

MINUTES

Attendees: Dr. Nancy Brown (CHAIR), Dr. Heather Addy, Clare Ard, Carol Crooks, Dr. Robert Cuny, Eric Dohei, Joseph Fittes, Gary Grothman, Dr. Kimberley Harcombe, Dr. Sean Irwin, Dr. Carol Kroeker, Sandra MacDougall, Nancy McInerney, Dr. Ruth Pickett Seltner, Dr. James Thomas, Sue Edwards (recorder)

Teleconference: Dezene Huber, Caroline Nixon, Jocelyn Hall

1. Welcome and Introductions

Nancy asked all members to introduce themselves and their respective institutions.

2. Update from Dezene Uber (BCCAT Science Articulation)

Nancy advised that she had been exchanging emails with Dezene in relation to the work of this committee and would be submitting a report to him shortly. However, she had invited him to participate in this meeting (via teleconference) to advise the committee on the work that he and his group had been doing.

Dezene stressed the importance of integration between the two groups and then updated the committee on the following work that BCCAT had undertaken:

Flexible Pre-Major – the purpose of this process was to make the transition between 1st/2nd year courses and 3rd/4th year courses seamless for students. In comparing similarities of courses offered by institutions, information had been produced for students in order for them to make an informed decision about whether to remain at the institution they were currently studying at or to move to an alternative institution, which offered the most comparable courses for their particular major. A lot of work had gone into formulating this process, and would require constant updating in order to keep information current. This information is housed on the BCCAT website for all current and prospective students to access.

Curriculum Redesign – the committee had invited the Minister of Education to discuss changes being proposed to the curriculum and in particular that of Biology and had set up a subcommittee to monitor and discuss these changes. The committee had written a report to the Ministry of Education in regards to these changes and had raised their concerns in relation to non-discussion at Post-Secondary Level. Following that report, the MoE were now working on a revised curriculum, taking into account some of the concerns raised. Dezene encouraged members of the committee to establish subcommittees when changes were proposed by the MoE in order to ensure that Post-Secondary concerns were heard.

Maintaining a Field Course Database: He informed the committee that a number of institutions in BC had field courses and that his committee had been keeping a sporadic record. However, they were now working towards creating a proper field course on-line database in conjunction with the University of Victoria, who were currently working on this. He advised Ontario does have an on-line database of field courses on their website and they would be looking at creating a similar model for British Columbia.

Nancy then thanked Dezene for his updates and for participating in the meeting. No questions were raised in relation to the information Dezene provided.

3. Institutional Updates

Medicine Hat College: Nancy advised there were no changes in Biology courses.

University of Calgary: Heather advised no new courses, but faculty are being challenged in offering

current courses due to the retirement of current faculty and no replacements being hired. She also advised that a curriculum review was being undertaken and this may produce changes. A zoology course was on the horizon and information around this would be available at next year's meeting. Questions were raised in relation to hiring of sessional faculty to meet staff shortfalls.

Mount Royal University: Ruth advised she had three items to discuss.

Firstly, working on Biology 1202 & 1204 in order to allow them to be taken in either order;
Secondly, redeveloping their programs, including a new BSc degree in Biology which at present was at letter of intent stage;

Thirdly, struggling with the large number of contract faculty in labs and lectures. The department would like to see less contract staff in order to maintain stability and get better input from faculty.

A question was raised in relation to transfer students and where they were coming from.

Advised mainly coming from smaller centres and out of province, but do transfer a lot of students to UofC. Also get students returning to Post-Secondary Education.

Ambrose University: Carol advised that she had been conducting a study on class sizes (small vs large), but had not seen any significant differences in grades between small and large classes. Faculty is growing and department is expanding into new areas of ecology, molecular genetics, evolution, and have just started a water bio monitoring course in conjunction with the University of New Brunswick and Government of Canada. Program has received certification and lots of students interested in taking it. Also looking to expand in the areas of Kinesiology and BSc in Natural Sciences. Student numbers are up and are being encouraged to undertake more research and field studies. Field studies have been undertaken in Costa Rica, Banff and next year's field trip will be to Belize.

A short discussion took place around Carol's work on class sizes.

Grand Prairie Regional College: Sean advised they had lost faculty and zoology courses in last round of cuts, however this had strengthened other course programs.

St Mary's University: Gary advised that the first students of BSc in Biology will be graduating this June.

Have two new courses coming on stream and will be arranging a field trip to Belize in February.

MacEwan University: Kim advised that she had a number of items for discussion and these included: Firstly, starting 'competitive declaration' in BSc in Biology to ensure students have the right pre-requisites to apply for a Biology Major. *Questions included: current declaration process; process for students without pre-requisites; class sizes.*

Secondly, BSc undergoing program review, major changes include 'core requirements' being changed; credit ranges being made more flexible; changes to residency requirements. Kim can provide information if requested.

Thirdly, Biology – Major and minors being adjusted to meet degree courses requirements. Majors now require Chemistry and STATS 151. All changes will take effect in 2017/18

Fourthly, Honor designation for Biological Sciences proposal. Kim advised that her department is currently working on proposal and now waiting for approval from Academic Governance Council.

To achieve honors designation, Majors must include extra courses including one course in Organic Chemistry, Introductory Biochemistry, Mechanisms in Evolution, Biostatistics and a seminar course. Kim outlined how courses would be set up to enable students to achieve honors designation and the application requirements needed. To be effective from 2017/18 if approved. *Question included how many students are anticipated to apply for honor designation (current anticipation 5-10 students).*

Fifthly, new courses. New courses include a pathobiology course, advanced animal developmental biology (300 and 400 level courses), seminar courses and independent study courses and a 'Methods in experimental ecology (lab-based) course'. Kim advised that they currently did not offer field courses because of faculty provision and financial restricts.

Sixthly, new faculty. New faculty have been hired to implement the new courses.

Lakeland College: Robert advised that the college has tried to maintain the status quo in regards to program provision. Have two people in Biology. One teaches the labs and he teaches the lectures. Two years ago moved from Botany to Microbiology courses to try and attract more students, but this has not proved as successful as hoped and most students move to Saskatchewan to complete their programs, which are mainly Pharmacy, Kinesiology and Nursing. Still have Botany course on the

books and may reactivate it in the future. Would like to offer more comprehensive science courses (i.e. Zoology) but are unable to do so, due to resource and financial restraints.

University of Lethbridge: Jim advised that the UofL is facing a lot of retirements and are currently working on how best to deal with this, in relation to faculty/course provision. In regards to new developments, the UofL have been asked by the Agricultural sector to focus on more elements of agriculture in biology courses. The Potato Industry has funded a new faculty member who specializes in 'Potato breeding' and will be incorporating elements of this research into future biology courses.

Red Deer College: Sandra advised that the college is currently hiring for two biology posts (micro and genetics). Joseph advised that enrolments are up by an additional 10% from the increase of 25% (1st year students) in Sciences last year. The extra students from last year appear to be staying to complete 2nd year courses.

University of Alberta: Jocelyn advised that they are in the process of restructuring their seven programs and will be reducing the programs to three. The names of the new programs are *Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Sciences* (previously Evolution); *Integrative Physiology* (previously Physiology); *Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology* (previously Molecular/Genetics). Suspending - Animal Biology, Evolution Biology, Microbiology and Plant Biology. Streams of these programs will be implemented in the new programs but the core will remain the same, to make the programs more flexible.

Planning three new hires.

Running South African Field School – students offered semester abroad, which is in modular form. First module is based in Swaziland; second module based in Mozambique and third module in Cape Town. Still experimenting on how to run the Field School and looking at how to make it financially viable. Cost for field school is approximately \$15,000 for all three modules. The school is currently run by Uof A instructors but are looking at working with local instructors.

4. Alberta Education Update

Caroline (via teleconference) advised that research had been undertaken both nationally and locally in relation to how numeracy, literacy and information technology issues are addressed. Work was being undertaken at both early developmental and K12 levels in order to get students ready for professional learning. Work was also being done in revising and developing the curriculum to address some of issues identified. However, currently the fire at Fort McMurray was the main focus for Alberta Education and providing education to displaced students.

5. ACAT Council/Secretariat and Innovation and Advanced Education Updates

Eric introduced Clare Ard to the committee. Clare is on a two year secondment from MacEwan University and will be working primarily with the Articulation committees. Eric advised that the biggest piece of work ACAT is currently working on is the Learner Pathways Modernization initiative. Work had initially started in 2014 and stage one was now complete. Eric advised that ACAT had worked with a number of institutions, stakeholder groups, students and faculty on how best to make transfer systems between institutions better. Work would soon start on stage two which is two projects – **one:** website redesign and updating of information, and redesign of the on-line search tool, which will make filters more accessible and informative, and **two:** the redesign of the transfer credit evaluation system which provides information for the database. He advised that at present there is collaboration between Manitoba and BC in developing a tool at foundation level to provide information that can be flexible enough to accommodate provincial needs and requirements. In the meantime, ACAT is currently developing a catalogue which will house data, from both external and internal systems and can be readily available to all students.

A Learning Outcomes forum is going to be held on May 18th and invites have been sent out to institutional VPAs. A report following the forum will be produced and will be shared with all the committees.

Work will also be done on redesigning 'Sharepoint' to give better accessibility to information.

6. **Biological Sciences Chart Review**

Following discussions last year around 'Block Transfers', Dr. Carol Kroeker had worked on and produced a 'Course Equivalency Table', which outlined course descriptions for Biology, Cognate Sciences and Other Introductory Courses across institutions. The chart also included notations on the courses and information in relation to Block Transfer requirements. Carol explained how she had revamped it to make it more generalized and invited the group to give their input/comments. A number of editorial changes were noted and will be corrected by Carol.

Eric advised that this information could be digitized and put into a database for easier information accessibility.

A discussion on the distribution of the chart took place, including who the table should be accessible to; differing opinions were shared on whether students should have access to the table or not. Carol and Nancy will seek further input from the committee members.

A suggestion was made to change the current chart title to something more easily identifiable.

Further discussion then took place around the chart, main points of discussion were:
Identifying key concepts for biology courses at 1st & 2nd year levels and ensuring that they enable students to meet transferability requirements; third level courses being taken in 2nd year, ensuring students are prepared for advanced level courses; 371 course not having lab component (on-line course); elimination of the block transfer agreement; giving students more credits for transferability dependent on which institution they transfer from/to; requirement of Cell biology 331 for transferability (need to look at old block transfer agreement and compare current agreement); making block transfer unworkable by adding courses not taught at some institutions due to lack of resources; impact on 2nd year retention for smaller institutions if students need to move to other institutions to take courses to meet transferability agreement; on-line information around equivalents not always portrayed as correct, needs more clarification; App for students – need to make sure transfer information is up to date (ensuring ACAT agreements by institutions are updated regularly); agreement works well for general courses, but not for more specialized courses, need for more course requirement information to be made available to students earlier in their studies, so they can concentrate on core programs.

The group thanked Carol for her work on the chart. Carol asked the group to send their changes/notations to her. She would work on the changes proposed and recirculate the chart for information.

7. **Identification of Next Meeting Date and Location and Potential New Agenda Items**

Nancy advised that the next meeting will probably be held in conjunction with the AIBA conference next year. Information will be circulated to members once date and venue for AIBA conference has been confirmed. Agenda items will be called for nearer to that date.

8. **Plans for Confirming and Sharing Minutes and Institutional Updates on ACAT SharePoint Site**

It was agreed that Sue would forward a draft of her minutes to Nancy for approval/amendments etc. Once approved Nancy would forward to ACAT Secretariat for circulation and putting on SharePoint Site.

9. **Adjournment: Meeting ended at 12:17pm.**