Enabling the BC Transfer System – Final Recommendations

Prepared by BCCAT Staff

Background

The BC Transfer System is a network of autonomous institutions who regularly articulate course arrangements to facilitate student mobility. In order to remain in alignment with the original mandate of institutions, colleges were enabled to perform sending functions while universities were enabled to perform receiving functions. The results of this articulation process were published in the BC Transfer Guide. Significant shifts in institutional mandates and system complexity have occurred since the inception of the BC Transfer Guide over 20 years ago. There are now 11 public and four private university members of the BC Transfer System, and the majority of institutions are offering one or more degree programs. Further, student mobility data indicate students are moving across sectors and between institutions within sectors, regardless of whether an institution performs sending or receiving functions. In keeping with these shifts, several institutions have expressed interest in expanding the scope of their listings in the BC Transfer Guide website beyond their current roles.

In June, 2011, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) embarked upon a consultation titled "Enabling the BC Transfer System". The discussion paper presented BCCAT's vision for enabling all institutions to perform sending and receiving functions within the BC Transfer System. The discussion paper outlined several flexible options that would enable institutions to determine the size and scope of the role they could choose to assume within the BC Transfer System. Feedback was obtained through an electronic survey that accompanied the discussion paper, system meetings throughout the fall of 2011, and from attendees at the Joint Annual Meeting (JAM) on Nov 4, 2011.

BCCAT's Transfer and Articulation Committee (TAC) charged BCCAT with convening a sub-committee to review the feedback obtained through the consultation for the "Enabling of the BC Transfer System" discussion paper. The committee reviewed the findings and put forward the following draft recommendations for feedback and review from the TAC. The following recommendations have been reviewed and endorsed by the TAC and have been approved by BCCAT's Council.

The Recommendations have been divided into the following four sections:

- Implementation
- Communication/Education
- Maintenance
- Research and Outreach

Enabling Committee Members:

- Anna-Lee Boulton, Senior Admissions & Academic Advising Officer, Enrolment Services, Capilano University
- Neil Coburn, VP, Education and Students, Selkirk College
- Robert Hensley, Registrar, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Sharon Josephson, Professor, Okanagan College
- Grant McMillan, Registrar, Trinity Western University
- Kate Sutherland, Senior Advisor to the Provost, Thompson Rivers University

BCCAT Staff:

- Mike Winsemann, Transfer and Technology Manager
- John FitzGibbon, Associate Director, Transfer and Articulation
- Christi Garneau, Articulation Coordinator

TAC Membership:

Chair: Martin Gerson, Vice-President Academic & Provost, Langara College

- Robert Campbell, Dean of Arts & Sciences, Capilano University
- Ian Cavers, Associate Dean of Science, Curriculum & Learning, University of British Columbia
- Sarah Dench, Director, University Curriculum, Simon Fraser University
- Tim Haskett, Assistant Professor, University of Victoria
- Robert Hensley, Registrar, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Sharon Josephson, Professor, Okanagan College
- Nikki Lee, Student, Simon Fraser University
- Ron McRae, Dean of Instruction, College of the Rockies
- Patricia Sackville, Associate Dean - Academic Studies, BCIT
- Katherine Sutherland, Senior Advisor to the Provost, Thompson Rivers University
- Trevor Toone, Principal, Columbia College

Implementation

The central question of the "Enabling of the BC Transfer System" consultation asked respondents whether they supported BCCAT enabling BC Transfer System members to perform both sending and receiving functions. Of the 78 responses, 97% were in support of BCCAT moving towards a fully enabled environment. As one respondent indicated, "Having both Sending and Receiving status demonstrates a clearly articulated system working collaboratively between and among partners." When asked to elaborate, respondent feedback centred upon articulation maintenance, timelines, and resource implications. As such, BCCAT is proposing a phased approach to implementation that offers institutions flexibility with regard to changes in their roles within the BC Transfer System.

Recommendation 1: BCCAT should enable all institutions to perform sending/receiving functions.

All institutions will be enabled to perform partial sending/receiving functions by **September 1, 2012**. This will result in the following:

- All institutions will have their accounts enabled in the Transfer Credit Evaluation System (TCES) to perform sending/receiving functions.
- All institutions will be listed as sending/receiving in the BC Transfer Guide website.
- Newly enabled receivers can declare credit for sending courses as necessary.
- Newly enabled receivers will **_not_** be required to receive formal requests for articulation at this time.
- Senders can submit courses for articulation as necessary to receiving institutions that choose to receive articulation requests.

BCCAT will work with all institutions to enable full sending/receiving functions by **September 1, 2014**. This would result in the following:

- All institutions receiving articulation requests from other BC Transfer System members.
- All institutions actively sending out course outlines as necessary.
- Maintenance responsibilities for articulation arrangements being shared between the two articulated institutions.

Recommendation 2: A point person at BCCAT should be appointed to coordinate and oversee all aspects of the implementation.

- The point person will work with other BCCAT staff to implement recommendations as a result of this consultation.

Recommendation 3: BCCAT should monitor the impact of enabling on articulation activity as a result of implementation.

- BCCAT should produce ongoing reports, to the system and to its Council, on the impact of the enabling implementation.
- BCCAT will work with the institutions to highlight best practices and navigate any emerging challenges as a result of the implementation.

Communication/Education

The need for greater communication both within the institutions and from BCCAT was highlighted as part of the consultation feedback. Feedback from JAM delegates offered the following suggestions:

- Create an internal committee dedicated to reviewing data and prioritizing agreements
- Ensure individuals involved with transfer and articulation activities understand their responsibilities and roles
- Establish clear procedures for reviewing requests, decision-making processes, and communication within and between institutions

- Facilitate better communication and understanding among articulation committees, Institutional Contact Persons (ICPs) , Transfer Credit Contacts (TCCs), and System Liaison Persons (SLPs), and encouraging system-wide information sharing

The need for greater communication was also reflected in the survey, where one respondent offered: "BCCAT could continue to provide a forum for training and discussion around the articulation issues which are common. A continued dialogue about the level of activity (mobility) would stimulate the need for formal articulation".
In addition, the need for education and training in matters related to articulation was also highlighted. Feedback from JAM offered the following:

- Develop a best practices guide for participants including information about the system, procedures, and communication tools
- Create a website/database and relevant documents to encourage efficient engagement across the system
- Provide a forum for collaboration and discussion regarding transfer and articulation activities
- Build online resources and tutorials for evaluating requests including case studies about the application of articulation principles
- Ensure all participants are appropriately trained to complete their responsibilities, providing institution-specific information when required

The Enabling Committee felt that in order to support a more fully enabled system as readily as possible, effective communication within institutions among those responsible for articulation and transfer, including ICP/TCC, SLP, and articulation committee representatives, would be an asset. The Enabling Committee also felt that the efficacy of the institutional staff would be enhanced with more focused training and support from BCCAT.

Recommendation 4: BCCAT recommends that institutions consider the necessity of internal mechanisms to enhance and/or systematize communication between articulation committee members, articulation personnel, and the registrar's office. Enhanced communication within institutions would:

- ensure that practices are consistent, policies are clear, and articulation arrangements are expeditiously managed
- focus on transfer and articulation issues relevant to the institution
- raise awareness of articulation personnel within the institution
- allow the institution to remain current on articulation and BCCAT initiatives
- share institutional knowledge at the articulation committees and vice versa

Recommendation 5: BCCAT should embark on a communications campaign that explains the implications of enabling to institutions.

- BCCAT should develop materials for articulation personnel that describe the implications of the changes for institutions, and strategies that could be adopted to mitigate any resource demands. This would be developed during the March to September 2012 period.
- BCCAT should arrange for meetings and workshops to answer questions, and provide training on roles and responsibilities of transfer and articulation staff and representatives. Training could be provided beginning in the spring of 2012.

Recommendation 6: BCCAT should develop an online education/training centre for articulation activities that could include training modules, webinars, tutorials, and videos.

- This material should be developed throughout the spring and summer of 2012 in support of the phase 1 target date for implementation.
- Materials should regularly be expanded and updated as the need arises.

Recommendation 7: BCCAT should develop a mechanism to allow institutions to inform BC Transfer System members of curriculum changes that impact articulation.

- This will allow institutions to remain informed about curriculum changes in disciplines throughout the BC Transfer System.
- The use of Twitter or RSS feeds as a notification method, and producing a regular summary of curriculum changes reported through articulation committee minutes, should be explored.
- This recommendation should be implemented as part of BCCAT's 2012-13 work plan.

Recommendation 8: BCCAT should provide additional information on articulation activity to articulation committees to help raise awareness about articulation patterns within the discipline.

- This includes reports on unassigned credit, courses that were denied credit, and pending articulation requests.
- This recommendation should be implemented as part of BCCAT's normal interactions with articulation committees beginning in spring, 2012.

Maintenance

Considerable concerns were expressed about the maintenance burden that would result from a fully enabled BC Transfer System. According to the survey, 32% felt that their institution currently does not dedicate appropriate enough resources to support articulation activity, while an additional 51% were unsure. One respondent indicated: "As a sending and receiving institution we find it very difficult to have the resources to maintain in a timely manner". Feedback from JAM also offered the following suggestions:

- Establish system-wide timelines for new member orientation, reviewing agreements, and communicating decisions
- Administrators must prioritize transfer and articulation and assign appropriate resources to related activities
- Regularly review and assess agreements, policies, and procedures to ensure they are in the best interests of students, the market, and post-secondary system

The Enabling Committee recognized that clarity on how articulations are currently maintained, and how they will be maintained in the enabled environment, would be an asset. In addition, it was also expressed that guidelines around what constitutes an appropriate rationale or business case for articulation would be a benefit to BC Transfer System members. The following recommendations speak to the issues identified by stakeholders.

Recommendation 9: BCCAT should explore how articulations are currently being maintained at institutions to determine best practices, and clarify expectations around maintenance of articulation agreements.

- Information on best practices with regard to articulation maintenance should be made available on the BCCAT website.
- This work should be completed as part of BCCAT's 2012/13 work plan.

Recommendation 10: BCCAT should explore with institutions what constitutes a sound rationale for a business case for articulation.

- Guidelines should be published on the BCCAT website.
- This work should be completed as part of BCCAT's 2012/13 work plan.

Research and Outreach

Several areas of research were identified through the consultation that could help deepen understanding of issues related to articulation, articulation maintenance, and student mobility. The following recommendations are aimed at enhancing the current knowledge base of student mobility patterns in the BC Transfer System. These recommendations can be implemented as time and resources permit.

Recommendation 11: BCCAT should investigate the long-term possibility of moving the BC Transfer System more towards outcomes-based articulation.

- A background paper exploring the issues, benefits, and drawbacks could be produced during the 2012/13 fiscal year.

Recommendation 12: BCCAT should research the feasibility of using existing data from the STP to evaluate the current movement of upper level transfer credit in order to determine the implications of expanded upper level articulation.

- Little research has been conducted into the extent of upper level transfer credit in the BC Transfer System.
- In light of changing residency requirements, additional information on the rationale for expanded upper level articulation would be an asset.

Recommendation 13: BCCAT should engage in marketing and communication activities that provide students with a better understanding of their transfer pathways/options, and information about institutional appeals and advocacy.

- This work can be undertaken as part of BCCAT's 2012/13 Marketing and Communications Plan.