

Research Results

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2008 Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Post-Secondary Studies in British Columbia

Prepared by BC Stats

Introduction

The BC post-secondary system is a geographically dispersed network of colleges, institutes, university colleges, and universities.¹ The success of such a diverse system depends on students' ability to move easily through the system, accessing the institutions, programs of study, and courses that they need and, where appropriate, transferring credits for their work.

The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) facilitates the movement of students among BC post-secondary institutions by coordinating an efficient system for transferring course credits. In order to learn more about the experiences of students who changed institutions, BCCAT commissioned an analysis of relevant questions from a provincial survey of former students conducted in 2008,² the BC Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Outcomes (DACSO) Survey.³

Approximately 6,800 former students who left a BC college, university college, or institute program to continue their studies in another program at the same or at another BC public institution provided information on their admissions and transfer experiences.⁴ The former students were interviewed by telephone 9 to 20 months after they left their programs of study. The following information includes a comparison of results with similar studies conducted in 2002 and 2005.

Students' admission experience

Close to half (45%) of the survey respondents continued their studies after leaving their original program; this proportion is down two percentage points from 2005 and 2002.

Which students went on for further studies?

Continuers were more likely to be younger and female, to have less previous post-secondary experience, and to originate from

relatively large institutions located in the Lower Mainland. Former students of Arts and Sciences programs were more likely to go on for further studies (82%) than those from Applied programs (34%).

Where do students go for further studies?

Ninety-three percent of continuers stayed in BC and 87% continued in the BC public post-secondary system—of those, 62% transferred to a different institution. The remaining 38% started a different program at their original institution. The relatively strong tendency observed in 2002 and 2005 for students from institutes to remain at the same institution for further studies continued in 2008, with 71% remaining. (Figure 1)

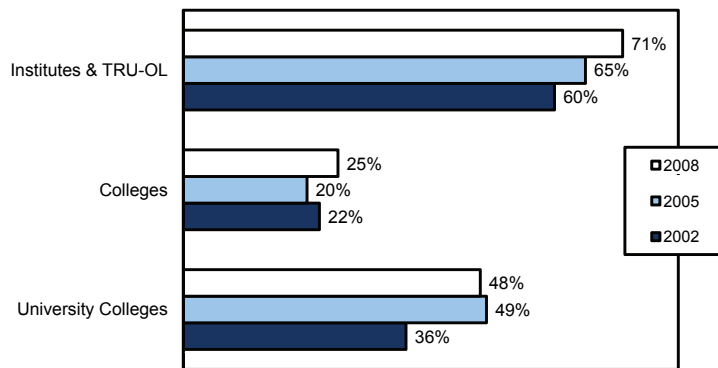
2008 Survey Highlights

- **45%** of post-secondary students continue their studies after completing all or much of their original program.

Of those continuing their studies:

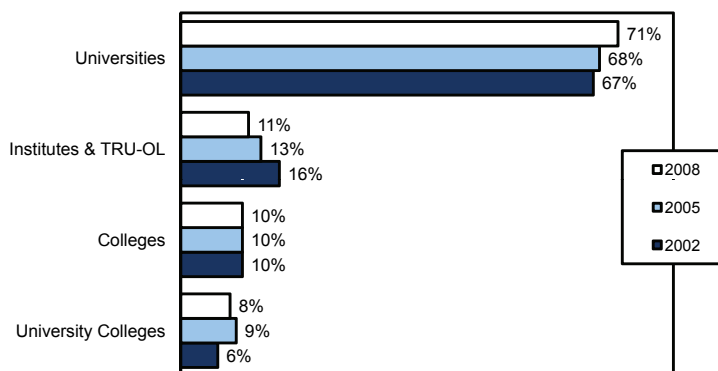
- **90%** enter their preferred institution.
- **94%** enter their preferred program.
- **84%** register in all the courses they want.
- **86%** receive all the transfer credits they expect.
- **81%** are satisfied with their transfer experience.

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who stayed at the same institution, by type of original institution and survey year



In 2008, about 7 out of 10 students who transferred to a different institution selected a BC university. Most of these students went to the University of British Columbia (28%), Simon Fraser University (26%), or the University of Victoria (11%). (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Distribution of continuers who transferred to a different BC public post-secondary institution, by receiving institution type and survey year



Are students able to implement their chosen educational plan?

A great majority of those who continued at a different institution reported getting into the institution, program, and courses of their choice.

- 90% were accepted into their institution of choice.
- 94% accessed their preferred program of study.
- 84% registered in all the courses they wanted.

Rates of accessing preferred institutions and programs were uniformly high across all types of institutions. In comparison with 2005, the proportion of students who were able to enrol in all of the courses they desired increased for all categories of receiving institution. The overall rate of students registering in all of the courses they wanted (84%) reflects the large proportion of students who transferred to universities where they were less likely to get all of the courses they wanted (81%), compared with university colleges (88%), colleges (94%), and institutes (97%).

What about students who wanted to continue their education, but didn't?

The admissions picture is incomplete without considering the experiences of students who wanted to continue but did not, for one reason or another. Although almost half of non-continuers expressed a desire to continue, only 16% submitted a formal application. Many of those who did not apply decided to work at a job instead (42%) or cited financial barriers to continuing their education (17%).

Of the 16% that applied to continue, 70% were accepted, but did not enrol; the main reasons for not enrolling were "deciding to work at a job" and other personal circumstances.

Students' transfer experience

What are students' transfer expectations?

The great majority (80%) of students who transferred to a different BC public post-secondary institution expected to transfer course credits from their original institution. Almost all students from Arts and Sciences programs (92%) expected to transfer credits. Overall, 86% of transfer students received all of the course credits they expected, down from 90% in 2005. Although 14% did not get all of their expected transfer credit, less than one percent of respondents did not get any of their transfer credits and the rest got at least some.

Among a range of reasons cited, half of the 14% of respondents who did not receive all of their expected credits said they received unassigned credit instead of specific credit for the courses they transferred, and 48% said the original course or program was not designed for transfer to the new institution. About a third of those who did not receive all of their expected credits said they did not know or understand the transfer requirements, up from 28% in 2005. These findings highlight the unrealistic expectations that some students have with respect to transferability of course credits and the need for students to be better informed in this regard.

What sources of information do students use to plan for transfer?

Over the years, the importance of online information sources has grown steadily. In 2008, the website of the institution that students transferred to was accessed by 79% of students to plan for transfer, up from 72% in 2005. The online BC Transfer Guide was also a popular source of information; three-quarters of 2008 respondents who expected to transfer credits reported using the Guide, compared with 53% in 2005. Use of other information sources, such as counselors and student advisors, also increased between 2005 and 2008, from 69% to 74%.

More students are accessing information to inform their transfer planning than ever before.

Are there concentrations of unmet expectations?

Because of their size, location, and program offerings, a few institutions produce the majority of transfer students and a couple receive the majority. This uneven distribution of transfer students in the post-secondary system results in a significant concentration of students with unmet transfer expectations in a small number of institutions. In fact, just over half of students with unmet expectations originated at four sending institutions (Douglas College, Langara College, Kwantlen University College, and Capilano College) and transferred to two receiving institutions (University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University). Focused efforts to improve the articulation of courses between these institutions by awarding assigned transfer credit rather than unassigned credit where feasible and to provide transfer information on the university websites have the potential to reach a large transfer student population and to reduce the number of students with unmet transfer expectations.

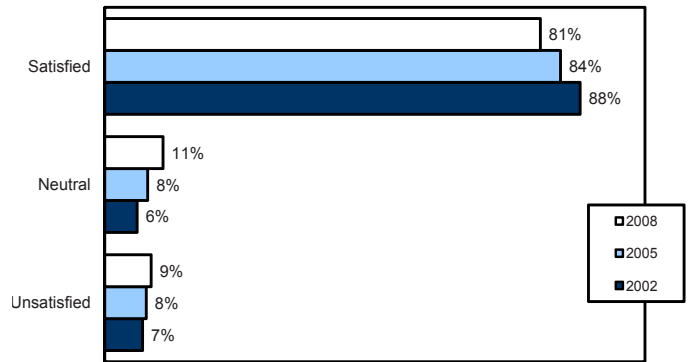
Are students satisfied with their transfer experience?

Respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction with their overall transfer experience; 81% said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied.” Only 9% were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied,” with the rest being neutral. (Figure 3)

The percentage of students who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their transfer experience has decreased over time from a high of 88% in 2002 to 84% in 2005 and to 81% in 2008. At least some of the decrease between 2005 and 2008 can be attributed to changes in data collection, from telephone interviewing only to a combination of telephone and web in 2008. The mode of data collection had a significant impact on respondents’ reported satisfaction with their transfer experience in 2008; 83% of telephone respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their transfer experience, compared with 74% of web respondents.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Research shows that respondents surveyed by phone are more likely than web respondents to give positive ratings on satisfaction and level-of-agreement questions. Please see the full admissions and transfer report for a detailed discussion of the impact of changes to the data collection methodology on year-over-year comparisons. The combined telephone and web approach to data collection will be used in future DACSO surveys because it has become increasingly difficult to maintain response rates to telephone surveys.

Figure 3: Respondents’ satisfaction with their overall transfer experience, by survey year

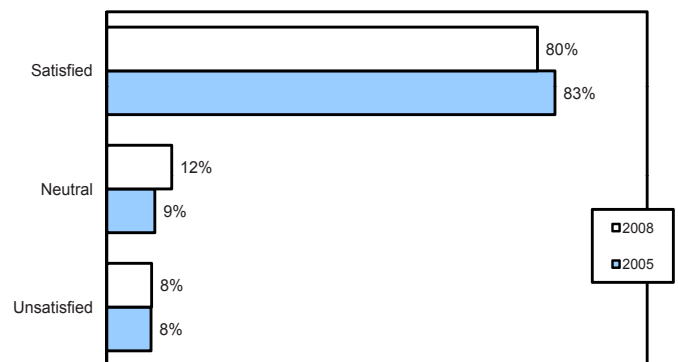


Students’ satisfaction with their overall transfer experience is closely related to their success in transferring course credits. Eighty-seven percent of respondents who received all of their expected transfer credits were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall transfer experience, compared with 39% of those who did not receive all of their expected credits.

Are students satisfied with admission services and application processes?

Eighty percent of respondents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the admission services and application processes at their new institution. This proportion, which was three percentage points lower than in 2005, was also impacted by the change in approach to data collection. (Figure 4)

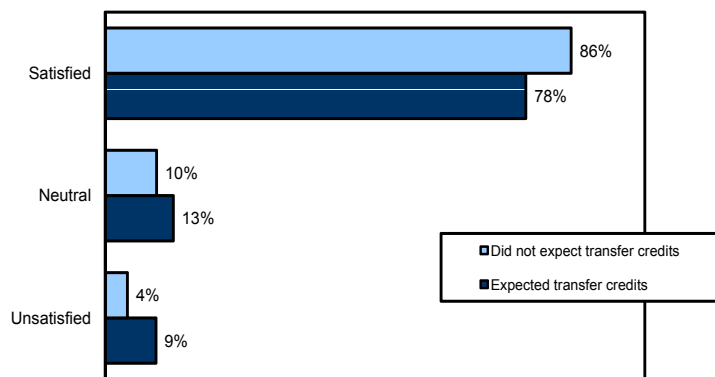
Figure 4: Respondents’ satisfaction with admission services and application processes at the institution they transferred to, by survey year



Interestingly, those applicants who did not expect to transfer credits were significantly more likely to give a positive evaluation of the admission services and application processes at their receiving institution. In 2008, 86% of students who did not expect to transfer credit were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” versus 78% of those who expected to transfer credits. (Figure 5)

Credit transfer expectations significantly impact students’ satisfaction with admissions services.

Figure 5: Respondents' satisfaction with admission services and application processes at the institution they transferred to, by transfer expectation



Conclusion

Students are taking advantage of the wealth of opportunity and choice offered by the BC post-secondary system. Close to half of the students surveyed had gone on to further studies—62% at a different institution. A large proportion of these transfer students reported that they were able to enrol in their institution, program, and courses of choice.

Eight out of every ten students who continued at a different institution expected to transfer credits, and 86% were successful in transferring all of their credits—less than one percent were unable to transfer any of their credits.

More students are accessing various transfer information sources than ever before. Online sources, such as the website of the new institution and BCCAT's Transfer Guide, were particularly popular.

Recent changes in the approach to data collection make it difficult to compare the 2008 rates of satisfaction with those of past surveys. However, it is expected that a mixed telephone and web data collection model will continue and that future satisfaction ratings will be directly comparable with the 2008 survey results.

Recommendations

For institutions:

- To be informed about students' perceptions of their admissions and transfer experience, conduct exit surveys with these students.
- To ensure that students know which courses are transferable and which programs are designed for transfer, provide online information for prospective students, particularly for Arts and Sciences students.

For BCCAT:

- To help institutions improve communications with students and to communicate with them directly, continue to develop and maintain online, user-friendly transfer information, such as the BC Transfer Guide.
- To increase awareness among potential users, continue to publicize the Transfer Guide widely.
- To improve students' transfer experiences, continue to identify and help resolve any articulation issues between sending and receiving institutions and expand the Transfer Guide to include more articulations as appropriate.
- To investigate the implications of unassigned credit for students, consider a research project to identify what percentage of transfer credit is awarded as unassigned credit and the extent to which assigned credit would be more appropriate.
- To construct a more complete picture of student transitions in BC, 1) work to develop a methodology that analyzes the experiences of all groups of students and includes applicants as well as registrants and 2) analyze both qualitative survey data and quantitative data on student mobility.

¹ In 2008, three university colleges, one college, and one institute became universities. This study is based on a survey of students who studied prior to these changes and references to the institutions in this report reflect their names and institutional status when the students attended them.

² The annual DACSO Survey is overseen by the Outcomes Working Group and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development and participating institutions. It was previously known as the BC College & Institute Student Outcomes (CISO) Survey.

³ For more detail, please see the report upon which this document is based, "2008 Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Post-Secondary Studies in British Columbia" found at <http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/bcstats08.pdf>. Similar reports for 2000, 2002, and 2005 are also found at BCCAT's website.

⁴ Former students from research universities do not fall within the scope of the DACSO survey; these institutions are typically destinations for transfer students, rather than senders of transfer students.