DRAFT Communication Articulation Committee Meeting May 10/11 2007

1. Call to Order 9:00 and Opening Activities

- Welcome by Associate Dean Bruce Dunwoody, UBC
- Introduction of Committee Participants. In attendance:

Anita Kess	Camosun College
Judy Johnson	North Island College
Sharon Josephson	Okanagan College
Alexandra Richmond	Kwantlen University College
Sarah Bowers	Langara College
Julia Denholm	Langara College
Kate Sangha	Douglas College
Gene Homel	BCIT
David Thomson	University College of the Fraser Valley
Peter Maides	College of New Caledonia
Greg Lainsbury	Northern Lights College
Joshua Guilar	Royal Roads University
Jean Scribner	BCIT
Annette Berndt	UBC
Tatiana Teslenko	UBC
Estella Qi	UBC
Jan Harkness	College of the Rockies
Marty Wittman	Capilano College
Ruth Dirksen	UBC
Jennifer Orum	BCCAT representative

2. Approval of Agenda

- Motion to Approve Agenda - Tatiana Teslenko
- Seconded by Joshua Guilar
- Carried

3. Approval of 2006 Minutes

- Discussion of amendments and corrections
- Motion to accept amended minutes – Marty Wittman
- Seconded by David Thomson
- Carried

4. Report on BCCAT Meeting - David Thomson

- David reported that the handbook for articulation committees entitled The Articulation Committee Handbook is now published. (Copies were made available to participants of this BCCAC)
- Articulation committees have a tendency to elevate their own courses when comparing them to the courses of others for the purpose of transfer.
- Jennifer Orum reported that BCCAT wants Articulation committees to use their pages on the BCCAT website and their mailing lists more.
- Greg Lainsbury reported that the best part of the CAC meeting was the student panel
- A question arose as to who our System Liaison Person is. We don't currently have one, but suggestions of a friendly Dean are being sought.
- A question as to who pays for attendance at articulation was raised. Money for representatives to attend Articulation meetings must come from their institutions. It does not come from BCCAT and should not come out of participant's PD funds.
- Accreditation of private colleges is moving ahead, and discussion followed about what that might augur vis a vis articulation and transfer between institutions.

5. Motion to Invite Private Institutions to Meetings

- Motion: The incoming Chair should invite accredited private institutions to the CAC meeting.

- The motion was put forward by David Thomson
- Seconded by Julia Denholm
- Discussion – many private institutions are program-based and may not have transfer/articulation issues, there were voices of both concern and confidence over standards in private institutions
- Carried

6. LPI Discussion

- Julia Denholm - Concern over "slippage" of marks on LPI and lack of consistency in grading
- Annette Berndt – Students taking the course multiple times are failing courses once they finally get in
- Tatiana Teslenko – Ask why we don't use LPI for placement (level 4 on LPI go into upgrading, level 5 on LPI go into university transfer)
- Jan Harkness – There is a systemic problem with English grammar and composition in schools going back to elementary school. They tried placement testing, but lost students to other institutions with less stringent standards.
- Sharon Josephson – Text messaging is the "new literacy" in students. Standards change – not just drop.
- Gene Homel – Employers want higher standards in writing – not lower.

Marty Wittman – International students accepted from online course transcripts can't pass an LPI but are kept at the institution and must be accommodated. They are plagued by plagiarism, lack of verbal communication skills

7. Report from BCCAT – Jennifer Orum

- Jennifer clarified an important point; once a private institution has a degree which has been certified by the Degree Quality Assessment Board, it will be invited to send a representative to Articulation meetings. This renders the motion passed earlier in the meeting (see number 5 above) moot, as no extraordinary invitation by the Chair will be needed for these institutions to be invited.
- A BCCAT Articulation Committee Update document was also distributed for members. It outlined the BC Transfer Guide changes and improvements. One important improvement is that students can save their searches, rendering the tool more user-friendly.
- There is also dynamic updating of the Guide as new transfer agreements are struck. There is virtually no time lag between establishment of an agreement and the ability to see it online.
- The BCCAT website also offers more tools for Articulation Committees, including detailed information on members, upcoming articulation meetings, etc.
- The Articulation Committee Companion was announced and distributed.
- Discussion arising from the report -
  - o Julia Denholm commented that communication courses are not articulated, and Jennifer replied that a transfer grid is the first thing our group needs to do to get articulation rolling. The grid is then put up on the Transfer Guide. We can apply for funding from BCCAT to make up a grid.
  - o Sharon Josephson pointed out that a multi-lateral transfer model has replaced the simple "sending/receiving" binary system of earlier days – although the website is still organized that way. Developing a grid is a good first step.
  - o Marty inquired how much money we could get to develop the grid, and $10,000 was posited as the amount.

8. Institution Reports – summary of highlights of reports and discussion

- Online courses generate extra workload. How is that being compensated?
- Low enrolment is an issue for many institutions outside the lower Mainland.
- Plagiarism is a widespread concern
- BCIT is introducing a Technical Writing Certificate Program
- Multitasking students is a concern (work, school, children, not enough time)
- When giving joint assignments (content and format marked separately by different departments) what is the best way to mark them? (discussion)

- University College of the Fraser Valley has a new course in Writing for the Internet and a Minor in Communications
- Royal Roads University has just hired an Aboriginal Relations Coordinator
- UBC and UBCO's Technical Communication Centre has been changed into the Centre for Professional Skills Development. They will be developing an Engineering Report Writing course and Teaching Assistant modules, as well as giving workshops.
- College of New Caledonia a new program in the English Department for Web and Print design, which has a cohort of 14. They are also facing enrolment challenges generally.
- College of the Rockies is moving from WebCT to Moodle for its online courses.
- Capilano has new Communication Studies Diploma Program and an Advanced Certificate in Professional Communication, as well as a Magazine Publishing Intensive Course. Busy folks at Capilano!
- Camosun raised an issue with class sizes greater than the number of seats in the computer labs. Peter Maides suggested that having more students than the room was built to accommodate may violate a collective agreement or health and safety rules.
- North Island College has a new Access-level technical writing course called English 159.
- Okanagan College has 9 courses that are not service courses. They articulate to most BC Universities. Applied English is not widely taught, and as a result, does not transfer widely.
- Kwantlen has spread a course over 8 months to give students more time to absorb content. Half is F2F (face to face) and half is online.

9. Election of Chair
- Peter Maides is Co-Chair and David Thomson is the other Co-Chair. They were both elected unanimously.

10. Future Venue for Articulation Meeting 2008
Royal Roads University, with its fabulous harbour view and expansive gardens, is to be the tentative venue for BCCAC 2008. If for any reason Royal Roads cannot perform this duty, the first runner up, North Island College, will become the venue.

11. Core Aims Document
The attendees divided into groups and developed ideas for the core aims document. These were then given to Alexandra Richmond who will be heading up the Core Aims Document project.

12. Burning Issues Discussion

a. Underprepared Students

- Students who fail because they do not have essential elementary language or composition skills that should have been learned in early grades
- Grade inflation in first year composition courses can be caused by sessional instructors' need for good student evaluations
- There is pressure to pass under-prepared students through the system without really addressing their needs – even though industry tells us that communication skills are their highest priority in hiring.

b. Team/Group Marking

- The issue of fairness in marking collaborative projects was discussed, and a number of different methods of assuring that poor team performers don't achieve better marks on the backs of their hardworking teammates were discussed.

- Notable was a "project management" approach used by Sharon Josephson. This allows teams to "fire" underperforming members for cause, or to "hire away" good performers in other groups.

- Some instructors have dropped group projects because they tend to inflate the marks of low performers.

- Two books that were recommended for helping use groups effectively in classes were discussed.

  - *Gender and Collaboration: Communication Styles in the Engineering Classroom* by Sandra Ingraham and Anne Parker was passed around the group. It is published by Basics from Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, 2002.

  - *Teams That Work* , published at BCIT.

- ◆ It was suggested that ideas for dealing with Group Projects could be put up on our Website. Action: David Thomson stated that he would ask BCCAT what they would do to support our website.

c. Prerequisites

- Camosun College has done a statistical survey reviewing data over a number of years that indicates the high school English marks are not good predictors of success.

- "Clever" high school students who are divergent thinkers often get good grades in high school, but do not do well in college or university where the ability to master skills is more important than originality during the first two years.

- Assessment tests can help put students into the right level, but can also effectively terrify and demotivate some adult learners. The right "warm, fuzzy" supports have to be in place to support these students.

- Colleges noted that "high touch" interactions with students persist past Frosh week, whereas larger universities with huge classes can't maintain the level of interaction due to pressure of sheer numbers. Even some students with scholarships fail in their first year due to adjustment issues.

- Students who transfer from colleges to university were reported to be more engaged and successful than the average student coming in directly from high school.

d. Falling Enrollment/grade inflation

Does falling enrollment lead to grade inflation?
Do we pass more first year students to ensure our second year courses run?

- The consensus was that, no, we don't inflate grades. What we do is support learning – and actually encourages under qualified students to learn.
- The first assessment should be marked really hard so that students will either pick up their socks and learn – or drop the course if they are under prepared.
- By giving most of the assignments in class you discourage cheating/plagiarism.

e. Class Size

- Late enrolments and overloads are an issue in some institutions.
- Some instructors take an extra 5 students as a means of showing they are hard workers – but if 5 instructors each take an extra 5 students, that's a whole section that the institution is getting but not paying for. You're taking someone's job.
- Larger than average classes should be an articulation issue – can you really teach as much/as well to a class of 50 as to a class of 25?

f. Hybrid/Online Courses

- Videoconferencing and online courses can solve multi-campus accessibility problems.
- Online attrition rate is 20%, while in F2F classes it is only 5%
- Training on running hybrid courses is being held at Langara. They are bringing Jeff Miller to run a course. Action: Sarah will send highlights of this session to the listserv.
- Security in online courses is an issue – how to ensure that your student is the one writing that essay? In hybrid courses you can have in-class

assignments/exams that overcome this concern. Some on-line courses still have students write in-class final exams.

g. Plagiarism

- One instructor's final exam was – "Write a summary of your final report". Those who had plagiarized the report didn't stand a chance.
- Courses should be designed such that students can't pass on the basis of out of class (potentially plagiarized) work.
- We should be hard on plagiarism because we are preparing the students for courses that are not designed to be cheat-proof.
- Some instructors have a sign-off sheet that students must sign to verify that the assignment is their own original work.
- Some instructors have students hand in photocopies of all source material used.
- International students lack the vocabulary to paraphrase effectively.

h. We Don't Get No Respect
- Faculty in other departments think they can do our jobs
- Senior engineers have poorer writing skills than new recruits – leading one employer to hire a consultant to train senior engineers in communication skills, thus proving that the industry respects our skills even if the engineers don't.
- Auto Retailers Industry Training Organisation (ITO) is building a curriculum of communication skills to help train auto industry workers. It will be an apprenticeship trade.
- Future agenda item – "How do we build credibility for our discipline?"
- Industry groups –
    o STC (Society for Technical Communication)
    o ATTW (Association of Teachers for Technical Writing)
    o CATW (Canadian Association for Technical Writing)

- Conference Board of Canada Employability Skills 2000+ -
  http://www.conferenceboard.ca/educatin/learning-tools/employability-skills.html

13. Motion to Institute a Course Grid
- Motion: Sarah Bowers and Julia Denholm will write a proposal for funds to create a grid for Communication Articulation. Tatiana will support and inform the process from the University perspective.
- Moved by Peter Maides
- Seconded by David Thomson
- Carried

14. Core Aims Document

◈ The concept of a Core Aims Document was strongly supported by the group. Alexandra is taking this project forward and hopes to have a draft by September 2007.

Discussion: The absence of a Provincial Core Aims document makes us vulnerable to pressure from "content" departments that our courses serve. Having a Core Aims Document would increase our credibility and give us more clout in course design.

If we keep our Core Aims reasonably abstract and high level, it will facilitate the inclusion of many different content areas. This will permit us to be more persuasive in getting content departments to bring our service courses under that Core Aims umbrella.

Also, having formalized core aims will professionalize our group, and may prevent colleagues in other departments from trying to do our jobs (in their spare time, with no training).

15. Other Business

- **BCCAT Website Technical Writing Articulation Page**
  - o Not password protected
  - o What can we put on it? Can it be a repository of examples, assignments, etc?
  - o Can we have a threaded discussion?
  - o Who is going to spearhead the development?
  - o If the website is not password protectable, we should apply for a grant next year to make it so.

- **BCCAT Listserv**
  - o Can it be made to reply to individuals rather than all?
  - o David Thomson will undertake to find out and report back.

16. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Peter Maides
Seconded by Marty Wittman
Carried
Meeting Adjourned 12:33 pm May 11, 2007

ADDENDUM

Joshua Guilar has confirmed that the next meeting will be at Royal Roads University May 8-9.