

Credentialing Practices for Joint Programs

A Review of BC Transcript and Parchment Protocols

Prepared for BCCAT by Joanne Duklas, MBA, Research Consultant

December 2013



Research by

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The project benefited enormously from the leadership and guidance of the following members of the Project Working Group:

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Appreciation is extended to these colleagues for their thoughtful reflections and support during this project.

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INTRODUCTION

Project Overview

In June and July 2013, 30 public and private British Columbia (BC) institutions were invited to participate in a joint program research project which was led by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) with support provided by the British Columbia Registrars' Association (BCRA). The primary focus of the research was to identify the protocols in place at BC post-secondary institutions for credentialing joint programs on both transcripts and parchments. The project also involved identifying successful practice examples and providing registrarial recommendations for future research, planning and potential policy development focused on joint program transcript and credentialing protocols within the province. This report represents a summary of the findings from that research.

The report begins with a focus on background and context and elaborates on the research methodology. The current state of transcription and parchment practices and partnership and agreement nomenclature used in the province is highlighted. Suggestions for principles to guide future planning and research and a summary of potential perceived risks are provided. The report concludes with a recommendation to develop transcription and parchment protocols for joint programs, whether at the institutional and/or provincial level. Areas for future research to facilitate moving the discourse, research and planning for joint programs are also identified within the report and emphasized in the concluding remarks.

Transfer credit protocols and related nomenclature were not in scope for this project given the extensive prior work of both BCCAT and BCRA. In addition, alignment of institutional practice across institutions was not an intended goal of this project. Of special note, the findings and the research process will inform a larger national study on transfer credit and transcript standards soon to launch by the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) and the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC).¹

The primary focus of the research was to identify the protocols in place at BC post-secondary institutions for credentialing joint programs on both transcripts and parchments.

The project also involved identifying successful practice examples and providing registrarial recommendations for future research, planning and potential policy development.

¹ PCCAT and ARUCC are leading a national research study focused on identifying current practices and recommending standards for transcripts and transfer credit. This project will formally launch in fall 2013.

A Brief Note about the Research Findings and Related Risks

The research suggests a lack of systematic approaches and inconsistent use of nomenclature in the province which appears to be impeding transparency and causing some confusion. While transcription conventions may appear to some as minor technical issues, consistent and transparent transcription is important to the academic integrity of an institution's credentials. According to the European Consortium on Accreditation of higher education, well developed joint partnerships ensure a number of protocols are adhered to; in particular, quality assurance and accreditation (European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education, 2007). Therefore, the research findings are timely; credentials should be given appropriate consideration and serve joint programs by supporting academic integrity, transparency, and consistent, well established standards. The respondents indicated credentials represented an institution's academic currency and stressed the role of these documents in advancing institutional quality. Sustainability, transparency, and specificity were three themes identified as principles that should inform transcription and parchment practices as a means to facilitate adherence to quality standards.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that enhanced clarity for students and policy makers would be furthered by developing and adopting guidelines for transcribing joint programs and issuing associated parchments, a move that received strong support from the survey respondents. Ideally, these guidelines should reflect the characteristics unique to inter-institutional partnership types and, as one registrar noted, identify 'successful practices as a means to move institutions to a common practice'. The research findings suggest this as a fruitful next phase of joint program discourse in BC.

Joint Program Nomenclature

The definition used in this report for 'joint program' is one provided by the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education (2007, p. 1).

“...a programme offered jointly by different higher education institutions irrespective of the degree (joint, multiple and double) awarded.”[sic]

The European Consortium (2007, p. 33) further indicates that joint programs should result in only one joint degree parchment shared by the partnering institutions regardless of type. Examples of a single parchment for joint programs were not routinely found in the BC institutions that participated in this study although five were submitted. Simon Fraser University (SFU) indicated it offered dual degrees (a form of joint program) which involved distributing parchments from both partners as students receive two degrees, one from each institution. Survey respondents indicated that certain types of programs can dictate appropriate credential protocols. Therefore and in contrast to the position of the European Consortium, the opportunity exists in BC to identify types of joint programs and related transcript and parchment protocols.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This research project is one of many efforts undertaken by BCCAT over several years to support institutions developing successful degree partnerships. In 2007, BCCAT hosted a symposium which brought together representatives of BC post-secondary institutions to showcase their work on various types of partnerships. The success of this led to a 2009 symposium focused on lessons learned. In 2012-13, BCCAT built on these efforts by creating a degree partnership database in collaboration with system partners.² The interest in credentialing practices for parchments and transcripts emerged naturally as an area that needed focus. As one registrarial respondent emphasized, these documents represent artifacts of an institution's academic currency and are the primary means by which institutions 'communicate' student achievement.

Interest in developing inter-institutional partnerships beyond provincial borders, both nationally and internationally, appears to be growing (Obst et al., 2011, p. 39). Therefore, registrars and other institutional leadership need to be fully prepared. While not exclusively focused on joint programs, a recent PCCAT study provided an appreciation for national student mobility patterns, whether within a province or across provincial boundaries (Heath, 2012). A number of students study at more than one institution. While many may be pursuing options that fall outside of joint program arrangements, these patterns of multiple enrolment suggest that further study is warranted. Inter-institutional partnerships, once developed and matured, hold the promise of providing a sophisticated and organized means to enhance mobility for students whether locally arranged or geographically far reaching. Understanding current transcript and parchment practices for joint programs and providing suggestions for successful practice will assist BC institutions with clarifying protocols and facilitating discussion about methods to ensure transparency, sustainability, coherence, and academic integrity.

Interest in developing inter-institutional partnerships beyond provincial borders, both nationally and internationally, appears to be growing. Therefore, registrars and other institutional leadership need to be fully prepared.

² www.bctransferguide.ca/guides/degree-partnerships

THE PROJECT

Objectives

The research was focused on the following objectives:

- Identify the current transcript and parchment practices for joint programs at private and public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia (between all levels of institutional types including universities and colleges);
- Begin to identify working nomenclature apparent at BC institutions related to joint program transcript and parchment practices;
- Highlight transcription and parchment practices and emergent viewpoints that exemplify and inform successful joint program practices requiring further study and debate;
- Identify any possible risks with existing or possible practices;
- Inform a national research project focused on transfer credit and transcript standards being led by the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT) and the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC).

The resulting research findings summarized in this report will inform provincial and national discourse on joint program credentialing practices.

Principles

The BCRA and BCCAT Project Working Group established core working principles which guided the research and analysis. The research and consultation maintained a commitment to engaging in broad, system-wide consultation with registrarial leadership within the province and, to the extent necessary for the scope of the project, nationally. Each of these principles is described below.

Institutional autonomy

The final report avoids identifying prescriptive practices for transcripts and parchments for joint programs. Rather, the goal remains to identify current practices and inform future dialogue and research into successful practice that is respectful of institutional nuance and autonomy. Institutional autonomy is essential to high quality joint programs which allow each institution to express its inherent uniqueness in partnership arrangements.

Improving transparency and coherence

The report attempts to heighten the degree of transparency regarding current practice and lend subsequent coherence to province-wide discussions focused on developing successful joint program transcript and parchment protocols. The intention is to assist institutional decision makers and province-wide organizations with advancing the policy and procedural planning and research surrounding joint program development with regard to credentialing practices.

Supporting student mobility

A commitment to enhancing student mobility by capturing current evidence and perspective surrounding joint program credentialing practices in BC is a core principle underpinning this project. Thoughtful, well designed joint programs are enhanced by sustainable, transparent and coherent credentialing practices. These in turn will support enhanced student mobility. Communication between institutions about the academic achievements of a student becomes easier when the transcripts and parchments are appropriately reflective of the nature of the program taken, including for those that pursue inter-institutional paths. The advantages to the student are many including reduced confusion and smoother assessment processes by the receiving institutions, accrediting organizations and/or employers.

Enhancing knowledge

Enhancing institutional understanding of current joint program practices across the province and beyond will inform and evolve future discussions focused on refining protocols and identifying successful credentialing standards. Areas requiring further study and debate also naturally emerge as a result of identification of gaps and opportunities. To that end, the report identifies areas for further consideration and study.

Ensuring broad and collaborative consultation

It remains important to ensure BCCAT research actively involves and engages registrarial leadership across BC; hence, the partnership with the British Columbia Registrars' Association (BCRA). To deepen this approach, the research incorporated a mixed methods approach of an online survey, specific credential analysis (where available) and interviews of select senior registrarial officials. Taken together, these methods encouraged broad, system-wide involvement in the project. Further, the BCCAT joint program study, while separately constituted, is a pilot project for a national ARUCC/PCCAT transcript and transfer credit standards project that is soon to launch. The importance of providing input to the national discourse on student mobility by pursuing forward thinking research that contributes to joint program development represents a common thread in much of the BCCAT research conducted in collaboration with the BCRA. BC is well positioned to assist others across Canada with developing successful joint program practices.

Methodology

The mixed methods research approach included an online survey of registrars in private and public post-secondary BCRA member institutions, a review of sample credentials and select interviews. Having noted the mixed methods approach, the primary tool employed to gather information for this project was the province-wide, online survey distributed via the BCRA listserv. In the same invitation to participate, each institution was asked to submit anonymous sample transcripts and parchments of students who had studied in joint programs.

A working group of the BCRA executive and BCCAT leadership developed the questions and reviewed the survey for clarity and refinement. The same working group functioned as the lead advisory body for the project, approved all the communications and methodology and reviewed the final report for clarity and accuracy.

The survey was administered directly to the registrars at each of the participating institutions in May and June 2013. The Chair of the BCRA distributed two electronic reminders to the registrarial community; in addition, the contractor for the project contacted registrars at select BC institutions to ensure fuller participation. For the purposes of gathering additional jurisdictional insights, the project along with the PCCAT/ARUCC initiative mentioned previously was also featured at the annual June conference of the Western Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (WARUCC), the annual conference of Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admission and Transfer (PCCAT) and at regional association meetings across Canada (e.g. Ontario University Registrars' Forum, the Ontario Committee on College, Admissions and Liaison Officers, the Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec Universities, and the Atlantic Association of Registrars and Admission Officers).

Survey participants were asked to identify current practices and to provide suggestions for moving forward the discourse on successful practice in joint program development in BC as it relates to transcript and parchment protocols. The findings reflect the practices and opinions of registrarial leadership who participated in the study.

In total, 30 institutions were contacted – 26 public and 4 private institutions. Of the original 30, 18 institutions responded to the survey. This resulted in a response rate of 60%. Appendix A contains a listing of the institutions asked to participate in the online survey.

With regard to the call for specific credentials, eight BC institutions submitted sample transcripts and parchments.³ Findings from these samples are shared later in the report; however, as only a small number were provided, this represents an area of future enquiry.

³ All transcripts and parchments were provided by the first institution noted of the partners involved for any given joint program and are as of 2013.

In August 2013, the contractor reviewed and analysed the data as well as sought clarification as necessary from survey participants. Select interviews were conducted with participants to expand the findings. A consultation draft was compiled and subject to review and comment by the BCRA and BCCAT leadership to ensure the findings and recommendations accurately reflected current joint program practices and thinking in BC. This report represents the final outcome from the research and review process.

Challenges

The project encountered a few challenges: namely, difficulty encouraging sufficient participation in the survey, subsequent timeline delays, limited submission of sample credentials and, to a lesser extent, communication challenges due to nomenclature differences and institutional leadership changes. Also, institutional level knowledge of joint program credentialing requirements appeared incomplete as evidenced by the “do not know” responses to different questions. Each of these is described further below.

It was difficult to encourage participation in the survey within the original time frame established by the Project Working Group; however, ultimately there was a 60% response rate. The analytical and report creation phases were impacted by the time delay. Further, very few schools submitted sample transcripts and parchments. As registrarial operations tend to be extremely busy managing daily operations throughout the year, this participation challenge is not unusual. Further detailed credential analysis would be helpful as the province develops specific credentialing suggestions for successful practice. Additionally, BCCAT and BCRA participation in the national PCCAT/ARUCC survey focused on transcript and transfer credit standards will help to confirm and / or refine the concluding findings in this report.

As evidenced by the number of times participants signaled they did not know the answer to questions focused on practices at their particular institution, there appears to be institutional level challenges with corralling credentialing information for joint programs. Further discussion at the institutional level seems warranted, given the potential impact on students’ educational credentials and related mobility. Additionally, because the post-secondary community does not have a consistent appreciation of joint program types, respondents’ understanding of terminology varied considerably, impacting survey responses. This represents an opportunity for future study within the BC system.

There have been leadership changes at BC institutions which appear to have resulted in some registrars not receiving the survey communications. In a select few instances, institutions either had outgoing registrars, no registrars or interim registrars. Outreach helped to improve participation and led to the final number of 18 participants. Given the demographics of registrarial leadership across the country and the importance of securing senior level involvement in projects of this nature, challenges of this sort may become more common for future projects.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

Demographics and Current Practice

Demographics

The largest majority of responses pertained to undergraduate partnerships alone (56%) while 44% described both undergraduate and graduate partnerships. No respondents reported on graduate partnerships alone.

TABLE 1: Respondents by level of study

	Count
Undergraduate studies	10
Graduate studies	0
Both	8
Total Responses	18

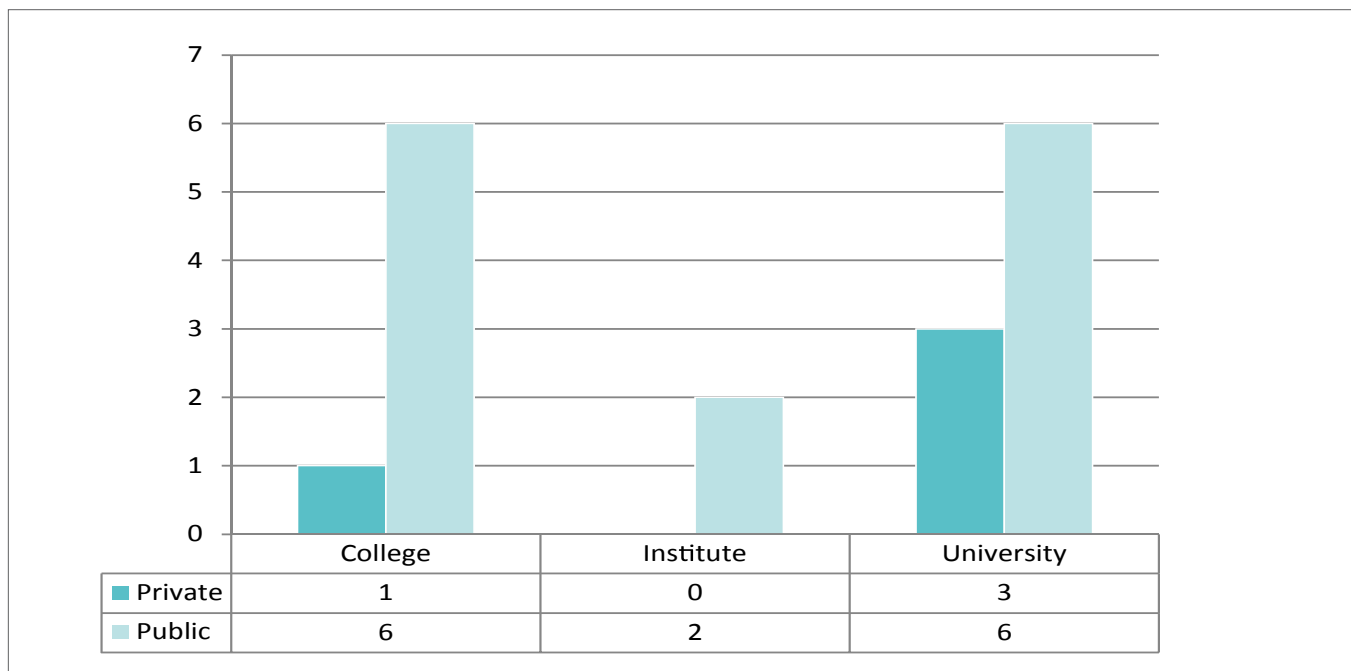
Seventy-eight percent (78%) responded on behalf of publicly funded institutions with 22% responding from private institutions. Within the private institution category, 75% identified as a university, 25% as a college. Within the public institution category, 43% were from a college, 14% from an institute, and 43% from a university. In both instances, the largest number of respondents came from universities. Due to the small number of private schools involved in the study⁴, the results between the two groups have been combined throughout the report for the most part. Table 2 and Figure 1 compare responses from public and private institutions, combined and by sector.

TABLE 2: Public vs private respondents

Institution Category	Count
Private	4
Public	14
Total	18

⁴ The response rate (4/6) of the private institutions was consistent with the response rate of public institutions.

FIGURE 1: Respondents by sector



NOTE: Responses from public universities came from 1 teaching university and 5 research universities.

Although all private institutions who were invited participated in the study, the number of public institutions was much greater.

Current Practice: Agreements

In all cases, institutions reported the creation of a formal agreement when establishing a joint program. Typically those agreements were referenced as block transfer⁵ agreements (83% of all responses) and articulated agreements (78%). Figure 2 provides details on the varied nomenclature utilized by both public and private institutions to describe agreements. Figure 3 separates the findings between private and public institutions. Figure 4 examines the public respondents more closely by institutional sector.

Generally speaking, private institutions appear to follow the same pattern as public institutions for articulated and block transfer agreements. Greater complexity is apparent among public institutions particularly, as Figure 4 illustrates, in colleges and universities.

⁵ BCCAT Definition: “Block Transfer occurs when a group of courses, often in the form of a certificate or diploma, is recognized for transfer credit.” Retrieved September 16 2013: www.bctransferguide.ca/help/type/

FIGURE 2: Number of respondents using specific nomenclature for joint program agreements

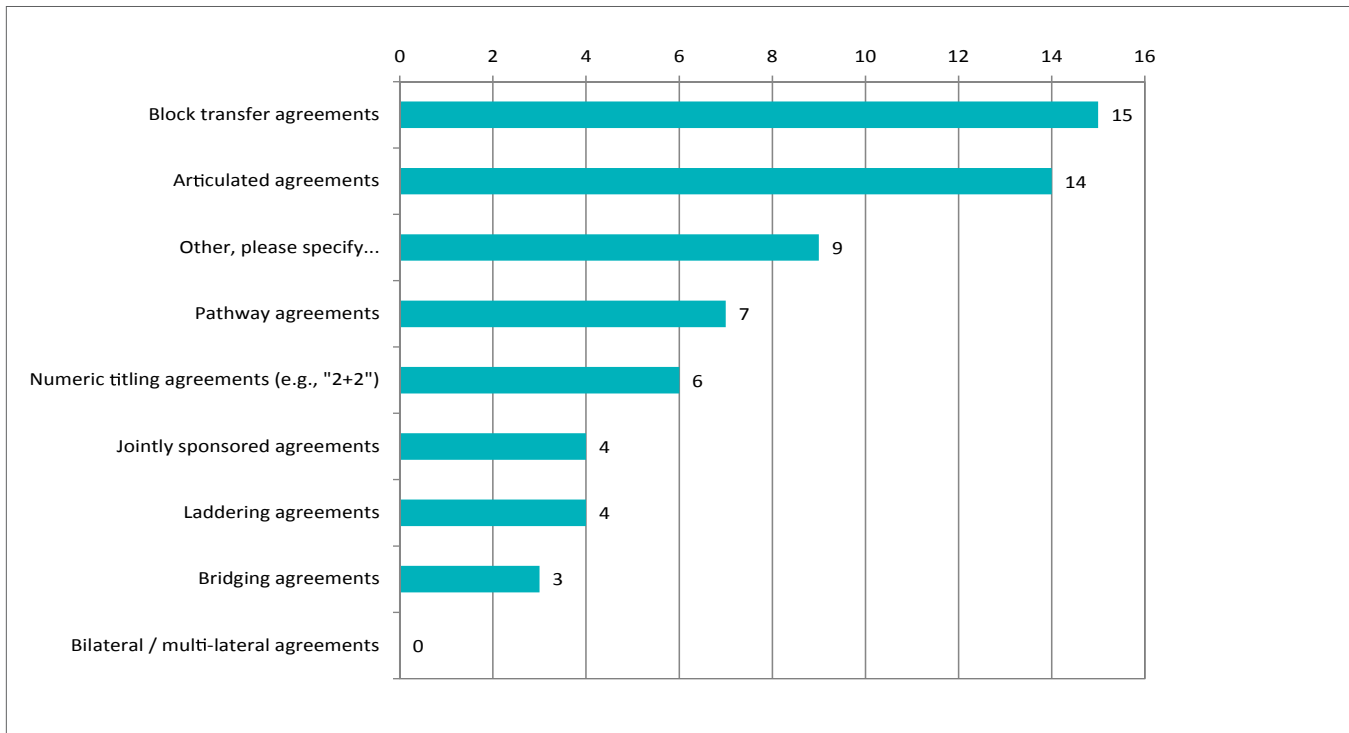
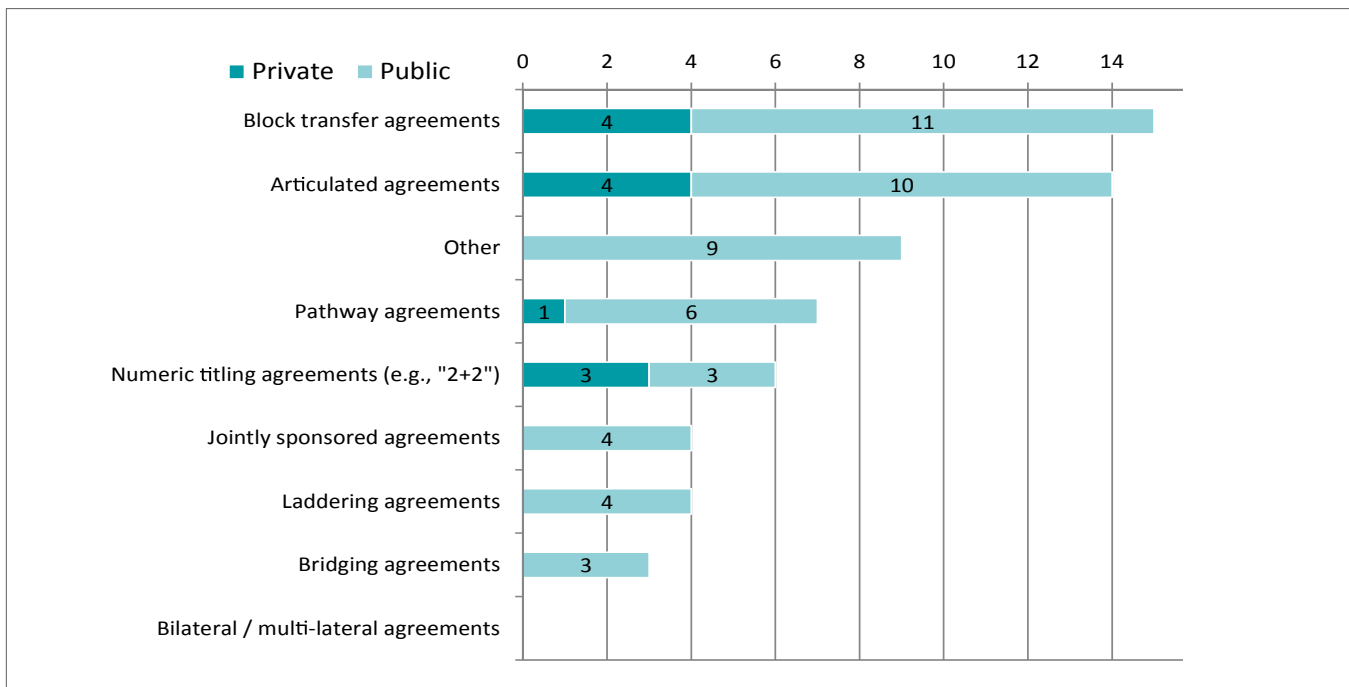
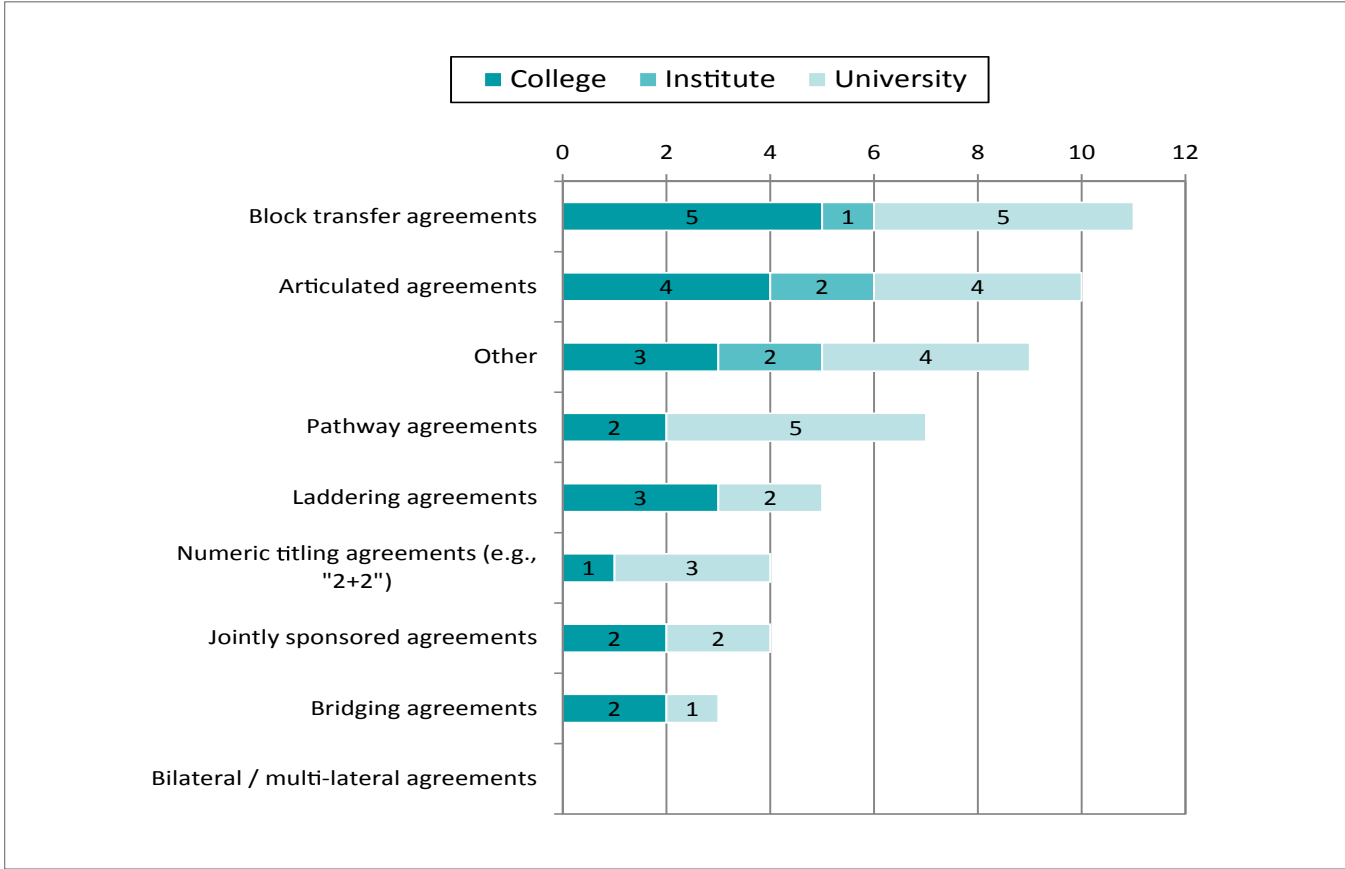


FIGURE 3: Number of respondents using specific nomenclature for joint program agreements - Public and private institutions



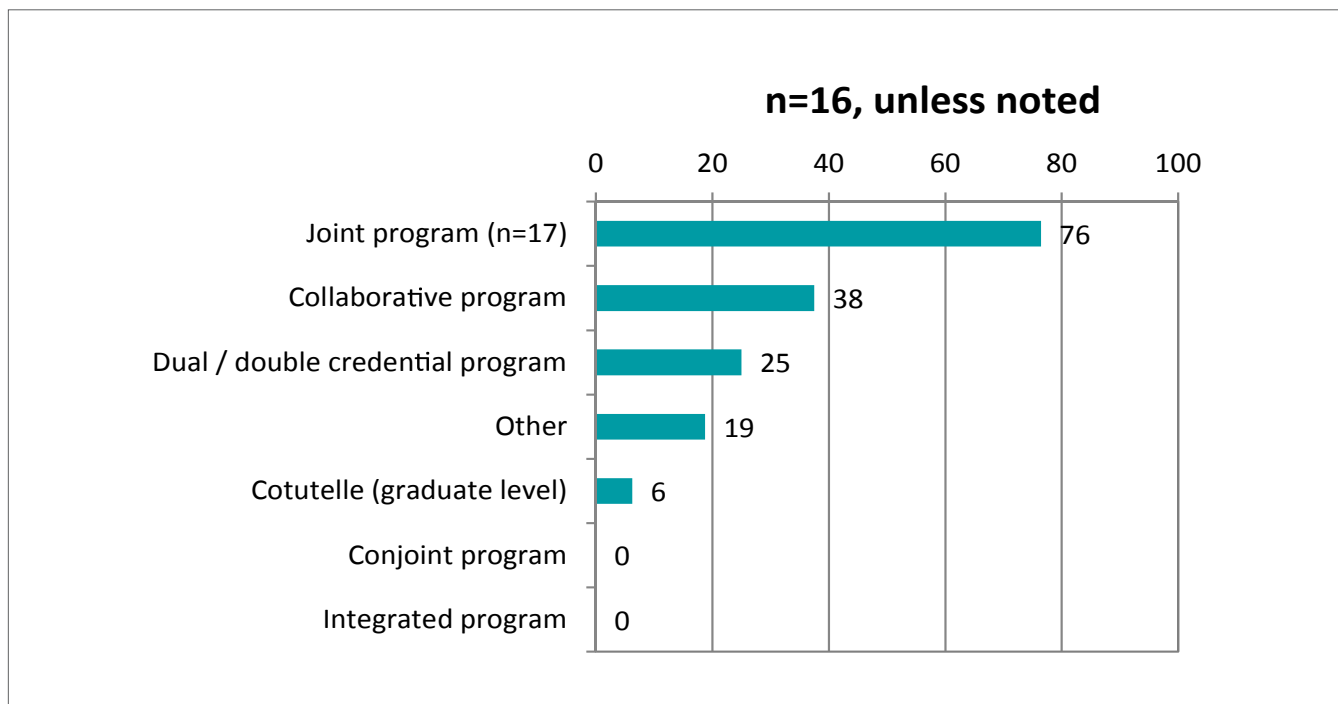
Within the “other” category, descriptors shared included “affiliation agreement”, “brokered agreement”, “collaborative agreement”, “collaborative program”, “jointly supervised doctoral program”, “dual degree”, “accreditation”, “exchange” and, finally, “memorandum of understanding”. The latter was the most popular in the “other” category. All the findings taken together are interesting; there appears to be a lack of systematic use of nomenclature in the province to describe joint program agreements. There also appears to be some confusion about what each term signifies and/or a high degree of customization occurring. As a result, it was difficult to identify a standard approach beyond the concluding note about articulated and block transfer agreements.

FIGURE 4: Number of respondents using specific nomenclature for joint program agreements - Public institutions by sector



Respondents were asked to identify the naming convention used for joint program partnerships, as distinct from the specific agreement type. Figure 5 provides a summary. “Joint Program” at 76% appears to be the most common. In the “other” category, participants noted “2+2 joint program agreement”, “jointly conferred”, “MOUs”, “dual entry programs”, and “joint admission programs”.

FIGURE 5: Percentage of respondents using specific naming conventions



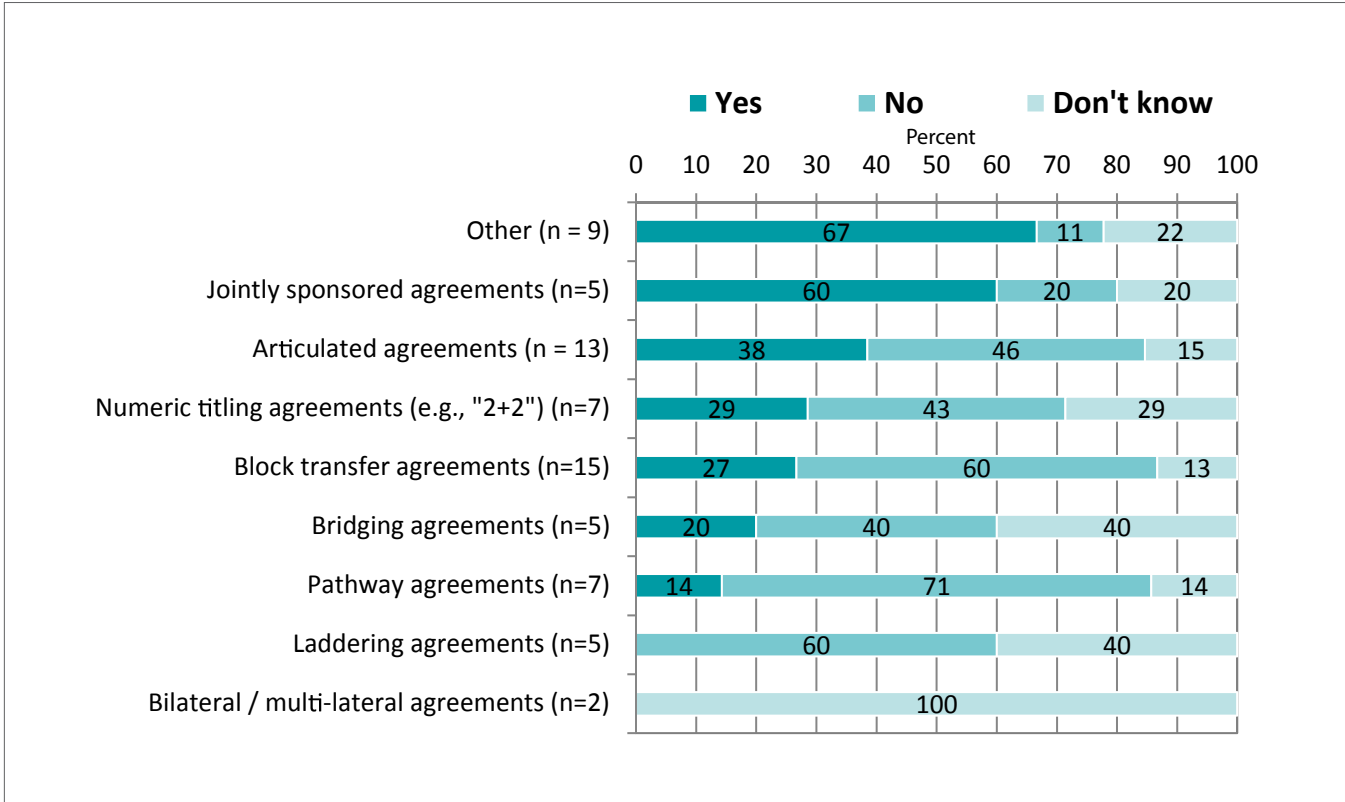
In the qualitative commentary, respondents expressed a desire for the creation of province-wide definitions and terms. This is not surprising given the diversity of nomenclature introduced by the respondents themselves in the “other” categories for both agreements and partnerships. It is worth noting that the definitions for joint programs vary nationally; therefore, the confusion in the BC market is understandable.

Current Practice: Impact of Agreements on Credentialing

The participants were asked if the agreements influenced the handling of transcripts and parchments. Figure 6 provides the specific responses. Generally speaking, most indicated agreements did not have an impact – that is, both transcripts and parchments were produced in the same manner for joint-programs as they were for programs offered wholly within the home institution. Of the two most popular agreement types, articulated and block transfer, 46% (6) and 60% (9) respectively were identified as having no impact on transcript or parchment practices. Pathway agreements scored 71% (7) in terms of having no impact. The responses for the balance of the remaining categories are too low to draw any further conclusions. What is obvious is the great variety of agreement types. Further study of these agreement types would be helpful to inform future joint program planning in the province.

Of note is the percentage for each category where the answer was not known. This was an interesting finding as it may suggest a lack of transparency given that credentials are not reflecting the existence of agreements to the appropriate degree. Confirming this is difficult without analysing the agreements closely, an exercise that was out of scope for this project.

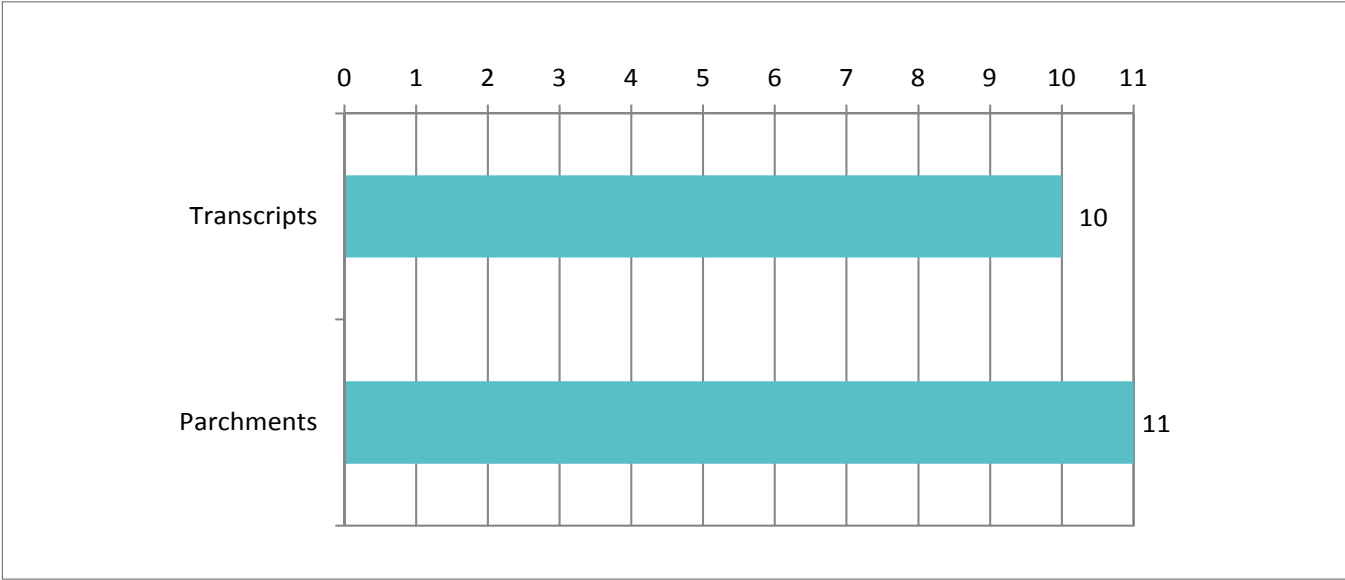
FIGURE 6: Does the existence of a joint program impact how transcripts and parchments are handled? (percent respondents)



NOTE: In the "Other" category, one respondent provided both "yes" and "no" answers. As confirmed by the respondent, this resulted because, in this case, parchments are impacted by the joint program while transcripts are not. Both responses were included in Figure 6.

For those that responded “yes” regardless of agreement type, parchments were impacted slightly more than transcripts. Figure 7 provides the aggregate findings for all respondents. Table 3 separates the findings for public and private institutions and outlines the data differences between public institutions by sector.

FIGURE 7: Impact of joint programs on transcripts vs parchments



NOTE: More than one choice was possible.

TABLE 3: Impact of joint programs on transcripts vs parchments - Public vs private institutions and public institutions by sector

	Institution Category		Public Institutions by Sector		
	Private	Public	College	Institute	University
Transcripts	2	8	3	2	3
Parchments	1	10	4	2	4
Total Responses	3	18	7	4	7

Interestingly, private institutions reported that the transcript was impacted more often than was the parchment. However, as previously mentioned, the smaller number of respondents from private institutions suggests caution should be used when interpreting these findings. There may, however, be interesting successful credential practices; hence, collecting transcript and parchment samples can provide valuable insights.

Among public institutions, the opposite was reported as occurring (i.e., the parchment was impacted more) although, again, the difference in actual number of respondents is small. The strongest conclusion from the data is the indicator that both documents are impacted. However, the percentages seem low when considering the implications for student mobility. As students move between institutions before completing a degree or diploma, these results suggest a lack of transparency regarding the academic paths students are pursuing. Further study of actual transcripts would have been helpful to clarify these findings.

Current Practice: Transcripts and Parchments

The data in Figure 8 confirms the findings depicted in Figure 7; however, greater specificity is provided – more parchments than transcripts were reported as featuring some type of reference to joint programs (47% versus 29% respectively). Twelve percent (12%) did not know the answer to this question which suggests information about protocols is not widely known or established at the institutional level. Forty one percent (41%) indicated the question was not applicable likely because their institution did not have joint programs. Table 4 compares responses from public and private institutions and separates the findings by institutional sector for public institutions. While the numbers are small, there is indication of transparency on parchments; less so with transcripts.

FIGURE 8: Presence of joint program nomenclature on credentials

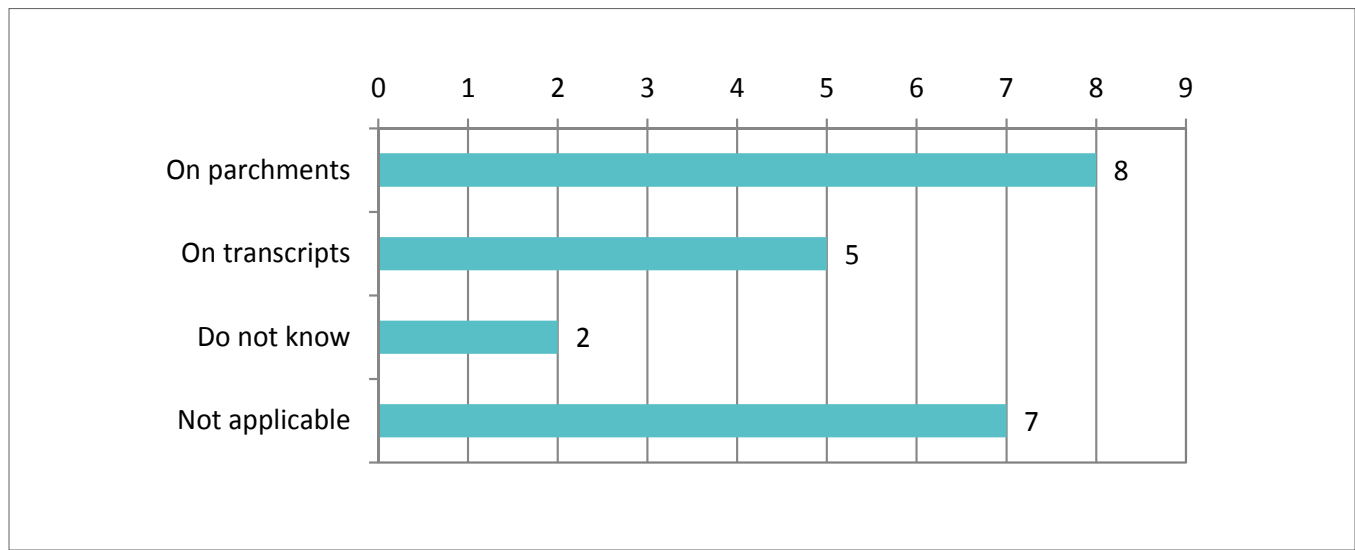


TABLE 4: : Presence of joint program nomenclature on credentials - Private vs public institutions and public institutions by sector

	Institution Category		Public Institutions by Sector		
	Private	Public	College	Institute	University
On parchments	1	7	2	1	5
On transcripts	1	4	1	1	2
Do not know	0	2	2	0	0
Not applicable	3	4	2	0	2
Total Responses	5	17	7	2	9

For those institutions that do provide information about joint programs on parchments and transcripts, the following examples from different institutions were provided:

- Representing both institutions on the joint program parchment along with supporting signatures; notating the parchment with the phrase “jointly conferred” – sometimes adding seals from both schools
- Identifying a “bridge” on parchments for “bridging” joint programs (“bridging” was not defined)
- Issuing one parchment for joint programs, two for dual degrees – in both instances, individual transcripts note the joint or dual degree program
- Notating “credentials” (term not defined) with the phrase “offered in association with...”
- Issuing parchments separately (i.e. not acknowledging the joint program nature of the degree) with transfer credits noted on separate institutional transcripts
- Issuing a joint parchment but not revealing evidence of the joint program on transcripts – again, the notations reflected assignment of transfer credit only

A subset of the above institutions provided sample parchments each of which explicitly note the conferral of a joint degree and feature logos and signatures from all partner institutions:

- Master of Digital Media conferred jointly by Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the Emily Carr University of Art & Design, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (showcased in the report)
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and Thompson Rivers University
- University of Northern British Columbia and University of British Columbia

Usually the existence of a joint program was not apparent on the few transcripts submitted. Rather, only transfer credit assignment and the name of the sending institution were identified. The University of Northern British Columbia was somewhat unique in that its transcripts incorporate the following phrase:

“This student is enrolled in the joint <name of> degree program between UNBC and <name of partner institution>. For the <partner institution> record, please refer to the <partner> transcript.”

This approach is highly transparent, conveying to anyone subsequently reviewing and evaluating the transcript the nature of the partnership, and directing them to the existence of a second relevant transcript from the partner institution.

Simon Fraser University (SFU), in addition to providing jointly conferred parchments, also offers dual degree programs. It follows protocols which lend some interesting insights for successful practice. These are outlined in the sample approach for dual degrees.

Based on the parchments submitted, there is evidence that BC institutions are adhering to international standards for joint programs – specifically with regard to fully recognizing all partners involved in the joint conferral of degrees on parchments (Lantero (ed), 2012, p. 59-62). While select institutions are fully transparent on transcripts, this appears to be a less common practice and a potential area of improvement. As insufficient samples of parchments and transcripts were provided, it was not possible to pursue any additional analysis of credentials. Doing so is recommended as an area requiring further study.

Current Practice: Distribution

When asked the direct question “do your joint programs have each partner distribute separate parchments or transcripts”, 31% indicated parchments and 56% noted transcripts were distributed separately. Figure 9 and Table 5 contain the findings. The comments provided coincide with the responses above. For the 50% that did not see the question as applicable, reasons given varied from “no joint program in place” to transfer credit notations being the mechanism to identify results from the partner schools on transcripts. Two schools indicated one partner issued the transcripts for the joint partnerships; of these, one institution was the official keeper of the academic record. The latter approach seems unique in the province and represents an interesting concept.

The SFU parchment practice for dual degrees provides an interesting alternate approach as well. It is highlighted in the report as a potential candidate for employing successful practice and would appear to represent a unique approach in the province.

FIGURE 9: : Credential Distribution

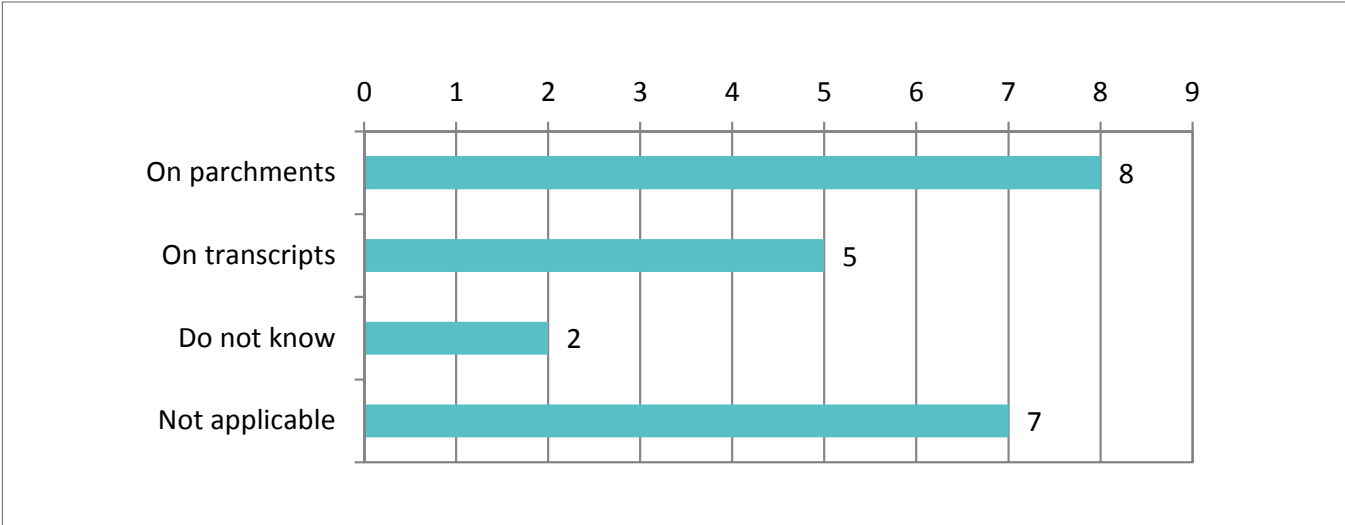


TABLE 5: : Credential distribution - public vs. private institutions and public institutions by sector

	Institution Category		Public Institutions by Sector		
	Private	Public	College	Institute	University
Parchments are distributed separately	1	4	2	0	2
Transcripts are distributed separately	2	7	4	0	3
Depends	0	1	0	0	1
Not applicable	2	6	2	1	3
Total Responses	5	18	8	1	9

Sample Approach

Dual Degrees

Simon Fraser University⁶ with its international partner offers an interesting approach for dual degree programs – while each institution in the partnership distributes its own parchment, the transcript acknowledges pursuit of a dual degree program, features assigned block credit and notes the year of transfer. No grade is assigned for the duration of the study at the partnering institution. The name of the partner institution is also noted. This model, which had a unique degree of transparency, was not apparent in the responses from any other institution. It represents a good example of how institutions might establish a credentialing standard that supports transparency, academic integrity and joint program sustainability.

Current Practice: Graduate versus Undergraduate

Respondents noted differences in practices exist between undergraduate and graduate levels although none specified the nature of the divergence which limited the analysis. In addition, there were two questions in the survey regarding “academic activities”. However, the findings are not included in the report as it became clear respondents did not understand the questions. Further study of the differences between undergraduate and graduate including the impact of academic activities (more of a graduate phenomenon) would be helpful before drawing any conclusions in this area.

⁶ Simon Fraser University provided a 2013 anonymous sample student transcript to demonstrate the manner in which dual degree information is featured on transcripts.

RESEARCH FINDINGS: Looking Forward

The survey participants were asked a series of questions constructed to inform future planning and research regarding successful practice for featuring joint programs on academic credentials.

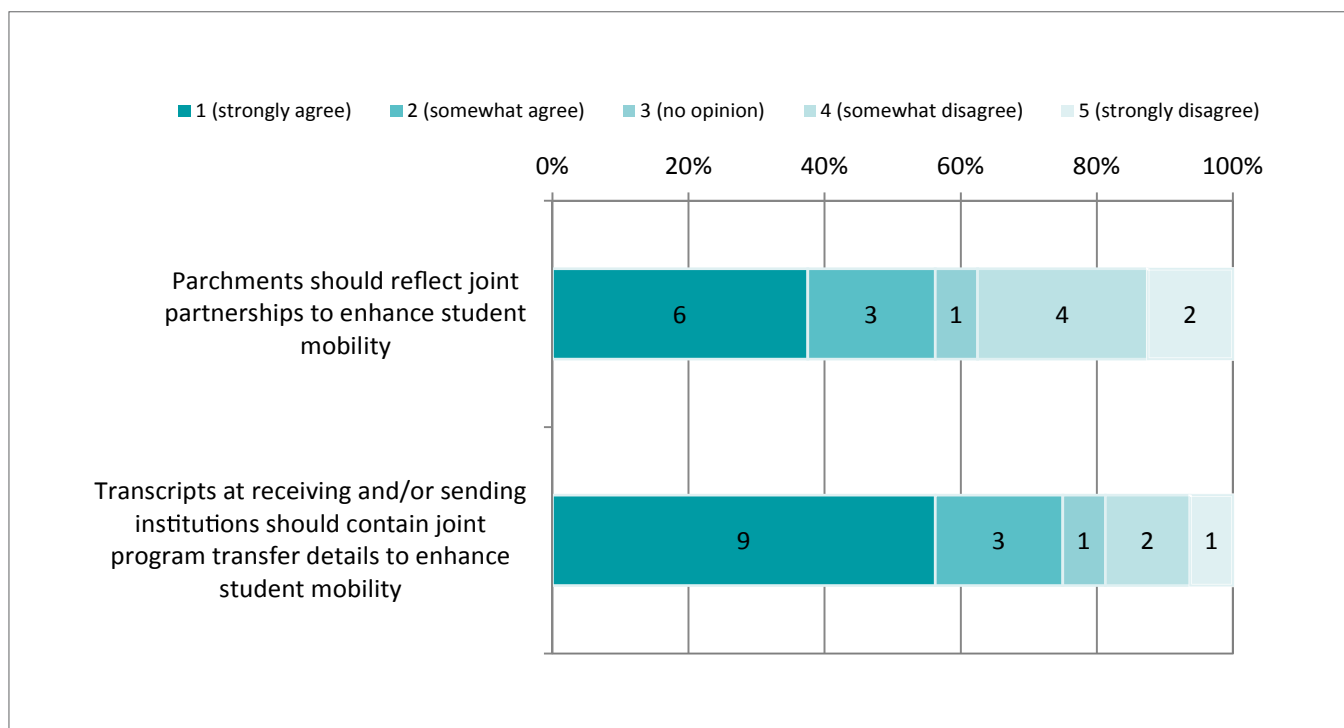
Credentialing Protocols

The participants were asked to rank their agreement with the following two statements on a five-point Likert scale:

- Parchments should reflect joint partnerships to enhance student mobility
- Transcripts at sending and/or receiving institutions should contain joint program transfer details to enhance student mobility

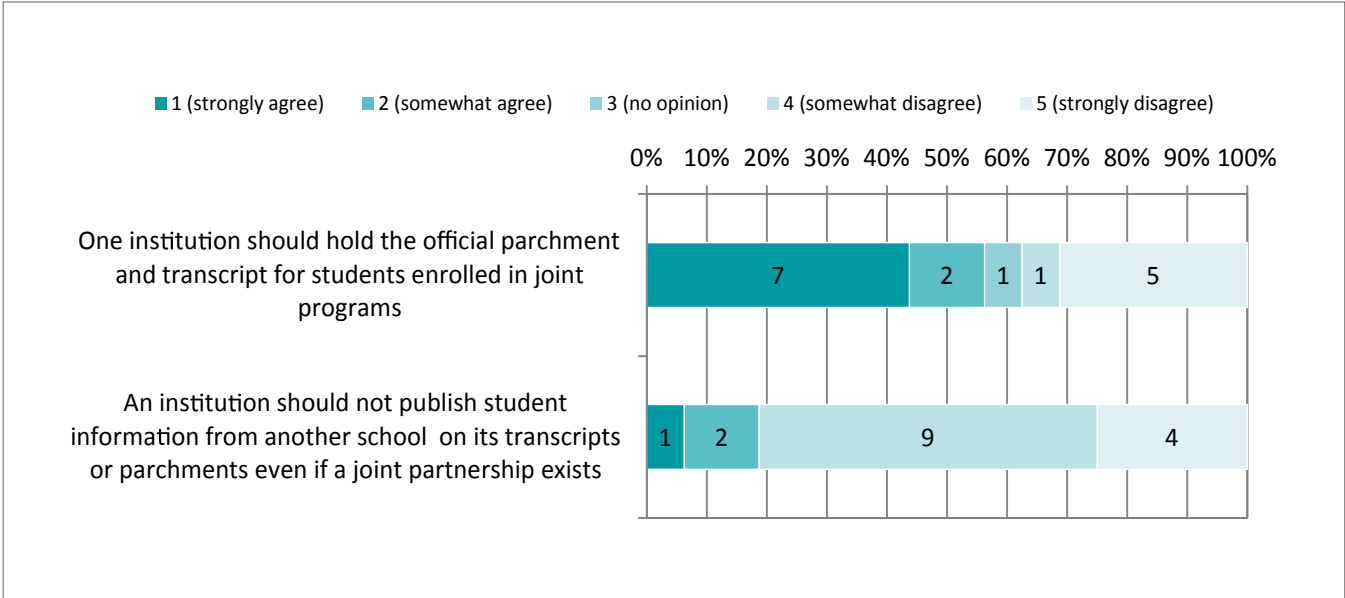
The majority somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with both statements (57% for parchments, 75% for transcripts). Those that strongly agreed represented a significant cohort particularly for transcripts (38% for parchments, 56% for transcripts). Figure 10 provides the full data set for this question.

FIGURE 10: Degree of transparency for credentials



The matter was probed with the next question wherein participants were asked to rank, again using a five-point Likert scale, which school should hold the official parchment and transcript and what publication protocols should be in place. Figure 11 provides the details addressing these two items. Given these results, the survey respondents appeared to suggest the opportunity exists to go much further – for example, 56% somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with one institution holding the official parchment and transcript for students in a joint program.

FIGURE 11: Operationalizing transparency



With regard to which school should hold the official record, the international practices are relevant. In a global survey of joint programs conducted in 2011 and reported on by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and Freie Universität Berlin (Obst et al., 2011, p. 19-20), distinct differences in records management were identified between dual degrees and joint degrees. For joint degrees, the largest majority (43%) reported students enrolled fully at both institutions, 41% had students enrolled at each school depending on location of study and 16% had students enrolled only at one school. For dual degree programs, the international trend at the time was 52% with students enrolled at either institution depending on the location of study, 32% with students enrolled at both institutions fully and 17% with students enrolled at one institution only. In this area, it would appear that BC schools follow the international trend – most appear to have students enrolling at both schools. This potentially explains why there is a trend toward maintaining separate transcripts between partners.

The BC findings suggest there is a provincial appetite for combining parchments and transcripts when joint programs are in place. In Figure 11, a large majority of respondents indicated that academic information from a partner institution should be published on transcripts or parchments from a joint program. There is an important codicil – not all joint partnerships are the same and each type may require a different approach depending on the credential.

One registrar noted ‘different types of partnerships will naturally dictate the direction credentials should go’. The implications are considerable. Combining student record details and creating one transcript document that is reflective of a joint program could have considerable impact on policies, protocols, and registrarial systems. Creating integrated credentials would not be an easy task particularly with regard to transcripts and would need to be carefully considered from an academic perspective before moving forward with any type of administrative implementation as maintenance of academic quality assurance controls should remain paramount.

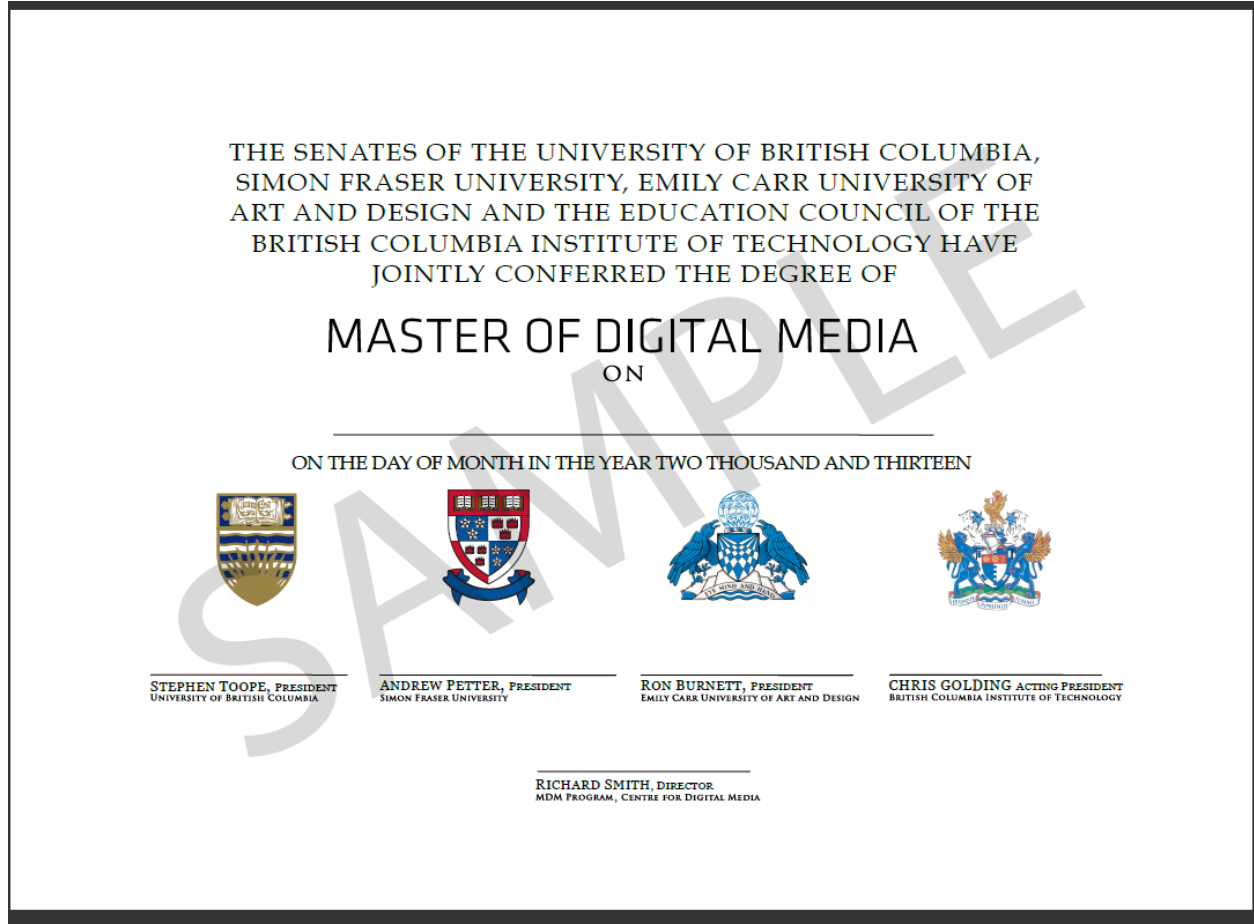
An approach institutions might consider is offered by the collaborative venture between the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Emily Carr University of Art & Design, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology. These four institutions, through the creation of a Master of Digital Media, attempted to balance principles of quality and transparency by creating a joint program with integrated supports, financing, and credentials. A review of the service agreement supporting the partnership indicates a number of successful practices (Simon Fraser University and Great Northern Way Campus Ltd., 2012). More details are featured in the case contained in this report.

Sample Approach

Multiple Partners Delivering One Degree - Master of Digital Media

Four partner institutions, the University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), the Emily Carr University of Art & Design, and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) offer the Master of Digital Media through “Great Northern Way Campus Ltd. (GNWC)” which is a cooperative venture of the four institutions. SFU provides extensive management services under this agreement. However, the specific focus for this report are those components which affect the student record and related credentialing. Students are subject to SFU policies including those related to admission assessment, financial aid and scholarships, tuition management, recruitment, and records management. In this inter-institutional partnership model, SFU manages the entirety of the student record keeping. Collaborative decision making and governance models are in place. All four partners are equally represented under the auspices of the GNWC Board of Directors and the academic committee. Further, each partner is equally represented on the graduate program committee. The final parchment a graduate receives contains the logos of all four partners (see Figure 12). Although the partnership began in 2010, the particulars of the student services support and other management services were further clarified in a specific agreement between SFU and GNWC in 2012. While still a relatively young partnership, it represents an extremely interesting approach to creating a sustainable, inter-institutional joint program model for a curricular initiative that transcends more than one institution and yet builds on the unique strengths of each party. Examples include the use of thoughtful governance structures that allow for representative interests from each partner, the creation of a separately incorporated body that oversees the relationship, the leveraging of management strengths of one partner for operational level support that directly impacts the student, the creation of a supporting infrastructure focused exclusively on overseeing the program and the attention to financial details. The focus on both academic quality and students is evident in all aspects of the partnership.

FIGURE 12: Sample parchment for the SFU-managed Master of Digital Media



Institutional and Provincial Frameworks

Of great related interest are the survey findings regarding provincial and institutional jurisdictional interest in developing a framework for joint program credentialing. Respondents were asked to identify their agreement with the statements itemized below. The findings are noted. It is important to stress that participants could choose as many responses as they wished; therefore, the categories should not be treated as mutually exclusive.

1. “A province-wide quality assurance framework should be established for joint programs” – 70%
2. “Institutional senate policy should be harmonized to avoid ad hoc joint programs” – 40%
3. “Institutions should develop joint programs locally and in a customized fashion” – 60%
4. “Other, please specify” – 20%

In the “other” category, participants in all cases lent support to the notion of a province-wide framework, although their position came with codicils. Specifically, there was an expressed desire to develop the conversation without creating enforced standards, to broaden it beyond joint programs and to ensure avoidance of restrictive models.

There are examples in other jurisdictions wherein all of the first three realities co-exist (i.e., a provincial framework, institution wide senate/board control, and customization). In Ontario, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) through its Ontario Council on Academic Vice Presidents (OCAV) along with a specially constituted task force created a quality assurance framework which specified the nomenclature surrounding types of joint programs (called “inter-institutional partnerships”) such as conjoint and joint dual degrees (Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, 2010). Of specific relevance to this research, protocols for credentialing are noted under each category in Appendix B.

The governance approval process for the Ontario Quality Assurance Framework is relevant and serves to highlight how different levels within a jurisdiction can work in concert to achieve alignment with program types, credentialing, and so forth and yet allow for institutional customization of program design. The Framework was first approved by the OCAV committee, then by the Ontario university executive heads (i.e., Ontario university presidents). The expectation leading from this was that every university in Ontario would develop senate/board-approved academic program approval protocols that aligned with the Quality Assurance Framework within established timeframes. The Framework (2010, p. 9) outlines the expected internal and external approval process any new program must be subject to (including new “inter-institutional” ones). This Framework dovetails with provincial government expectations and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) principles for quality assurance (see Appendix C). BC institutions have established quality assurance frameworks in place and are therefore well positioned to move the discourse forward to the point of defining types of joint programs and credentialing standards.

While the Ontario jurisdictional example noted above involves much more than simply joint program development and credentialing protocols, it is reasonable to conclude from the research that there is interest in BC, certainly within the registrarial community, to consider a similar model that balances academic interests, institutional autonomy, and system quality assurance considerations. While this survey was not targeted at academic leadership, the findings support developing a framework to guide joint program development and related credentialing. Such indicators are helpful and may spark interest with the academic leadership.

Principles and Practices Recommended to Inform Joint Program Credential Planning

The registrarial community was asked to provide suggested principles to help achieve progressive joint program credentialing practices that would support enhanced student mobility.

Core principles emphasized by survey respondents included a commitment to student mobility and student focused solutions, transparency, consistency, simplicity, and the recognition of the role credentials serve in preserving and showcasing academic quality. Well understood in the BC registrarial community is the value of the transcript for showcasing student achievement in a particular program and the parchment for highlighting degree attainment. The findings suggest transcript clarity and a certain level of detail appropriate to each credential are discussions that would be valued by the registrarial community in BC.

When establishing joint program credentialing protocols, survey respondents emphasized the need for employing a principle of ‘openness’ as a mechanism for considering innovative and alternate approaches. Further, they argued that any approach should recognize that some students face unavoidable constraints - including geography and limited technological access. While it was unclear how this point affects credentialing practices, it is reasonable to extrapolate the probable intended meaning: the less a student has to reconnect with former institutions to obtain clarification on credentials regarding previously earned studies on behalf of other bodies (e.g., employers, credentialing organizations, other institutions), the easier it will be for them to move forward.

Additional thematic principles shared by respondents included respecting institutional autonomy, employing flexible approaches (e.g., providing an ‘opt in’ approach to utilizing successful practice standards), and developing sustainable and simplified practices (i.e., with clear definitions and advice on what joint program information should be represented on diplomas and transcripts). A collaborative, consensus-based approach was advised to continue the debate and development of standards; hence, the point made previously about identifying ‘successful practice’ to ‘move institutions to common practice’.

Participants noted that the nature of a joint program “directs” credentialing practices – an example shared noted that a dual degree program typically results in two credentials whereas a joint program tends to result in one credential. The research suggested that developing a principles-based institutional and/or provincial credentialing framework would result in a fuller appreciation of joint program categories along with the associated credentialing needs. The Ontario Quality Assurance Framework mentioned previously provides one such example.

An operational principle suggested by the survey participants was the importance of decoupling the parchment and the transcript – not surprising as the two are very different documents. While doing so, it was further emphasized that each credential should be aligned – for example, if a joint program exists and is supported by a parchment, the transcript should reflect the more detailed components relevant to acknowledging the achievement path a student pursued for that particular joint program. The level of detail necessary was a debatable point although one survey respondent indicated it should “mirror current transcript practices”.⁷

An interesting comment from a survey respondent addressed the need for transparency and is worth restating, “a transcript is sometimes the only way in which institutions ‘communicate’ with one another about student achievement”. This emphasis is important and relates to the subtleties inherent to hurdles students experience when attempting to move between institutions or levels (e.g., undergraduate to graduate) or when trying to obtain external recognition for their earned studies (e.g., from teacher’s colleges, etc.). A lack of clarity and transparency tends to impede subsequent assessments and reviews of a student’s credentials, which then become the responsibility of the student to resolve.

Related to the above, two competing perspectives were apparent in the survey responses: keeping the amount of joint program information on credentialing documents to a minimum versus adopting greater specificity and transparency even to the point of creating a fully integrated transcript for certain types of partnerships. Some examples were suggested and are highlighted below – although anonymous, they demonstrate the diversity of perspectives:

- If a joint program resulted in block transfer, respondents suggested the block transfer should be noted on a transcript but not the “details” from the other school (i.e., not grades and courses);
- Only “basic” (the term was not defined) information should be noted;
- Transcripts should reflect the “academic credit” (the term was not defined) and credential awarded;
- Parchments should reflect from which institution the learning and credit was achieved – it should not be a “hybrid parchment” (the term was not defined);
- “We should transcript what is actually happening to our students in our programs, including the fact that our students are enrolled in some form of ‘joint’ program”;
- “Only one institution should issue the parchment, the one that grants the majority of the credit”;
- “Transcript the student’s academic experience for which you are responsible and over which you have some control”.

⁷ The PCCAT/ARUCC national transcript and transfer credit project is seeking to update the transcript standards for Canada.

As the above findings illustrate, further research on joint program types, definitions and credential implications would be helpful. The national project by PCCAT/ARUCC demonstrates the terminology and standards gap is nation-wide – BC is not alone. To address this situation, the survey respondents urged cooperation between government and institutions to define joint program nomenclature clearly. At the institutional level, the registrarial community stressed the importance of engaging their expertise early in any discussions around developing standards, definitional terms, and local joint program development.

Risks to Consider when Developing Joint Program Credentialing Protocols

According to survey respondents, there are two cornerstone considerations when developing joint programs that tend to be at risk if ignored - sustainability and recognizing the importance of credentials as indicative of an institution's academic currency. These considerations match, in part, the findings of the global joint program survey mentioned previously by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and Freie Universität Berlin (Obst et al., 2011, p. 7). Sustainability was highlighted as one of two top challenges; the other was financial resources.

The opportunity to corral information about established agreements and continually enhance and document existing joint programs were seen as benefits to students and institutions by survey respondents. They further emphasized this commitment to sustainability was essential to the long term success of joint programs. In turn, it was felt that credentialing practices should maintain an appropriate level of consistency and permanence in keeping with their role as serving as artifacts of an institution's quality and academic offerings. This finding suggests that institutions would be well served to establish a commitment to permanence that transcends initial champions for individual initiatives by developing transparent credentialing standards (along with other academic quality controls). The sample approach provided by Medicine Hat College provides insights on the value of transparent credentialing standards and supporting registrarial protocols as a means to mitigate risks that sometimes emerge with joint programs.

Sample Approach

Managing Risk and Enhancing Transparency

Establishing transparent credentialing protocols served an Alberta institution well when responding to a recent provincial audit. Medicine Hat College was subject to a provincial audit that examined the academic oversight of a joint partnership with a Chinese institute by the international education department which reported directly to the then serving President (Saher, 2013). Without getting into the specifics of the audit findings which are beyond the scope of this report, suffice it to say there were concerns raised about the lack of consistent academic oversight and related quality control mechanisms in the international area, and at the presidential and board levels. The Medicine Hat College Registrar's Office maintained a practice of transparent credentialing protocols. To that end, explicit identification of which courses were taken at the Chinese site occurred on all transcripts as a matter of routine practice. As a result, the audit was able to localize the impact to the specific students and their transcripts. The Medicine Hat College Registrar notified the external registrarial community of the audit findings (Wood, 2013), which is an approach that helps to preserve perceptions regarding the overall academic currency of an institution's transcripts. The actions of the Medicine Hat College Registrar demonstrated forthright acknowledgment of the quality control problem with the joint program and highlighted the follow up undertaken to ensure future diligence. Given the delicacies of joint partner relationships and the need to monitor and sustain academic quality, credentialing standards serve an important role and mitigate or at least localize the impact of risk for institutions. Further, transparency is emphasized and preserved as a result.

A related matter identified by survey respondents as a potential risk to joint program development and credentialing protocols was an over-zealous commitment to institutional autonomy and reputational identity. For example, schools that avoid refining policies and practices in favour of a collaborative partnership usually find it difficult to create sustainable joint programs. The result can negatively impact registrarial practices such as credentialing. To illustrate the point, it is difficult to create one diploma for a joint program when there is a refusal on the part of one institution to compromise on branding protocols. If there was a province-wide credentialing standard, such situations might be avoided.

In contrast to this view, survey respondents indicated academic integrity could be at risk with joint partnerships - the assumption appearing to be that credentials, which function as artifacts of an institution's academic currency, are one of many methods in place to protect academic integrity. Ergo, the view that seemed to be apparent in the qualitative survey commentary; restrictive credentialing standards would be critical to employ. This mindset tends to maintain the perspective that 'only that which an institution controls should be represented on its transcript', a principle that was evident in the survey responses.

The approach of the Registrar at Medicine Hat College demonstrates one way to identify studies taken elsewhere and yet control for integrity and build in transparency. The SFU approach for dual degrees and the UNBC transcription practices for joint programs represent others. Co-registration models provide another illustrative example such as the partnership between York University and Ryerson University. In this example, courses from each partner are explicitly identified on each other's transcripts; thereby, easing the information capture on artifacts while still preserving institutional uniqueness, transparency, and academic integrity.

Sample Approach

Co-registration Partnerships

In 2011, York University and Ryerson University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to signal an intention to “seek opportunities to partner on relevant joint programs and initiatives that would build on ...respective strengths and enhance student mobility and access.” (York University, 2013, p. 20) The Ryerson York Exchange represents one example between the two institutions. The model offers students access to courses at each institution without requiring completion of a Letter of Permission, a combined online platform that is co-branded and streamlined administrative procedures to avoid unnecessary fees and bureaucracy (Ryerson University and York University, 2013). In this arrangement, both schools are ensuring courses taken at the host school are noted on the student’s original home school transcript along with equivalent grades. As an illustrative example of transparency, the York transcript will apply a unique code (“RYER”) to ensure other institutions will know which courses were taken at Ryerson. This arrangement is not unique as it is modeled after long standing co-registration options offered between the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University (University of Waterloo, 2013) and between the University of Ottawa and Carleton University (Carleton University, 2013). What these types of models illustrate is that it is possible to contribute to student mobility while maintaining unique strengths, academic integrity, and transparency on the student transcript.

If joint program partners decide that creating one transcript is an appropriate practice given the integrated nature of the joint curriculum, differing scales can create a challenge, a potential risk noted by one survey respondent. The co-registration, SFU dual degree and the GNWC examples provide potential options for how an institution might mitigate this risk. In the case of the co-registration model, a grade equivalency standard is in place. The various techniques utilized to mitigate risk and promote flexibility in these examples support maintenance of academic control, reputation, and integrity and yet also transparently depict a student's academic path resulting from an intra-institutional arrangement.

Other operational and programmatic risks noted by survey respondents which do not necessarily relate to credentialing practices included: programmatic mediocrity; neglecting to control for funding (i.e., neglecting to control the flow of students to ensure no partner is financially disadvantaged or developing a financial mechanism to even the scales regardless of flow); a lack of monitoring or communication mechanisms to manage program changes at partner institutions; misidentification of problems or issues; academic and administrative duplication of effort, and creating overly bureaucratic academic governance and administrative processes. A further caution was suggested – that it is important to involve an institution's legal department when developing a new 'type' of agreement.

Another area of risk dealt with establishing sustainable relationships. Neglecting the creation of sustainable working and governance relationships between academic and administrative colleagues at all levels of a partnership in the early stages of partnership development appears to be an area of concern and risk.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The opportunity and risk inherent in developing joint programs is such that credentialing protocols represent only one small yet important component. Therefore, there are interesting options available when considering creating sustainable standards in the province.

For example, the findings on current practice appear to suggest some confusion about what constitutes a joint program. This appears to be affecting how, when or if mention of a joint program occurs on transcripts and/or parchments. Credentialing protocols vary by institution and, it would seem, by type of inter-institutional partnership. This is not unusual; in fact, in the IIE report mentioned previously, only 55% of schools in the countries surveyed (Australia, France, Germany, United States, Italy and the United Kingdom) had a clear institutional policy focused on joint program development in place in 2011 (Obst et al., 2011, p. 7). Further research on the joint program types within BC and identification of their inherent characteristics would assist in furthering shared understanding and consistent practices when creating credentialing standards.

The findings suggest that, while some institutions submit parchments jointly, the predominant approach appears to be to distribute transcripts separately. If institutions feature other institutional results on transcripts, it appears to be primarily in the form of transfer credit. Documentation of an actual joint program does not seem to appear regularly on transcripts, which would suggest a transparency issue. In select cases, there also appears to be institutional needs to corral existing partnerships, identify joint program categories, and expand the knowledge of what impact each has (or should have) on credentials. The low submission rate of sample transcripts and parchments made it very difficult to conduct a more detailed analysis of current practice. There is clearly an opportunity to create a suitable forum where registrars could discuss existing credentials and joint program details, and reflect further on successful practice with detailed evidence available.

While the suggested principles and jurisdictional examples noted in this report cover much more than simply joint program credentialing protocols, it is reasonable to conclude from the research that there is interest in BC's registrarial community in exploring the possibility of developing protocols on transcription and parchment practices for joint programs. Of course, such a discussion would require close collaboration with academic leadership across the BC postsecondary system. The national PCCAT/ARUCC transcript guide and transfer credit glossary project has the potential to provide helpful input into this dialogue. Further research regarding existing joint program frameworks from other jurisdictions will help to advance the discussions regarding transcription and parchment standards.

Finally, should the next stage focus on developing a joint program credentialing framework for transcripts and parchments, the discussions should advance the principles of transparency, sustainability, institutional autonomy, and academic quality. The suggested principles identified by survey respondents and outlined in this report provide a basis for shaping forward thinking discourse on joint programs. The outcome will result in greater clarity and coherence for students and other institutions, support institutional academic integrity, and help to advance the BC post-secondary education quality imperative.

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APPENDIX A:

List of Institutions Requested to Participate in the Study

- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Corpus Christi College
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Farleigh Dickinson University
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- North Island College
- Northern Lights College
- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College
- Royal Roads University
- Selkirk College
- Simon Fraser University
- Thompson Rivers University
- Trinity Western University
- University of British Columbia
- University Canada West
- University of the Fraser Valley
- University of Northern British Columbia
- University of Victoria
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University
- Yukon College

APPENDIX B:

Glossary of Terms for Joint Programs from the Council of Ontario Universities' Quality Assurance Framework

“Collaborative Program: A collaborative program is an intra-university graduate program that provides an additional multidisciplinary experience for students enrolled in and completing the degree requirements for one of a number of approved programs. Students meet the admission requirements of and register in the participating (or “home”) program but complete, in addition to the degree requirements of that program, the additional requirements specified by the collaborative program. The degree conferred is that of the home program, and the completion of the collaborative program is indicated by a transcript notation indicating the additional specialization that has been attained (e.g., “MA in Political Science with specialization in American Studies”).”

In the same document, “inter-institutional program categories” along with the protocols for credentialing are specifically noted:

- 1. Conjoint Degree Program:** A program of study, offered by a postsecondary institution that is affiliated, federated, or collaborating with a university, which is approved by the university’s senate or equivalent body, and for which a single degree document, signed by both institutions is awarded.
- 2. Cotutelle:** A customized program of doctoral study developed jointly by two institutions for an individual student in which the requirements of each university’s doctoral programs are upheld, but the student working with supervisors at each institution prepares a single thesis which is then examined by a committee whose members are drawn from both institutions. The student is awarded two degree documents though there is a notation on the transcripts indicating that the student completed his or her thesis under cotutelle arrangements.
- 3. Dual Credential Program:** A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute, including institutes of technology and advanced learning, in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a separate and different degree/diploma document being awarded by each of the participating institutions.
- 4. Joint Degree Program:** A program of study offered by two or more universities or by a university and a college or institute, including an Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, in which successful completion of the requirements is confirmed by a single degree document.

(Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance, 2010, p. 4-6)

APPENDIX C:

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)

Principles of Institutional Quality Assurance in Canadian Higher Education

The following principles have been endorsed by the executive head of each member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

Each AUCC member institution has a mission statement and objectives which underpin the development and assessment of its academic programs. Each university is committed to ensuring that appropriate standards are achieved and maintained in its programs and that it is offering a high quality education. To these ends:

Quality assurance and improvement

- The institution has in place a formal, approved, transparent policy committing it to ensuring the quality and continuous improvement of its academic programs.
- Where applicable, the institution is also in compliance with the requirements of a provincial or regional authority having responsibility for quality assurance either through that agency's verification that the institution's quality review policy and processes meet an agreed standard, or through the agency's own assessment of the programs offered.
- The authority responsible for implementation of the institutional policy and for action in response to recommendations resulting from the quality assurance process is clearly identified.
- There is a procedure for the regular review of the institution's quality assurance policy and related processes.

Scope and frequency of reviews

- The policy applies to current and planned programs. The policy is comprehensive in its coverage of all undergraduate and graduate programs.
- The policy applies to all programs whether campus based or delivered at a distance, in Canada or across borders.

- The full range of the institution's academic programs is subject to review on a regular cycle.
- The policy defines the elements of the program reviews.
- The policy includes an appropriate mechanism to review interdisciplinary programs.

Key characteristics of the quality review

- The quality assessment process is based on self-evaluation and peer review.
- The process includes, as a fundamental dimension, the involvement of external disciplinary experts.
- The process involves internal and external stakeholders including students, faculty, and the administration of the institution, and may also involve alumni and representatives of the community.
- Where accreditation or certification processes exist for certain professional and other programs, the institution typically participates in them, and these standards are integrated into the institution's own quality review processes for these programs.

Information to the public

- There is documentation to guide the quality assurance process, and this documentation is public.
- In the interests of transparency and accountability, the results of the quality assessment are made public.
- The policy, related processes and the calendar for assessments are known within the institution and among external stakeholders including government and the public-at-large.

(Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2011)

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