

## Executive Summary

# Ontario College to Fanshawe and Seneca Colleges “Bachelor of Commerce” Degrees Transfer Pathways Project

Project # 2015-25

March 2016

A proposal was submitted to ONCAT in early 2015 to initiate a project to support the creation and implementation of diploma to degree pathways for access from all colleges in Ontario for transfer into college Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree programs offered at Fanshawe College and Seneca College.

Building on the Ontario Heads of Business ONCAT’s transfer agreements in Business between Ontario college diploma programs, Fanshawe and Seneca College’s Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees will provide pathways for Ontario diploma graduates to ladder into these college degrees. The project’s goal was to create articulation agreements for the college’s high affinity diploma and advanced diploma programs in business. The result of these agreements will create time and cost saving for college graduates in Ontario seeking degree options in business. It will further fulfill a need for degree transfer opportunities in high affinity business diploma programs.

### Goal of the Ontario Colleges to Fanshawe and Seneca College Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees transfer pathways project

- Create seamless diploma to college degree transfer between the 24 Ontario colleges and pathways from high affinity college diploma programs to:
  - 4 Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees at Seneca College
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce-Business Management
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce-Financial Services Management
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce-Human Resources Strategy and Technology
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce-International Accounting and Finance
  - 4 Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees at Fanshawe College
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce (Management)
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting)
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce (Human Resources Management)
    - Honours Bachelor of Commerce (Digital Marketing)
- Articulation agreements created for all high affinity business diploma programs from all Ontario colleges into the Fanshawe College and Seneca College Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees.
- Provide oversight of the development of online bridging courses (6 per institution)
  - Fanshawe College online bridging course development
  - Seneca College online bridging course development

## Pathway mapping

The methodology for the mapping for this project began with the ability to build on two previous projects. Both Seneca and Fanshawe Colleges have analyzed diploma and advanced diploma course content and learning outcomes to the content and learning outcomes of the Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree programs to build an internal pathway for their diploma students and advanced diploma students and graduates who wish to pursue the Bachelor of Commerce degrees. Bridging programs delivered over the summer months were developed to allow the new degree students a seamless transfer into the Bachelor degree program and address learning outcome gaps from diploma to degree programs. Over the past couple years, another ONCAT funded project mapped out the Ontario colleges “Diploma to Diploma” pathways project that build transfer pathways between Ontario colleges by mapping course content and learning outcomes across all Ontario business programs. This “diploma to degree” project piggybacked on the research and outcomes that came out of the “diploma to diploma” project. A gap analysis between Fanshawe and Seneca College’s diploma courses and the colleges courses were done to see about potential curriculum and learning outcome gaps, which then compared against the degree curriculum and learning outcomes.

## Learning Outcomes

It is challenging comparing the learning outcomes from diploma to degree programs because the differences between the applied nature at the diploma and the advanced diploma levels and the conceptual sophistication at the Honours Bachelor degree level. In the business diploma programs that have courses that allow for transfer to professional credentials or designations, college diploma courses have built in some of the conceptual sophistication necessary to transfer to the profession-oriented degree requirements in the same areas of study, for example, accounting, HR and management. To address gaps in learning outcomes, Seneca College and Fanshawe College developed bridging courses that will address the lack of skills and knowledge that the gap analysis identified in the mapping process. The bridging courses provide skills and competencies that are necessary at an Honours baccalaureate level and that are missing from diploma level programs such as critical thinking, analytical skills, independent thinking and learning and research oriented skills. The bridging programs also provide a more theoretical approach to the functional areas of business than in the diploma programs.

## Articulation agreements

A total of 235 articulation agreements were developed for the 24 Ontario colleges. A separate articulation agreement was prepared for high affinity diploma and advanced diplomas for each college’s program. Please note, not every college offered a diploma or advanced diploma in each specialty (i.e. Business, Marketing, Accounting, Financial Services or Human Resources).

## Successes and Challenges

Successes:

The ability to prepare the 235 articulation agreements for 24 colleges in a relatively short period of time (June 2015-March 2016) is the direct result of the synergy gained by being able to access the research, findings and results of the ONCAT funded Ontario college “diploma to diploma” transfer project completed by the ‘Heads of Business for Ontario Colleges’. There was a tremendous amount of sharing of information that made the mapping of the college diploma programs simplified through shared resources and collaboration. Another factor that assisted in the development of the agreements was the

publicly available online information for each college. The posting of detailed course outlines and learning objectives provided an easy and accessible method for gaining information and the posting of relevant contact persons aided in required follow-up.

There are more pathways available than ever before for people wishing to pursue post-secondary education through diploma and degree programming. These articulation agreements offer graduates of business diploma and advanced diploma programs a clearly communicated, easy to understand pathway following graduation from diploma and advanced diploma to Honours Bachelor of Commerce degrees at Fanshawe and Seneca Colleges.

Additionally, the articulation agreements originating out of this project provide opportunities for colleges, and in particular those that do not offer similar degree level programming, and the ability to promote more degree options to their students and graduates who wish to pursue Bachelor degrees in business.

### Challenges

The major weakness in the outcome of the mapping exercise is the nature of them as “point in time” articulation agreements that are based on diploma course requirements in a specific academic year. Graduates from prior years will have to have a more detailed review of their courses and curriculum to be accepted into the degree programs. Likewise, agreements will need revisions as curriculum in diplomas and the eight degrees themselves evolve in the future.

The sustainability of these agreements will need to be examined in the future to determine an effective way to keep them updated and relevant in the most-timely fashion otherwise they lose their value to students, faculty and staff who access them.

As more college programs develop opportunities for transfer between post-secondary institutions, another opportunity for colleges to streamline the entry process between institutions would be to offer common transcript language so academic results are consistent across institutions.

### Creation of Online Bridging Programs

Timing constraints necessitate that bridging programs (a group of courses bridging the gap between diploma and degree) to be delivered over the summer months between diploma graduation and degree start. Since many diploma programs have a ‘co-op’ option and some students have flexible graduation dates, access to the summer bridging programs is delayed for some. To address this timing issue, Fanshawe and Seneca Colleges are developing online courses that will allow graduates that need to take the bridging courses the opportunity to do so without being on campus. Ideally, the online courses that compose the bridge will also be available multiple times during the academic year which will benefit students that graduate at the end of the summer and fall semesters. Development of these online courses will begin summer 2016.

### Communications Plan

Both Fanshawe College and Seneca College have invested in this project to develop a communications plan to promote the articulation agreements at Ontario colleges. The communications plan will include online and written materials targeted to the colleges in the agreements. The communications plan will be rolled out at the end of March 2016.

## Monitoring Outcomes

Seneca College and Fanshawe College will monitor the progress, success and challenges with new students who transfer from other college diploma programs into their Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree programs. This will be done to maximize student success in the degree programs by identifying and addressing learning gaps. Both Seneca and Fanshawe Colleges will be ensuring potential students' needs are met in the enrolment cycle from communication of degree options to registration processes with easy access of information. They will ensure transparency, clear communication of application processes, and advisement support. Finally, these students will be monitored in terms of challenges and successes in the program through to graduation.