

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

ACAT Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2008 Yellowhead Tribal College, Edmonton

Present: Peter Haney, Larry Hlushak, Robin Fisher, Fred Carnew, Alex Kondra, Gord Nixon, Anne Ryton, Marg Leathem, Ron Woodward (Chair), Lisa Fox, Anna Kae Todd, Bert Seinen, Gerry Kendal (p.m.), Olive Yonge (a.m.), Jonathan Strand (for Catherine Eddy), Stephen Griffith (for Peter Berry), Stella Shrum, Vincent Steinhauer

Absent: Ann Tierney, Catherine Eddy, Kelly Kennedy, Peter Berry

- Ron Woodward welcomed Council to the third meeting of the 2007-2008 academic year. As Ron was unable to travel to Edmonton, Anna Kae Todd co-chaired the meeting.
- A discussion of sending/receiving institutions was added to the agenda under item 3b.

It was moved by Fred Carnew, seconded by Larry Hlushak that the minutes from November 21, 2007 be adopted with one change to attendees.

CARRIED

2a. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Event in Alberta

Council members discussed hosting a joint PLAR event in conjunction with the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), which is planning to host their annual event in Banff from October 18-22, 2008. This event would replace a provincial event that was formerly being planned to be hosted solely by ACAT in May 2008. Council members mentioned that it would be an excellent opportunity to maximize participation at both events, and those that attended the 2007 CAPLA event indicated that it was a very worthwhile conference to attend.

It was moved by Marylea Jarvis, seconded by Olive Yonge that ACAT move forward with organizing a joint PLAR event with CAPLA to be held October 2008.

CARRIED

Next Steps

- The ACAT Secretariat move forward with requesting funds to support the CAPLA conference, and will work with CAPLA to jointly organize the event.

2b. Athabasca University- BCCAT application

During Ron's visit with BCCAT in January, it was identified that Athabasca University was interested in applying for membership in the BC Transfer System. It was identified at the time that one opportunity to solidify ACAT's support for increased cross-jurisdictional transfer would be for ACAT to write a letter of support for Athabasca's inclusion in the BC Transfer System. This issue generated much discussion, and members determined that writing letters of support on behalf of one institution has not been a role for Council in the past and as such agreed not to move forward with drafting a letter of support.

2c. Members in Good Standing- letter to institutions

At the November meeting, members agreed to move forward with developing institution status reports to be sent to each member institution. A draft letter to institution staff was distributed for Council review.

Members agreed to send institution letters and status reports to the institution presidents.

It was moved by Peter Haney, seconded by Olive Yonge that the institution letter be approved in principle, and that the Secretariat should move forward with sending out the letter.

CARRIED

Next Steps

- The Secretariat will make slight adjustments to the letter, and will send it out to the President of each member institution. Status reports will be compiled, and will be shared with institutions in late fall, in order to align with requests for transfer pattern data from institutions.

3a. Strategic Priorities from Roles and Mandates Framework

Council members discussed numerous issues related to how Council can move forward with implementation of the recommendations provided to the Minister on the Roles and Mandates Framework, as well as the key priorities mentioned in the Minister's recent letter to Council. They also discussed the potential impact that the recently released Public Agencies Governance Framework may have on the Guidelines Review Subcommittee that is currently examining ACAT's structure and governance.

As a result of the new six-sector model for the publicly-funded post-secondary system outlined in the Roles and Mandates Framework, the opportunity to align ACAT with the six-sector model was discussed. Membership in ACAT will be reviewed as part of the work of the Governance subcommittee, established last October.

As well, ACAT identified that they also have representation from First Nations institutions, which is not identified in the Roles and Mandates Framework model. Members identified a need to send a letter to the Minister requiring the recognition of the important role these institutions play in Alberta's post-secondary system, and that government should consider the role of these institutions in the advanced education system.

Next Steps

- Council members supported the Guidelines Review Subcommittee in moving forward, and to expand the subcommittee's mandate to include a review of the mandate, vision, and structure of ACAT. The subcommittee's membership will be expanded to include Vincent Steinhauer (First Nations institutions), and a representative from the comprehensive community institutions (Anna Kae Todd or Marylea Jarvis). The subcommittee will report back to Council at the May meeting.
- To move forward on key Council priorities, specific strategies will be pulled out of the recommendations document and letter from Minister Horner to feed into the draft ACAT Business Plan that will be discussed at the May meeting.
- Council members indicated that they are also keen to move forward with forging stronger relationships with the K-12 system and the Campus Alberta Quality Council.
- In order for Council to develop recommendations for a performance indicator to reward collaboration, further background information is needed from the Ministry.

3b. Sending vs. Receiving Institutions

Although ACAT does not define institutions as senders or receivers, there is a common perception that most institutions may only fulfill one of those roles in the transfer system.

A specific example of how the traditional perceptions may be hindering the development of new agreements was raised by Council member Gord Nixon, who brought an example of transfer proposals initiated by SAIT, where they are proposing to be a receiver for certain courses that they have been accepted on a case by case basis in significant numbers, but would like to see the transfer agreements reflected in the guide.

Gord Nixon indicated that approximately 30% of new SAIT learners come from other post-secondary institutions. With the increased numbers of students bringing previous learning, they feel that it warranted formalizing transfer agreements in order to reduce case-by-case assessments. This was brought forward to council in order to clarify ACAT's policies around sending and receiving institutions.

Several issues were discussed, such as workload implications, and the history behind traditional transfer roles. Council members stressed ACAT's operating principle to support the recognition of student's previous learning regardless of the direction they are transferring.

Members felt that it is important for the ACAT Secretariat to address this misconception about traditional institution roles, and to reiterate that there are no policy restrictions related to institution roles.

Next Steps

- ACAT Secretariat will do more background research into the underlying issues and historical context of how the perception of the sending/receiving institution designation came to be.
- The Policies, Principles, and Procedures document and other ACAT policy documents will be reviewed in order to clearly articulate the policy direction that institutions are free to play either role in the system.
- The Secretariat will work with member institutions in order to ensure that they are aware of ACAT's policy.

3c. BCCAT Articulation Committees Discussion

An overview of BCCAT's articulation committee model was provided, and key benefits and drawbacks to implementing a similar approach in Alberta were discussed. Members indicated that it would be an excellent way to gain faculty buy-in of the transfer system and engage faculty in the transfer agreement process, but would also require significant institution resources to implement.

One suggestion to approach increasing articulation options in Alberta was to start with broad interdisciplinary committees, which would start building faculty commitment to the articulation process.

Next Steps

- The ACAT Secretariat will complete an analysis of the BC articulation system, and will develop a discussion document outlining several strategies for consideration at the May meeting.
- Questions that could be posed to institutions and other stakeholder groups (i.e. AUA, SAO, etc.) will be developed in order to gauge the level of support for advancing this approach in Alberta.

3d. Newman Theological College Submission

Newman subcommittee members reported that they held an initial meeting to review the submitted proposal, and had written the college to request clarification of a few items.

Once a formal response from Newman is received, the subcommittee will reconvene to discuss the response, and will then develop a recommendation to bring to Council.

Subcommittee members brought to Council's attention a couple of broader issues that arose from the review of Newman's proposal. These issues would not affect Newman's proposal, but members thought were worthy of further discussion at Council. These included:

- o *Instructor Academic Freedom*- In reviewing the admission questionnaire, it was clear that academic freedom was not one of the current criteria. Council members agreed to explore this issue further to see if it warrants a policy change.
- o *Common grading system*- Council members were not aware of past issues arising from institutions not following the common grading system, however, they did identify that it would be appropriate to research this issue further.
- o *Graduate-level courses*- Subcommittee members felt it would be timely to discuss whether graduate-level courses would be appropriate for inclusion in the Transfer Guide. The consensus of Council members was that not enough students would benefit from the huge amount of work that would need to go into developing these types of agreements. As there is currently no policy prohibiting graduate courses from being included in the guide, Council members recommended that a policy statement about the types of courses to be included/excluded from the transfer guide be developed.

Next Steps

- The Newman subcommittee will reconvene once a response is received from the institution, and will subsequently develop a recommendation to be shared with Council members.
- The Secretariat will report on research activities related to the above issues at the May meeting.

3e. BCCAT's Education Planner

An overview of the interactive post-secondary planning tool was provided to Council members. ACAT would be interested in encouraging the Ministry to explore further how a similar tool could be developed in order to provide comprehensive planning opportunities for Alberta students.

Next Steps

- The ACAT Secretariat and other Advanced Education and Technology representatives will further explore the tool within the Alberta context.
- Council members are strongly encouraged to explore the BC site, which is located at www.educationplanner.ca.

3f. Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer Update

The third annual PCCAT meeting will be held in Toronto from June 16-18, 2008 and Council members are strongly encouraged to attend. Ron Woodward and Robin Fisher both indicated that they are interested in attending.

Ron Woodward mentioned that BCCAT has been fulfilling the Secretariat support duties for PCCAT for the past two years, and that it may be a timely opportunity for ACAT to take a turn providing this support. This issue, as well as the future of PCCAT governance will be discussed at the June meeting.

Next Steps

- The ACAT Secretariat will keep Council members informed when registration becomes available, and will forward a draft agenda once it is available.

4a. Secretariat Update

- *Articulation update*- Anne Ryton provided an overview of recent activities of the various articulation committees. She indicated that three committees intend to meet within the next month: Second Languages, Computing Science, and Cree Language. As well, an interim report outlining the changes to the Math curriculum will be sent to post-secondary institutions in the next week, which will ask institutions to determine if there may be opportunities for the Math 30-2 course to be used as a prerequisite in certain circumstances.
- *Communications Plan update*- Anne Ryton provided an overview of communications activities since the last Council meeting, and indicated that she anticipates that there will be an increased capacity to move forward with these initiatives once the new ACAT intern joins the Secretariat in the next few weeks.
- *Transfer Patterns update*- Anne Ryton shared a draft of the Transfer Patterns Report, the Transfer Patterns Extracts by Sector report, and the BC-Alberta Transfer Report. She indicated that these reports would be finalized and sent out to all institutions in the next few weeks.

4b. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Policy Framework

Lisa Fox provided an update on the progress of the Framework as well as an overview of a recent presentation made to members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with representatives from Alberta post-secondary institutions. Advanced Education and Technology is currently gaining additional feedback from PLAR practitioners and stakeholders on the draft Framework, and will share a new version of the Framework with Council members once it has been developed.

4c. CAQC meeting

Ron Woodward described a recent meeting he had with the Chair of the CAQC, where they discussed opportunities for the two Councils to work together.

Issues discussed at the joint meeting included:

- Concerns about the different research roles identified for institutions in the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework.
- ACAT will also work with CAQC to explore best practices of current laddering opportunities. This could lead to situations where if an institution is proposing a new degree to the CAQC that would potentially involve laddering opportunities, the institution would be able to follow identified Best Practices.
- They also shared information on quality assurance and transferability issues related to Alberta-based degrees that are being offered outside of Alberta, as well as non-Alberta-based degrees that are offered inside of Alberta.

Next Steps

- The Secretariat will report on progress made on research projects at the next meeting.

4d. Institution visits

Ron Woodward has had the opportunity to visit several institutions to discuss issues and opportunities they are facing and how ACAT can help to support their efforts. To date he has visited Bow Valley College, University of Alberta, Grant MacEwan College, and Keyano College.

Once a few more visits have been completed, the Secretariat will develop a summary report that will outline trends from the visits to be shared with Council.

Some key issues discussed so far include:

- Challenges institutions face related to part-time learners
- Implementation of PLAR
- Out-of-province transfer issues
- Need to raise awareness of ACAT
- Resource issues at institutions
- Need to improve the ACAT computer system

Other Business

Council members provided updates of activities at their institution/sector.

The next meeting will be held at Medicine Hat College on May 9, 2008.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.