

# ARUCC

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### Canada signs onto the Groningen Declaration

Andrew Arida, President ARUCC

On Tuesday, May 6, 2015, Canada formally signed on to the Groningen Declaration in support of the creation and maintenance of networks that facilitate the international exchange of digital student data. A Canadian delegation sponsored by ARUCC, consisting of Andrew Arida (UBC; president of ARUCC), Kathleen Massey (McGill University; Chair, ARUCC Groningen Declaration Task Force), and Leisa Wellsman (Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC); CanPESC) attended the fourth annual Groningen Declaration Network Meeting in Málaga, Spain to participate in the formal signing ceremony and to share Canada's practices on digital data exchange. *(For an overview of the Groningen Declaration, see CONTACT Newsletter Spring 2014).*

The Groningen Declaration Network Meeting event was attended by roughly 100 representatives of institutions of higher education, research organizations, government, and organizations that support higher education infrastructure around the world. The formal sessions fell into two topic streams – one on policy, the other on practice – showcasing the current global state of electronic student data exchange. Discussions ranged from the multitude of contexts for which data can be exchanged (e.g., admission, co-transcription or student exchange), to the mechanisms by which the data is exchanged (e.g., "hub and spoke" models involving both sending/receiving institutions and intermediary organizations), to the nature of the data that is being exchanged (e.g., how learning is documented and represented within digital data).

The Canadian delegation presented the current state of digital data exchange in Canada and possible directions for future growth. Leisa provided an overview of two recent initiatives involving the OUAC, one of which features Canadian postsecondary student data crossing provincial borders. The presentation then sparked a group discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of different models that could be



(1) L to R: Neil Robinson, Executive Director, Academic Services and Registrar at the University of Melbourne, Australia; Leisa Wellsman; Nigel Palmer, Honorary Fellow with the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Melbourne. (2) University of Málaga

employed to further enhance the exchange of data in Canada. Specifically, what is the most effective trading method: institution-to-institution exchange, provincial hub-to-hub exchange (e.g., OUAC to ApplyAlberta), or the development of a national clearinghouse-type model?

Having Canada join the Declaration Network was an idea borne of a discussion group at the 2014 ARUCC Conference in Quebec City. Kathleen Massey played a lead role in assembling a taskforce of representatives from institutions across Canada to explore the idea; the group ultimately provided a formal recommendation to the ARUCC Executive. The 2015 Groningen Declaration signatory document appears online and both links Canada to, and formalizes Canada's presence in, an international consortium of countries and organizations supporting the exchange of digital student data.

These discussions took place against the magical backdrop of the Andalucía

region in the south of Spain. The University of Málaga hosted the event and their generosity ensured that all invited guests experienced the richness of Spanish hospitality and culture. The informal networking and discussions outside of the sessions certainly drew inspiration from a backdrop of Moorish architecture and the taste of fresh seafood and Spanish tapas!

So what does this mean for Canadian universities and colleges? Canada's presence underscored our existing capacity to exchange electronic data and our eagerness to partner with international organizations on pilot exchange projects. Certainly, as pilot projects south of the border prove, Canadian institutions will need to explore partnerships with intermediary groups to make this happen; institution-to-institution linkages do not seem quite as common. Indeed, if conversations from the Groningen Declaration Meeting are any indication, the solution to digital student data mobility goes beyond individual institution willingness and

interest and requires the establishment of sophisticated support networks.

Now that Canada has signed the Declaration, the ARUCC Groningen Task Force will re-commence its work to consult broadly regarding possible Canadian models for data exchange. Stay tuned for more on this project!



*Kathleen Massey (McGill University; Chair, ARUCC Groningen Declaration Task Force), Andrew Arida (UBC; president of ARUCC), and Leisa Wellsman (Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC); CanPESC)*

## ARUCC Executive Update – Fast Facts

- Save the Date! The 2016 Biennial Conference will be held June 19 - 22, 2016 at the Sheraton Wall Centre, Vancouver BC (held jointly with PCCAT 2016). Watch for more information and a call for session proposals - consider sharing your expertise!
- Send us your photos. We're collecting a bank of photos (people and places) to showcase on the main ARUCC banner. We also invite your feedback on the new website. Please send your comments and photos to [www.arucc.ca/en/contact](http://www.arucc.ca/en/contact)
- The PCCAT 2015 Conference was held June 24 & 25 in Windsor ON. This year's theme was "Blending Borders: Expanding Capacity and Access Through Student Transfer and Mobility". Highlights included keynote speaker Tom Black, Stanford University Registrar, a National Transcript Guide Update, and a National Panel on Consortiums, Admissions and Transfer organizations.

## ARUCC – Research Working Group

*Aaron House, Director, Pathways to Education and Working Group Member*

The ARUCC Research Working Group is a volunteer committee to review requests and provide recommendations to the executive regarding future research opportunities.

We are excited to announce the addition of our web presence on the new ARUCC web site, launched in March, 2015. The new webpage contains:

- the genesis of the working group and early efforts;
- working group membership and a call for regional representation;
- a list of relevant national and international resources of interest to those within the registrarial community.

You may view the page via [www.arucc.ca](http://www.arucc.ca) or directly at [www.arucc.ca/en/resources/research-working-group.html](http://www.arucc.ca/en/resources/research-working-group.html).

Going forward, we are interested in populating the website with topic specific research papers and will be seeking your advice on how best to collect and present such information using templates to help facilitate this process. The Research Working Group will soon be seeking your input on these templates so stay tuned!

### Interested in joining the Working Group?

Additional membership is being sought through the regional associations. Those interested in joining the working group should contact Kate Ross at [kate.ross@ubc.ca](mailto:kate.ross@ubc.ca)

## Congratulations George!

ARUCC extends our best wishes to George Granger, retiring Executive Director of the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC). George's 35 year career included a year as an Admissions Counsellor at the University of Guelph, fourteen years as Associate Registrar and Director of Admission at Wilfrid Laurier University, and seven years as Registrar at McMaster University. George has served on numerous OURA committees, was President of OURA in 1997, and received the OURA Award of Achievement in 2001, becoming member emeritus in recognition of his many contributions.

For the last 12 years, George has been the Executive Director of the OUAC. Under his extraordinary leadership, George has made the OUAC a centre of excellence in centralized application services recognized provincially, nationally and internationally. He has provided oversight of the Ontario Universities Fair, an event that now attracts over 129,000 visitors a year and has provided key direction in innovative application services including electronic transcript management.

On July 1, 2015 OUAC welcomed Dave Wallace as the incoming Executive Director, formerly CIO at the University of Waterloo.



## Exploring the Impact of a Fall Break Policy on Student Mental Health Outcomes and Retention

*Kelly Pilato, Doctoral Candidate, Applied Health Sciences, Brock University*

The mental health of university and college students is receiving increasing attention as they report higher levels of stress and anxiety than the general population (Stallman, 2010). As mental illness commonly develops between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four (Eisenberg, Golberstein, Gollust, & Hefner, 2007) post-secondary students are at particular risk. In fact, the higher stress levels associated with being a first year university student alone lead to higher dropout rates than either anxiety or depression (Tamin, 2013).

Many universities across Ontario are implementing a policy for a fall break in hopes of alleviating students' stress and anxiety in order to improve mental health, heighten retention, and increase academic productivity. However, there is limited research on university-initiated interventions that alleviate school related stress. There is even less research on whether a policy for a fall break has an impact on student's mental health and the overall health of the students on campus.

The objective of this study is to assess whether a newly implemented policy for "fall break week" reduces students' stress and anxiety and increases retention at Brock University.

A mixed methods methodology is being used to collect self-reported qualitative

and quantitative indicators of stress and academic achievement and retention. This study uses a three-year longitudinal cross-sectional survey design with a sample of full-time undergraduate students registered in core and context courses across all faculties. Regression analyses and two-way ANOVAS were used in years one and two to determine if there is a relationship between the break and stress, academic achievement, retention and test differences between gender, Faculty, and year of study.

Data is also being contrasted with retrospective information to establish a baseline for comparison over 3 years on proxy measures for mental health indicators such as student health services usage, residence incident reports, campus police services and counselling services usage. An institutional analysis including the variables of a breakdown of undergraduate students only by age/gender/year of study/Department; data regarding admission data – high school averages with standard deviations by undergraduate department for each of the past four years; and major averages by degree program and retention rates within degree programs by year again over the past four years is also being compiled for the database as well as to compare representativeness of the sample from each year of the study (year one, 2013/2014 and year two, 2014/2015).

Two years into this study, a trend toward the Fall Break decreasing students overall stress can be seen. Students agree the break was beneficial, that workload did not increase as a result of the break (before or after) and that stress did not increase as a result of increased workload. Although the strength of the associations varied, these general conclusions held for all years, all faculties and for both males and females. The group reporting the greatest benefit was first year students in year one of the study (2013/2014) and first and second year students in year two of the study (2014/2015). The data also revealed that stress is correlated to workload as those students who did report increased workload before or after the break also reported greater stress; although a trend toward fewer students reporting either workload or stress increasing before or after the break can be seen from year one of the study (2013/2014) to year two of the study (2014/2015).

This research will provide comprehensive evidence regarding the utility of a Fall Break to reduce stress and increase retention in post-secondary settings. Findings will help post-secondary institutions determine whether a fall break week can be an effective part of a multi-faceted approach to addressing students' stress and anxiety.



# Common National Transcript Standards and Transfer Credit Nomenclature

Joanne Duklas, Primary Investigator and Project Lead

The national ARUCC PCCAT Transcript Standards and Transfer Credit Nomenclature Project continues to move forward with the support of stakeholders from across the country.

The project team is compiling the feedback from the national follow up survey to clarify findings and deepen the consultation from Phase 1. Throughout June and July, the team will be synthesizing the new findings, developing the database content, and beginning the creation process for the new national Database Guide platform. The team's primary focus is on identifying and creating standards and nomenclature for use by registrarial and pathway policy developers and practitioners.

The national project was featured in one of the plenary sessions at the annual national PCCAT conference in Windsor, June 24-25 (see <http://pccatweb.org/pccat-2015/>).

This Canada-wide project is a multi-year project currently funded by ARUCC and

PCCAT, and six provincial organizations including the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT), the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), Campus Manitoba, the New Brunswick Council on Articulations and Transfer (NBCAT), the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT), and the Saskatchewan Credit Transfer and Learner Pathways Committee. Project leadership is provided by a Joint ARUCC PCCAT Steering Committee. A number of stakeholders are involved actively in the consultation for this including the Canadian PESC User Working Group.

Phase 1 finalized in June 2014 with the publication of a national study which identifies current practices for transcription and transfer credit nomenclature in Canada. You will find this compendium of practices useful in your daily work; therefore, we encourage you to review the report available at the ARUCC PCCAT Project website ([www.arucc.ca/en/resources/arucc-pccat-project.html](http://www.arucc.ca/en/resources/arucc-pccat-project.html)).

Phase 2 is heavily informed by the Phase 1 findings. For this second phase, the project team is consulting with the national community on what should be the future transcript standards and transfer credit nomenclature.

Core principles continue to guide this work: supporting student mobility; facilitating community engagement; and encouraging transparency, coherency and knowledge enhancement. The project is also guided by a commitment to recognize and respect institutional autonomy and provincial authority. In this context, the overarching intentions include pointing "to good practices, even best practices" (ARUCC, 2003 ARUCC Transcript Guide, p. 10), highlighting enduring common practice which should be preserved, and pointing the way to future possibilities.

Questions and reflections can be directed to Joanne Duklas, [jduklas@cogeco.ca](mailto:jduklas@cogeco.ca) (Tel: 905 877-7485). The project website contains further details (see [www.arucc.ca/en/resources/arucc-pccat-project.html](http://www.arucc.ca/en/resources/arucc-pccat-project.html)).

## Survey Says!

In March 2015, the ARUCC Executive launched an on-line survey of its membership. Full survey results can be viewed at [www.arucc.ca/en/resources/surveys/surveys.html](http://www.arucc.ca/en/resources/surveys/surveys.html) under Reporting & Research – the table provides a quick snapshot.

The ARUCC Executive has already identified a series of possible action items from the survey findings, including:

- Current and planned activities to have an enhanced presence on the ARUCC website and to be featured as regular items in the CONTACT Newsletter – this includes regular updates specific to the work of the Executive.
- Use of the CONTACT Newsletter as a means of helping disseminate news from the Regions, as well as ongoing work on current issues or topics.
- Design of a common tool or template for creating, sending, and repositing surveys. Consider a baseline set of annual surveys for benchmarking.
- Explore economies of scale with other organizations (PCCAT, CACUSS, etc). These discussions are underway.

Comments and observations on survey data are encouraged via members of the ARUCC Executive. Our thanks to Greg McPherson, survey administrator; Romesh Vadivel for summary analysis work, and the ARUCC members who responded to the survey!

Quick view of survey findings by importance of activity/function	Current focus	Satisfaction level		Future focus
	Very important or somewhat important	% Very satisfied or satisfied	% Unaware of existing work	% High or moderate priority
Development of guidelines and standards of practice (e.g. National Transcript Guide)	97.7	95.4	2.3	96.6
Communication regarding government relations (e.g. new legislation)	96.6	70.1	27.6	94.2
Collecting and sharing information via surveys on the ARUCC listserv	95.5	88.2	3.5	90.8
Professional development opportunities (e.g. webinars, workshops)	93.1	53.5	30.2	86.2
Communication among members via existing media (e.g. website, CONTACT)	92.1	76.5	10.6	85.9
Bi-annual conferences	92.0	94.2	2.3	89.5
Research projects/service	87.2	76.7	18.6	75.6
Representing Canada within international organizations and networks	86.4	54.7	41.9	73.6
Leadership development and mentoring	80.7	47.1	41.2	70.9
Advocacy	80.7	52.4	45.1	67.5
Exploring the use of new media to promote communication among members	72.4	46.5	46.5	57.5
Promotion of professional services (e.g. external reviews)	64.8	45.4	51.2	51.2