

research results

highlights of current research for BC post-secondary system partners

Improving the BC Transfer Experience: Feedback From Students

Prepared by BC Stats

Introduction

The BC Council on Admissions and Transfer is always seeking ways to improve the transfer system for the benefit of students. Doing so is often informed by research in one form or another. Questions were added to the 2011 Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) survey to help us gain a better understanding of why some students were dissatisfied with their overall transfer experience. The good news is that only 193 (8%) of the 2,361 students who expected to transfer credits within the BC public post-secondary system reported being dissatisfied, which is consistent with the small number of respondents reporting dissatisfaction in former years. The 2011 research shows that the BC credit transfer system continues to work well for the large majority of students who use it. For the small number of students reporting dissatisfaction, the findings shed light on the nature of students' experiences and what would have improved them.

This document provides the highlights of a more detailed BCCAT report.¹ The focus of this document is on the results of a new set of questions asked in 2011, which allowed BCCAT to hear directly from students who were dissatisfied with their transfer experience and to gather their input regarding how the transfer system can be improved.

Over the years, the DACSO² survey has shown that a high proportion of students expect to transfer credits when they move

from a BC teaching-intensive university, college, or institute to another institution in the province's public post-secondary system³. In 2011, 79% of respondents who continued their studies at a different institution within the public post-secondary system expected to transfer credits; the rate of transfer expectations was highest for those moving to BC research-intensive universities, at 92%.

With 86% of respondents who moved within the province's public system reporting that they received all of their expected transfer credits, it is clear that the BC transfer system is serving students well. The proportion of students who expected to transfer credits and were dissatisfied with their experience has remained at about 8% across multiple survey years. In the 2011 survey, only 193 such respondents reported being dissatisfied with their transfer experience. About half of these (51%) also reported receiving all of the transfer credits they expected.

The 2011 research shows that the BC credit transfer system continues to work well for the large majority of students who use it.

¹ Please see Improving the BC Transfer Experience: Feedback from Students, found at BCCAT's website, bccat.ca/pubs/bcstats12.pdf

² The annual DACSO survey is overseen by the BC Student Outcomes Research Forum and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and participating institutions. A detailed set of admissions and transfer questions is included in the DACSO survey every three years. The report on which this newsletter is based includes some trend data across these survey years.

³ The proportion of students expecting to transfer credit to their new institution in the BC public post-secondary system was 79% in 2005, 80% in 2008, and 79% in 2011.

Why were these students dissatisfied, and what suggestions do they have for improvement to the system?

Reasons for Dissatisfaction

Respondents were presented with a list of six possible reasons for dissatisfaction. Three reasons were selected by more than 45% of the 193 respondents. The two top reasons were:

1. they did not get the information they needed even after seeking it out (51%), and
2. the transfer process was difficult to understand (50%).

A relatively high proportion of respondents mentioned both of these top two reasons (60%), suggesting that a respondent's ability to access the transfer information they need is a key factor in their perception of the complexity of the overall process.

The third top reason for dissatisfaction was:

3. they did not get the transfer credit they were expecting (46%).

It is not possible to tell from the survey whether these respondents' expectations were reasonable. Respondent comments illustrate that some were frustrated by a sense of being set back in their studies or that they had to repeat material that they felt they had already covered.

Suggestions for Improvement

More than three-quarters of the 193 respondents provided suggestions for what would have made their experience better. Their suggestions relate closely to their reasons for dissatisfaction and are summarized as follows:

- improve service from academic advisors and admissions staff at sending and receiving institutions;
- increase availability of clear, accurate, accessible, and timely course transfer information;
- provide more opportunities to transfer credits among institutions; and
- increase collaboration among sending and receiving institutions.

Did not get information needed and process difficult to understand

...counsellors were giving contradictory information...

It seemed like no one knew the answers or could help you.

...could not get help from anyone ... was shuffled from person to person.

Process was not clear, many unanswered questions.

Did not get transfer credit expected

... I retook and repaid for the same classes.

...they put me back in second [year] which resulted in me doing a five year bachelor.

...despite there being overlapping material, nothing transferred over.



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