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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** BCSS MEMBER SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS & ATHLETIC DIRECTORS  
**FROM:** JORDAN ABNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
**SUBJECT:** POLICY CLARIFICATION - BONAFIDE ACADEMIC TRANSFER  
**DATE:** OCTOBER 12, 2017  
**CC:** BCSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BCSS STAFF

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The purpose of this memo is to help clarify the application of an existing policy as directed by the Board of Directors so that all schools are clearly informed on its application. The policy in question is 38.9.3.1 (page 44) of the BCSS Handbook relating to the area of Bonafide Academic Transfers.

Your Board of Directors has limited ability to pass or alter policy without a membership vote. Our Bylaws state that the *“Board may establish such rules, regulations, policies or procedures relating to the affairs of the Society as it deems expedient, provided that no rule, regulation or procedure is valid to the extent that it is inconsistent with the Act, the Constitution or these Bylaws.”*

In real-world terms this means that the Board typically only responds to a situation or request from the staff or membership as it may be related to a situation, unforeseen development or change in the educational or sporting landscape. Generally, the board will only be directly involved in clarifying or modifying policy in the following situations:

- An area that is not covered by existing policy
- An unclear policy that requires some direction for staff on application or implementation
- Two competing or contradictory policies and the staff request guidance on which supersedes the other
- Membership passing a vote that causes direct harm to the organization (i.e. the membership passing something illegal)

The educational landscape is changing at an incredible pace. In response to BC’s new curriculum, which is being phased in over the next 2 years, schools are reacting with the introduction of new programs and individualized or specialized programs rarely seen before in secondary education.

The reality is our organization’s governance struggles to keep up with the pace of changes we are seeing, and often leaves policies that were well intended and appropriate only a handful of years ago, now antiquated, ineffective or problematic in their application.



The policy in question, a bonafide academic transfer, was created originally so that students that had to transfer schools, simply to access core courses or common elective courses were not penalized by having to sit out a year from their athletics.

The question about students transferring to attend sport schools or academy type programs, and whether this would qualify as a bonafide academic transfer was brought forward to BCSS this fall. This was discussed at length during the most recent Board of Directors meeting, and as a result the Board issued the guidance for this year that **courses that are directly related to Sport or Human Performance, where credits are being issued for the execution of sport training activities, either in a multi-sport, or sport-specific application, should not be eligible for consideration when evaluating the merits of an eligibility application on the grounds of a bonafide academic transfer.**

The reasoning for this guidance from the Board is that the primary goal and objective of BCSS is to provide a fair and balanced playing field for competition in a secondary school environment. The Board recognized that students who are transferring schools and stating an academy or sport school as their justification as the courses necessary to satisfy the requirements of a bonafide academic transfer do not meet the original intent of this rule, and secondly have a greater likelihood of affecting the fair and balanced field of play, when they are provided significant school time to train in a sport training environment.

The BCSS membership removed a rule years ago excluding sport specific training (i.e. Academies) athletes from participating in that sport whatsoever; it remains removed and has no effect in this situation. The student-athletes in question, however, are subject to transfer rules, and in this case, they would be required to sit out a year, like any other student-athlete who transfers after the first day of grade 9, but only in the sports they have competed in during the previous 12 months. They are immediately eligible in any other BCSS recognized sports in which they haven't participated in.

Moving forward, at the request of the Board, the BCSS staff will be soliciting feedback on the proper language to bring forward at the next opportunity for the membership to pass policy for clarification on this rule, but as we continue to try to operate transparently with our membership, they felt it was important to communicate the interpretation of this rule immediately to all our member schools.

Should you have any concerns or feedback regarding this or any other item, please do not hesitate to contact the BCSS Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan Abney".

Jordan Abney  
Executive Director