Subsection 3.7: Institutional Readiness for Competency-based Education and Learning Outcomes <pages 35-40>

Considerations:

Phase 1 research reveals a varied understanding of competency-based education and learning outcomes assessment in Canada or of international approaches to documenting student achievement. The findings also indicate there is not a common understanding regarding the co-curricular record among those surveyed. However, there seems to be a significant group of researchers, policy developers, and practitioners who are interested in expanding the conversation around documenting different student learning experiences.

Canada is not alone. As an example, three American associations are working to establish a common definitions framework for transcription of competency and outcomes-based learning at the program level for individual learners: the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and IMS Global Learning Consortium. While the project is in its early stages, the proponents are consulting about the concept of creating a learning outcomes document (a competency record) that is separate and yet complementary to the transcript.

Currently, there are examples of institutions documenting competency-based assessment scores on transcripts in order to share learner achievement results. Further, organizations such as the Lumina Foundation and OECD are exploring enhanced assessment metrics for learning outcomes even at the individual student level. Some references are provided for those that are interested in delving into this topic further:

- Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile – see http://www.luminafoundation.org/resources/dqp and http://www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2013/November-December%202013/Degree_full.html
- Council for Aid to Education (CAE) – see "CLA +" at http://cae.org/participating-institutions/cla-overview
- OECD Assessment for Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) – see http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/testingstudentanduniversityperformancegloballyoecdsahelo.htm

Phase 1 findings suggest that institutions in Canada have long histories with developing learning outcomes. Examples include the college sector's historical focus on delivering program and vocational learning outcomes, the various quality assurance bodies across the country which focus on establishing or aligning with credential frameworks and establishing program level expectations, and those in student development who have or are implementing the co-curricular record.

Research and related efforts are underway in Canada to deliver learning in alternative ways and in a manner that acknowledges achievement of learning outcomes through a variety of learner experiences. One of the value assets of these projects is to explore possibilities for transfer and student mobility. The following represent three recent Canadian examples:

- Fitzgibbon, J. (February, 2014). Learning Outcomes and Credit Transfer: Examples, Issues and Possibilities. Vancouver: BCCAT.
  http://bccat.ca/pubs/Learning_Outcomes_and_Credit_Transfer_Feb2014.pdf
- Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) – see http://www.heqco.ca/en-ca/Research/LearningOutcomes/Pages/home.aspx
- Lennon, M. C., Frank, B., Humphreys, J., Lenton, R., Madsen, K., Omri, A., & Turner, R.1 (2014). Tuning: Identifying and Measuring Sector-Based Learning Outcomes in Postsecondary Education. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.
  http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Tuning%20ENG.pdf

These efforts align with the conclusions published in the Phase 1 ARUCC PCCAT report where specific international examples were shared including the European Diploma Supplement (Duklas et al, 2014, p. 51), the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS) (p. 49), and the UK Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) (p. 53).

It is worth noting that the 2003 ARUCC Transcript Guide contemplated competency-based learning and actually noted high level transcript standards such as *Demonstrated Competencies* and *Narrative Evaluations.* There are also examples of institutions notating transcripts and identifying milestones and activities such as at the graduate level. The findings from the first phase suggest there appears to be a strong commitment across the country to preserve the transcript in its traditional format and yet to also explore creating separate standards and documents for representing program learning outcomes *once agreed upon learning outcome frameworks are established by academic colleagues through quality assurance frameworks*.

The stage of the Canadian postsecondary environment suggests that while certain core understandings are needed, it is prudent to proceed cautiously until more research is conducted and formal application of learning outcomes at the program level and perhaps even the course level is expanded across all institutions in Canada.[1]

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[1] It is acknowledged that select jurisdictions have defined learning outcomes and related credential level expectations and frameworks. These might hold the promise of creating a transcription definitional framework for Canadian institutions.

Extract from: Duklas, J., Pesaro, J. (2015). ARUCC PCCAT National Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Project Phase Two: Consultation Document. Calgary, Alberta: Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).

Background:

The transcript is being challenged to stretch. New forms of learning and credentialing are emerging.[2] The growing focus on learning outcomes[3] and competency-based learning and assessment,[4] has significant implications for documenting learner achievement. Given the growing focus on inter-institutional partnerships, transfer, and mechanisms for monitoring and representing student workload in a manner that facilitates transfer between institutions and through levels of education, pressure is growing to be ready for alternate approaches to document outcomes.

Further, the Phase 1 report provides examples from international jurisdictions of countries that create or incorporate program level learning outcomes in institutional artifacts that document student learning and achievement of learning outcomes.[5] Specific examples are shared including the European Diploma Supplement (Duklas et al, 2014, pp. 49, 51),[6] the Australian Higher Education Graduation Statement (AHEGS) (p. 49), and the UK Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) (p. 53). These findings complement a recent learning outcomes Tuning Project mentioned above.

For the HEQCO study, the researchers identified and measured learning outcomes in specific postsecondary areas for four types of qualifications: two-year diploma, three-year diploma, a four-year baccalaureate, and a master's degree (research-based) (Lennon et al, 2014, p. 3).[7] The researchers further "affiliated" learning outcomes to Ontario qualification frameworks and degree level expectations (p. 3; appendices). The research project is quite extensive and provides practical advice to academic colleagues for incorporating learning outcomes in programs in meaningful ways. In the section, *Demonstrating Learning Outcomes to Students and Employers*, the researchers note the variety of methods institutions use around the world to provide documentation outlining student achievement of

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[2] Carey, K. (January 22, 2013. MIT Mints a Valuable New Form of Academic Currency. Chronicle of Higher Education. Retrieved March 26, 2015 from http://chronicle.com/article/MIT-Mints-a-Valuable-New-Form/130410/

[3] Lennon, M. C., Frank, B., Humphreys, J., Lenton, R., Madsen, K., Omri, A., & Turner, R.1 (2014). Tuning: Identifying and Measuring Sector-Based Learning Outcomes in Postsecondary Education. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

[4] Fitzgibbon, J. (February, 2014). Learning Outcomes and Credit Transfer: Examples, Issues, and Possibilities. Vancouver: British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT).
http://bccat.ca/pubs/Learning_Outcomes_and_Credit_Transfer_Feb2014.pdf
Goff, L., Potter, M., Pierre, E., Carey, T., Gullage, A., Kustra, E., Lee, R., Lopes, V., Marshall, L., Martin, L., Raffoul, J., Siddiqui, A., Van Goestel, G. (2015). Learning Outcome's Assessment: A Practitioner's Handbook. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

[5] Duklas, J., Maki, K., Pesaro, J., Brady, J. (2014). ARUCC PCCAT Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Study. Alberta: Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) & the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).
http://www.arucc.ca/uploads/documents/arucc_pccat_15_jun_2014_english.pdf

[6] Sample templates: http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm and
Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. (2007). Retrieved March 26, 2015 from
http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/images/stories/documents/General_Brochure_final_version.pdf

[7] Lennon, M. C., Frank, B., Humphreys, J., Lenton, R., Madsen, K., Omri, A., & Turner, R.1 (2014). Tuning: Identifying and Measuring Sector-Based Learning Outcomes in Postsecondary Education. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

learning (p. 35). According to these authors, the examples include the European Diploma Supplement which also documents "'information on the Contents and Results Gained' broken down into four categories: knowledge and understanding, intellectual (thinking) skills, practical skills (subject-specific) and key skills" (p. 35).[8]

A mapping of the credential frameworks in use across Canada identifies an interesting opportunity for establishing a framework for transcription standards. Table 7 provides a comparative analysis at a very high level. What becomes immediately clear is the credential level expectations in use across the country to guide credential and potentially even program learning outcomes are fairly consistent. Each of the expectations vary considerably in terms of description, credential, and level; however, a thematic framework is readily apparent which might help to undergird a definitional framework for Canadian transcription standards of demonstrated competencies and learning outcomes for each credential type and level.

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[8] See European Commission for more details and the Phase 1 ARUCC PCCAT report.

Extract from: Duklas, J., Pesaro, J. (2015). ARUCC PCCAT National Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Project Phase Two: Consultation Document. Calgary, Alberta: Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).

Table 1: Comparison of Credential Level Expectation Categories

Credential Level Expectations	Canada Degree Qualifications Framework[1]	Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework (undergraduate) [2]	Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework (graduate) [2]	Ontario Qualifications Framework (certificate through graduate); Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board[9]	Quality Assurance Framework (baccalaureate)[3]	Quality Assurance Framework (graduate) [4]
Breadth and depth of knowledge	X	X (in the field) X (outside the field)	X (in the field) X (outside the field)	X	X	X
Knowledge of methodologies		X (Conceptual and methodological awareness)	X (Conceptual and methodological awareness)	X (Conceptual and methodological awareness)	X	
Knowledge of methodologies and research	X					
Research and scholarship				X		X
Level of analytical skill		X	X			
Level of application of knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	X
Awareness of limits of knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	X
Professional capacity / autonomy	X	X	X	X	X	X
Level of communication skills	X	X	X	X	X	X

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[9] http://www.peqab.ca/DegreeLevelStandards.html

Extract from: Duklas, J., Pesaro, J. (2015). ARUCC PCCAT National Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Project Phase Two: Consultation Document. Calgary, Alberta: Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).

Credential Level Expectations	Canada Degree Qualifications Framework[1]	Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework (undergraduate) [2]	Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework (graduate) [2]	Ontario Qualifications Framework (certificate through graduate); Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board[9]	Quality Assurance Framework (baccalaureate)[3]	Quality Assurance Framework (graduate) [4]
Jurisdiction	National -- adopted by a number of provinces and territories such as BC, Saskatchewan, Alberta through the Campus Alberta Quality Council (pp. 53, 85),[10] and more	Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, mphec.ca (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI)	Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, mphec.ca (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI)	Ontario government (certificate through to doctoral)	Ontario university, Quality Council, oucqa.ca	Ontario university, Quality Council, oucqa.ca

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[10] http://caqc.gov.ab.ca/media/4650/handbook_july_2014.pdf