible future precedents.

If the curriculum were to remain static both at the home institution and elsewhere, eventually precedents should exist for most courses encountered, but this is unrealistic because curriculum change is always ongoing.

Transfer applicants often need to know when their transcripts were sent by the sending institution and when they were received at their destinations. A typical modern SIS can show an applicant each supporting document required and the date it was sent or received.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- receives academic records of prospective transfer students electronically and acknowledges their receipt;
- uses available automation to determine transfer credit;
- advises each applicant what records are needed and when;
- advises each applicant that the record has been received.

9. TRAINING NEEDS WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

In most institutions, even those currently designated as sending only, there will already exist a considerable history of evaluating transfer credit on behalf of incoming students. Different levels of expertise will be found among faculty, student advisers, admission evaluators and administrative staff.

To be effective, employees need to work collaboratively and trust each other. In a collegial learning environment, they can also best train each other. Trainers from outside the institution could not achieve the same results, although regional articulation workshops and the use of outside process experts can also be valuable.

Where assessments are largely done by faculty, there might be rotation of roles within a department. Sometimes new faculty members are assigned such tasks, perhaps with no experience or knowledge of the Province's well-established transfer infrastructure. These faculty need to be introduced to pertinent sources of information such as the *How to Articulate* handbook, the BC Transfer Guide, institutional transfer credit policies and how to read a student record.

Over and above this, advising and admission staff also need to know something about the nature of each discipline and how certain courses are likely to be treated, whether or not they themselves do the assessments. If they do make the transfer credit decisions, they will need considerable knowledge of the field, so it makes sense for each to specialize as far as possible in order that their depth of knowledge can develop. Institutions should encourage those staff members to attend courses and workshops, such as those offered by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). Sometimes, these exchanges shed more light on international issues than on domestic transfer credit principles, but a broader, more professional evaluation perspective will always be beneficial.

Annual in-house transfer credit workshops have been very successful at some institutions. Typically a half-day workshop might be run for each faculty or division in the early part of the academic year. Orientation should be offered for any new assessor as soon as the appointment is known.

Frequent communication, such as a weekly meeting, is necessary for admission evaluators and student advisers to ensure that they are dealing consistently with ever-changing circumstances, processes, work priorities and policies. Whenever changes are abrupt rather than incremental, broader communication sessions are in order and repeated so that every person involved has an opportunity to attend.

Annual in-house transfer credit workshops have been very successful at some institutions.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- collaboratively trains its coordinators, evaluators and administrators to ensure consistency and efficiency;
- provides opportunities for ongoing training and for frequent communication among evaluators, advisors and admissions personnel.

10. EFFECTIVE DATE RANGES

Occasionally, articulation requests are received that bear backdated start dates. For example, a request is received in September 2007 for a new course, but the requested start date for the agreement and the first offering of the course is given as September 1998, while the course outline bears a 2005 date. There is no consensus as to how a receiving institution should treat these requests, although it is normal practice to allow a one-year backdate. If the backdating is for a longer period, it can have a potential impact on the records of students who have already had their transfer credit evaluated and are now attending the receiving institution. Sometimes, it is worth analyzing records to see if any of those students now deserve additional transfer credit, but usually institutions do not do so for various reasons. One reason is that students have likely already made up for this credit and it will no longer benefit them. Also, because courses can change over time, it is not prudent to evaluate a course outline that does not match the start date. Hence, if backdated agreements are made, the course outline needs to match the date of the agreement and any subsequent updates also need to be provided and evaluated sequentially.

Receiving institutions should not be expected to retroactively assess old courses unless they choose to do so, perhaps, on behalf of an individual applicant or student. Retroactive changes of published transfer credit agreements should not occur unless the change clearly benefits all students. The evaluation of an old course should be made in terms of the receiving institution's current curriculum rather than of the curriculum in place at the time the course was taken. Its purpose is to assist a student from now forward, rather than to backfill a missing archive.

10.1. Special Responsibilities of Receiving Institutions

If an existing articulation agreement is reviewed, there are four possible outcomes, each with different timing implications: transfer credit might be improved, worsened, cancelled, or remain the same.

Receiving institutions need to be mindful of the impact that they have on sending institutions. Abrupt changes can severely impact a sending institution by changing student enrolment patterns. In particular, if a significant curriculum change is contemplated at a receiving institution, advance notice to the sending institutions is mandatory, as well as consultation, preferably via the discipline articulation committee. At least a year's notice is needed for a smooth transition although unfortunately this often proves to be impractical.

When an existing transfer credit agreement is improved (from the student's perspective), it can become effective immediately or at the start of that academic year, without any need to give any special notice to the sending institution or to its students who might already be taking the course.

e.g. (hypothetical)

Existing agreement

DOUG BIOL 1105 (3) = UNBC BIOL 1XX (3)

Revised agreement

DOUG BIOL 1105 (3) = UNBC BIOL 123 (3)

This changes the credit from unassigned to assigned and can be assumed to be better for students.

Hence, the change can be implemented immediately.

Receiving institutions need to be mindful of the impact that curriculum change has on sending institutions

When an existing transfer credit agreement is worsened (from the student's perspective), the existing agreement must remain in effect until the sending institution and its students have been advised of the change. Generally, this means honouring the existing agreement until the end of the current academic year or for up to one calendar year.

e.g. (hypothetical)

Existing agreement

CNC HIST 204 (3) = UBC HIST 155 (3)

Revised agreement

CNC HIST 204 (3) = UBC HIST 2nd (3)

This changes the credit from assigned to unassigned and can be assumed to be less valuable for students. Hence, the change must not be implemented immediately. All students who took the course under the current agreements should receive the better credit indefinitely.

Effective dating of articulation agreements requires close attention to detail and careful system design.

When there is no change to an existing transfer credit agreement, no issue of implementation timing arises.

Effective dating of articulation agreements requires close attention to detail and careful system design. An agreement made in 1998, that is effective for a course taken at the sending institution between Sept 1999 and Aug 2002, must be honoured for many subsequent years, or even indefinitely. Transfer rules and the supporting file structures rapidly become quite complex when there are significant changes from year to year.

Another responsibility of the ICP at a receiving institution is to note potential or actual curriculum changes that might affect existing articulation agreements. Ideally, the ICP will have access and input to the curriculum approval process. Even minor changes, such as a proposal to re-number a course or change a discipline designation can have far-reaching impact on the sending institutions and on the record-keeping systems of the receiving institution.

e.g. In approx 2006 a proposal arose in the Psychology department at a large university to re-number PSYC 100 to PSYC 101. PSYC 100 + PSYC 102 are a popular first year course sequence, found in many transfer credit agreements. The reason for the change was to make the first year course sequence appear more standard by becoming PSYC 101 + 102. However, some 15 years earlier, the same institution had offered PSYC 101, which had a higher credit value and had then been split into the current two courses. A simple course number change would have created the need for significant re-configuration of transfer agreements, complex date range-sensitive duplication rules and other complications. The benefits did not justify these costs, so the proposal was dropped at the urging of the ICP, after it had passed through two levels of internal approval.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- pays close attention to the effective dates of articulation agreements;
- monitors own curriculum for changes;
- does not change transfer credit retroactively unless the change benefits all students.

11. CONSISTENCY OF PROCESS

Articulation agreements must be honoured consistently for all programs. There are examples where this is not happening within the BC system.

e.g. At one institution every admitted student is assessed for transfer credit, except in one degree program where the faculty takes some time (often a semester or two) assessing a student's background before agreeing to any transfer credit at all.

This situation creates inequity. Applicants and students need to understand at the time of admission what they must do to complete the program. If an institution has concluded an articulation agreement that agreement must be consistently honoured or the institution must clearly state that transfer credit does not apply in specified faculties or programs.

Articulation agreements must be honoured consistently for all programs.

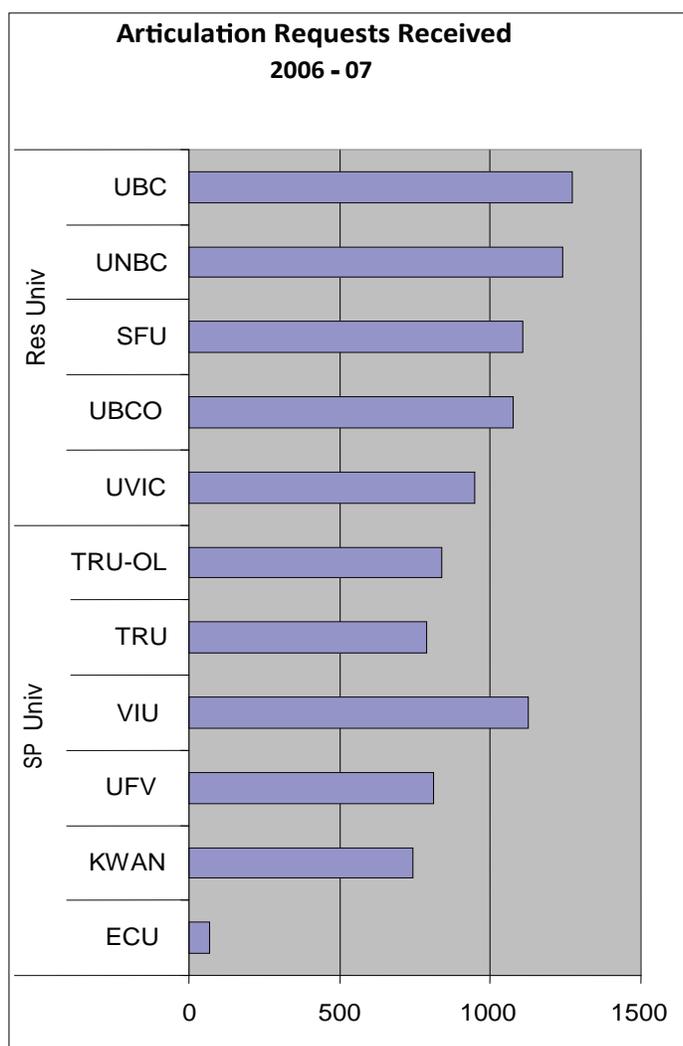
BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- establishes and honours articulation agreements for *all* faculties and programs or clearly and publicly identifies exceptions.

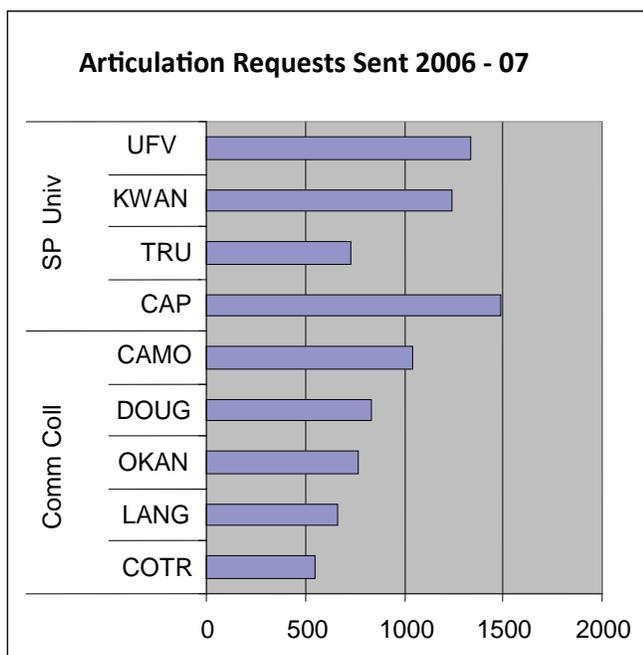
12. VOLUME OF ARTICULATION REQUESTS

One of the many benefits of BCCAT's TCES is the facility to report on the volume and timeliness of processing requests. Over a one year period, from April 2006 to March 2007, receiving institutions each received on average 814 articulation requests, of which 18% were for a re-articulation of a previous evaluation. Some institutions received far fewer than the average – for instance ECU received only 68. This is likely a result of their request to be excluded from the default “all institutions” distribution setting that is often chosen by sending institutions. Given their specialized curriculum, this decision appears to make sense and avoids dealing with requests that will likely be largely irrelevant (e.g. Chemistry courses).

Public Receiving Institution	Annual Articulation Requests Received
UBC	1270
UNBC	1238
VIU	1126
SFU	1108
UBCO	1076
UVIC	950
TRU-OL	839
UFV	810
TRU	791
KWAN	744
ECU	68



The following institutions each submitted at least 500 requests in the same period:



Sending Institution	Requests Sent (>500)
CAM	1487
UFV	1340
KWAN	1239
CAP	1040
LANG	661
DOUG	835
OKAN	768
TRU	732
COTR	551

As expected, the size of the institution has a significant effect on the volume of requests sent. If a sending institution chooses to become a receiving institution, it could expect between 50 to 100 requests per month or 600 to 1200 requests each year. The following factors are likely to influence the volume of requests:

- Breadth of curriculum. A broad curriculum at the receiving institution, including fine arts, sciences, social sciences, and humanities is likely to foster more requests than a narrower curriculum;
- Range and nature of programs offered;
- Receiver's proximity to major sending institutions;
- Receiving institution is included in "all institutions" default TCES selection, available to sending institutions (under review);
- Sending institutions electing to send requests to the new receiving institution: they might see no need to send these requests if there is no history of students flowing between the two institutions.

Therefore, to some extent the number of requests that will be received is under the control of the receiving institution. Regardless of the annual volume of requests received, a large institution with a diverse applicant pool will process many more (student-specific) transfer credit evaluations than are represented in the data collected by BCCAT. For example, although in one year SFU received 1100 articulation requests via TCES, an estimated 5000 further requests were forwarded to academic departments for evaluation on behalf of individual students.

A study on articulation costs (Jarvis 2004) refers to these as ‘non-articulated transfers’ and reports that one institution “estimated the cost ..to be three and a half times that of transferring an articulated course”. The study does not suggest why the cost would be greater but each non-articulated transfer is generally more difficult to evaluate than an articulation request because:

- institutions are more diverse;
- no standardization of course outlines;
- different pedagogies;
- translations from various languages;
- communication with the course owner/author or her/his institution is more difficult.

12.1. Evaluating a Large Stock of Existing Courses

If a sending institution were to become a receiving institution, there might be an immediate need to assess some or all of the large stock of existing courses. The upper limit of this would probably be the current active articulations maintained by the current receiving institutions:

Receiving Institution	Articulation Agreements Active in Fall 2007
UVIC	7835
SFU	7497
UBC	6029
UNBC	5217
UBCO	3387

A triangulation process could still offer the most expedient way to populate large numbers of transfer articulation agreements.

Currently, a typical receiving institution has about 7000 separate active course articulations. It would be very demanding on time and resources for a new receiving institution to make up such a large deficit of transfer articulation evaluations.

When the university colleges transitioned from sending institutions to being both sending and receiving institutions they were faced with evaluating a large volume of lower level courses offered by other sending institutions. Some still in the system recall how this was done. Many course articulations followed the standard procedure but the university colleges often had one or more degree programs offered in affiliation with a university. The transfer guide of that university was used as the basis for a triangulation process. For example, many of the Arts degree programs at UFV began under the oversight of SFU. Hence, it was natural to use that university’s transfer guide to determine transfer credit from CAM to UFV via known courses at SFU. Issues concerning the consistency of standards were more easily addressed starting from the articulations already set by the overseeing university.

Degree programs offered by community colleges today are not usually overseen by another institution. Nonetheless, a triangulation process could still offer the most expedient way to populate large numbers of transfer articulation agreements, particularly if done in consultation with the sending institutions.

It is probably not necessary to articulate all 7000 courses. A new receiving institution should establish priorities based on:

- size of the sending institution;
- existing (or anticipated) student flows;
- whether there is a close match of curriculum;
- nature of the credentials offered by the receiving institution..

Current student flows might be misleading because greater volumes of transfer students are likely to be attracted once their transfer credit is guaranteed and published.

e.g. If a new receiving institution offers a bachelor's degree program in Art Therapy, it could make sense to start with large local sending institutions that offer Fine Art, Studio Art, Psychology and any other disciplines that fit the lower levels of this degree program.

As students enter the receiving institution with unarticulated courses, they would receive specific assessments of transfer credit at the time of admission. These individual assessments could be escalated to articulation requests if the courses were from a BC sending institution and had been taken recently. The ICP would be advised of the need to articulate the course by admission staff and could use TCES to initiate a request. In this fashion, articulation agreements can be built over time. It does not appear to be mandatory that a new receiving institution should try to fill all of the vacant spaces in the provincial transfer matrix. Instead they should indicate, in general terms, that transfer credit will be available at the time of admission and give prospective students some general reassurance as to the criteria that will be employed.

Articulation agreements can be built over time.

Using the TCES, an evaluation category of 'under review' or 'to be evaluated' could replace all of the current blank entries for a new receiving institution. This would be less discouraging to a prospective transfer student than a completely blank entry. The new receiving institution could undertake to place high priority on such evaluations as soon as they are needed on a case-by-case basis and, using TCES, could respond to such case-by-case requests and frequently update the status of articulation requests. It is understood that BCCAT staff are very willing to assist with such efficiency enhancements.

If a new receiving institution is able to pick and choose which transfer articulation requests to evaluate, it follows that existing receiving institutions should have the same choice. Indeed, some institutions, notably ECU, already select which requests to evaluate. Perhaps there is a lingering assumption among the original group of receiving institutions that each is obliged to respond to every request from any sending institution. This assumption might still be valid but requires review in the light of the system's overall evolution.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- prioritizes the stock of existing courses at sending institutions;
- uses efficient triangulation process wherever possible to establish articulation agreements;
- determines a strategy to best meet the receiving institution's needs.

13. TIMELINESS

Lack of timeliness on the part of some receiving institutions is the most common complaint about the current articulation process. In 2006-07, requests for articulation of a course took on average 72 days for a decision and response (Winsemann, 2007). This ranged among large receiving institutions from over 80 days to fewer than 30 days and did not seem to depend on the overall volume of requests. Response times also varied by discipline: business course articulations took longer to resolve than those in Arts or Science, for reasons that are unclear. However, this is not the whole picture, because it fails to track requests that were not completed within that period. Large receiving institutions completed widely varying proportions of the total requests they received, the remainder presumably becoming a residual backlog. The following data are from TCES 2006 – 07 statistics.

The articulation process depends on timely responses to requests if it is to be sustainable and efficient.

Public Receiving Institution	Articulation Requests from Sending Institutions		
	Received	Completed	Proportion Completed within the Period
UVIC	950	747	79%
SFU	1108	632	57%
UFV	810	380	47%
UBC	1270	361	28%
UNBC	1238	<382	<31%

The articulation process depends on timely responses to requests if it is to be sustainable and efficient. While it is hard to say what a minimum standard rate of response should be, rates below 50% are clearly unsatisfactory. Good practice would suggest that if one institution can achieve almost 80% completion, then others should aim no lower. Thirty days is a reasonable time to expect resolution, in most cases.

To achieve timely response to articulation requests, a new receiving institution will need to have addressed the issues in this Guide through planning, training and resource allocation.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- completes articulation requests in 30 days;
- sets up process to ensure that this standard is met consistently.

14. COST OF ARTICULATING

The articulation costing report (Jarvis 2004) estimated the annual province-wide cost of the articulation system to be \$4 million to \$7.5 million. Each course submitted by a sending institution to an average of 6.7 receiving institutions costs each receiving institution \$122 per year to maintain. A major component of this cost was faculty attendance at annual articulation meetings, held for almost every discipline. An institution's change from sender to receiver should not change the amount of faculty attendance at articulation meetings or, therefore, the associated average costs of articulating.

The same report estimated that a receiving institution expends annually between 30 and 50 hours of faculty time per academic department in course articulation. This may represent the best approximation of the true annual impact of changing from sending to both sending and receiving.

14.1. Staffing Levels

Formal articulation via TCES itself gives rise to very few staffing issues, except if large sending institutions make wholesale changes to course numbers, as occurred several years ago when Langara College and Kwantlen Polytechnic University each adopted a new SIS at about the same time, necessitating a new course numbering systems for each institution. Later, in 2004, when DOUG adopted 4 digit course numbers to replace their 3 digit numbers, prior consultation with BCCAT led to a faster and smoother transition, greatly reducing the work of implementing some 10,000 TCES changes.

The TCES-derived load on faculty assessors tends to be broadly spread. Volumes are higher between September and May and lower from June to August. TCES work for administrative staff is less demanding than for student-specific evaluations. The course outline is usually online and in an acceptable format. The external institution is well known and usually has many other articulated courses. The external institution has an ICP, who is available in the same time zone (or the next one) by telephone or email.

Institutions are much more heavily impacted by case-by-case transfer evaluations. They cluster in the spring and summer months and around the start of each new academic year and they are almost always time-sensitive because many enrollment systems prioritize access by seniority of credit earned and utilize extensive course prerequisite structures. It becomes increasingly difficult for an institution to make timely decisions once a backlog has developed: dissatisfied applicants absorb such amounts of staff and faculty time that service levels can spiral downwards. At UVIC and at SFU only 1 to 1.5 positions handle TCES requests at the administrative end (more are involved at the assessment end) and these are rarely overwhelmed unless they are assigned to other duties. At the same time, multiple admission staff collect and forward student-specific (case-by-case) transfer evaluation requests at peak times.

Formal articulation and case-by-case evaluations are of critical importance to students, yet too often they receive insufficient funding, perhaps because they are poorly understood. These functions require, but rarely receive, adequate resources. Institutions that attempt to expand their services without providing sufficient resources will not be able to deliver or sustain high quality student service.

Case-by-case transfer evaluations cluster in the spring and summer months and are almost always time-sensitive.

BEST PRACTICE - RECEIVING INSTITUTION

- acknowledges the workload generated by both case-by-case and articulation evaluations and provides resources accordingly.

15. SOME PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY

- The benefit of articulating a course should exceed the cost of its articulation.
- Support for students is more important than the convenience of an institution or its departments.
- ‘Parity of esteem’ or respect for the mission, faculty, and staff of other institutions builds the trust on which articulation depends.
- The chicken/egg conundrum: articulate only if a student flow already exists vs. a flow will never be present unless the courses are first articulated. This cannot be resolved with certainty, but if the sending institution has significant enrolment in a course and is located within one hundred kilometres of the receiving institution, there is likely a case for articulation.
- ‘Build it (a transfer articulation agreement) and they shall come’ is a reasonable expectation for the receiving institution.

APPENDIX 1: READINESS CHECKLIST FOR A NEW RECEIVING INSTITUTION

NECESSARY

Institutional Rules and Policies

- Develop and publish institutional transfer credit policies, as needed;
- Determine how transfer credit is to be recorded, by whom, for which categories of student.

Responsibility

- Identify ICP for receiving, and set up access to a secure TCES account;
- Identify contact person in each academic department who will assess requests;
- Identify who will be responsible for assessing courses beyond the institution's range of curriculum.

Timeliness

- Determine institutional service standards and set up a reminder procedure.

Consistency

- Develop a precedent and tracking database for assessments and articulation agreements;
- Review *How to Articulate* to ensure general compliance;
- Review *Best Practice Guide for Receiving Institutions*;
- Provide training for course assessors;
- Provide training for student advisers;
- Provide training for admission staff.

Implementation

- Request that BCCAT change institution's role in TCES to both send and receive;
- Prioritize existing courses at sending institutions.

DESIRABLE

Single accessible data source

- Record transfer credit agreements and other transfer credit assessments in the SIS.

Efficiency

- Utilize the automated functionality of the SIS to award articulated and other commonly-encountered transfer credit;
- Import frequently-encountered transcripts electronically.

Appeal

- Establish an appeal process.

APPENDIX 2:

LIST OF BEST PRACTICES FOR RECEIVING INSTITUTIONS

Policy, Procedure and Record-Keeping

- Has a well developed, published transfer credit policy;
- Assesses new students for transfer credit at the time of admission;
- Has timely process for adjudicating transfer credit appeals;
- Clearly shows student how transfer credit is determined and how decisions can be appealed;
- Clearly shows student how transfer credit applies to the current credential;
- Allows student to compare progress towards different goals;
- Audits transfer credit early in the student's career;
- Uses residency, degree and graduation requirements to delimit applicability of transfer credit awarded rather than restricting the number of transfer credits awarded (e.g. to 60 credits);
- Refuses Letters of Permission only in justifiable situations.

Assessing Transfer and Articulation Requests

- Establishes clear responsibilities for transfer articulation;
- Involves instructional staff (faculty);
- Ensures that faculty attend articulation committee meetings;
- Has a process for assessing non-equivalent curriculum.

Formal Articulation versus Case-by-Case Assessment

- Maintains single source precedent database of both articulation agreements and case-by-case evaluations;
- Honours the BC Transfer Guide if a discrepancy arises;
- Establishes conditions under which precedents are used in the absence of an articulation agreement;
- Uses similar evaluation processes for both formal and case-by-case articulation;

- Allows public on-line access to its precedent database, linking to the BC Transfer Guide when ever appropriate, presenting a single source of information;
- Distinguishes in its precedent database between articulated evaluations and case-by-case evaluations and provides date ranges.

Functionality of the Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES)

- Uses functionality of TCES to forward requests electronically to departments;
- Participates in regular evaluations of BCCAT's TCES and suggests improved functionalities.

Technology and Transfer Credit

- Receives academic records of prospective transfer students electronically and acknowledges their receipt;
- Uses available automation to determine transfer credit;
- Advises each applicant what records are needed and when;
- Advises each applicant that the record has been received.

Training Needs within Institutions

- Collaboratively trains its coordinators, evaluators and administrators to ensure consistency and efficiency;
- Provides opportunities for ongoing training and for frequent communication among evaluators, advisors and admissions personnel.

Effective Date Ranges

- Pays close attention to the effective dates of articulation agreements;
- Monitors own curriculum for changes;
- Does not change transfer credit retroactively unless the change benefits all students.

Consistency of Process

- Establishes and honours articulation agreements for all faculties and programs or clearly and publicly identifies exceptions.

Volume of Articulation Requests

- Prioritizes the stock of existing courses at sending institutions;
- Uses efficient triangulation process wherever possible to establish articulation agreements;
- Determines a strategy to best meet the receiving institution's needs.

Timeliness

- Completes articulation requests in 30 days;
- Sets up process to ensure that this standard is met consistently.

Cost of Articulating

- Acknowledges the workload generated by both case-by-case and articulation evaluations and provides resources accordingly.

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