



Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)

Jurisdictional Update — June 2011

The mission of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is to serve as a cornerstone of Campus Alberta by advocating for learners in the areas of post-secondary admissions and transfer and by acting as a catalyst for beneficial change in these areas.

Overview of ACAT Structure

- ACAT is an independent body that operates with support of the ministry of Advanced Education and Technology (AET), and also with the cooperation of Alberta's post-secondary institutions.
- The ACAT Secretariat is served by six AET staff members, who provide support to ACAT Council and the ministry.
- *New: In October 2010 ACAT implemented its new competency-based governance model. Under the new model ACAT Council is comprised of 17-20 voting members, and 2 non-voting members. Currently there are 17 voting members on Council including student and public representatives. Participation in ACAT Council is governed by established competency standards.

ACAT Governance

- ACAT subscribes to the ACAT Mandate and Roles document, which is available on the ACAT Council website (www.acat.gov.ab.ca).
- ACAT and the Transfer System member institutions conduct business adhering to its Principles, Policies, and Procedures document, which has been reviewed and is also available on our website.

Alberta Transfer System

- Alberta's Transfer System is currently made up of 38 ACAT member institutions including aboriginal and out of province institutions. These include ACAT's newest member institutions Thompson Rivers University, Open Learning and Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute.
- *New: The 2011 print version of the Transfer Guide, scheduled for release by mid-June, has been redesigned to provide information on admissions and special transfer arrangements such as block transfer agreements. The *On-Line Transfer Guide* at www.transferalberta.ca remains the official statement of transfer agreements in Alberta.
- There are over 31,155 active transfer agreements. In total, there are over 77,705 agreements on the system, including both active and grandfathered transfer agreements.

Three Key Strategic Initiatives Identified in the ACAT Business Plan

- **Block Transfer:** ACAT is exploring the expansion of block transfer opportunities reflecting its commitment to developing and broadening learner pathways in Alberta. At the October 2010 ACAT meeting a Block Transfer Sub-committee was established to define and develop best practices and models for block transfer in Alberta.

- **Learning Outcomes and Assessment:** ACAT is examining a move towards learning outcomes as a vital part of the transfer system, where the link between teaching, learning and assessment is emphasized. The aim of a learning outcome system is to promote mutual trust, transparency, and recognition of competencies and qualifications to increase mobility and facilitate access to lifelong learning.

At the October 2010 ACAT Council meeting, a Learning Outcomes and Assessment Sub-committee was established. This Sub-committee is working to develop best practices and models for learning outcomes and assessment. It is recognized that this work, which will be developed collaboratively with post-secondary institutions, is an evolutionary change and will be realized over time.

- **Articulation Committees:** ACAT has launched its new articulation committee model. These articulation committees provide a context within which effective communication and collegial relationships among different institutions across Alberta's Transfer System can be maintained. The new model offers increased opportunities for fluid and productive dialogue between committee members, while ensuring important issues are being effectively relayed to the ACAT Secretariat and, ultimately, to Council. Pilot articulation committees were launched in English and in Aboriginal Education in September 2010. In 2011, new articulation committees are being launched in Child and Youth Care and in Business. Psychology/Sociology is to be launched in 2012 and Fine Arts in 2013.

Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (PLAR)

With the goal of increasing capacity in the advanced education system to engage in PLAR practices, Advanced Education and Technology (AET) released *Advancing PLAR in Alberta: an Action Plan* (hereafter referred to as the *PLAR Action Plan*) in October 2008. Implementation of the *PLAR Action Plan* began in 2009 with a series of institution meetings, intended to identify existing PLAR practices, policies, and issues. A report summarizing the information gathered is available at <http://aet.alberta.ca/post-secondary/policy/plar.aspx>. Implementation activities to-date include:

- Establishing a PLAR Stakeholder Committee and holding four meetings per year. The committee includes 15 representatives from a variety of organizations across the system and provides advice on implementation activities.
- Offering the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology's (SIAST) workshops and distance courses on relevant PLAR topics to Alberta cohorts. From January 2010 to June 2011, there were approximately 190 workshop participants and 100 course registrations.
- Using existing information management systems and reporting processes, institutions will be able to include PLAR credits in their annual full load equivalent enrolment totals in the Learner and Enrolment Reporting System beginning in summer 2011.
- Developing a PLAR manual and a PLAR website to assist institutions in building capacity for PLAR. These resources are currently being developed and will be released in fall 2011.
- Researching the issues of transcription and portability of PLAR credits. Portability is the main issue students and institutions face regarding awarded PLAR credits. If left

unaddressed, PLAR may lower a barrier at one educational level, while raising a barrier at the next. Portability and transcription are linked because PLAR credits on transcripts may not be recognized or accepted by receiving institutions.

Campus Alberta Minister's Summit on Learner Pathways

- On June 21st 2011 representatives from Alberta's 26 publicly funded institutions and from ACAT Council are invited to participate in a Campus Alberta Minister's Summit on Learner Pathways. The intent of the Summit is to share perspectives on learner pathways, strengthen the Campus Alberta approach to supporting innovative learner pathways, develop collective understanding of opportunities and challenges, and articulate key outcomes and actions critical for student success.

Publications

To view ACAT publications, please visit our website at: www.transferalberta.ca