

Post-Secondary Pathways of Non-Graduates from B.C. Grade 12

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INTRODUCTION

The Student Transitions Project (STP) has focused its research since 2005 on the achievements of B.C. grade 12 *graduates* who enrolled in post-secondary education. Some students who do not graduate from Grade 12 also enroll at post-secondary institutions in a variety of programs, but little has been reported on these *non-graduates*.

To start filling the information gap, this newsletter examines the post-secondary enrollment and completion information that is available from the STP on British Columbia students who did not graduate from a public or private high school in B.C. The newsletter looks at what programs these students take at B.C. colleges, institutes and universities when they reach post-secondary. Three educational pathways or enrolment patterns are described:

- ▶ Upgrading programs such as Adult Basic Education or Developmental Education
- ▶ Post-secondary credit and other credential-bearing programs
- ▶ Non core and contract (often non-credit) programs

Part 1 of this paper reveals three dominant patterns of post-secondary enrolments taken by the students who appear as non-graduates from B.C. Grade 12. Part 2 examines the credentials earned by such students.

ACCESS PHILOSOPHY

Following the 1962 Macdonald Report, *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future*, (prepared at UBC in recognition that the baby boom generation was finishing high school and in response to the rising educational expectations of society), British Columbia established a dozen community colleges in every region of the province¹. Providing courses that ranged from basic literacy for adults and short, occupationally focused programs to a full two years of university-level studies, the community colleges adopted an “open door” admissions philosophy.

¹ The Macdonald Report also led to the creation of the University of Victoria in 1963 and the opening of Simon Fraser University in 1965.

While particular programs may have had specific entrance requirements, virtually all adults could enter a college, take pre-requisite courses and eventually become eligible to apply for a full range of programs, either at their original institution or through a robust system of university transfer.

One characteristic of the college educational model is that it facilitates a “second chance” for high school dropouts. This system articulates learning levels such that adults can return to learning and access pre-requisite course work missed during their youth. While the mandates of community colleges in British Columbia have evolved over the decades, and some have become teaching intensive universities, the open access, “second chance” philosophy has endured, enabling high school non-graduates to continue their education at many of the public post-secondary institutions in B.C. In addition, research-intensive universities enroll a limited number of high school non-graduates through their mature and other special admission categories.

Traditional thinking about post-secondary pathways involves high school graduation prior to post-secondary enrolment. Across most systems of post-secondary or tertiary education, one would not expect to find students who had not graduated from high school, with the exception of some vocational training. That non-graduates are part of the post-secondary enrolments in British Columbia reveals distinctive design attributes of B.C.’s system in terms of policy and mandate structure.

FILLING A DATA GAP

While this open admissions approach provided access to thousands of students, the analysis of the post-secondary educational histories of non-graduates becomes difficult: many institutions are unable to consistently differentiate high school graduates from non-graduates. In B.C. colleges, institutes and teaching intensive universities, records of Grade 12 graduation are not necessarily collected or retained in student databases because their programs define specific courses, skills or knowledge as prerequisite for admission. Fortunately, the STP is now able to partially rectify this lack of data about B.C. high school graduation.

By linking post-secondary records in a privacy-protected manner with B.C. school records, the STP is able to identify post-secondary students who graduated from a B.C. secondary school. We know that about 80 percent of students in Grade 8 in the B.C. public school system will graduate from Grade 12 within six years, a figure reported annually and used in *STP Fast Facts*. The STP regularly reports on the transitions of these graduates into post-secondary education.

Little is known, however, about the one in five high school students who do not graduate in B.C. from Grade 12. Some may have moved out of province to complete their high school, while others are high school dropouts. What we do know is that we see some of these students enrolled in public post-secondary institutions. They have not followed the transition from Grade 12 to post-secondary that is the main pathway, and this analysis of their enrolments reveals other pathways into a post-secondary institution.

A Note about the Data: STP merges data from the B.C. public post-secondary institutions with B.C. school demographic and educational information about those non-graduates who entered a B.C. public post-secondary institution, but STP does not contain information about the non-graduates who did not make this transition. A complication in calculating transition rates for non-graduates is that students may have left the secondary school system at various ages and in various grades, making the choice of a denominator complicated. In the interest of simplicity, this paper therefore ignores the issue of transition rates and instead looks backwards to identify the enrolments of students at public post-secondary institutions in 2009/10 who had previous B.C. high school records, but no evidence of B.C. Grade 12 graduation.

The traditional route into post-secondary education takes place after graduating from B.C. Grade 12. For the purposes of this analysis, a 'NoBC12' student is a B.C. public post-secondary student who had attended a B.C. high school (at least entering Grade 8), but for whom STP has no record of B.C. Grade 12 graduation. (Students who left the B.C. school system in Grade 7 or earlier likely continued their education elsewhere and were excluded from this analysis).

Some of the leavers from Grades 8 to 12 may also have continued their education elsewhere. This paper assumes that few of these students graduated from high school elsewhere and then returned to B.C. for post-secondary education. This seems a strong assumption in that, as reported below, the majority of enrolments analyzed here are in institutions and programs that tend to serve local populations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that findings only approximate the true situation as a result of this "no return migration" assumption.

Quick Facts Found in this Newsletter

34,750 students who attended a BC high school but who did not graduate from BC Grade 12 attended a public post-secondary institution in BC in 2009/10.

Sector:

60% Community college
22% Teaching intensive university
12% Institute
6% Research university

Program:

25% Developmental/Adult Basic Education
41% Post-secondary credit
35% Contingent/Non-credit/Contract

Credentials Earned:

55% Certificate (1 year)
12% Diploma (2 year)
17% Bachelor degree (4 year)
16% Developmental and other

Part 1

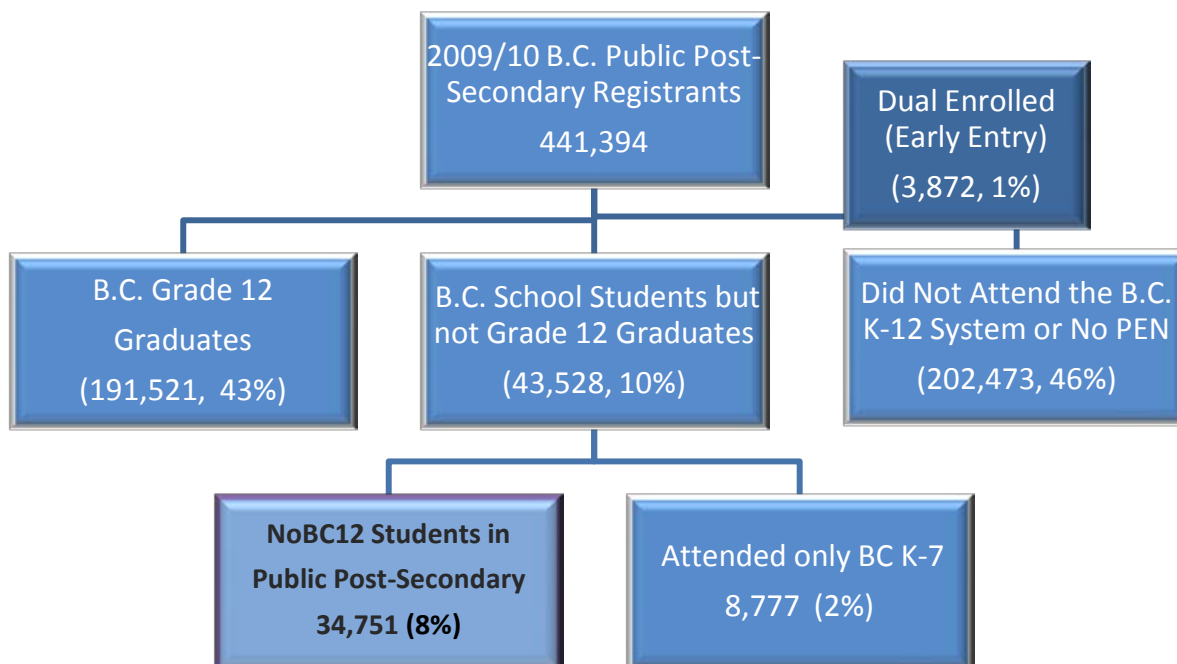
ENROLMENTS OF NoBC12 STUDENTS IN PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

The STP enrollment file for the 25 public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia in 2009/10 shows that a total of 441,394 students were registered and that more than half (54 percent or 238,921 students) can be matched with a B.C. high school enrolment (see [Figure 1](#)). This study relies on a characterization of each B.C. public post-secondary student in 2009/10 into categories that describe previous high school experience.

Of the 54 percent of post-secondary students known to have enrolled at some point in a B.C. elementary or high school, 81 percent were Grade 12 graduates, and 18 percent had previously been in the B.C. school system but did not graduate from B.C. grade 12 (“NoBC12” students). A small number of students (1 percent) were dual enrolled, in a combined high school plus post-secondary program (early entry, often in trades).

This paper begins with the 43,528 students who were enrolled in a post-secondary institution having B.C. school histories but without B.C. Grade 12 graduation. It then excludes students who left B.C. schools before Grade 8. The label ‘NoBC12’ is used to refer to the remainder, and this paper examines their enrolments to classifying their post-secondary educational pathways.

Figure 1: Distribution of Students Registered in B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions in 2009/10



The post-secondary enrolments of students who did not graduate from B.C. Grade 12 include 8,777 students (2 percent) who were last enrolled in a B.C. school between kindergarten and grade 7. This group has a different enrolment pattern than the other 34,751 NoBC12 students (8 percent) who last enrolled in B.C. Grades 8 to 12. For example, the K-7 leavers were less likely to be in upgrading programs (17 percent compared to 25 percent) and 30 percent were enrolled in research universities. It appears likely that those who left the B.C. school system between kindergarten and Grade 7 had moved out of province and may have completed their high school education in another jurisdiction before returning to B.C. They are excluded from the subsequent analysis.

The next section of this paper analyzes the students in the bottom left side of Figure 1, a total of 34,751 students who represent 8 percent of all the students in the public post-secondary system in 2009/10, or about one student in twelve. They left a B.C. high school in grades 8 through 12, did not earn a B.C. high school diploma but have enrolled in a public post-secondary institution in B.C. in 2009/10.

Of the NoBC12 students discussed next, 15,268 (44 percent) were last seen in grades 8 to 11, with the remaining 19,483 (56 percent) having made it into grade 12. As a result, more than half might be considered to have been “almost ready” for post-secondary education.

TYPE OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Of the 34,751 NoBC12 students enrolled in 2009/10, the majority (60 percent) enrolled at a community college, followed by teaching intensive universities (22 percent), institutes (12 percent) and research universities (6 percent). Each of the 25 public post-secondary institutions enrolled at least 50 NoBC12 students. The institutions with the largest enrolments of NoBC12 students were BCIT (3,034 students), Vancouver Community College (2,979 students), and Douglas College (2,728 students).

DEMOGRAPHICS OF NoBC12 STUDENTS

Previous STP research shows that delayed entry into post-secondary is significant for marginalized populations in that students from rural locations and Aboriginal students have lower immediate transition rates into post-secondary education than urban and non-Aboriginal students. Students who did not graduate from high school would be expected to have low transition rates, but the significant finding is that some people who do not graduate from high school are still making the transition into post-secondary education. Age data would suggest that delayed entry is an important factor in understanding the educational trajectories of NoBC12 students.

GENDER

Gender plays a role in post-secondary participation. Minor gender differences in grade 12 graduation numbers and rates are amplified at the post-secondary level. In B.C. post-secondary education, over 55 percent of students are female. However, the NoBC12 students were more equally split between males and females.

Gender differences are nevertheless evident by institution type: there were twice as many males than females in the NoBC12 group enrolled at the institutes, while more females were enrolled at the research-intensive universities (see Figure 2). Programming at BCIT (the largest institute) is often in fields that have traditionally been male dominated, such as Trades.

Figure 2: Gender Distribution of NoBC12 Students by Institution Type

Institution Type	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
Community college	10,603	10,380	51%	49%
Teaching-intensive university	3,864	3,588	52%	48%
Institute	1,407	2,826	33%	67%
Research-intensive university	1,206	866	58%	42%
Total	17,080	17,660	49%	51%

Excludes 11 students whose gender is unknown.

AGE

NoBC12 students appear to wait much longer before entering a public post-secondary institution than high school graduates, although they covered the spectrum of the age categories: 28 percent were aged 20 or under, 43 percent were between 21 and 30, and 29 percent were over age 30. In comparison, only 8 percent of B.C. Grade 12 graduates were over age 30. These differences become more interesting once the enrolment patterns of the NoBC12 students are understood.

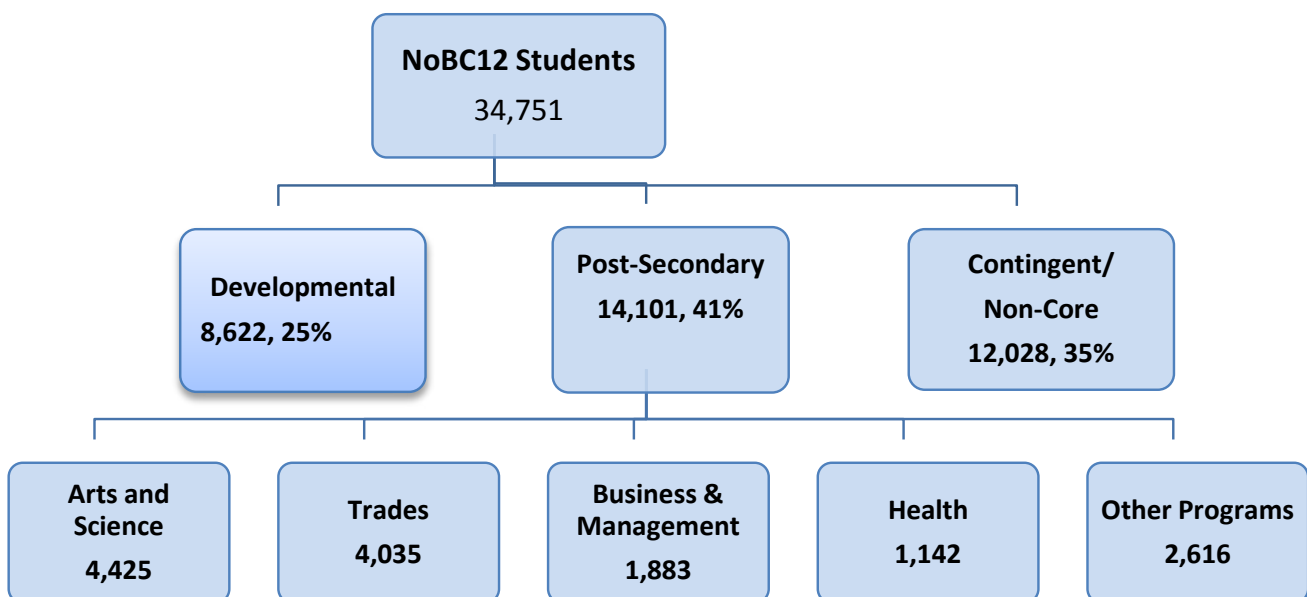
PROGRAM ENROLMENTS OF NoBC12 STUDENTS

While we are unable to identify whether the NoBC12 students enrolled in B.C. public post-secondary institutions may be Grade 12 graduates from a jurisdiction outside of B.C., looking at their program enrolments reveals much about the academic circumstances of these students.

Analysis of these data revealed that are three general enrolment patterns of NoBC12 students at B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions. These are summarized below, represented in Figure 3, and discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

- ▶ One large group is enrolled in developmental or preparatory programs at the colleges and teaching universities, presumably to upgrade deficiencies in their educational skills prior to enrolling in regular post-secondary programs.
- ▶ Another group includes those enrolled in post-secondary programs, presumably working toward completion of a post-secondary credential such as a certificate, diploma or bachelor's degree. All public post-secondary institutions in B.C. offer this type of programming.
- ▶ The final group is enrolled in non-core programs (often offered as continuing or community education), or programming not considered part of the institution's ongoing offerings. This non-core programming is contingent on the availability of full cost-recovery tuition revenue, special funding, or contracts from third parties. It is often, but not always, non-credit. In this sense, a contingent program is provided only under certain circumstances.

Figure 3: Enrolment Patterns of NoBC12 Students in B.C. Public Post-Secondary 2009/10



PATTERN 1: DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

Developmental programs are the destination of about one quarter of NoBC12 students: 8,622 students (this is 38 percent of NoBC12 students in core programs at the public post-secondary institutions). That Developmental programs such as Adult Basic Education (ABE) would be a key destination is appropriate because these programs are designed to serve students who lack high school level skills and knowledge. The enrolment of NoBC12 students in Developmental programs at six times the rate of B.C. Grade 12 graduates demonstrates a clear pathway for bringing these students back onto an educational pathway.

Most post-secondary ABE programs, in contrast to ABE programs offered by school districts, are not intended to provide high school graduation. Rather, they focus on specific pre-requisite skills and knowledge to prepare students for further post-secondary study. Thus NoBC12 students are not the only registrants in developmental programs during 2009/10, but make up only 19 percent of all students in these programs.

Since completion of prerequisite courses is the key motivation, NoBC12 students who enter Developmental programs typically do not complete an Adult Graduation Diploma or any other type of credential, but are prepared nevertheless through success in certain gatekeeper courses to enter other post-secondary programs. Future longitudinal analysis of STP may contribute insightful details about the movement of Developmental learners into post-secondary level courses.

PATTERN 2 – POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS

Whereas only high achieving high school graduates can gain direct access to a research university, other institutions serve the full cross section of the population. Many programs in these other institutions are less concerned about the completion of a high school credential than with seeking evidence that the student possesses the prerequisite skills and knowledge that foster success in specific studies.

The 14,101 NoBC12 students enrolled in post-secondary level programs represents the largest pattern revealed in this analysis. This pathway represents 41 percent of NoBC12 students in 2009/10 enrolled in a post-secondary program, i.e. in a program designed for high school graduates. Some of these students may have already completed courses at the Developmental level before entering these programs. (A future longitudinal study on this topic would establish more clearly the timing and flow of this educational pathway).

In 2009/10, there were 2,072 NoBC12 students enrolled at a B.C. research university. Some of these (739) are recorded as having entered with either 'B.C. Associate Degree' or 'B.C. College' as the basis of admission. This means that this set of students have used the open admission route at other B.C. institutions to achieve academic success, thereby gaining admission as a transfer

student to a research university. For those who had been high school dropouts, the access provided by the upgrading and transfer system removes an educational barrier; to gain admission to a research university represents a significant achievement for a high school dropout.

What types of post-secondary level programs were the NoBC12 students enrolled in? The largest enrolments in post-secondary level programs were in Arts and Science (4,425 students) and Trades (4,035 students) in about equal proportions (19 percent and 18 percent respectively). In comparison with the B.C. Grade 12 high school graduates, significantly more of those (38 percent) were in the Arts and Sciences, and fewer (8 percent) in the Trades.

Some Trades programs do not require high school graduation, although it is recommended. Generally, trades programs can be entered upon demonstrating sufficient English and math skills. The NoBC12 students made up 16 percent of the 2009/10 trades student enrolments. The largest grouping within this category is construction trades, with 4 percent of the total students.

The remaining one third of NoBC12 students in post-secondary level programs are distributed across a variety of program areas, including Business and Management (1,883 students), Health (1,142) and Human and Social Services (971).

PATTERN 3: CONTINGENT - NON-CORE: COMMUNITY EDUCATION OR CONTRACT TRAINING

Many (35 percent or 12,028 students) of the NoBC12 students were enrolled in programs that are reported in the STP under two general and broad headings: 'Personal Improvement and Leisure' (9,448 students) or 'Other Programs' (2,580 students). This is about two and half times the rate in which B.C. high school graduates enroll in these programs, i.e. in courses and programs which are not part of their ongoing core offerings and which may be offered contingent on the availability of special funding or tuition fees.

This grouping of programs includes Continuing Education courses and short programs that focus on specific skill development, such as Flag Person Training or Industrial First Aid. Contracts funded under labour market and job skills training initiatives will often be recorded in STP data in these program categories.

Enrolments of NoBC12 students in programming of this type provide evidence of efforts by government and educational institutions to provide relevant job training to individuals who may not have other training opportunities. It is not generally expected that these enrolments would result in a credential, but may support improvement of specific job skills or contribute to a local community initiative. Additional analysis from a policy perspective would be useful to determine the extent to which these learners were participants in government sponsored special programs or targeted job-training projects. Analysis of this category at the detailed level could reveal partnerships between governments and institutions to increase the employability of specific groups (such as those who are unemployed).

Other students in this category are enrolled in general interest or personal development courses that institutions offer as a service to enrich community life and strengthen the social fabric, especially in rural areas of the province. Yet others are employees enrolled in workplace education or professional upgrading courses.

A cautionary note about the data is that institutions vary in the extent and completeness with which they report enrolments in what may be considered non-credit, contingent courses. As a result, participation of former B.C. high school students of both types in this category is likely to be understated.

PATTERNS BY PROGRAM AND AGE

Figure 4 below summarizes the discussion thus far and reveals the age distribution of the NoBC12 students according to each of the patterns discussed. The largest group, almost 23,000 students, was in the core programs offered by the public post-secondary institutions, with roughly two-thirds in post-secondary level programs, and one-third in developmental level programs.

Younger NoBC12 students were less frequently in post-secondary programs, and more frequently in Contingent and Non-core programs. Of these former B.C. high school students who had entered a B.C. public post-secondary institution without evidence of B.C. high school graduation, 40 percent of the 12,028 enrolled in Contingent and Non-Core programs at the post-secondary institutions were aged 20 or younger. This indicates that involvement in programming for at risk youth or for specific short-term labour market related training is taking place.

Those in Health and Human and Social Services programs were more likely to be over aged 30 years than the younger students. As later entrants to post-secondary education, these NoBC12 students may have worked through Developmental levels in order to reach labour market related programming in these fields.



Figure 4: Age Distribution of NoBC12 Students by Program Area

Pattern and Program	Age Group			Total
	20 and younger	21-30	Over 30	
Pattern 1: Developmental	3,067	3,374	2,181	8,622
<i>Percent of Group</i>	27%	26%	21%	25%
Pattern 2: Post-Secondary Level	3,263	6,431	4,407	14,101
<i>Percent of Group</i>	29%	49%	43%	41%
Arts and Sciences	1,149	2,237	1,039	4,425
<i>Percent of Group</i>	10%	17%	10%	13%
Business and Management	304	864	715	1,883
<i>Percent of Group</i>	3%	7%	7%	5%
Education	20	103	218	341
<i>Percent of Group</i>	0%	1%	2%	1%
Engineering and Applied Sciences	145	405	294	844
<i>Percent of Group</i>	1%	3%	3%	2%
Health	79	442	621	1,142
<i>Percent of Group</i>	1%	3%	6%	3%
Human and Social Services	82	381	508	971
<i>Percent of Group</i>	1%	3%	5%	3%
Trades	1,335	1,785	915	4,035
<i>Percent of Group</i>	12%	14%	9%	12%
Visual and Performing Arts	149	214	97	460
<i>Percent of Group</i>	1%	2%	1%	1%
Pattern 3: Contingent Non-Core	4,845	3,415	3,768	12,028
<i>Percent of Group</i>	43%	28%	36%	35%
Total	11,175	13,220	10,356	34,751
<i>Percent of Group</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%

ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

NoBC12 students represent a significant portion, at least one-third, of the Aboriginal students in B.C. post-secondary education. Overall, of the 24,220 Aboriginal students enrolled in 2009/10, 41 percent (9,887) are B.C. high school graduates and 32 percent (7,682) were NoBC12 students. (Dual enrollment with secondary school, being from outside the province, or being from secondary school before the PEN was used explains the remainder). Many of these (3,832 students) had last enrolled in B.C. grade 12, but had not graduated. A majority of the NoBC12 Aboriginal students were female (56 percent).

Of the NoBC12 Aboriginal students in programs offered at public post-secondary institutions, 32 percent (2,456 students) are in Developmental programs (Pattern 1). At the post-secondary level, 26 percent (2,010 students) were enrolled (Pattern 2), with 16 percent (706) in Trades programs. Finally, 42 percent (3,216 students) of NoBC12 students were in Non-Core contingent programs (Pattern 3).

That the larger proportion of the Aboriginal NoBC12 students were enrolled in Pattern 3 indicates that many Aboriginal students are gaining access to post-secondary education through specially funded programming, possibly related to partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

This analysis identified NoBC12 students who had been identified in the B.C. elementary or secondary system as having a special need other than “gifted”. Almost half (46 percent) of the NoBC12 special needs students were enrolled in a Developmental program and proportionately more of the NoBC12 students have special needs (10%) compared to those who graduated from grade 12 (2.5%).

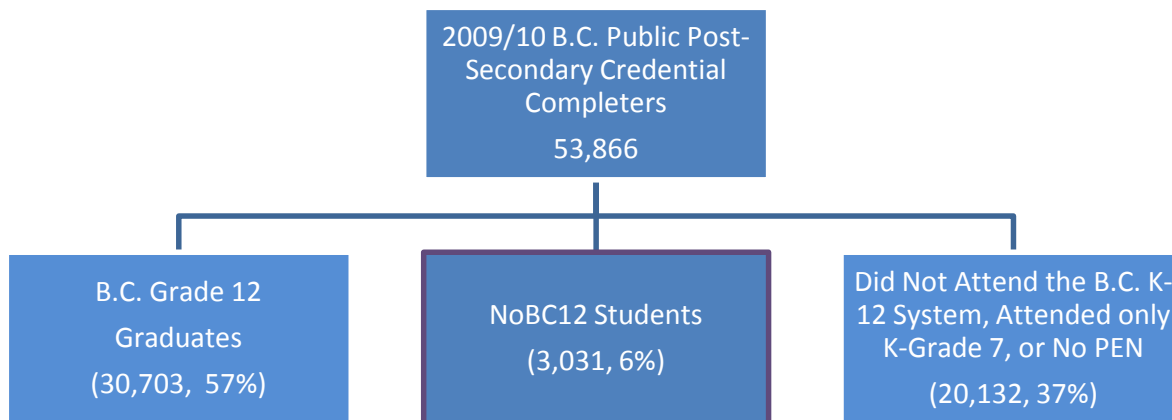


Part 2

CREDENTIALS EARNED

The 25 B.C. public post-secondary institutions during the 2009/10 year awarded almost 54,000 credentials, not counting short certificates and credentials awarded by other organizations (e.g. apprenticeship credentials, professional accountant designations). Figure 5 shows a breakdown of these credentials by B.C. previous education. NoBC12 students earned 3,031 post-secondary credentials in 2009/10. Of the 34,000 post-secondary credential recipients who had formerly been part of the B.C. high school system, roughly one credential is awarded to a B.C. NoBC12 student for every ten awarded to a B.C. Grade 12 graduate. (More than a third of the credentials were earned by students outside the scope of this paper: this group includes students from other provinces and countries, as well as students formerly part of the B.C. education system but prior to Grade 8 or before students were issued a PEN).

Figure 5: Post-Secondary Credential Completers in B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions in 2009/10



CREDENTIALS BY TYPE

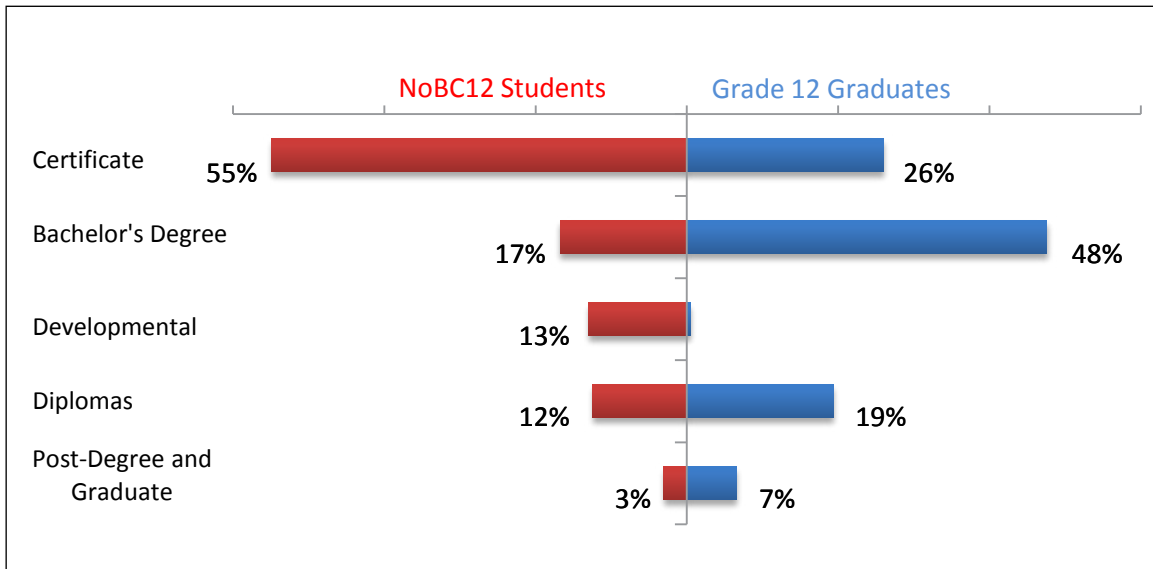
NoBC12 students earned 6 percent of the 2009/10 credentials awarded in 2009/10 year – but they differed greatly from B.C. Grade 12 high school graduates in the types of credentials earned.

Figure 6 shows the differences in the level of credentials awarded to NoBC12 students compared to Grade 12 graduates. (Credential types reflect the length of the program: one-year certificates, two-year diplomas or four-year bachelor's degrees). NoBC12 students more frequently completed a certificate while B.C. Grade 12 graduates more often completed a Bachelor's degree.

While 17 percent of the NoBC12 students' credentials were bachelor's degrees, and another 12 percent were two-year credentials, over half (55 percent) received a one-year certificate. High school graduates, in contrast, much more frequently earned bachelor's degrees (48 percent) and less often received certificates (26 percent).

² As Apprenticeship credentials are awarded by the Industry Training Authority, those completions are not reported in these data.

Figure 6: Distribution of Post-Secondary Credentials Completed in B.C. Public Post-Secondary Institutions in 2009/10, by Credential Type – NoBC12 Students vs. K-12 Graduates



Diplomas include Associate Degrees, Advanced Diplomas

Post-Degree and Graduate includes Doctorates, Masters, First Professional Degree, Post-Degree and Graduate Certificates and Diplomas

CREDENTIALS BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

The largest share of 2009/10 credentials awarded to NoBC12 students (49 percent or 1,478 credentials) was by community colleges; 25 percent (723 credentials) by teaching-intensive universities; 15 percent (453 credentials) by the research universities and 12 percent (377 credentials) by the institutes. By comparison, 23 percent of post-secondary credentials awarded to B.C. grade 12 graduates were by the colleges; 21 percent by the teaching universities; 12 percent by the institutes, and 44 percent by research-intensive universities. These differences demonstrate the significant role of the B.C. colleges in providing opportunities for training to NoBC12 post-secondary students.

CREDENTIALS BY PROGRAM

Not only did NoBC12 students tend to earn credentials requiring shorter study periods, but they also earned them in different fields of study (these two factors are interrelated). With particular reference to Pattern 1 Developmental, while almost 14 percent of the credentials earned by NoBC12 students were Developmental, less than one percent of the credentials earned by Grade 12 graduates were Developmental.

The largest number of credentials awarded to NoBC12 students was in the Trades fields (828 credentials³). Trades made up 27 percent of the credentials earned by NoBC12 students and 11 percent of the credentials earned by Grade 12 graduates. Credentials in Health, the next largest program category, were proportionally more similar (16 percent of the credentials awarded to contingent students and 13 percent of those awarded to Grade 12 graduates). The number of credentials awarded to NoBC12 students was roughly equal across Arts and Science programs (386 credentials) and Business and Management (361 credentials).

CREDENTIALS BY AGE AND GENDER

The NoBC12 students earning post-secondary level credentials (2,618 or 86 percent of their credentials) tended to be older than the B.C. Grade 12 graduates earning credentials. For both groups about one in five of those earning credentials were aged 20 or under. However, 72 percent of the Grade 12 graduates earning credentials were aged 21 to 30 years, while only 44 percent of the NoBC12 students were in this age category. In terms of older students, 26 percent of the NoBC12 students earning credentials were aged 31 to 40 years, while only 6 percent of the Grade 12 graduates were in this group.

The gender ratio of those who completed credentials in 2009/10 is similar, regardless of whether the award recipients were NoBC12 students or Grade 12 graduates. Female graduates outnumbered males approximately 57 percent to 43 percent for both groups.

COMMENTARY ABOUT CREDENTIAL ACHIEVEMENT

Not only are NoBC12 students gaining access to post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, but they are also meeting with some success in their studies as evidenced by the conferring of credentials. Many of those credentials are from programs that are relatively short – a year in duration – as might be expected; there is little reason to anticipate that a student who did not complete a secondary education would subsequently be motivated to spend long periods in further formal education. Nevertheless, some do persist and, of those who earned credentials, one third had enrolled in programs that required two or more years of study.



³ This does not count completed apprenticeships awarded by the Industry Training Authority as these are not part of STP.

CONCLUSION

This paper is the first time that British Columbia has had an opportunity in more than a partial or anecdotal manner to examine the educational pathways of people who attended its secondary schools and public post-secondary institutions, but for whom STP has no record of high school graduation. It is encouraging that some of those who leave high school without graduating are able to access further education and to succeed in achieving credentials across a full range of subjects and in programs of varying duration.

The data do not reveal whether the “second chance” taken by NoBC12 students is working better or worse than might be desired or anticipated. They do, however, demonstrate that it at least works. The open access philosophy of many specific post-secondary institutions in B.C. has provided a viable option for motivated NoBC12 students who otherwise may not be able to access higher education, and this is helping to meet provincial labour market and literacy goals.

This study demonstrates that a significant number of NoBC12 students are entering post-secondary institutions (the door is indeed open), study in a variety of programs (the door does not lead to a blind alley), and complete credentials (it is not a revolving door). While Developmental and Trades programs are destinations that do not always require high school graduation for admission, they are by no means the only destinations of the NoBC12 students.

In short, the data examined in this paper contributes to a sense that the B.C. post-secondary system does function as envisioned over a generation ago with respect to “second chance” pathways.

ABOUT THE STP

The Student Transitions Project is British Columbia’s collaborative research project that tracks student movement from the K-12 to post-secondary systems. This partnership, involving B.C.’s public post-secondary institutions and education ministries, reports on student transitions to post-secondary education, mobility among institutions and post-secondary completion and retention rates. STP is managed by a steering committee with representatives from the institutions, the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education and the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT).

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