

Simultaneous Enrollment and Letters of Permission in the BC Transfer System

Dr. Fiona McQuarrie
Special Projects Officer, BCCAT



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What is simultaneous enrollment?

When a student enrolls in more than one BC post-secondary institution at the same time

What are letters of permission?

Documents issued to students by the BC post-secondary institution they are currently enrolled at, to facilitate simultaneous enrollment

Purpose of This Study

- To explore the extent of simultaneous enrollment in the BC Transfer System
- To explore how BCTS member institutions manage letters of permission
- To make recommendations for consideration

Why Do Students Simultaneously Enroll?

Some of the reasons:

- Unable to attend classes at their own institution
- Want to finish program/credential more quickly
- Can't take the course at their own institution
- Want a course that isn't offered at their own institution
- Want more flexible course structures
- Want to try out another institution before transferring there
- Believe that course is "easier" elsewhere

Findings From Previous Research

- 1) Simultaneous enrollment is a strategic choice
- 2) Students who simultaneously enroll are well-informed
- 3) Students who simultaneously enroll may have higher GPAs
- 4) Timing of simultaneous enrollment may affect students' outcomes in the course(s) taken elsewhere
- 5) Students who simultaneously enroll may be more likely to complete a program or credential

Methodology

- Data on simultaneous enrollment in BC
- Data from BCTS member institutions' websites
- Survey of registrars & transfer credit staff at BCTS member institutions

Simultaneous Enrollment in BC

Data from Student Transitions Project, 2003-04 to 2021-22

SE as percentage of overall enrollment has declined (2.7% → 1.6%)

Number of SE students has also declined (7,096 → 4,989)

Most common “pairs” are:

- Institute/Teaching-intensive university
- Research-intensive university/Teaching-intensive university
- College/Teaching-intensive university

Process of Simultaneous Enrollment

- Student requests Letter of Permission (LOP) from current institution
 - Institution is aware of student's enrollment elsewhere
 - Institution will grant transfer credit for the course(s)
- LOP request is approved
- Student applies for admission at other institution and enrolls in course(s)
- Student completes course(s) and provides transcript to current institution

Data from Institutional Websites

- 19/39 have website information or policies around issuing LOPs
 - LOP requested in advance of taking the course
 - Student can only take the course(s) listed on LOP
 - Student must be in good academic standing and not have unpaid fees
 - Other institution must be recognized or accredited
- 13/19 have standardized LOP application forms
- Institutions' own policies (e.g. residency) may affect applicability of credit acquired with LOP
- Other requirements vary by institution

Data from Institutional Websites

- Most common requirements around LOPs
 - Minimum number of completed credits
 - Minimum GPA in most recent semester
 - LOP valid for limited time
 - Restrictions on which courses can be taken with an LOP

Survey of BCTS Registrars & Transfer Credit Staff

- 30/39 institutions participated
- Most LOP requests are for courses offered at BC institutions
- TRU and Athabasca are most common institutions for LOP requests
- Most LOP requests are approved
- Most students take the course(s) for which they receive LOPs

So.....?

- SEs are a small part of BC post-secondary enrollment
but they are “lost” enrollment at student’s current institution
- Are LOPs necessary?
 - No
a barrier to opportunities available through BC’s transfer credit system
 - Yes
a way to monitor SE activity, and potentially control problematic enrollments elsewhere

Recommendations

- Decide whether LOPs are appropriate and/or useful
- Standardized LOP application/approval process (e.g. application form)
- Publicly available description of LOP application/approval process
- Clear criteria for approval or denial of LOP requests
- Regular monitoring of SE to identify potential issues, and of student performance in courses taken with LOPs

Thank you!

Dr. Fiona McQuarrie

fmcquarrie@bccat.ca