



ONCAT-Funded Research Projects:
A Handbook for Project Leads and Participants

oncat
Ontario Council on
Articulation and Transfer



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Conseil pour l'articulation
et le transfert – Ontario

Research Projects: Overview of the Process

Congratulations, and welcome to the team of dedicated individuals who have created and are currently helping to improve student mobility in the public postsecondary education system in Ontario. ONCAT is pleased to support Research Projects undertaken by our partners in the province. As will be discussed in more detail below, the purpose of the Research Projects is two-fold: 1) to advance knowledge and understanding of the current state of student mobility and credit transfer in the province of Ontario and 2) to provide a resource for others who are looking to broaden and deepen understanding of both the student and the institutional experiences of transfer in future work. The ONCAT Projects Team is here to support you throughout your project work.

This short handbook is intended to give new (and returning) project leads and participants a brief overview of the main stages in the Research Project process. The steps are in place to help us fulfil our project management responsibilities, but more importantly the process is there to provide some helpful structure to you as your group works its way through the project. While this handbook describes the main components of a typical project, ONCAT understands that each project is unique, and we are happy to be flexible wherever appropriate to help you do what works best for the partners in your group and to help you attain the best results in your project work.

I—Pre-Project Stage

At this point you will already have completed most of the steps in the Pre-Project Stage (see the **Summary of Project Steps** section below). You will have submitted a proposal to our Request for Proposals (RFP) that has been reviewed by the ONCAT RFP Panel and been accepted. You will have received a **Notice of Award** informing you that your project proposal has been approved along with a **Draft Agreement** (contract). The Notice of Award itself should not be construed as permission from ONCAT to begin the work detailed in the Draft Agreement. Once all details (and revisions, if applicable) of the Agreement are accepted by both you and ONCAT, a **Final Agreement** is signed by both parties. Only after the Final Agreement has been signed and returned to you should work on the project begin.

II—Project Stage

Once the Final Agreement has been signed by you and ONCAT, work on your project can begin. The Agreement will provide details about the timelines and deliverables expected for the project. Normally, there are at least two reports associated with Research Projects: one or more Interim Reports (depending on the length of the project) and a Final Report. However, the details of each particular project will vary, so please refer to the specifics outlined in your Final Agreement for more information or contact your Project Officer with any questions or concerns. As a project unfolds, there are sometimes deviations from the original project plan or timeline that occur. ONCAT understands that such developments are sometimes unavoidable and can even be favourable to the outcome of the project. In such cases it is helpful to

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communicate with your Project Officer, so that ONCAT can be kept in the loop about the project's current status and help you achieve your goals.

Interim Report

The **Interim Report** is expected to be a short document, regardless of project size and scope. ONCAT will provide you with an **Interim Report Template** and, in fact, the report should not be any longer than the template. The primary purpose of the Interim Report is to communicate the status of the project and whether it is on track; if the project has fallen behind the intended schedule, the Interim Report should indicate the extent of the discrepancy and what is being done to remedy the situation.

The key sections of the Interim Report (as outlined in the Template) include project details (project name, number, contact information, etc.); a Progress Overview; a Key Milestones Table; a brief account of project progress and deviations from the plan; a Risk Register; a Financial Status update; and a Deadlines section that indicates when the Final Report is due according to the agreement.

The Interim Report is not intended to provide a record of all the work the team has done and will do; rather, the emphasis is on the status of and deviations from the project plan, thus making for a shorter and more focused report. If there is a need to record more detail, that can be done via an Appendix or attached document.

An ONCAT Project Officer will send you a reminder approximately 1 month before the Interim Report is due. This notice will also contain a reminder of the invoice due from your institution at this time. An invoice is required to correspond to the interim payment. Once the Interim Report and invoice have been received and the report has been approved by ONCAT, the interim payment will be issued. As you are progressing through the project, if it becomes apparent that you may not need to expend the full amount of funding as outlined in the original budget, please let your Project Officer know as soon as possible, so that ONCAT can factor this information into our overall financial planning. Any unused funds must be returned to ONCAT.

Final Report

The **Final Report** is expected to be a lengthy and detailed document. ONCAT will provide you with **Final Report Guidelines** to help you prepare your Final Report. There are two primary goals to the Research Projects: first, to advance knowledge and understanding of the current state of student mobility and credit transfer in the province of Ontario and second, to provide a resource for others who are looking to broaden and deepen understanding of both the student and the institutional experiences of transfer in future work.

Not every project is successful in achieving all the goals that were laid down at the outset. Such instances should not be considered failures; rather, a clear articulation of what both worked and did not work in your project can be highly valuable to future project leads. As such, you should be

sure to highlight tips and best practices as well as lessons learned through your project work. The Final Report must also contain an **Executive Summary** and detailed **Financial Statement**, as outlined in the Final Report Guidelines.

An ONCAT Project Officer will send you a reminder approximately 1 month before the Final Report is due. This notice will also contain a reminder of the invoice due from your institution at this time. An invoice is required to correspond to the final payment. Once the Final Report and invoice have been received and approved by ONCAT, the final payment will be issued.

III—Project Wind-up

As mentioned above, one of the primary goals of the Research Projects is to act as a resource for the sector. In keeping with this principle, the Final Report and Executive Summary will be posted on the ONCAT website (www.oncat.ca). The version of the Final Report for the website may be a slightly modified version, if the submitted Final Report contains information that is deemed sensitive.

Summary of Project Steps

I—Pre-Project Stage

1. Submission and Evaluation of Proposal
 - i) RFP submitted
 - ii) RFP evaluated by panel
 - iii) Approval process completed
2. Notice of Award issued
3. The Agreement (contract)
 - i) Draft Agreement sent and reviewed by institution(s)
 - ii) Any amendments agreed upon by institution(s) and ONCAT
 - iii) Final Agreement signed by institution(s) and submitted to ONCAT
 - iv) Final Agreement signed by ONCAT and returned to institution(s)
4. Initial Payment made

II—Project Stage

1. Project work begins
2. Interim Report
 - i) Template provided by ONCAT
 - ii) Reminder of Interim Report & invoice due sent
 - iii) Interim Report and invoice submitted
 - iv) Approval of Interim Report by ONCAT
 - v) Interim payment issued
3. Final Report
 - i) Final Report Guidelines provided by ONCAT
 - ii) Reminder of Final Report & invoice due sent
 - iii) Final Report and invoice submitted
 - iv) Approval of Final Report by ONCAT
 - v) Final payment issued

III—Project Wind-up

Final Report and Executive Summary posted on ONCAT website (www.oncat.ca)

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