

Subsection 3.2: Transcription of Transfer Credit

Considerations:

The Canadian registrarial and pathway communities are solidly committed to developing partnerships among institutions locally, and a number advocate for the flexibility to develop them in a customized fashion. There is also strong desire to harmonize institutional policy to avoid ad hoc transcript policies and practices in the area of transfer credit, to develop jurisdictional standards that preserve institutional autonomy, and to ensure transcripts contain information about transfer to enhance mobility. There are differences of opinion regarding principles related to the tension between program autonomy, institutional autonomy, and adoption of standards, and including details regarding studies taken at another institution on the home transcript.

Online Survey Questions:

The following questions are embedded within the online survey accompanying this Consultation Document. They are provided below to facilitate advance reflection.

1. In your opinion, what are the risks and opportunities when student information regarding studies taken at another institution is embedded within your school's transcript? What policy and systems considerations emerge?
2. What assumptions drive decision making in this area? What might be ways to mitigate reliance on those assumptions?

Background:

During the first phase of the national project, we clearly heard the following principles should guide transcription of transfer credit (2014, pp. 107-108):

- Clarity (source of transfer credit, what was awarded, what type, and how much credit);
- Transparency (display necessary information to ensure other organizations reading the transcript understand what was awarded); and,
- An appropriate level of detail (sufficient information to ensure a clear understanding of how the awarded transfer credit applies to the credential).

As a means to provide additional clarification, select institutions reported providing a supplementary document with the transcript that 'tells the story' of transfer to both the student and other organizations.

The ARUCC 2003 Transcript Guide is clear on transcription of partnerships: *adding the names of all partner institutions is considered "essential" whether the relationship involves degree or non-degree*

studies. Having noted this, only 33% indicated this practice is followed. A review of transcript samples reveals a significant lack of transfer credit detail is included on transcripts.

Typically, the source institution is noted and transfer credit is indicated as awarded; however, the level of detail varies and institutions are not routinely explicit on transcripts regarding how they calculate credit weight even for their own institution.

In examining the almost equally balanced divisions of perspective identified in the first phase, the foundational principle that appears most in conflict is the tension between preserving the transcript as an academic record that is reflective of that which is controlled and delivered locally by the home institution (i.e., verifiable, subject to local quality control, defensible, monitored) versus facilitating partnerships and transfer by putting another institution's information on the transcript as a means to acknowledge the partnership and/or to enhance clarity and transparency.

The notion that information from another institution should not be featured on home transcripts stands in contrast to many examples where this practice, when carefully thought through, has proven to be in the best interest of the student, mobility, transparency, and efficiencies. In instances where this occurs, one institution typically holds the final "official" record of the student. The researchers found examples across Canada that amplified these principles in action and note partnership type sometimes drives the final outcomes.

A college and university in Alberta have developed a degree completion opportunity wherein the college notes the full four years on the transcript. In this example, all courses are taught on the college campus; however, the upper two years officially comprise the courses owned and taught by the university. The college, therefore, notes that the upper year courses are placed on the college transcript for information purposes and indicates that the "official" transcript outlining the full degree is distributed by the university. This approach has ensured the student is seamlessly supported, the administrators and faculty have a complete record for degree progression review, counselling, and audit, and the student can still access an official version for the purposes of demonstrating completion of a degree program at a university.

Agreement or strong agreement was evident for the following:

- Institutional policy should be harmonized to avoid ad hoc transcript policies and practices (80, 74%);
- A jurisdictional transcript standard should be developed that preserves institutional autonomy (88, 82%);
- Transcripts at receiving and/or sending institutions should contain transfer details to enhance mobility (69, 65%).

There appears to be almost equal division of perspective on the following:

- Partnership types should influence what appears on a transcript;
- Institutions should develop partnerships locally and by program in a customized fashion;
- An institution should not publish partner information from another school;
- One institution should hold the official student record.

Duklas et al. (2014). ARUCC PCCAT Phase 1 Report, p. 100.

Another example in BC represents a partnership among four institutions wherein the final diploma credential for the degree is signed by all four presidents. The “official record” is managed entirely by one of the partners. The partnership for the degree is supported by a separately incorporated company. There is one transcript distributed. This model demonstrates an example of a partnership model driving the final credential and the subsequent support framework and protocols such as for transcription.

The graduate level provides interesting approaches to partnerships; one example is the Cotutelle. This type of partnership originally emerged in France and has now been adopted by institutions around the world. In this model, a student pursues two doctoral programs simultaneously as a result of first an institutional partnership agreement and then an individual agreement. Many elements are joint: supervision, a shared defence, and recognition of work by two separate institutions at the PhD level. Further, the successful student can receive two degrees upon completion or one joint degree. Transcripts are notated to acknowledge the participation of the doctoral student in a Cotutelle arrangement. The Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (the “Quality Council”) is one example of a jurisdiction in Canada that has specifically defined Cotutelle¹ and specified the expected

Respondents to the national survey conducted in Phase 1 were asked to identify which of the following transfer credit items should be on a transcript. The total percentage that chose optional, recommended, and essential is noted for each item; of this, the percentage that identified the item as essential is identified in brackets:

Block transfer credit – 90% (49% essential)

Grades earned from equivalent experience (e.g., PLAR) – 78% (26% essential)

Failed grades – 63% (21% essential)

Passed grades – 80% (40% essential)

Transfer credit source – 88% (22% essential)

Identity of sending institution – 95% (66% essential)

Name of sending program – 79% (22% essential)

Actual grades from sending institution – 60% (14% essential; 38% NOT recommended)

Grade equivalents – 56% (11% essential; 36% NOT recommended)

Course-specific transfer credit – 89% (55% essential)

Type of inter-institutional partnership – 83% (14% essential)

Duklas et al. (2014). ARUCC PCCAT Phase 1 Report, p. 107.

¹ A customized program of doctoral study developed jointly by two institutions for an individual student in which the requirements of each university’s doctoral programs are upheld, but the student working with supervisors at each institution prepares a single thesis which is then examined by a committee whose members are drawn from both institutions. The student is awarded two degree documents though there is a notation on the transcripts indicating that the student completed his or her thesis under Cotutelle arrangements (Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, 2010, p. 6).

credential outcomes. A growing number of Canadian institutions are creating locally developed policies to support this type of degree.