

# BEGINNING THE DIALOGUE: CREATING A COMPETENCY-BASED STUDENT RECORD REFLECTING ACHIEVEMENT OF ACADEMIC LEARNING OUTCOMES

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## Introduction:

This document provides postsecondary institutions with a series of questions to facilitate initial discussions focused on developing a ‘competency-based student record.’ Typically, the first step involves establishing the overarching vision, goals, and objectives. The assumption here is that the ultimate vision is to enhance and facilitate student mobility by chronicling final learner achievement of pre-defined learning outcomes related to an individual’s academic studies. The questions might change and evolve if a different vision is contemplated. Further, the assumption regarding process is that discussions would evolve in partnership with campus stakeholders, particularly academic colleagues. As each institution provides a unique context, participants involved in the creation of a competency-based student record may be different depending on the campus.

## Essential Components:

The respondents to the 2015 survey for Phase 2 of the *ARUCC PCCAT Transcript Standards and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Study* identified the following requisite components for developing an individual student competency record:

1. an institution-wide definitional framework for documenting learner outcomes;
2. defined and approved learning outcomes by program;
3. defined principles for assessing and documenting achievement of learning outcomes at the student level with a supporting rubric;
4. adoption of an appropriate assessment tool (or approach) to measure final achievement of learning outcomes at the individual student level by program and level (i.e., year 1, year 2, etc.).

Extensive consultation and leadership from the academic community was also considered necessary. The process involved to create a student competency record is very complex; however, it is achievable. Examples exist such as Stanford University’s “[Scholarship Record](https://registrar.stanford.edu/scholarship-record)” (<https://registrar.stanford.edu/scholarship-record>). In Canada, BCcampus has been exploring platforms and processes in the area of [competency-based education in the trades](http://bccampus.ca/2015/02/02/bccampus-white-paper-explores-disruptive-innovation-within-trades-training-in-b-c/) (<http://bccampus.ca/2015/02/02/bccampus-white-paper-explores-disruptive-innovation-within-trades-training-in-b-c/>). Its work amplifies the complexities and systems involved.

For more background information and additional resources, refer to [Subsection 3.7](#) of the Phase Two Consultation Document.

The material in this document results from research and consultation conducted as part of the *ARUCC PCCAT National Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Standards Study* (September, 2015)

## Initial considerations

*What are you hoping to achieve and for whom? What is the intended delivery platform?*

1. In the initial stages, what are you hoping to achieve by creating a new competency-based student record? Why are you considering creating this new document? What problem are you hoping to solve or opportunity are you trying to leverage? What is its core purpose? What goals are served with such a document? For example, is it intended to advance student mobility? Is it intended to provide a student with a “learning passport” or “learning experience record”?
2. Do you wish to develop a separate document to complement the existing Official Academic Transcript or are you looking to extend the existing credential?
3. What audience is the new document primarily serving? How might such a document benefit students or employers? One might assume that students are the primary audience; however, it is helpful to confirm the shared thinking in this regard.
4. How do you intend to deliver the document? How flexible does it need to be? What format is intended? PDF? Digital?
5. What core standards and principles should be maintained regardless of format?
6. In addition to courses and grades or as a complement to the existing transcript, what student experiences and evidence of learning should be recorded on this competency record? What type of learning outcomes rubric is appropriate? Are learning outcomes established at the program or course level, or are they available by program and year level? If not, what needs to happen to develop a learning outcomes rubric?

## Governance and coordinating structure

*How will the project be managed?*

It is generally recommended to engage the campus community in a staged and strategic fashion when developing a student record that extends the Transcript. As institutional contexts and cultures vary, a standard methodology for governance and coordination would need to be nuanced appropriately. The framing questions in this section are intended to surface these differences.

1. What type of institutional context, culture, and governance structure exists at your institution and how might this environment inform the initiative?
2. Given the responses to these questions and the nature of your campus or institutional environment, who needs to be on the innovation team? What might its first steps involve?
3. Which academic or senior leadership colleague is well positioned to serve the initiative as a strategic sponsor and senior champion?

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4. Should you consider more than one team? What role would each serve and when? Who should lead each of these groups? Examples might include establishing a small executive group, a larger advisory body, working groups, etc.
5. What are the terms of reference and scope of authority for each of these groups? Who should be the chair for each (or is a co-chair model for select groups appropriate)? Which functional areas should be represented in each group?
6. What type of governance should be contemplated to facilitate development, approval, implementation, and sustainability of the initiative?

### Core principles

*What principles are shared regarding a competency-based student record?*

1. What core strategic and/or academic principles should be established to guide decisions? For example, when deciding what to put on a competency record, best practice suggests it is important to make distinct the academic learning experiences that form part of the student's formal educational framework (e.g., their program/degree) from those that represent additional learning experiences. Quality assurance and rigorous validation and assessment processes are also important considerations. Are these areas where principles are needed?
2. What operational principles are important considerations? For example, it is considered best practice to make sure there is validation by an appropriate authority for an achieved competency or credential. What area or person(s) should be the arbiters for that process or that outcome?

### Additional considerations

*Identify the additional considerations, promising practices, or future efficiencies, risks and opportunities when developing a competency-based student record.*

1. Are there any downstream considerations or future opportunities that this initiative should contemplate?
2. Are there any promising practices evident either on campus or off that might inform this process?
3. Are there any other considerations (legislation, audit processes, financial, systems, technology, policy, communities, etc.)?
4. What other stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students, alumni, employers, other institutions, regulatory bodies, etc.) should be consulted in the creation of this record (and how and when)?
5. Are there any new standards or guidelines that should be developed? How can the new standards serve the overall educational framework in your jurisdiction? Are there external

consultation bodies that should be involved in these conversations to facilitate a system wide approach?

6. What risks and opportunities exist or could potentially emerge? What are the implications that may result from each of these risks and opportunities that might disadvantage or extend this initiative and how would you resolve or facilitate them?
7. Are there potential efficiencies or synergies that should be considered to expedite creation, launch, and future sustainability (e.g., system platforms such as those offered by vendors, federated validation models, best practice standards, partnerships, etc.)?

### Next Steps:

The above framing questions are intended to inform the initial stages of moving to a competency-based student record. As such, they aren't intended to be fully comprehensive. Each school will develop a customized series of considerations and framing questions in addition to the ones suggested above.

Creating a new academic learning record that has currency and long term sustainability represents an opportunity to improve the array of information available for student use. However, the first step is to define what it is you want to do and why. Pulling together a small group of experts to brainstorm the concept will help you tackle some of the initial questions identified in each of the categories above. Consulting with your institutional networks will also inform the process. This is particularly important if other organizations and institutions are going to make use of the final artifact or receive it from a student.

### Resources to Tap:

Best practice standards guides

Qualification and/or credential frameworks either in your jurisdiction or others

Foundational presentations, studies, and papers examining the area of documenting learner achievement of learning outcomes

Artifact examples of competency records from other jurisdictions or early innovators at institutions