

Certificate in Academic Foundations – Comprehensive Program Review
Self-Study Recommendations
Dr. E. McCausland, Faculty Liaison, Academic Foundations
30th April 2019

The Certificate in Academic Foundations (CAF) was designed to provide students with a strong first-year experience, an opportunity to explore a variety of fields, and maximum transfer into degree programs. It has achieved that purpose. Douglas College has revised existing degrees to include a CAF entrance pathway and ensured that all new degrees will include a CAF option. The program has block transfer to most BC research universities. From the curriculum and transfer perspective, the program is a success.

However, since the creation of separate limited enrolment CAF programs for entry into the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Science in Psychiatric Nursing, student numbers in the open enrolment CAF have dropped substantially; there were 130 new CAF students in 2017-18. Moreover, about half of those students are waiting for entrance to the Nursing and Psych Nursing Foundations programs rather than using the CAF to explore other options. The College has built an excellent entry point to a Bachelor of Arts or Science for undecided students, but they have not come.

The main recommendations of this report, then, are aimed at increasing enrolment numbers and attracting more students to this opportunity for a broad-based foundation for future study.

Primary Recommendations:

Recomm. Number	Related Report Component	Recommendation	Status / Timeline
7.	7	Develop a “Zed Cred” (textbook-free free) option, starting with a planning committee to determine resource needs and process	Had preliminary discussion with Open Douglas; establish Planning Committee F2019
8.	8	Create a “Foundations compass” website to promote exploration and provide some basic guidance on areas to explore based on student interests	In place for W2020 semester

Additional Recommendations (unranked):

Recomm. Number	Related Report Component	Recommendation	Status / Timeline
1.	1	Meet with Academic Advising to discuss CAF course planning for breadth	May 2019
2.	2	Consider reopening block transfer discussions with UBC (consult with VPAP and President)	May 2019
3.	2	List or link degree-specific CAF packages on the CAF catalogue page (work with Registrar’s Office)	May/June 2019
4.	3	Meet with Future Students’ Office about recruitment avenues (annual or biannual)	June 2019
5.	3	Investigate possibility of block registration and internal promotion possibilities for course packages (VPAP office)	
6.	4	Review admission caps for AFN and AFPN (VPAP office and Institutional Effectiveness)	Consider change for F2021 (Oct. 2020 application)

Response to Douglas College Self Study: Certificate in Academic Foundations
External Reviewer: Dr. Alisa Webb, Vice President, Students, University of the Fraser Valley
May 2019

Overview:

I am pleased to have been asked to conduct an external review of Douglas College’s Certificate in Academic Foundations (CAF). The CAF appears to be a solid credential which prepares students for academic success by ensuring learning in key, foundational areas: communication (English), quantitative analysis (Math, Statistics, or Computing Science), science (lab science), and other areas typically the product of a range of first-year Arts and Science courses, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and research. The well-written self-study clearly articulates the merits of the program and general student satisfaction with their studies, while also noting issues with recruitment and enrolment.

Environmental Scan:

Few BC colleges offer the equivalent to Douglas’ CAF. Institutions such as Langara, Okanagan College, Camosun College, and Selkirk College only provide Arts and Science credentials for 60 credits, either as an Associate Degree or a Diploma. Similarly, a quick look at four of the designated teaching-intensive universities – Capilano, Vancouver Island, UFV, and Emily Carr – finds no comparable program. The self-study indicates one comparable program, KPU’s Certificate in Arts, noting it requires 6 credits in English and 24 additional credits in Arts.

Two BC colleges do offer a program similar to CAF: Vancouver Community College and Northern Lights College. These programs are closer in composition to CAF than the noted KPU certificate.

	DOUG	VCC	NLC
Total Credits	30	30	30
Credential	Certificate in Academic Foundations	University Transfer Arts Certificate	General Arts and Science Certificate
Required English Credits	3	6	0
Required Math, Statistics, or Computing Science Credits	3	0	0
Required Lab Science Credits	3	0	0
Required General Arts and Sciences Credits	12-21	0	30
Required Humanities and/or Social Science Credits	0	18	0

Required Math and/or Science Credits	0	6	0
Options?	Can include up to 9 credits of university transfer	N/A	Can include select courses from Business Management or from Social Work

Of the three, NLC’s Certificate is the most flexible, likely because of their smaller student and faculty population and their lower number of course offerings. VCC and DOUG both require 6 credits in Math/Science, although DOUG’s CAF is more specific about how students meet those 6 credits. All programs require the completion of general arts and science courses, with an emphasis on university transferability. Finally, DOUG and NLC both allow for some non-Arts/Science credits to be applied to their respective certificates.

The environmental scan led to another observation that might be of use to the program administrators: the name of the certificate might be an issue. “Foundations” seem to be linked to pre-college and pre-university programming at various institutions across North America. For example, both Okanagan College and the University of the Fraser Valley identify Foundations programming as targeting students who need one of the following:

- English Language learning, such as ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELS (English Language Studies);
- Upgrading so as to meet college- or university-level admissions requirements or first-year course pre-requisites; or
- Adult Basic Education.

This could have present a challenge when Douglas is looking to recruit students; if students see “foundation” as having negative connotations, they could be dissuaded from applying.

Self-Study Recommendations:

The self-study identifies several recommendations related to issues with program recruitment and enrolment. These all make good sense. Of note:

- Shifting the CAF to Zed Cred would likely attract new students and would set it apart from other credentials at Douglas. Re-visiting transfer with UBC is also likely to increase attractiveness for students.

- Better website materials and greater engagement with Academic Advising should help students to think about their studies in a different way, providing both more direction, but also greater understanding of how their early coursework has an effect on what is possible for them later in their studies.
- Undertaking work to address the issues around the AFN and AFPN and their interconnectedness to open enrolment CAF, as outlined in the self-study, might also decrease the number of students in CAF who are attempting to mimic the AFN and AFPN programs.

It is clear that the review team has put considerable thought into identifying ways to address enrolment and recruitment issues, as well as overall student satisfaction.

Additional Recommendations:

While reviewing the self-study, Douglas' website, and Douglas' Strategic Plan, I did identify two other potential areas of consideration.

1. That Douglas broaden the idea of academic foundations

The CAF seeks to provide a solid, academic foundation that is applicable to a number of different degrees and pathways. This makes good sense. Douglas might also consider, though, how students obtain the additional skills needed for post-secondary success. Three of these skills are noted in the desired program outcomes:

- Work effectively with others;
- Learn independently; and
- Develop/improve time management and organizational skills.

How does the CAF overtly teach students these skills? As with many academic programs, it seems that it is expected that students will gain these skills through engagement in their courses, but there are likely few courses that overtly teach them. While the survey responses suggest that, on the whole, students feel they have been at least somewhat prepared in these areas, Douglas might consider how they could tweak the program to emphasize not just academic foundations, but setting students up for academic success.

Beyond the already articulated outcomes, another could be goal setting, thereby addressing the concern regarding student planning and connection to Advising. Other possibilities include dedicated learning around study skills and managing stressors. Whether offered as a required course (face-to-face or online), as a series of mandatory workshops, or in another way, such an approach could work well for recruitment purposes and could help distinguish the CAF from Douglas' more popular General Studies

Diploma. It might also include a change in name, such as Academic Foundations for Success. This would likely appeal to both students and their supporters.

2. That Douglas consider other avenues for transfer

While agreeing that Douglas should re-start conversations with UBC around block transfer of the CAF into UBC programs, there is also value in Douglas thinking beyond the research universities. While appreciating that this approach creates seamless pathways into and out of the associate degrees, by adhering so firmly to the associate degree framework which emphasizes the research institutions, I think Douglas is missing an opportunity. BCCAT data, as presented at the past several Joint Articulation Meetings, shows that the government-identified teaching intensive institutions receive huge numbers of transfer students. Douglas could be limiting opportunities for students by not broadening the scope of transfer possibilities. Of note, Douglas might consider conversations with KPU and CAP given their relative proximity and ease of access to transportation for students living in New Westminster and Coquitlam.

Conclusion:

Douglas' CAF has the potential to draw more students than it currently does. From an academic perspective, the program is sound and well-conceived. Fundamentally, though, it is not immediately clear at this time what is attractive about the program or why a student might favour it over other options. The self-study, for example, indicates that the General Studies Diploma is more attractive to students. This is perhaps not surprising given the diploma has the flexibility of the CAF, with the added attractiveness of no math requirement and no lab science requirement. Douglas would do well to consider how they can make the CAF stand out from other options as a credential that gets students excited about applying. Considering shifting it to a Zed Cred, increasing transfer possibilities, and/or tweaking the focus of the program – or a combination of all three – could help in attracting more students to the CAF as a foundational program for their post-secondary studies at Douglas and beyond.



**DOUGLAS COLLEGE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW (CR)
RESPONSE FROM THE
OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AND PROVOST**

Douglas College Administration policy A38: *Program Review* requires a follow-up plan be developed by the Vice President, Academic and Provost, in response to the Self-Study and External Report.

FACULTY (Lead Dean/Associate Dean)	Cross-Faculty Credential	
Department / Program	Certificate in Academic Foundations	
Date Submitted	April 2019	
External Review Panel (ERP)	Dr. Alisa Webb	VP, Students and Enrolment Management, University of the Fraser Valley
Reason for Timing of Comprehensive Review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Schedule (routine) or <input type="checkbox"/> Off-cycle, due to emergent concerns (<i>specify below</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in discipline/field/licensing <input type="checkbox"/> New program development <input type="checkbox"/> Demand/enrolment/budget concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>specify</i>) 	
Date of last Comprehensive Review	N/A	
RESPONSE/RECOMMENDATIONS		
SUMMARY RESPONSE	<p>The CAF program was launched in 2012 as a UT pathway option that would give students modest guidance while encouraging them to explore their academic interests. Over time, it has become integrated into the College’s degree programs as a flexible but somewhat defined first-year option upon which an additional, discipline-specific three years are built. It is well conceived and highly subscribed where used as the only degree admission pathway; however, it continues to struggle to find its niche in the broader first-year community of students who have entered the College with less clear academic goals.</p>	
All Self-Study recommendations accepted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No [<i>If no, brief explanation</i>]	
All External Report recommendations accepted?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No [<i>If no, brief explanation</i>]	
VPA’s RECOMMENDATIONS In particular, CAF should focus on the following:	<p>The Faculty Liaison is asked to develop an Implementation and Action Plan (IAP), to be submitted on the form provided: the IAP will propose priorities and timelines for pursuing the recommendations in the Self-Study as well as those proposed by the ERP. The following should be taken into account: pursuing transfer recognition at UBC should be given high priority; a Zed Cred initiative should target high-demand courses and can proceed only with faculty member buy-in. The IAP is due in to my office by 15th August 2019.</p>	
Next scheduled PR (5 – 7 years):	2024	

Vice-President, Academic and Provost

May 23, 2019

Date