

Environmental Studies Block Transfer Report

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Introduction

The Environmental Studies Block Transfer Project, funded through the BBCAT Transfer Innovation Fund, had the objective of increasing the number of environmental program block transfer agreements among BC post-secondary institutions. Initially requested from the Environmental Studies Articulation Committee in 1999 with a budget of \$10,000 CAN, it was later re-budgeted to \$6,500, on the understanding that the project would be less extensive than previously envisioned.

Summary of Activities

The first activity of the Environmental Studies (ES) Block Transfer Project was to hold a half-day workshop for ES Coordinators who were interested in block transfer. This workshop was linked with the 2000 ES Articulation Meetings held at Langara College. The workshop was attended by representatives from Douglas College, Kwantlen College, Langara College, North Island College, Northwest Community College (NWCC), Open Learning Agency, Royal Roads University, Selkirk College, University College of the Cariboo, and the University of Victoria. At this meeting, it was generally agreed that block transfer agreements were useful and attractive to students, but numerous challenges were identified, and it was agreed that individual course articulation was easier to achieve.

The only transfer agreement to have come out of this workshop was that between the University of BC's Global Resource Systems (GRS) Program and Langara College's Environmental studies Program. This agreement has worked well, with a steadily increasing number of students transferring into the UBC program from Langara. Talks were also held between Langara College (Environmental Studies Program) and Northwest Community College (Natural Resources Program) but it was found that the non-university transferable content of the Natural Resources Program was too great a barrier for block transfer .

More recently, Langara College (Frank Williams) and the Open Learning Agency (Trevor Chandler and Karen Meen) held talks about the possibility of block transfer, but recent developments with the block transfer of associate degrees make it more attractive to develop an associate ES degree, and transfer that. At present, the development of an Associate Degree in Ecology accommodates most of the Langara ES students.

In June 2002 Dr. George Kennedy of the UBC GRS program accessed funds from the ES Block Transfer Project to visit Northwest Community College (Terrace) to attempt to develop a block transfer system similar to what had been worked out between UBC and Langara College. While no agreement has been produced so far, both sides remain optimistic that an agreement can be made, and the first student from NWCC has transferred to the GRS program. Dr. Kennedy is also interested in exploring the possibility of developing an agreement between the GRS program and the NWCC Coastal Eco-Adventure Tourism Program.

It remains my belief that while ES Coordinators remain receptive to the concept of block transfer, current student enrollment has been so great as to give the development of block transfer agreements a very low priority relative to other issues (such as scheduling and developing more courses). Moreover, the success of the individual course transfer process has made block transfer less attractive than it may have been previously.