

## 2002 Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Studies in British Columbia

PREPARED BY THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION INFORMATION

### Introduction

British Columbia's public post-secondary education system promotes access through its geographically dispersed network of 11 community colleges, five specialized institutes, five university colleges, five universities, and an agency that provides distance learning opportunities. Key to the success of such a diverse system is the ability of students to move

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between institutions and, where appropriate, to transfer credits.

The experiences and opinions of students are critical to the development of a responsive admissions and transfer system. This report is based on feedback obtained from close to 7,000 students who continued their studies in British Columbia's public post-secondary system after having studied at a community college, university college, or institute. The study is based on results from the *2002 BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey* (see *Data Notes Box, page 3*).<sup>1</sup> Although students express high levels of satisfaction with their credit transfer experiences, the findings point to a need for institutions to ensure students have reasonable expectations regarding credit transfer.

### Admissions

BCCAT's mandate includes facilitating admissions to B.C.'s post-secondary education system. The admissions system is experienced by all students who apply, whether they are accepted or not. In 2002, the *BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey* was expanded to include questions addressed to former students who may have tried unsuccessfully to gain admission to further studies. This report looks at both groups of students: those who continue their studies, and those who want to, but do not.

### Recommended Actions

1. Sending institutions are encouraged to inform their students about the extent to which individual courses and programs are transferable.
2. All post-secondary institutions are encouraged to read the full study on which this report is based, to review the details pertaining to their own institution and program offerings, and to follow up as appropriate.
3. Institutions are encouraged to direct students to information sources such as the Online Transfer Guide and BC Transfer TIPS.

<sup>1</sup> The full study on which this report is based, *2002 Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Studies in British Columbia: Findings from the BC College & Institute Student Outcomes Survey*, is available at: [www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/ceissfeb03.pdf](http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/ceissfeb03.pdf). This full study is an updated and expanded version of a similar study based on the 2000 survey titled *Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Studies in British Columbia*. In general, the results are very similar across the two studies. Some comparisons are provided throughout this report.

### Where Do Students Go For Further Studies?

Close to half (47%) of respondents continue their studies after leaving their original program. Of those who continue, 94% study in BC, including 88% who continue their studies in the BC public system.

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Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents who continue in the BC public post-secondary system transfer to a different institution for further studies, and the remaining 32% start a different program at their original institution. Universities are by far the most common destination, receiving 67% of all respon-

dents who transfer to a different institution; institutes and OLA receive 16%, community colleges 10%, and university colleges 6%. The three largest BC universities are the top destinations, receiving 62% of respondents who continue at a different institution; BCIT is the fourth largest destination at 10%.

### Do Students Get Their First Choice of Institution, Program and Courses?

The great majority of respondents who continue their studies at a different institution report getting into the institution, program, and courses of their choice.

Of those who continue their studies after leaving their original institution:

- 92% are enrolled in their institution of choice;
- 94% are in their preferred program of study; and
- 85% are enrolled in all the courses they wanted.

Although rates of accessing a preferred program are uniformly high across all types of sending and receiving institutions, course availability shows some variation. Those entering university-colleges are the least likely to get all of the courses they want (79%) and those entering institutes or OLA are the most likely (96%); both of these findings are consistent with the 2000 study.

### What Stops Some Students Who Want to Continue?

For the first time, a more complete picture of the admissions system is drawn by including the experiences of those who wanted to continue their studies, but had not enrolled by the time of the interview. Although over half (56%) of former students who do not go on to further studies say they want to continue, only 15% of those who want to continue actually make a formal application to a post-secondary institution within approximately one year of leaving their program at their institution. The top four barriers to applying include: a need to work (46%), a lack of financial resources (16%), a needed break from studying (11%), and personal circumstances (10%).

For those who do apply, but are not accepted to a BC public post-secondary institution, poor grades are the top barrier (27%). A further 25% report not being accepted because there are not enough spaces in the courses or program they want. Many of these former students report being on waiting lists, while others say the course or program they want has been cancelled.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with Transfer Experience

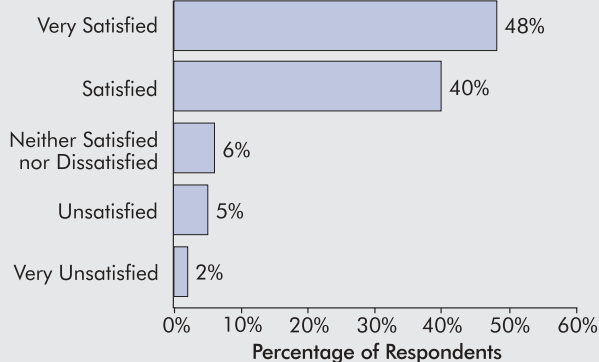
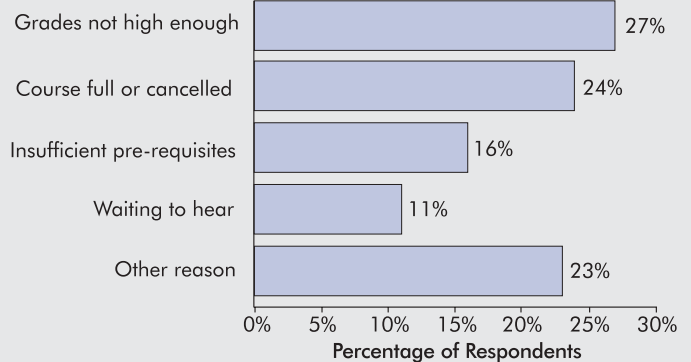


Figure 2: Reasons for Not Being Accepted



## Credit Transfer

A significant component of BCCAT's work is dedicated to facilitating articulation and transfer arrangements among the network of 27 institutions comprising the public post-secondary system in British Columbia.<sup>2</sup>

### Are Students' Transfer Expectations being Met?

Students moving among BC transfer institutions report very high levels of satisfaction – 88% of respondents who expect to transfer credits are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall transfer experience, up 2 percentage points from 2000.

The overall percentage of former students reporting unmet transfer expectations fell by two percentage points between the 2000 and 2002 surveys, from 12 to 10%. The improvement is reported by respondents regardless of

the type of institution they leave or enter. Especially notable is the reduction from 24 to 14% in the proportion of students reporting unmet expectations after leaving institutes or OLA. The percentage of former students reporting unmet expectations after transferring to university colleges also dropped considerably, from 18 to 11%.

### Do Students Have Realistic Transfer Expectations?

In spite of the high levels of satisfaction reported by participants in the transfer system, there remains room for improvement. Fifty one percent of respondents who report unmet transfer expectations say their “original course or program was not designed for transfer.” This finding is consistent with the 2000 study and shows that about half of unmet expectations are unrealistic.

Helping students to understand the transfer outcomes they can reasonably expect requires education. The survey results show that knowledge makes a difference. Just over

half of respondents who expect to transfer credits report their expectations are based on “a lot” of information. This group is relatively successful, with only 6% reporting they did not receive all of the transfer credit they expected. By contrast, 15% of the group who based their expectations on “some information”, or who “simply assumed” their courses would transfer, did not receive all expected transfer credit.

These findings point to a need for institutions to en-

## Data Notes:

This report is based on the 2002 BC College and Institute Student Outcomes Survey. This annual survey contacts former students between 9 and 20 months after leaving their program of study at a publicly funded BC community college, university college, institute, or the Open Learning Agency. The survey project is overseen by the BC Outcomes Working Group and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and participating institutions.

The study population consists of students who participated in an Arts and Sciences program or an Applied program in BC's college and institute system. Applied certificate and diploma students are included in the study population if they either complete or nearly complete their program of study and are no longer enrolled in that program at their institution. The Applied baccalaureate and Arts and Sciences cohorts consist of all students who left their program at their institution with at least 24 credits (less than one full year). Most of this report draws on the results of a set of questions that were addressed specifically to those respondents who indicated they had pursued further studies after leaving their original program.

For more details, see the full study upon which this report is based, *2002 Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Studies in British Columbia: Findings from the BC College & Institute Student Outcomes Survey*, at:

[www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/ceissfeb03.pdf](http://www.bccat.bc.ca/pubs/ceissfeb03.pdf).

*STUDENTS MOVING among BC transfer institutions report very high levels of satisfaction with their overall transfer experience.*

<sup>2</sup> Currently, four BC private institutions and one Yukon institution are part of BC's formal transfer system. However, due to data availability, this report focuses on the BC public post-secondary system.

sure students have realistic transfer expectations for the individual courses and programs they study.

Possible strategies for informing students include:

- making transfer information available as part of course outlines;
- including discussion of transfer in the first session of each course;
- including transfer information for each course in calendars; and
- directing students to sources of written transfer information, such as the Online Transfer Guide and BC Transfer TIPS.

*INSTITUTIONS NEED to ensure students have the information they need to form realistic transfer expectations.*

All post-secondary institutions are encouraged to read the full report on which this newsletter is based, to review the details pertaining to their own institution and program offerings and to develop education strategies appropriate to their own circumstances.

BCCAT also has a role to play in identifying “best practices” with respect to educating students regarding credit transfer.

### Are Students Who Report Unmet Transfer Expectations Concentrated in Certain Institutions or Program Areas?

Although the entire system shares the goal of reducing unmet transfer expectations, actions on the part of a vital few will likely impact significantly on the proportion of students reporting unmet transfer expectations. Because of size, location, and program offerings, a few institutions produce the majority of transfer students, and another few receive the majority. For example, 23% of the sending institutions participating in the survey account for 65% of students reporting unmet transfer expectations. Similarly, 19% of receiving institutions account for 82% of students reporting unmet expectations.

It must be stressed that the relative concentration of respondents who did not receive their expected credits

reflects the volume of respondents leaving and entering these institutions, rather than any failing of these institutions to educate their students or grant credit.

## Conclusion

Students who continue their studies in the BC public post-secondary system after studying in a college, university college, or institute are overwhelmingly positive about their admissions and transfer experiences. On the admissions side, respondents report very high rates of accessing the institutions, programs and courses of their choice. The need to work and a lack of financial resources are key factors stopping former students who want to continue their education. On the transfer side, this report emphasizes the need for all institutions to ensure their students have the information they need to form realistic transfer expectations.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER

SUPPORTING BC'S  
EDUCATION SYSTEM

**Address:**

709 - 555 Seymour St., Vancouver, BC V6B 3H6

**Electronic Mail:**

admin@bccat.bc.ca

**BCCAT Online (website):**

www.bccat.bc.ca

**Telephone:**

(604) 412-7700

**Fax:**

(604) 683-0576

**Staff:**

Executive Director:

Frank Gelin – fgelin@bccat.bc.ca

Associate Director:

Finola Finlay – ffinlay@bccat.bc.ca

Acting Executive Secretary:

Valerie Yorkston – vyorkston@bccat.bc.ca

Administrative Assistant:

Jean Karlinski – jkarlinski@bccat.bc.ca

Transfer Guide Co-ordinator:

Raymond Bendall – rbendall@islandnet.com