

## **The BC Post-Secondary Transfer System: What's working well? What needs improvement?**

Report and Presentation by  
 The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer  
 to the Select Standing Committee on Education

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*As the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer was formed in 1989, it is instructive to compare the system that year with that of 2001.*

	<b>1989/90</b>	<b>2000/01</b>
Public post-secondary institutions	23	28
Public degree granting institutions	4	14
Institutions in the formal transfer system	23	33
Students in public post-secondary institutions	103,000	150,000 <sup>1</sup>
Number of Transfer courses	5,000	7,254
Number of Transfer equivalencies	16,000	47,000
Documented block transfer agreements	N/A	600

### **What's working well**

#### **1. The Fundamentals of the Transfer System**

British Columbia generally is considered to have the most sophisticated and effective credit transfer system of any province in Canada that enables students to begin their studies at one post-secondary institution, transfer to another, and be guaranteed to receive appropriate levels of credit towards completion of a baccalaureate degree.<sup>2</sup> The BC transfer system encompasses all 28 BC public post-secondary institutions, one private university, three private colleges, as well as one public out-of-province college (Yukon College).

<sup>1</sup> Data provided by Ministry of Advanced Education; it refers to full-time equivalent enrolments but excludes apprenticeship and contract or continuing education activity not otherwise reported as part-time vocational

<sup>2</sup> It should be acknowledged that both Alberta and Quebec have very good transfer systems. Some other provinces, notably Ontario, are endeavouring to develop a transfer system.

Through our research we know that on average about 40% of students in British Columbia who enter universities each year transfer from a BC college, institute, or university college. We know that these students are well prepared for transfer because they perform very well at university and have graduation rates comparable to students who enter the universities directly from high school. Surveys reveal that the vast majority of students in both academic and applied programs report high levels of satisfaction with their transfer experience.

## 2. The structure and function of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer

The Council is the only agency that represents the interests of the entire post-secondary system. Council members are selected as representatives from, rather than of, any particular institution or constituency and are expected to represent and serve the overall best interests of the system. The Council has strong support from institution presidents, system groups, and the Ministry.

The Council's mandate is to support and facilitate effective articulation, transfer, and admission arrangements for students who move between the province's colleges, institutes, university colleges and universities. Its challenge is to do this by establishing and maintaining values that are supportive of student mobility in an environment of autonomous institutions with highly differentiated missions and characteristics.

## 3. The BC Transfer Guide

The BC Transfer Guide, which lists all official transfer credit arrangements and constitutes a guarantee for students, is available in print form, as well as online at the BCCAT Web site [www.bccat.bc.ca](http://www.bccat.bc.ca). It is the product of an extensive system of articulation of courses and programs between institutions. The 2001-2002 Guide includes 7,254 first and second year courses offered by 24 "sending" institutions and their transfer credit equivalencies at 11 "receiving" institutions. In addition, there are over 600 transfer agreements that guarantee a block of credit to students who have completed a credential at a college, institute, or university college.

## 4. Tracking/Measuring Effectiveness of Transfer System

BCCAT undertakes extensive research that measures the effectiveness of student transfer. These reports are all available on our Web site. We have studied how many students transfer to the universities, from which institutions they are transferring, how many credits they transfer and how well they perform after transfer. We also know which courses do not receive transfer credit and the reasons why. We have surveyed students and advisors extensively about their understandings of and perceptions about transfer.

## 5. Providing Relevant System-Wide Information to Students

BCCAT publishes Transfer TIPS (Transfer Information for Post-Secondary Success), a widely distributed handbook written for students to assist them in preparing to transfer between institutions, and has recently funded the development of a Facilitation Guide to assist High School teachers to use TIPS. We have a user-friendly website that functions as a comprehensive resource for admission and transfer information.

## **What needs improvement**

### 1. Encouraging More Flexible Program Requirements

Course requirements for similar programs vary between institutions and many students who start at one institution must move to another institution to complete their undergraduate degree. Because transfer students can not be sure to which institution they will be admitted to complete their degree, we need our degree granting institutions to develop more flexible program requirements for first and second year courses leading to the major so that sending institutions can assist students to meet these requirements at a variety of institutions wherever possible.

### 2. Establishing Admission Quotas

We need to develop a mechanism whereby all institutions work more closely together to ensure that, *from an overall system perspective*, there is fair and reasonable access to our degree granting institutions for both students entering directly from our high schools and those transferring from colleges. At the moment, our universities independently set quotas for these two groups of students and there is very little examination of whether or not the total distribution of available spaces for each group is effectively addressing system requirements. We are also uncertain about the number of spaces being made available to transfer students at our other degree granting institutions.

### 3. Measuring Patterns of Student Mobility

Although we have good information about students who transfer to universities, we need system-wide information about the patterns of student mobility and the performance of students who transfer between colleges, university colleges and institutes, between degree granting institutions, and from degree granting institutions to colleges to determine how well the system is serving these students. Such information is not currently available nor are there explicit plans that would enable such information to be collected easily in the near future.

### 4. Examining Implications of Online Learning

We need to think about how transfer will be affected by the impact of a whole new universe of online educational opportunities for students. Residency requirements may need to be re-examined in light of such opportunities.

#### 5. Transferring to and from Private Institutions

We need to examine how best to enable students, who choose to enrol in private post-secondary institutions, to transfer their credits to public institutions and vice-versa. How to develop cost effective mechanisms for the establishment and maintenance of formal articulation agreements or transfer protocols needs to be determined.

#### 6. Examining Administrative Policies and Procedures

We need to continue to examine administrative policies and procedures that may serve as barriers to student mobility and seek appropriate changes where possible. For example, since each institution uses its own grading system and its own way of calculating a grade point average, it can be very difficult for students to find out whether their grades at one institution will allow them admission to another.

#### 7. Improving Use of Information Technology for Transfer

We need to examine how technology can be utilized to provide improved access to relevant admissions and transfer information to assist students in their educational planning. For example, students should be able to go to an institutional web site, enter the courses they have completed at college and their intended major, and be informed of what transfer credit they will receive, what courses are still required to complete their diploma or degree, and whether their grades are high enough for admission.

#### 8. Encouraging Inter-Provincial Transfer

We need to take steps to enhance opportunities for student who transfer between institutions located in different provinces.

### **Supporting Documentation**

1. Overview of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer
2. 2000-2001 Annual Report to the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
3. British Columbia Transfer Guide 2001-2002
4. Articulation Committees: Their Essential Role in a Successful Transfer System
5. British Columbia Transfer TIPS (Transfer Information for Post-Secondary Success)
6. Admissions and Transfer Experiences of Students Continuing their Studies in British Columbia (February, 2001)
7. Admission of Transfer Students in British Columbia Institutions: Policies, Practices and Capacity (July, 2001)
8. Profile of BC College Transfer Students Admitted to BC Universities (1994/95 to 1998/1999) (October, 2001)
9. The Advisor (New Routes to Transfer, November, 2001)
10. BCCAT Newsletter (November, 2001)