Spot the Difference

DETERMINING EQUIVALENCY FOR COURSES COMPLETED OUTSIDE BC

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How Articulation WORKS within the BC Transfer System

Articulation request sent from sending institution to receiving institution's Transfer Credit Contact (TCC): request includes official course outline or syllabus

TCC screens request using eligibility criteria (e.g., institution or program accreditation)

TCC assigns request to appropriate subject matter expert(s) per institutional policy/procedure

In some cases, the TCC or RO may be authorized to grant transfer credit without further evaluation (e.g., unassigned transfer credit in some situations)

EXTERNAL Articulation Requests

Requests from outside the BCTS, particularly those from beyond Canada and the US, often aren't supported by the same, familiar documentation (course outlines/syllabi), and assessment of these requests may look different from institution to institution (and perhaps even within the same institution).

Unknown quantities:
- *Is there institutional policy language to guide the assessment of external articulation requests?*
- *How different is the process for evaluating external articulation requests versus those within the BC Transfer System (BCTS)?*
- *Do external articulation requests present specific assessment challenges?*
- *How much time/resourcing do non   - BC articulation requests require?*

As both international student enrolment and interprovincial student mobility have been trending upward, exploring the workflow behind external articulation requests may help uncover efficiencies.

THE BCCAT Study

Commissioned by BCCAT's Transfer and Articulation Committee (TAC)

Environmental scan of current policy and workflow at BCTS member institutions for assessing articulation requests from outside BC

Literature review:
- J. Duklas (2019)
- F. McQuarrie (2020, 2021)
- CamProf (2020)
- Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)
- UNESCO Global Convention (2019)

Survey sent out to all BCTS member institutions with Registrar's Office contact information available: 23% response rate, 14% completion rate

Articulation Requests from Outside BC

Domestic **19%**

International **12%**

Policy & Criteria

Half of respondents stated there was a specific institutional policy re: assessment of external articulation requests

#1 criterion for assessing articulation requests from outside the province (100% agreement among respondents):

ACCREDITED INSTITUTION

Receivers also check for Colleges Canada/Universities Canada membership (83%) and whether transfer credit has previously been approved from an institution (67%)

Other information used in assessment:
- International Handbook [of Universities]
- UK NARIC
- Faculty evaluation

Most respondents (67%) reported that the process was generally the same for assessing transfer credit requests, regardless of origin

83% said that requests were handled by the same assessor(s) regardless of origin

Most assessments involve a faculty member and/or department head (71%)

Less frequently, it was reported that the Registrar (43%) or Associate Registrar (29%) is active in an assessment

50% currently use the Transfer Credit System (TCS) in assessing external equivalencies*

86% of respondents identified the RO as the central repository for transfer and equivalency information at their institutions

PROCESS

https://www.reddit.com/r/TheSimpsons/comments/i73u51/it_just_so_happens_i_have_a_chair_at_springfield/

What, How, and by Whom?

IF YOU WERE A STUDENT HERE YOU'D BE HOME BY NOW

Programs

Majority of articulation requests arriving from outside BC tend to be from specific subject areas:

- Business
- Arts/Humanities (English, Philosophy, History)
- Science (Math, Chemistry, Physics, Biology)
- Engineering/CompSci
- Kinesiology

Levels

100- and 200-level courses, diplomas, and Bachelors of Business Administration (BBAs) were identified as more common amongst outside-BC requests

CHALLENGES

Respondents stated unanimously that external articulation requests take more time to process and in almost all cases (86%) significantly more time/resources

100% of respondents also noted that external equivalency requests were more challenging because of missing or unclear documentation

Verifying institutional accreditation/recognition was also mentioned as a pain point by the majority of respondents (71%), as was a lack of resources (57%)

Other challenges include managing records of equivalencies (29%), not having clear/standard procedures (29%), and document fraud (13%)

In the BCTG

External Equivalencies

No conclusive evidence that the inclusion of external equivalencies from outside BC in the BC Transfer Guide (BCTG) has led to a significant change in the number or type of articulation requests that institutions receive:

- **71%** saw no significant change in **number** (29% unsure)
- **60%** saw no significant change in **type** (40% unsure)

Some respondents noticed slight increase, and one stated there was a slight decrease: overall, the net effect of this change in the BCTG seems to be negligible (for those responding to this survey)

As the addition of these equivalencies is still quite new (est. ~2019–2020), this is a good point to revisit in the future as their inclusion becomes normalized

The majority of respondents (80%) said that they were aware that they could publish external equivalencies in the BCTG, but only 40% of these same respondents said that their institutions were currently doing so

✳

Perhaps this is an area where BCCAT could offer more support: BCCAT does most of the heavy lifting to onboard data ([about 90% of the work, which takes a total of 1-3 months](#))—PSI just needs to provide data and consent to having this data published on the BCTG

Spreading the
WORD

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2S79ea7ct0

Publishing External Equivalencies

The Principle of SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE

substantial difference

Term used in international "recognition community" to describe differences between external and "home" requirements/learning outcomes that are significant enough to justify denial of recognition

i.e., differences that mean the applicant would not be able to use the qualification in further study, research opportunities, employment, etc.

Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) and UNESCO Global Convention (2019) are international educational mobility agreements built on the principle of substantial difference: Canada is a signatory to both

Represents a philosophical and methodological shift away from *substantial agreement*, which tests for overall similarity (i.e., all differences get flagged): "reverse burden of proof" means that recognition is the default, and institutions should only refuse recognition on the basis of substantial difference

What Difference Does SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE Make?

Adoption of substantial difference as the core principle for recognition in the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) signaled a change in policy attitude toward simplification, flexibility, and modernization

Substantial difference recognizes that
- Differences are expected, and these constantly shift
- Not all differences are considered relevant in recognition
- Examining differences is more efficient than trying to explain similarity/equivalence
- Recognition is not a yes/no binary: partial and alternative recognition open additional pathways
- Provisions can and should be made for refugees and displaced persons, whose circumstances prevent them from accessing their documentation
- Recognition of foreign credentials defines and builds inclusive, democratic societies

(Bergan and Skjerven, 2017; CICIC, 2021)

TAKEAWAYS

One in three articulation requests comes from outside the province: these requests require more time and resources to evaluate

Institutions have found efficiencies in assessing external articulation requests, such as consolidating evaluation procedures

Missing or unclear documentation is a significant barrier in assessing articulation requests from outside BC

The Transfer Credit System (TCS) may be leveraged by institutions to streamline assessment further

The principle of substantial difference assumes equivalency to be the default: by limiting the search to just significant differences between qualifications, it is a more efficient and effective assessment framework than substantial agreement

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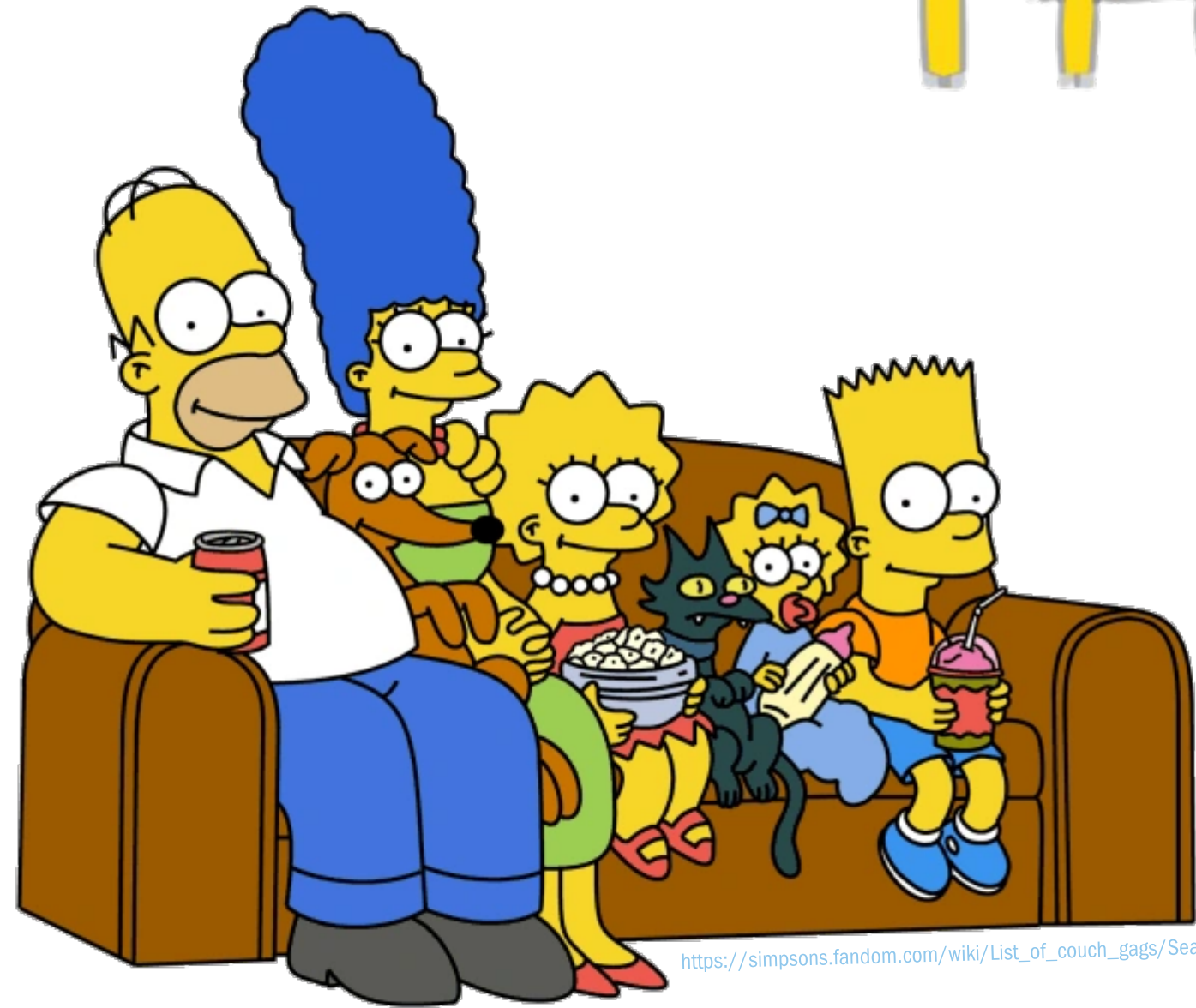
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THANK YOU!

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