

# Admissions of High School Non-Graduates

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*This newsletter presents the executive summary for this project report. The full report is available at [www.bccat.ca/pubs/Non-Grads.pdf](http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/Non-Grads.pdf)*

One in five youth in British Columbia (BC) does not graduate from Grade 12. Some people later obtain an adult equivalency to high school graduation, but many do not graduate at all. This project examined admissions to the public post-secondary education system in BC of applicants who have not completed high school graduation.

The objectives of the study were

- (1) to review the policies governing admissions of high school non-graduates in BC public post-secondary institutions, including the application of mature student admission policies and what institutional websites generally say about admissions of high school non-graduates, and to examine admissions requirements for high school non-graduates at the program level for selected institutions;
- (2) to assess perspectives of admissions professionals on issues and opportunities for high school non-graduates, and to gather information from admissions professionals, deans and directors of developmental education, and secondary school personnel about practices and policies regarding high school non-graduates;
- (3) to assess the demographic characteristics and programs of choice for high school non-graduates in BC post-secondary institutions; and
- (4) to identify areas for future research and, if appropriate, the development of suggested practices.

*A high school non-graduate was defined as an applicant to a post-secondary institution who last attended a secondary school in BC but who does not hold a Dogwood Diploma, an Evergreen Certificate, an Adult Dogwood, or a GED credential.*

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## Data Sources

Data for this review were gathered from several sources. A review of existing literature was conducted, primarily including Canadian sources but also some international sources. The formal admissions requirements were collected from the websites of all 25 public post-secondary institutions to identify the options for high school non-graduates (such as upgrading, trades programs and mature student entry). Interviews with 13 admissions professionals at BC public post-secondary institutions were conducted, along with 4 interviews with others in secondary schools and government. Respondents were asked about current practices, assessment tests, "open admission" programs, the use of mature student admission policies, and collection of information about demographic and cultural variables.

An examination of student data from three BC province-wide, annual data collections combined data from the *Central Data Warehouse* (2015/16 enrolments of non-graduates), the *Student Transitions Project* (previous reports and especially the 2004/05 Grade 8 Entry Cohort (STP2014)), and the *BC Student Outcomes Forum* with data from three of the regular student outcomes surveys that cyclically asked respondents about their high school graduation status.

## Institutional Approaches to Admitting High School Non-Graduates

Findings about admission policies revealed that requirements for high school graduation prior to entry varies in BC first by institutional type and then by program. The research-intensive universities generally require high school graduation, but they do offer some limited alternative pathways for non-graduates as mature students. The teaching-intensive universities tend to have general admission requirements for applicants to have graduated from high school. However, the use of the mature student category and assessment procedures allow non-graduates who have reached a certain age to gain admission. Most teaching-intensive universities offer a comprehensive series of skills upgrading (ABE), reflecting their origins as community colleges. The provincial institutes are somewhat similar in their requirement for high school graduation, but they operationalize that requirement differently. Colleges describe themselves as “very welcoming” to high school non-graduates. The requirement for high school graduation varies, the mature student category is common, and a range of skill upgrading courses or preparatory programs exist as routes of entry for non-graduates. This variety of approaches broadly reflects different institutional mandates and reveals a provincial system of broad options for non-graduates: highly accessible, open pathways with regional access.

The study also found various upgrading approaches used by BC institutions. The research-intensive universities do not offer upgrading courses per se. Most other institutions provide pathways for students to upgrade deficiencies in academic skills prior to being accepted into a program. These are usually focused on specific subjects – such as math, English and sometimes science. A common general prerequisite – English Grade 12 with C grade – must be satisfied before enrolling in university level courses, but often math and science skills can be upgraded concurrently.

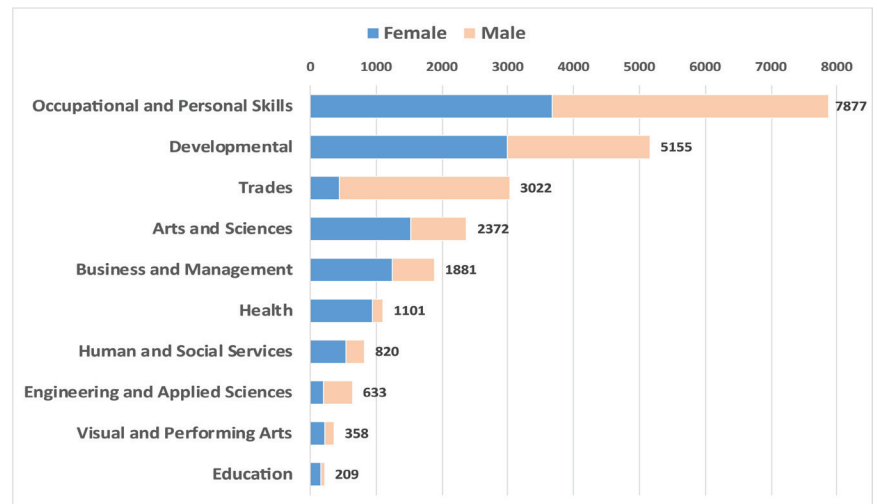
## Profile of High School Non-Graduates in BC Post-Secondary Education

Demographically, non-graduates represent a distinctive population. Non-graduates enrolled in post-secondary institutions are older on average than graduates. Rates of non-graduation from high school vary considerably in BC, with lower rates of high school graduation in rural and northern parts of the province – for example, 12 percent in Lower Mainland to 43 percent in the Cariboo and North regions.

High school non-graduates enrol in developmental education programs at six times the rate of graduates, demonstrating a clear pathway for bringing these students back into formal education. Trades programs offer another route to post-secondary education for students who have not completed their high school diplomas: some trades accept achievement of Grade 10.

Another key finding is that one in three non-graduates are enrolled in programs that are not part of regular institutional programming: these include contract training, partnerships with Indigenous communities, and continuing education. It is not necessarily expected that these enrolments would result in a credential, but may support improvement of specific jobskills or contribute to a local community initiative.

**High School Non-Graduates Aged 18+ in Post-Secondary 2015/16 by Program Area\* and Gender (21 public post-secondary institutions, n=23,428)**



Source: AEST CDW May 2017 \*Note: “Occupational and Personal Skills” includes students enrolled in programs in “Other” category and “Personal Improvement & Leisure”.