

TRANSCRIPT BEST PRACTICE PUBLICATION OPERATING PRINCIPLES

Overview

The following operating principles guided the decisions regarding the transcript publication standards for each of the Transcript Data Elements in the ARUCC PCCAT Guide. These are explained below in further detail to assist those using the Guide with understanding the rationale behind choosing a particular publication standard. As a result, not every principle is relevant to each Transcript Data Element. Those that are relevant to a particular Transcript Data Element are noted in the Transcript Standard Search results of the Guide. To assist the reader, here is a summary list of the principles:

A transcript should

1. Reflect the regulations of the academic body of the issuing institution (page 2)
2. Function as a trusted document that demonstrates adherence to historical accuracy and quality assurance and assessment (page 2)
3. Provide evidence of achievement of learning outcomes assessed through a quality assured process by a qualified person (page 2)
4. Be appropriately transparent in accordance with the credential being pursued (page 3)
5. Document relevant academic milestones (page 3)
6. Avoid publication of extraneous information (page 3)
7. Facilitate student mobility through transparency and clarity (page 4)
8. Support student retention, and student and/or alumni success and engagement (page 4)
9. Adhere to privacy, human rights, and/or accessibility legislation relevant in a particular jurisdiction (page 4)
10. Facilitate secure, validated, and trusted electronic data exchange (page 5)
11. Contain information that is carefully considered and presented to avoid any potential for misinterpretation and/or bias (page 5)
12. Be reflective of institutional autonomy which means that the information published is therefore sometimes dependent on institutional needs and context (page 5)

The data confirming support for these principles are contained in the Phase 1 Report and the Phase 2 Findings Report of the ARUCC PCCAT National Transcript and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Study (see ARUCC PCCAT Study section of the online Guide for copies of these reports).

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).

Rationale supporting each Principle

First Principle

The Transcript should *reflect the regulations of the academic body of the issuing institution.*

The Official Academic Transcript should reflect the approved regulations of an institution's academic governing body as the Transcript is the primary tool attesting to validated and quality assured assessment practices that support the educational framework and/or programs. As the Transcript is a trusted document, it is critical to maintain a direct relationship to academic governing approval protocols, program regulations, and institutional quality assurance and verification policies and processes.

Second Principle

The Transcript should *function as a trusted document that demonstrates adherence to historical accuracy and quality assurance and assessment.*

The Official Academic Transcript is intended to be a comprehensive summary of achievement of all academic milestones completed throughout a student's time at an institution. Approved institutional academic policies and related protocols relevant to the student's academic record are ultimately confirmed and validated through the issuance of the Transcript. This information is then used by both the student and other bodies and institutions to confirm and legitimize achievement of learning outcomes at the postsecondary level. As such and in keeping with the first principle noted above, if excerpts are published in isolation from the entirety of the Transcript, it becomes a different institutional artifact (e.g., a letter, a supplementary document, etc.) and is no longer a full representation of the student academic experience.

Third Principle

The Transcript should *provide evidence of achievement of learning outcomes assessed through a quality assured process by a qualified person.*

Academic achievements published on an Official Academic Transcript should result from an assessment by a faculty subject matter expert or an approved delegate. The process should follow quality approved protocols and unfold in accordance with the academic policy of an institution. The institutional Registrar should validate the transcript outcomes by signature and, if applicable, by institutional seal, as symbols that attest to that process.

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Fourth Principle

The Transcript should *be appropriately transparent in accordance with the credential being pursued.*

Transparency is a critical mechanism for ensuring trust in the quality of information published on an Official Academic Transcript. It is on the basis of the information provided that another institution or body assesses the capacity of the student and whether or not they met the requirements associated with a particular credential; therefore, it is important to ensure there is full and complete information provided regarding the academic milestones achieved on the Transcript. Any unique references in the Transcript should be supported by appropriate explanations (or links to additional information) on the Transcript Legend. The latter should form part of the back of or accompany the Official Academic Transcript.

Fifth Principle

The Transcript should *document relevant academic milestones.*

Complete, comprehensive, and concise publication of relevant academic milestones in a student's history with an institution ensures historical accuracy, tracking of time to completion, transparency, and clarity. The resulting compendium of information published as the Official Academic Transcript facilitates student mobility and reconfirms the trust other bodies and institutions have in the document.

Sixth Principle

Where possible, institutions should *avoid publication of extraneous information on the Transcript.*

The Official Academic Transcript should be sufficiently concise and coherent to facilitate student understanding of the information and/or review by an outside body or institution. Therefore, information appropriate for publication should relate directly to demonstrating achievement of academic milestones related to the final credential. Having noted this, it is not useful, practical nor advisable to publish every detail contained within the student academic record. The milestones published should reflect the academic policies approved by the institutional academic governing body.

Seventh Principle

The Transcript should *facilitate student mobility through transparency and clarity.*

The Official Academic Transcript facilitates movement of students to other educational institutions and/or the workplace. It also facilitates assessment by external regulatory bodies. The presence of certain transcript data elements can contribute to either enhancing or undermining subsequent assessments. For example, providing grades distribution information without a full explanation of the methodology employed could be problematic as the results could be misunderstood. Not providing clear and full information on the credit weight methodology in use at an institution could lead to misunderstandings and potentially result in flawed grade point average calculations or transfer credit assessments. Ensuring an appropriate, clear, and efficient display of actions taken to recognize work completed at other institutions contributes to the accuracy of future reviews of the Transcript by other bodies and institutions. It is also important to avoid unnecessarily duplicating information; therefore, while transparency is advisable when recognizing credit for transfer, a judgement call is necessary regarding the degree of detail provided.

Eighth Principle

The Transcript should *support student retention, and student and/or alumni success and engagement.*

There are select milestones and results that indicate highly successful achievement of learning outcomes by a student but that are not necessarily tied to a course. One example is an internally adjudicated award based on academic merit. As the student, other institutions, and potential employers are primary users of the Transcript, such notations on the document are helpful to formally acknowledge explicit examples of student success which can, in turn, facilitate student retention, and support student and alumni success and engagement.

Ninth Principle

Published information on a Transcript should *adhere to privacy, human rights, and/or accessibility legislation relevant in a particular jurisdiction.*

Federal and provincial legislation impact the Official Academic Transcript. In particular, it is important to adhere to privacy, human rights, and accessibility legislation.

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Tenth Principle

The information captured in the Student Information System and published in documents such as the Transcript should *facilitate secure, validated, and trusted electronic data exchange*.

Successful electronic data exchange requires that an institution adhere to data standards. For more information on transcript exchange standards, refer to the [XML data standards](http://www.pesc.org) (<http://www.pesc.org>).

Eleventh Principle

The information published on a Transcript should *be carefully considered and presented to avoid any potential for misinterpretation and/or bias*.

Select transcript data elements can be misinterpreted or lead to potential bias during subsequent transcript assessments. Either might occur if sufficient explanatory information is not provided either on the Transcript or the Transcript Legend, or through additional website links published on the Transcript. Examples include grades distribution, credit weight, and class rank. Complex transcript data elements can undermine subsequent reviews if full information is not provided regarding how each one relates to the academic standing of a student. Too much detail or lack of detail may impede a balanced review of an academic record, which may cause unnecessary harm to a student.

Twelfth Principle

The information published on a Transcript should *recognize institutional autonomy and is therefore sometimes dependent on institutional needs and context*.

At times, local circumstances will determine whether an institution publishes a particular transcript data element when doing so stands in contrast to the recommended standard or represents a unique situation not addressed by the standards. This could emerge, for example, when publishing a data element is influenced by timing in the academic year and related reporting requirements. The other publication principles should inform decision making when unique circumstances arise. Further, it is advisable to secure approval from the governing academic body.