

Research Results

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Moving From Case-By-Case Transfer to Formal Articulation: Assessing the Business Case

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Over the last couple of years, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) has undertaken a review of the BC Transfer System. Preliminary findings indicate that the current structure of the BC Transfer Guide, which designates institutions as either *sending* institutions or *receiving* institutions based upon their historic primary roles, may no longer fit a transfer environment in which students increasingly move in multiple directions and in which institutions traditionally perceived as primarily sending institutions aim to attract transfer students to their new degree programs.

A recent BCCAT policy has enabled any sending institution to add the receiving institution designation to its listing in the BC Transfer Guide. Since currently twenty-five sending institutions can submit courses for transfer credit, each new addition of a receiving institution creates the potential of thousands of additional formal articulation agreements.

It is vital, therefore, that each new institution seeking designation as a receiving institution examines the business case for its request. Assessing the business case ensures that course articulations will not proliferate unless there is evidence that student traffic warrants the considerable expenditure of resources to establish and maintain them. Examining which courses are carried by students as they move from one institution to another and to which institution(s) courses are flowing is one approach that provides potential new receiving institutions with valuable information to assess whether or where to commit resources to expand formal articulation.

A recent study, commissioned by BCCAT, profiled the flow of students among BC colleges, university colleges¹, and institutes (referred to here as Central Data Warehouse - CDW institutions) based on courses they took in calendar years 2004 to 2006 and subsequently carried to another institution. Universities were not included in the study, since universities are already receiving institutions in the BC Transfer Guide.

For information on the methodology employed and a full analysis of the findings, readers are referred to the full report, *Volume of Courses Students Carry Among Central Data Warehouse (CDW) Institutions: Implications for Recalibration of the BC Transfer System*, available at bccat.ca/pubs/coursescarried.pdf.

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¹At the time of this study, the university colleges and Capilano College had not yet been reclassified as Special Purpose Teaching Universities.

Definitions

- » The term **courses carried** identifies courses taken at one institution by a student who subsequently moves to another institution. Such courses may or may not be transferred (i.e., awarded credit by the institution to which the student moved): the data do not tell us whether transfer credit was expected or requested.
- » A **unique course** is a specific course offered by one institution: 15 individual students who took English 100 at College X generated a minimum of 15 course registrations in a unique course.
- » The **number of registrants** may equal more than 15 as a student may have been enrolled in more than one program at the receiving institution, thereby generating more than one record per student for that course.

Key Findings

This study provides evidence in support of expanding the number of receiving institutions in the BC Transfer Guide. Over the period 2004 to 2006:

- A total of **22,076** unique courses was carried by **32,446** individual students moving between institutions.
- The **vast majority** of courses had **very few registrants** carrying the course.
- Looking at those courses where registrants were **15 or greater**, the number of unique courses carried by students fell to **just under 2,000**.
- **Most students** who moved between institutions were in **liberal arts** and **science** programs or enrolled in a program with no specified credential (**general studies** or **university transfer**).
- Most of the courses students carried between institutions were **business-related** or **arts** and **science** courses.
- The **largest course flows** were between **Lower Mainland** institutions.

Credentials and Courses

Registration practices vary between institutions: some institutions register all students in specific programs leading to a credential while others do not. A quick review of the data indicates that, when looking at all institutions, there was no clear pattern of movement of students from one credential type to another:

- **31%** of associate degree registrants went into a diploma program compared to **23%** who went into a bachelor's degree program;
- **22%** of bachelor's degree students went into another bachelor's program but **34%** went into a program with no credential; and
- **20%** of certificate students went into a diploma program while **34%** remained in a certificate program and **21%** moved into a program with no credential.

However, an examination of the courses carried between institutions reveals that the courses carried most frequently were business-related, or in general arts and science.

Table 1 (page 3) shows the top 25 courses taken at a sending institution in 2004-2006. Apart from a few outliers (e.g., fire protection, marine transportation, and some health-related courses) the courses fit the general profile of those taken by students in arts, science or business/commerce programs.

Traffic Flows

The number of students in the data set (unduplicated head-count) is 32,446. These students carried with them a total of 22,076 unique courses, 70% of which were at the first or second year level. The vast majority of courses was carried by very few registrants.

The finding that the vast majority of courses is carried by very few registrants is significant: if few students are arriving with a specific course, best practice may be to assess that course on a case-by-case basis when students request transfer credit, rather than to establish articulation agreements.

Table 1: Top 25 Course Discipline Codes for Courses Taken at a Sending Institution (2004-2006)

Discipline Code Description	SENDING DISCIPLINE CODE	Total (Non-Unique) Headcount
Business Administration, Management and Operations	52.02	3162
Psychology, General	42.01	2840
Accounting and Related Services	52.03	2830
English Language and Literature, General	23.01	2798
Mathematics and Statistics	27.01	2745
Fire Protection	43.02	2311
Basic Skills	32.01	2265
English Composition	23.04	1991
Marketing	52.14	1847
Economics	45.06	1826
Sociology	45.11	1811
Philosophy	38.01	1507
Biology, General	26.01	1501
Technical and Business Writing	23.11	1483
Marine Transportation	49.03	1445
Security and Protective Services, Other	43.99	1421
Nursing	51.16	1318
Chemistry	40.05	1251
Allied Health Diagnostic, Intervention, and Treatment Professions	51.09	1216
Geography and Cartography	45.07	1211
History	54.01	1171
Finance and Financial Management Services	52.08	1166
Anthropology	45.02	1013
Social Sciences	45	1012
Criminal Justice and Corrections	43.01	950

To gain insight into courses where the volume of traffic might justify formal articulation, the data set was limited to include courses where the registrant count over the three-year period was greater than or equal to 15 (see [Table 2](#) on page 4). This had the result of reducing the course count to 1,993, or 9% of the total unique courses carried. Of those courses, the majority (78%) are at the first and second year level, and the greatest traffic flow is among Lower Mainland institutions. [Note that two institutions in this table constitute special cases: the Justice Institute offers highly specialised courses widely available across the province but normally not intended to transfer; and Okanagan College was the destination for many students upon the closure of Okanagan University College.]

BCIT is both the origin and destination for the greatest number of courses carried. Significant course traffic also flows among Langara, Douglas, Kwantlen and Vancouver Community College. Thompson Rivers University – Open Learning is the largest non-Lower Mainland destination for many courses carried. The impact of geographic proximity can also be discerned. For example, the largest proportion of courses carried to the University College of the Fraser Valley originated at Douglas, while of the courses carried to Malaspina most originated at North Island College. Partnerships or block transfer arrangements may also account for clusters of courses carried between certain institutions.

Top Sending & Receiving Institutions by Percent of Courses Sent or Received

Sending Institutions	Receiving Institutions
BC Institute of Technology - 15.5%	BC Institute of Technology - 25.2%
Kwantlen University College - 10.7% (already a receiving institution)	Justice Institute - 13.3% (note its specialized courses)
Douglas College - 10.6%	Langara College - 7.2%
Langara College - 8.4%	Douglas College - 6.2%
Vancouver Community College - 7.2%	Vancouver Community College - 5.6%

Note: This analysis excludes Okanagan University College and Okanagan College.

Table 2: Course Counts where Registrants >=15 by Sending and Receiving Institutions
Sending Years 2004 - 2006

Receiving Institution	Sending Institution																			Grand Total	
	BCIT	CAM	CAP	CNC	COTR	DOUG	ECI	JIBC	KWAN	LANG	MAL	NIC	NLC	NVIT	OUC	SEL	TRU	TRU-OL	UCFV		VCC
BCIT			38		15	80	14	60	77	60	32	2	1		7	56	5	3	9	44	503
CAM	14					1		1			5	4					2				27
CAP	1							4		8											16
CNC						1		7					4								12
COTR								11													11
DOUG	31	9	2	5					41	6						1		1	5	23	124
ECI	36									14											50
JIBC	123	3	5	2	21	12			10	1	2	6	7		20	34			12	8	266
KWAN	24					37		1		27								2	1	2	94
LANG	22		23			12			50									2	6	28	143
MAL	4	3						1				18			6						32
NIC	2	1						10			5										18
NLC				1				11				1								21	66
NVIT																		1			1
OKAN															280						280
SEL	4				2	1		28			1	1								15	52
TRU								3						3	1	1		1			9
TRU-OL	29	13	4	6		4			17	14	3	1		1	1	15			6		114
UCFV						45		2	8	5								1		2	63
VCC	18		2			15		2	11	32			15		16	1					112
Grand Total	308	29	74	14	38	211	14	141	214	167	48	33	27	3	320	101	56	13	39	143	1993

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that there may be a good argument for moving selected courses at some institutions from a case-by-case basis of transfer to an articulation basis for transfer formally recorded in the BC Transfer Guide, and thus to expand the number of receiving institutions. Most institutions, however, may wish to continue to assess requests for transfer credit on a case-by-case basis until such time as the volume of course flow makes becoming a receiving institution a cost-effective approach.

The pivot tables that underlie this study are available for analysis by each institution (please contact BCCAT for details). The tables can be studied by any potential new receiving institution to extract information about which courses students bring most often to the institution and the student's originating institution(s) to assist in the thoughtful development of a plan to add the receiving institution designation.

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