

# Reverse Transfer

## The Feasibility of Reverse Transfer in the BC Transfer System

*by Dr. Fiona A. E. McQuarrie, Special Projects Officer, BCCAT*

*February 2022*



**BCCAT**

# Reverse Transfer

## The Feasibility of Reverse Transfer in the BC Transfer System

*by Dr. Fiona A. E. McQuarrie*

© BCCAT February 2022

*This report is available online at*  
<https://www.bccat.ca/intro/ReverseTransfer2022>



# BCCAT

BC COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER  
Web/Email: [bccat.ca](http://bccat.ca) | [bctransferguide.ca](http://bctransferguide.ca) | [info@bccat.ca](mailto:info@bccat.ca)  
Twitter: [@bccat\\_org](https://twitter.com/bccat_org) | [@bctransferguide](https://twitter.com/bctransferguide)

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Literature Review.....	6
Reverse Transfer and Students .....	7
Reverse Transfer and Institutions.....	9
Features of Reverse Transfer Agreements in the US.....	10
Associate Degrees in the BC Post-Secondary System.....	11
The Feasibility of Reverse Transfer in BC .....	14
Discussion and Recommendations.....	18
System-Wide Recommendations.....	19
Institutional Recommendations.....	21
References .....	23
Appendix 1: British Columbia Post-Secondary Institutions Offering Associate Degrees .....	25
Appendix 2: Sample of US Reverse Transfer Agreements .....	28

## List of Tables

Table 1: BC Associate Degree Program Structure.....	12
Table 2: BC Public Post-Secondary Graduates by Undergraduate Credential Awarded, 2015/16 to 2019/20 .....	13
Table 3: Comparison of US and BC Post-Secondary System Characteristics Relevant to Reverse Transfer .....	14
Table 4: BC Associate Degree Enrollments at Public Post-Secondary Institutions, and Credits Acquired, 2014/15 to 2019/20 .....	15
Table 5: BC Public Post-Secondary Students Potentially Eligible for Reverse Transfer Leading to an Associate Degree, 2015/16 to 2019/2020 .....	16
Table 6: Undergraduate Degree Completion Rates for BC Associate Degree Graduates from Public Post-Secondary Institutions .....	18

# Acknowledgements

Thanks to Joanne Heslop (Manager, Student Transitions Project), for providing data for this project and for feedback on drafts of the report. Thanks also to Dr. Anna Tikina (BCCAT Research Officer) for providing sources for the literature review and for reviewing drafts of the report, and to Dr. Robert Fleming (Executive Director, BCCAT) and Mike Winsemann (Manager, Transfer and Technology, BCCAT) for their input and suggestions.

# Introduction

Reverse transfer has been part of the United States post-secondary landscape for more than a decade, in the form of statewide, system-wide, regional, and institutional transfer agreements. Reverse transfer agreements, as structured in the US, allow a college student in an associate degree program who transfers to a university before completing the associate degree to transfer credit “back” to the college, and receive the college’s associate degree while staying enrolled at the university.

Reverse transfer has been promoted in the US as being beneficial to students by expanding their educational and career options, and, through formal recognition of their academic accomplishments, motivating them to continue their studies. Reverse transfer can also benefit post-secondary institutions by improving credential completion rates. This can be particularly important for institutions whose access to funding or other resources may depend on this type of performance measure.

The British Columbia post-secondary system has included two associate degree programs since the mid-1990s. The structure and curriculum of the Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) programs are provincially mandated, meaning that the general and specific requirements of these programs are the same at every institution. At many BC post-secondary institutions, students in associate degree programs can receive a subject-specific AA or AS by choosing certain electives within the program structure. Associate degree programs in BC are offered primarily at public and private colleges, and at five universities that were formerly colleges or university colleges.<sup>1</sup>

If a BC associate degree graduate transfers to a university offering baccalaureate degrees, the graduate receives 60 lower-level transfer credits, i.e. credit equivalent to completion of the first two years of a four-year bachelor’s degree program. Enrollment and completion rates for BC’s associate degree programs have been relatively consistent, but they have not significantly increased over time. Various sources have suggested that this may be due to the provincially prescribed curriculum possibly not having enough flexibility to accommodate individual students’ academic interests; to a general lack of understanding of and lack of name recognition for the associate degree, both inside and outside the post-secondary system; and to other BC post-secondary credentials being perceived as having more employment and educational value.

---

<sup>1</sup> Capilano University, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Thompson Rivers University, University of the Fraser Valley, and Vancouver Island University.



*Reverse transfer agreements, as structured in the US, allow a college student in an associate degree program who transfers to a university before completing the associate degree to transfer credit "back" to the college, and receive the college's associate degree while staying enrolled at the university.*

This report, commissioned by the Transfer and Articulation Committee (TAC) of the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT), explores the potential for reverse transfer in the BC Transfer System. The report focuses primarily on the potential for reverse transfer in BC involving associate degrees. However, reverse transfer agreements can also be established for completion of credentials such as diplomas and certificates. The principles and processes of reverse transfer involving associate degrees are similar to those that would be necessary for reverse transfer agreements involving other post-secondary credentials.

The report begins with a review of published literature on reverse transfer agreements, followed by an overview of the characteristics of reverse transfer agreements in the US. Next, the report reviews the features of BC's associate degrees, and then presents data that may indicate student interest in and demand for reverse transfer in BC. It concludes with system-wide and institutional recommendations around the potential for reverse transfer in BC.

## Literature Review

Most of the published research on reverse transfer focuses on the development and implementation of reverse transfer agreements in the US, and on assessing the outcomes of these agreements. Some of this research (e.g. Liu, 2016; Taylor, 2017) points out that the term “reverse transfer” is also used in the US post-secondary environment to describe students at four-year degree-granting institutions (universities) who transfer “back” to colleges or other institutions with two-year programs. Thus, the process of transferring credits between institutions, rather than transferring students, could be more accurately described as “reverse credit transfer”. This distinction is accurate, especially as one of the defining features of reverse transfer agreements is that the student stays enrolled at the university while receiving a credential from the college. However, since this research primarily use the term “reverse transfer” to describe this specific type of credit transfer, that term will be used in this discussion.

Many current US reverse transfer agreements were created as part of larger initiatives aimed at improving degree completion rates. These multi-institution initiatives included Project Win-Win and Degrees When Due, both launched in 2009 (Siddiqui & Mikolowski, 2020; Degrees When Due, 2021), and Credit When It's Due, launched in 2012 (Ohio Department of Higher Education, 2021). Degrees When Due is still in operation. These initiatives target students with accumulated credits, often from multiple institutions, but who have never completed a credential. These initiatives have also been called “degree reclamation” initiatives (Wheatle, Taylor, Bragg, & Ajinkya, 2017). More than three million adults in the US have accumulated at least two years' worth of post-secondary credit but are no longer enrolled in a university or college, while 36 million US adults have some post-secondary training and education but no credential (National Student Clearinghouse Research Centre, 2019).

In addition to reverse transfer agreements, degree completion initiatives include components such as creating or updating course-to-course transfers or transfer pathways to facilitate credential completion; establishing academic degree programs specifically for students close to completing a credential; and funding staff positions for advisors or administrators to identify, contact, and encourage former students to re-enrol, and then to support these students on their path to credential completion. It is estimated that 20,000 associate degrees have been awarded in the US as a result of these initiatives (Degrees When Due, 2021), although there is apparently no breakdown of how many of these degrees were awarded through reverse transfer and how many resulted from other degree completion strategies.

The published research on reverse transfer can be categorized into two broad groups: research on reverse transfer from the perspective of students, and research on reverse transfer from the perspective of institutions.

## Reverse Transfer and Students

The most successful reverse transfer agreements - i.e. those that maximize the number of associate degrees awarded - appear to be those involving institutions in the same geographic region, and those that target students in demographic groups with historically low credential completion rates, such as students of colour and students from low-income families (Pocai & Davis, 2021).

Taylor and Giana (2019) conducted one of the few published studies that examined whether receiving an associate degree through reverse transfer affected the likelihood that a student would subsequently complete a bachelor's degree. Their study used data from Hawaii and Minnesota, two US states that were "early adopters" of reverse transfer, and included information on 6,705 students. Two hundred and forty-three of these students had transferred from a two-year institution to a four-year institution in 2013 and received an associate degree by 2015.

The research results indicated that students attaining associate degrees through reverse transfer were more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than students who transferred after completing an associate degree, students who transferred without an associate degree but did not meet the residency requirement for reverse transfer, or students without an associate degree who transferred to the four-year institution from an institution not participating in a reverse transfer agreement. Students receiving an associate degree through reverse transfer also had a higher retention rate ("retention" defined as having completed a bachelor's degree or still enrolled by the end of 2015) than students who transferred after completing the associate degree.

The authors of this study suggest that students' interest in using reverse transfer may be affected by how recently they transferred. "If students make retention/persistence decisions immediately after transfer, then students who are further away from transfer may be less influenced by reverse credit transfer compared to recent transfers" (p. 450). They also note that their data did not distinguish between different types of associate degrees, so completion and/or retention rates could also be affected by the type of associate degree students had obtained or were seeking.

Several studies examine the experiences of students who transfer from universities to colleges. While these studies do not specifically address reverse credit transfer, they provide some perspective on why students might want to attain a college-level credential while enrolled at a four-year institution. A study of US students that transferred from four-year to two-year institutions (Kalogrides & Grodsky, 2011) indicated that students might make this kind of transfer if they encountered academic difficulties at the four-year institution. A study of students in Ontario who transferred from universities to colleges identified a similar reason for this transfer direction. Half of the 20 participants in the Ontario study also cited mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, that made them look for an academic environment they perceived as more flexible and more welcoming (Maier & Robson, 2020).

*The most successful reverse transfer agreements... appear to be those involving institutions in the same geographic region, and those that target students in demographic groups with historically low credential completion rates, such as students of colour and students from low-income families (Pocai & Davis, 2021).*

Kalogridis and Grodsky also noted that students at four-year institutions that transfer to two-year institutions usually have more academic credits than students at four-year institutions who drop out. This suggests that these students are committed to post-secondary education but may be searching for an institutional culture or structure that they feel is a better fit for them. Thus, the community college plays an important role as a “second chance” or a “safety net” for these students (Kalogridis & Grodsky, 2011, p. 871). These students also have demographic characteristics that distinguish them from other students at four-year institutions, such as their parents being less likely to have completed high school, and their high school having less academically intense curricula.

Salzman and Van Noy (2014) also found demographic differences in their study of reverse transfer by students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) disciplines. Their results indicated that Black students were more likely to undertake reverse transfer than students in other non-White racial/ethnic groups. Black students were also more likely to undertake reverse transfer rather than taking courses concurrently at two institutions; to be concurrently enrolled at a four-year and a two-year institution; or to enrol in a two-year program after completing a four-year program. Engineering students and computing/information science students were more likely to undertake reverse transfer than students in other STEM-related programs.

A more recent study (Lee, 2021) also found that students who transferred from a four-year to a two-year institution usually did so because of academic challenges. However, within six years of their first post-secondary enrollment, these students were more likely than non-transferring students to have earned a certificate or associate degree, and less likely to have earned a bachelor’s degree. Six years after their first post-secondary enrollment, these students were also more likely than non-transferring students to still be enrolled in a certificate or associate degree program.

All of these studies looked at students that transferred from four-year to two-year institutions, rather than students who stayed at a four-year institution while transferring credit to a two-year institution. Additionally, three of the studies were conducted prior to reverse transfer agreements becoming more common in the US. Nevertheless, the results affirm the importance of alternative degree pathways for students enrolled at four-year institutions. Individual student demographics are also important in considering which students, or groups of students, might benefit the most from reverse transfer, or might be interested in using it.

Cortes-Lopes and Taylor (2020) investigated students’ perceptions of reverse transfer by conducting focus group interviews at four US public universities that participated in reverse transfer agreements. Eighteen students participated in the focus groups, 15 of whom were eligible for reverse transfer. The focus group interview data indicated that students perceived associate degrees through reverse transfer as “moving forward” (p. 68) and giving them the confidence and motivation to continue working toward an undergraduate degree. Students also saw associate degrees as a “backup” that would ensure they had a degree-level credential even if they did not complete a four-year degree, and mentioned that employers perceived associate degrees as valuable.

However, some students in the focus groups saw associate degrees as unimportant – particularly general associate’s degrees, which were perceived as not having the job-relevant content of associate degrees in specific subjects. Associate degrees were also considered by some students to be less valuable than credentials such as bachelor’s degrees and graduate degrees; one focus group participant described the associate degree as the “base level degree you can receive at a high-level institution” (p. 71). Some also suggested that achieving an associate degree through reverse transfer might inspire students to drop out of four-year degree programs, because they now had a post-secondary credential - although, interestingly, the students framed this comment in reference to other students and not to their own plans or motivations.

## Reverse Transfer and Institutions

In most discussions of US reverse transfer agreements, the benefits to participating institutions are characterized primarily as benefits to two-year institutions. The benefit most frequently mentioned for two-year institutions is a higher credential completion rate, which is particularly important for institutions whose funding or student loan eligibility status may depend on performance measures such as credential completion. Reverse transfer can also be promoted by two-year institutions as a way for students to complete their two-year credential, even if circumstances such as job changes or relocation forces students to continue their studies at a different institution. This may make the two-year credential program more attractive to students, especially to students in disadvantaged or underserved demographic groups.

Reverse transfer can also benefit four-year institutions by improving their retention and undergraduate degree completion rates (Taylor, 2017). Since successful reverse transfer requires the participation of both two-year and four-year institutions, reverse transfer rates can be used as a performance measure for both types of institutions. But the success of degree reclamation initiatives like reverse transfer may depend on the capacity of individual institutions to support these initiatives, including facilitating the work of the cross-departmental teams that are necessary for reverse transfer agreements to be successful (Taylor, Rubin, Kauppila, & Davis, 2021).

Taylor and Bragg (2015), using data on reverse transfer agreements from 12 US states, identify several methods that institutions can use to optimize the use and effectiveness of reverse transfer agreements.

- Pro-actively identifying students who might be eligible for reverse transfer, rather than relying on students to recognize on their own if or when they are eligible for reverse transfer. In most reverse transfer agreements, the four-year institution identifies eligible students by comparing the students' transcripts from both the two-year and four-year institutions. Ideally, this identification process occurs more than once a year, to catch students who are eligible for reverse transfer but who may not persist for another year or semester of study. Institutions granting associate degrees can also increase students' credential completion through reverse transfer by monitoring where students with unfinished associate degrees are transferring. The institutions that these students are transferring to are the institutions with the most potential for productive reverse transfer partnerships.
- Determining the most effective method of obtaining student consent to exchange transcripts between the institutions where the student was and is enrolled. Asking students to "opt out" of transcript exchange – i.e. permission is considered to be granted unless the student explicitly denies permission – may result in larger numbers of consents and thus potentially more reverse transfers. Asking students to "opt in" – to explicitly grant permission for transcript exchange – usually results in lower numbers of consents. However, it may raise student awareness of and interest in reverse transfer, as well as identifying the students most likely to complete the reverse transfer process. In combination with strategies to identify and encourage potential reverse transfer applicants, "opting in" may result in more credentials granted through reverse transfer.
- Facilitating timely and efficient methods of transcript exchange: for example, arranging for electronic transcript exchange rather than sending transcripts by mail or fax.
- Facilitating timely and efficient degree audits. The institution granting associate degrees must review the student's transcripts from both institutions to determine whether the student has completed the associate degree requirements. The more quickly this can be done, the more attractive reverse transfer may be to students. The institution(s) where students are currently enrolled can also conduct informal degree audits, using the other institution's associate degree requirements, it can review reverse transfer applications to determine if students

applying for reverse transfer have completed those requirements. This may speed up the degree audit process at the other institution, since it will only receive reverse transfer applications that have been screened by the student's current institution.

- Providing advising and support for “near-completers”. Students are more likely to pursue reverse transfer if they know the specific courses and/or amount of credit they need to complete the associate degree. Advisors and registrarial staff can help students identify these courses or credits, and help students develop strategies for how to acquire them.

Finally, in October 2021, the state of California passed legislation permitting two-year public community colleges to offer baccalaureate programs (Weissman, 2021). California does not have a statewide reverse transfer agreement, although some four-year institutions in California have reverse transfer agreements with two-year institutions in their region. A maximum of 30 college baccalaureate programs will be approved each year; the programs cannot duplicate undergraduate degree programs that are already offered in the state's public university systems; and the number of baccalaureate programs in any community college district must be less than a quarter of the number of associate degree programs offered in the same district. In the context of understanding reverse transfer, it is worth noting that one reason for this change is that “many fields that used to welcome graduates with associate degrees have shifted to requiring entry-level employees to have bachelor's degrees” (Weissman, 2021, para 16). This suggests that reverse transfer may become less frequently used if more employers require job applicants to have bachelor's degrees rather than associate degrees.

## Features of Reverse Transfer Agreements in the US

More than 13 US states have statewide reverse transfer agreements (Anderson, 2015). There are also reverse transfer agreements within regional and state post-secondary systems, as well as reverse transfer agreements between individual colleges and universities. Thus, it is impossible to summarize the characteristics of all these agreements because of the different types and numbers of participants. Appendix II presents descriptions of a random sample of these agreements. Their main features are:

- The agreement is between a university, or universities, and multiple colleges. Even agreements that involve only one university usually involve more than one college.
- To be eligible for reverse transfer, students usually need to have a minimum number of credits from the college granting the associate degree. Some agreements also require students to have a minimum number of credits from the institution where they are currently enrolled.
- The student must give permission for their transcripts to be shared with both participating institutions. In some agreements, the student gives permission as part of the process of credit transfer and admission to the university.
- Some agreements set a minimum GPA for student eligibility for reverse transfer, or set other requirements around eligibility (e.g. the student cannot already have an associate degree or a bachelor's degree).

- Some agreements require the student to start the reverse transfer process by notifying one or both participating institutions. In other agreements, institutions start the process by identifying potential reverse transfer students and notifying the students that they are eligible.
- Some agreements allow the institution to grant a different type of associate degree (e.g. a general degree rather than a subject-specific degree) if the student has not completed the requirements for the associate degree program in which they were formerly enrolled.
- Some or all of the student fees associated with transfer and degree-granting are waived. These fees include, for example, transcript production fees, transcript evaluation fees, and graduation fees.

## Associate Degrees in the BC Post-Secondary System

As stated in the Introduction, this discussion of the potential for reverse transfer in BC will focus on associate degrees in relation to reverse transfer. While this report is not intended to explore BC's associate degree programs in depth, an overview of these programs is useful in contextualizing the discussion.

BC is the only province in Canada to offer associate degrees. Other provinces have two-year programs with similar structures and subject coverage, such as the advanced diploma offered by colleges in Ontario, but BC is the only province to designate two-year programs as degrees. There are two associate degrees authorized in BC: the Associate of Arts (AA) and the Associate of Science (AS). Both require 60 credit hours and have a provincially mandated curriculum. Associate degree graduates from any BC post-secondary institution are guaranteed 60 credits of transfer credit at Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia-Vancouver, the University of British Columbia-Okanagan, the University of Victoria, or the University of Northern British Columbia. If a course at the institution granting the associate degree is not transferable to at least one of these universities, then the course cannot be used for credit toward completion of the associate degree, even if the student does not enrol at any of those universities.

Associate degrees were launched in BC in the mid-1990s (Dennison, 2000). The provincial Degree Authorization Act defines "degree" as "recognition or implied recognition of academic achievement that...is specified in writing to be an associate, baccalaureate, masters, doctoral or similar degree" (Degree Authorization Act, 2002, s. 1(a)). The Act also states that the provincial minister responsible for post-secondary education must give consent for "a person...to grant or confer a degree [or to] provide a program leading to a degree" (Degree Authorization Act, 2002, s. 3 (1) (a) & (b)). BC's two associate degrees were structured as Arts and Science degrees to recognize that approximately half of academic courses offered at BC post-secondary institutions other than research universities were in one of those subject classifications (Cowin, 2009).

*While the BC post-secondary system includes several types of two-year credential programs, associate degrees are the only two-year programs classified as degree programs.*

While the BC post-secondary system includes several types of two-year credential programs, associate degrees are the only two-year programs classified as degree programs; therefore, associate degree programs must be approved by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training. The Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB), an independent advisory board reporting to the Minister, is responsible for “quality assessment of degree-level education” in BC (Degree Quality Assessment Board, 2021). It makes recommendations to the Minister on applications from institutions wishing to offer, or to continue to offer, degree programs, including associate degrees. DQAB’s mandate includes degree-level programs at BC public and private post-secondary institutions, and out-of-province post-secondary institutions operating within BC.

BC post-secondary institutions wishing to offer an associate degree must submit an application to DQAB, which reviews the application and makes a recommendation on it to the Minister. The two most recently approved associate degree programs in BC were at private institutions; these were the Associate of Arts programs at University Canada West (2018) and at LaSalle College (2020). Since those approvals were granted, another application for an associate degree program, from a private institution, was submitted to DQAB but was subsequently withdrawn.

Currently, 23 BC post-secondary institutions - six private and 17 public - offer associate degrees. Six institutions offer an AA program, while the other 17 offer both AA and AS programs. Sixteen institutions offer subject-specific areas of study within these programs; while these areas of study have different titles at different institutions (e.g. “concentration”, “focus”, “specialization”, “option”), for the sake of simplicity this report will use the term “specialization” to refer to any subject-specific option within an associate degree program. Eleven institutions offer specializations within both AA and AS programs; four institutions offer specializations only within the AA program, and one offers specializations only within its AS program.

The structure of BC’s AA and AS programs is outlined in **Table 1**. The AA and AS programs offered at BC post-secondary institutions, including specializations, are listed in Appendix I.

**Table 1**  
BC Associate Degree Program Structure

	Associate of Arts (AA)	Associate of Science (AS)
General Requirements	60 first- and second-year credits, including a minimum of 18 second-year Arts credits in two or more subject areas	60 first- and second-year credits, including a minimum of 18 second-year Science credits in two or more subject areas
Specific Requirements	<p>6 credits in first-year English</p> <p>9 credits in Science, including at least 3 credits in mathematics, computing science, or statistics, and 3 credits in a laboratory science</p> <p>36 credits in Arts, including 6 credits in social sciences, and 6 credits in humanities (other than English)</p> <p>9 credits in Arts, Science, or other areas</p> <p>A single course can only be used to fulfill one of these requirements</p>	<p>6 credits in first-year English</p> <p>6 credits in mathematics, including 3 in calculus</p> <p>36 credits in Science, including at least 3 credits in a laboratory science</p> <p>6 credits in Arts other than English (excluding mathematics and laboratory-based science courses)</p> <p>6 credits in Arts, Science, or other areas</p> <p>A single course can only be used to fulfill one of these requirements</p>

Note. Information from BC Transfer Guide, 2021.

John Dennison, former BCCAT co-chair, observed in 2000 that “the AD has enjoyed mixed success in the college and institute sector, much depending upon the level of support given to it in each institution” (Dennison, 2000, p. 31). Since then, the BC associate degree program structure and curriculum have undergone several reviews and revisions, most recently in 2015. The most recent review made several recommendations for curricular revisions, and also proposed that “the articulation requirement definition for associate degrees should be expanded to include degree program courses articulated with any BC public university” (BCCAT, 2015, p. 2). To date, the recommended revisions have not been adopted.

An analysis of BC associate degree graduation rates between 2004/05 and 2013/14 (Biggsby, 2016) indicated that in 2004/05 associate degrees represented 8.3% of all credentials awarded by BC public post-secondary institutions that offer associate degrees, but by 2013/14, associate degrees represented only 4.8% of credentials awarded by the same group of institutions. The number of associate degrees awarded remained relatively consistent across that period, so the change in the percentage of graduates receiving associate degrees could be due to increased student capacity at universities granting four-year undergraduate degrees, or to increases in the numbers of graduates receiving other types of credentials.

Recent data from the provincial Student Transitions Project, presented in **Table 2** below, indicate that the annual number of associate degree graduates increased slightly between 2015/16 and 2019/20, and that in 2019/20 associate degrees represented 2.18% of all BC undergraduate credentials awarded. However, this percentage is based on data that include institutions that do not offer associate degrees. A more focused analysis, using only data from institutions granting associate degrees, would be necessary to determine whether this percentage has changed across time. Additionally, between 2015/16 and 2019/20 other credentials became more common in the BC post-secondary environment, such as post-degree and advanced certificates and diplomas. The numbers of these newer credentials awarded may affect the percentage of associate degrees awarded among all undergraduate credentials.

It is also important to acknowledge that the Student Transitions Project data do not include data from BC private post-secondary institutions. Since six BC private post-secondary institutions offer associate degree programs, the actual annual numbers of BC associate degree graduates are very likely higher than the numbers shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2**  
BC Public Post-Secondary Graduates by Undergraduate Credential Awarded, 2015/16 to 2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	TOTAL
Advanced certificate	715	833	909	1,004	893	4,364
Advanced diploma	564	602	581	711	744	3,203
Associate degree	1,152	1,117	1,155	1,204	1,470	6,098
Bachelor’s degree	24,700	24,209	25,211	25,992	26,554	126,666
Certificate	15,871	15,273	14,745	13,670	12,271	71,830
Diploma	9,229	9,218	10,149	10,557	11,255	50,408
First professional degree	963	944	1,002	959	985	4,853
Post-degree certificate	354	380	377	358	333	1,802
Post-degree diploma	1,359	1,571	1,880	2,714	3,458	10,982
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54,907</b>	<b>54,147</b>	<b>56,009</b>	<b>57,169</b>	<b>57,963</b>	<b>280,195</b>

Note. Data from Student Transitions Project.

# The Feasibility of Reverse Transfer in BC

The research on reverse transfer in the United States suggests that reverse transfer can be beneficial to students and to institutions, particularly for institutions offering associate degrees who wish to improve completion rates for those degrees. However, there are several significant differences between the BC post-secondary system and US post-secondary systems that may affect the feasibility of reverse transfer in BC. These differences, using the characteristics of the US post-secondary system described in the reverse transfer literature, are summarized in **Table 3** below. Because of these differences, it is difficult to credibly contend that reverse transfer would be successful in BC simply because it has had some success in the US.

**Table 3**  
Comparison of General US and BC Post-Secondary System Characteristics Relevant to Reverse Transfer

United States*	British Columbia
Colleges mostly offer two-year non-degree programs; universities mostly offer four-year undergraduate degree programs, as well as graduate programs.	Colleges, teaching-intensive universities, research-intensive universities, and institutes all offer degree and non-degree programs.
Associate degrees are general or occupation-specific. Associate degrees can be designed as terminal degrees, or as transfer degrees.	Associate degrees are in two general subjects (Arts and Science), although institutions can also offer specializations within each degree program. Associate degrees are designed as terminal degrees and as transfer degrees.
Associate degrees are recognized and understood by employers and organizations.	Associate degrees are not widely understood or recognized, either in the post-secondary system or in the external environment.
Institutions that offer associate degrees usually do not offer other degree programs.	Teaching-intensive universities and some colleges offer both associate degrees and undergraduate degrees.
Some institutional funding may depend on performance measures such as graduation or credential completion rates. These measures may also be used to assess institutions for other purposes, such as their students' eligibility for student loans.	Institutional funding is generally not directly tied to graduation or credential completion rates.
The strength and depth of transfer credit system varies between regions and systems. Transfer pathways and course-to-course transfers are not always well-established or well-coordinated. Information on transfer agreements may not be easy for students to find.	The BC transfer credit system is well-established and extensive, including different forms of transfer pathways. Course-to-course transfer information and program transfer information are easily accessible through the online BC Transfer Guide.
The ability of a student to transfer courses or credits may depend on the extent of the transfer system, or on staff or faculty knowledge of transfer options, at both sending and receiving institutions.	If a course or program is listed in the BC Transfer Guide, transfer is straightforward. If it is not listed in the BC Transfer Guide, a student's ability to transfer course or program credit may depend on staff or faculty knowledge of transfer options, at both sending and receiving institutions.

\*The characteristics listed here are summarized characteristics of regional, statewide, and institutional transfer systems and transfer agreements. The characteristics of individual transfer systems or transfer agreements may vary from these summaries.

One of the major differences between the two systems, as outlined in **Table 3**, is that most US post-secondary systems have a much clearer distinction than the BC post-secondary system between colleges (two-year institutions) and universities (four-year institutions). Most US systems also have a clearer distinction than the BC system between the degree-granting programs offered by each type of institution. In BC, associate degree programs are offered at teaching-intensive universities and colleges. BC colleges, teaching-intensive universities, and research-intensive universities offer undergraduate degree programs. Thus, if reverse transfer in BC was intended to increase associate degree graduation rates, reverse transfer agreements would likely have to encompass multi-directional transfers between multiple types of institutions, not just transfers between colleges and universities.

Along similar lines, for the BC institutions that offer both associate and undergraduate degrees, completing both types of degrees at the same institution would likely require revisions to institutional policies on second or subsequent degree completion. BC post-secondary institutions usually require between 25% and 50% of credit used to complete a credential to be taken at the institution issuing the credential (James & Cowin, 2020). Some institutional policies also limit the amount of credit used to complete one credential that can be applied to the completion of another credential, or specify that credit taken for a second or subsequent credential must include upper-level credit and/or core courses in that credential programs. Policies such as these could affect the ability of a student to obtain a credential through reverse transfer, if they want to obtain both credentials from the same institution.

The feasibility of reverse transfer in BC can be more broadly assessed by estimating the numbers of students in the BC post-secondary system that might be eligible for reverse transfer. Data from the Student Transitions Project can be used to estimate those numbers, as shown in **Tables 4** and **5**. These data cover enrollments and student movement at public post-secondary institutions between 2014/15 and 2019/20, the most recent years for which data are available.

**Table 4**  
BC Associate Degree Enrollments at Public Post-Secondary Institutions, and Credits Acquired, 2014/15 to 2019/20

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2018/19	2019/20
Number of associate degree program enrollments	20,132	18,885	17,876	18,291	18,444
Average number of credits acquired per enrollment	35.9	35.7	36.3	37.1	38.1
Number of associate degree program students with between 45 and 59 accumulated credits	3,099 [average number of credits = 51]	2,915 [average number of credits = 51]	2,908 [average number of credits = 51.1]	2,905 [average number of credits = 51.2]	3,080 [average number of credits = 51.1]

Note. Data from Student Transitions Project.

The data in **Table 4** indicate that each year, approximately 3,000 students in the BC public post-secondary system enrolled in associate degree programs have completed 45 or more of the 60 credits required for that degree. This group of students represents approximately 15% of annual associate degree enrollment. If reverse transfer existed in BC in a form similar to reverse transfer in the US, students in this group would likely be eligible for reverse transfer if they moved to another institution.

The data in **Table 5** provide some closer approximations of the numbers of BC students that could be eligible for an associate degree through reverse transfer. The eligibility criteria for a student's data to be included in this table are:

(a) the student was enrolled in an associate degree program in the previous academic year, and had accumulated between 45 and 59 credits, (b) the student moved to another institution without receiving the associate degree, and (c) the student is enrolled in a program other than an associate degree at their current institution. It should be noted that “moved” is not necessarily the same as “transferred”, because these data did not identify whether the student was admitted to their current institution as a transfer student. However, it is likely that most students that “moved” were admitted as transfer students at and/or transferred credit to their current institution.

**Table 5**  
**BC Public Post-Secondary Students Potentially Eligible for Reverse Transfer Leading to an Associate Degree, 2015/16 to 2019/2020**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020
<b>Number of students meeting eligibility criteria</b>	952 [average number of credits: 51.3]	945 [average number of credits: 51]	925 [average number of credits: 51]	931 [average number of credits: 51.3]	883 [average number of credits: 51.0]
<b>Destination by type of institution</b>	Research-intensive university*: 693 Teaching-intensive university**: 118 Institute: 82 College: 59	Research-intensive university: 690 Teaching-intensive university: 106 Institute: 93 College: 56	Research-intensive university: 668 Teaching-intensive university: 131 Institute: 76 College: 50	Research-intensive university: 658 Teaching-intensive university: 142 Institute: 81 College: 50	Research-intensive university: 607 Teaching-intensive university: 144 Institute: 83 College: 49
<b>Destination by type of program [only includes categories with 5 or more students]</b>	Bachelor's degree: 749 None: 109 Diploma: 48 Other: 36 Certificate: 25 Developmental: 8 Short certificate: 7	Bachelor's degree: 742 None: 127 Diploma: 44 Other: 35 Certificate: 22 Developmental: 6 Short certificate: 6	Bachelor's degree: 712 None: 131 Diploma: 42 Other: 39 Certificate: 37 Developmental: 7 Short certificate: 7	Bachelor's degree: 739 None: 116 Certificate: 46 Diploma: 40 Other: 33 Professional degree: 5 Short certificate: 5	Bachelor's degree: 646 None: 177 Certificate: 38 Diploma: 34 Other: 25 Post-degree diploma: 5

\*The institutions in the Student Transitions Project “research-intensive university” category are Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia (including the University of British Columbia, Okanagan), the University of Northern British Columbia, and the University of Victoria.

\*\*The institutions in the Student Transitions Project “teaching-intensive university” category are Capilano University, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Royal Roads University, Thompson Rivers University, Vancouver Island University, and the University of the Fraser Valley.

Note. Data from Student Transitions Project.

The data in **Table 5** show that of the approximately 3,000 students annually enrolled in BC associate degree programs at public post-secondary institutions, just over 30% move to another institution without receiving the associate degree. Among those students who move, more than 80% move to a research-intensive university or a teaching-intensive university, and approximately 75% enrol in a bachelor's degree program. This suggests that despite the multiple transfer possibilities within the BC Transfer System, reverse transfer agreements between BC colleges and universities would likely reach the majority of students who might be eligible for reverse transfer. Students that move from BC associate degree programs to BC colleges or institutes, or into programs other than bachelor's degrees, may not be eligible for reverse transfer if they are not able to acquire credits at the level or in the subject areas that they would need to complete the associate degree.

However, these data also suggest that completing an associate degree does not always seem to be a priority for BC's associate degree students. This is indicated by two trends in the data. First, comparing the data in **Table 2** and **Table 5** indicates that the annual number of BC associate degree graduates is higher than the annual number of students enrolled in associate degree programs who move to another institution without finishing the associate degree, but not by a very large amount. For example, in the 2018/19 academic year, there were 1,470 associate degree graduates and 931 associate degree students who moved to another institution, without completing the degree. Second, students that move without finishing the associate degree have usually completed around 51 credits. Assuming a course load of 15 credits per semester, in a 60-credit program these students would only need one more semester of study to complete the degree.

If students are close to completing an associate degree but move to another institution without finishing the degree, this raises the question of whether students perceive value or utility in acquiring an associate degree. Another possibility, raised in previous BCCAT research, is that students might move before completing the associate degree because the courses they need for completion are not offered at their institution, or are not offered regularly enough for them to complete the credential within a reasonable time (Karlinski, 1998). A further possibility is that students move or transfer as soon as they have met the admission requirements for their destination institution, which may happen before they complete the associate degree. Additionally, completing the associate degree may not fulfill all of the lower-level course requirements for the student's desired program at the destination institution. The student may move or transfer when they have maximized their transferable credit at the institution granting the associate degree, rather than remaining at that institution to take additional courses that will complete the associate degree but which will not be applicable to their desired program elsewhere.

Another indication of potential student demand for reverse transfer is the number of students with associate degrees that later complete an undergraduate degree. Obviously these students are not eligible for reverse transfer, because they have completed an associate degree. But this number may give some indication of student interest in acquiring both an associate degree and an undergraduate degree, which could be accomplished through reverse transfer. **Table 6** presents the data currently available; 1,202 associate degrees were awarded in 2018/19, but data for that year are omitted from the table because graduates in that year are not likely to have completed an undergraduate degree yet. Forty-eight of the associate degree graduates in 2018/19 had completed a bachelor's degree by the end of the 2019/2020 reporting year.

**Table 6****Undergraduate Degree Completion Rates for BC Associate Degree Graduates from Public Post-Secondary Institutions**

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Students graduating with an associate degree (AD)	1,127	1,148	1,112	1,149
Number of AD graduates obtaining a bachelor's degree one year after associate degree completion	103	82	75	57
Number of AD graduates obtaining a bachelor's degree two years after associate degree completion	206	218	161	165
Number of AD graduates obtaining a bachelor's degree three years after associate degree completion	223	217	220	n/a
Number of AD graduates obtaining a bachelor's degree four years after associate degree completion	165	153	n/a	n/a
Number of AD graduates obtaining a bachelor's degree five years after associate degree completion	93	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall percentage of AD graduates completing a bachelor's degree	70% (after five years)	58% (after four years)	41% (after three years)	19% (after two years)

Note. Data from Student Transitions Project.

The data in **Table 6** indicate that the majority of associate degree graduates in BC acquire a bachelor's degree within five years of completing the associate degree, with most completing their bachelor's degree within two or three years after the associate degree. These data also show that while the overall number of completed undergraduate degrees rises across time, the rate of undergraduate degree completion starts to decline three years after completion of the associate degree. This trend reinforces the suggestion in the research literature that transfer students' interest in credential completion may be highest relatively soon after they transfer. Credential completion opportunities such as reverse transfer will be most attractive to students if these opportunities can be undertaken relatively quickly.

## Discussion and Recommendations

The feasibility of reverse transfer in the BC post-secondary system appears to depend on two factors: the amount of student interest in reverse transfer, and the capacity of post-secondary institutions to support reverse transfer. The BC Transfer System is well-developed enough that transfer agreements to support reverse transfer may already exist; if not, they would be relatively easy to establish. For example, if a transfer agreement already exists between two institutions that gives credit for a college course transferring to a university, it should be straightforward to establish a transfer agreement for the same courses in the "other" direction, with credit for the university course transferring to the college. The university-to-college transfer agreement would be the type of course-to-course transfer agreement that could facilitate reverse transfer.

However, there is no point in institutions investing resources in developing and maintaining reverse transfer agreements if students are not interested in using those agreements. There is also no point in institutions implementing reverse transfer agreements if they do not have, or are not willing to commit, the resources to support the ongoing operation of those agreements. A poorly functioning reverse transfer agreement will cause frustration and will impede student mobility.

There are also practical issues around implementing reverse transfer agreements that would need to be addressed within the specific context of the BC post-secondary system, such as ensuring student privacy and appropriate data sharing. If the motivation to implement reverse transfer is to increase the number of associate degree graduates, or to increase the appeal of the associate degree as a program or credential option, adjustments to the criteria for courses applicable to the associate degree should also be addressed.

This report will not make recommendations on whether reverse transfer agreements should be developed in BC. Instead, it will make recommendations on information that should be collected and assessed before systems or institutions make that decision. The recommendations are presented in two categories - system-wide and institutional - although readers associated with either category should take all of these recommendations into account.

## System-Wide Recommendations

1. Prior to considering the feasibility of reverse transfer in the BC Transfer System, post-secondary system goals and objectives for credential completion should be established, including the role of transfer in achieving those outcomes. If reverse transfer is introduced as a component of the BC Transfer System, it will need to align with current institutional and system-level transfer policies and procedures.
2. A key component that should precede any development of reverse transfer agreements, either by individual institutions or across the BC Transfer System, is to identify the problems or opportunities that reverse transfer is intended to address, and to identify the desired outcomes of reverse transfer agreements.

As shown in the literature reviewed in this report, reverse transfer agreements can serve several purposes:

- To increase completion rates in associate degree programs, or other credential programs;
- To increase institution-wide credential completion rates;
- To provide a degree completion option for students who transfer into, but do not complete, an undergraduate degree program; and/or,
- To create additional transfer pathways between institutions granting associate degrees and institutions granting undergraduate degrees.

These purposes are not mutually exclusive; a reverse transfer agreement could be designed to address all of them. However, it is essential for all parties involved in a reverse transfer agreement to have the same understanding of what the agreement is intended to achieve. The intention(s) should guide the design of the agreement and its operations.

3. A key component that should precede any development of reverse transfer agreements, either by individual institutions or across the BC Transfer System, is to assess student interest in acquiring an associate degree or other credential through reverse transfer.

Since reverse transfer currently does not exist in BC, surveys to collect this information should include an explanation of what reverse transfer might look like, in order to provide meaningful data. Potential requirements for reverse transfer that could be presented to survey respondents could include, for example, the number of credits the student would need to acquire at each participating institution; a minimum GPA for eligibility; and any fees that would be charged to the student to acquire a credential through reverse transfer.

In the context of reverse transfer and associate degrees, data to assess student interest in reverse transfer could be collected from:

- Students in associate degree programs who transferred without completing the degree;
- Students currently enrolled in associate degree programs;
- Faculty or program advisors who provide guidance to students enrolled in or interested in associate degree programs;
- Chairs or program heads in associate degree programs;
- Registrarial staff who administer transfer agreements or transfer activity; and/or,
- Representatives on articulation committees in disciplines where associate degrees are offered.

To assess student interest in reverse transfer as accurately as possible, data should be collected from both public and private post-secondary institutions in BC. As noted, the current Student Transitions Project data only include data from public institutions. An accurate assessment of student interest in reverse transfer in BC would require data from the BC private institutions offering associate degree programs.

4. If reverse transfer is intended to increase the flexibility of pathways to credential completion, it would be beneficial to expand the criteria for applicability of transferable courses toward completion of the BC associate degree.

Currently, courses applicable to the completion of the BC associate degree must be transferable to UBC Vancouver, UBC Okanagan, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University, or the University of Northern BC. In the past, when BC colleges and institutes were not authorized to grant degrees, college or institute students wanting to complete an undergraduate degree would have to transfer to a degree-granting university. The BC post-secondary system has expanded considerably since then, as have student mobility patterns.

For example, in 2019/20, just over 5,000 students (approximately 56% from colleges) moved from BC public post-secondary institutions to BC public research-intensive universities; this represents 9.1% of total student mobility that year. This type of movement has accounted for less than 10% of BC student mobility for the past decade (Student Transitions Project, 2021). In 2019/2020, BC students at research-intensive universities also moved to colleges (3,200 students), to institutes (3,500), and to teaching-intensive universities (3,600) (Student Transitions Project, 2021). Students at teaching-intensive universities moved to institutes (5,000 students) and to colleges (4,600 students). While the “traditional” college-university transfer pattern still exists, there is now a much greater amount of student mobility between all types of institutions within the BC Transfer System.

The current limitations on applicability of courses to associate degree completion have implications for the potential scope and utility of reverse transfer agreements. For example, assume a student in an associate degree program at Selkirk College transfers to an undergraduate degree program at Okanagan College without completing the associate degree. Under the current regulations for the associate degree, the student would only be able to complete the associate degree at Selkirk College through reverse transfer if the courses they transferred “back” to Selkirk College also transferred to one of the universities named above. This criterion would apply even if the student never attended or acquired credit from any of those universities, and even if none of those universities was involved in any way in the reverse transfer agreement.

If reverse transfer in BC is being considered as a desirable way to increase the number of associate degree graduates, or to give BC post-secondary students more degree completion options, that outcome could be enabled by expanding the criteria for a course's applicability to associate degree completion, to incorporate a more inclusive range of degree-level transferable courses at the institution granting the associate degree. It is worth noting in this context that if a BC post-secondary institution has been authorized to offer degree-level programs, including associate degrees, the applicable courses at that institution have been confirmed as meeting the degree quality standards established by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training.

## Institutional Recommendations

1. An institution interested in implementing a reverse transfer agreement should first make a realistic assessment of its capacity and resources to support an agreement.

The role of a specific institution in a reverse transfer agreement, and the responsibilities and costs associated with the role, largely depend on whether the institution is granting the associate degree or other credential (the sending institution), or whether it is the institution that students are transferring to (the receiving institution). There are some responsibilities and costs that would generally fall to the sending institution, such as the responsibilities and costs associated with degree audits. However, other responsibilities and costs, such as those involved with identifying and contacting potential reverse transfer students, could be assigned to either the sending or the receiving institution, depending on how the participating institutions decide to structure the reverse transfer process.

The capacity and resource issues that should be considered by institutions participating in reverse transfer agreements are:

The availability of staff time to identify, develop, and implement any new transfer credit agreements that would facilitate associate degree completion [usually, credit transferring from the institution granting the bachelor's degree to the institution granting the associate degree]

- The availability of staff time identify potential reverse transfer students
- The availability of staff time to contact and follow up with potential reverse transfer students
- The availability of staff time to assist students in preparing reverse transfer applications
- The availability of staff time to receive and process reverse transfer applications
- The availability of staff time to conduct degree audits
- The availability of staff time to approve and process applications for associate degree graduation
- The availability of staff time to provide advising and guidance to unsuccessful applicants for reverse transfer (e.g. identifying courses/credits that the student needs to complete, or working with them to develop a program plan to acquire those courses/credits)
- If fees are waived to support student access to reverse transfer, whether there are sufficient resources to absorb the cost of waiving fees such as transcript production/exchange fees, degree audit fees, and graduation fees

These are ongoing capacity and resource issues. The required capacities and resources would depend on how many students use reverse transfer and how often some functions are carried out; for example, identifying potential reverse transfer students could be done annually or every few months. But for a reverse transfer agreement to be successful, the necessary capacity and resource allocations need to be provided on an ongoing basis, not just during design and implementation stages. Both sending and receiving institutions will also have to consider whether ongoing allocations of capacity and resources to support reverse transfer are justified by the number of students that might benefit from reverse transfer, or are justified by achieving other outcomes (e.g. higher rates of credential completion).

2. Institutions participating in reverse transfer agreements should collectively decide the structure of the agreements and their operational processes.

This would involve determining, for example:

- Whether the institution granting the associate degree is willing to grant a credential to a student that is no longer enrolled at the institution
- Whether potential reverse transfer students would self-identify, or be identified and contacted by a participating institution; if the students self-identify, who would they notify, and in what format
- Student eligibility requirements: e.g. would there be a minimum number of credit hours for eligibility, acquired at one or both participating institutions; would a minimum GPA be required
- Other conditions for student eligibility, e.g. whether a student that has already received a similar credential would be eligible; whether credit from other non-participating institutions would count toward receiving the credential through reverse transfer; whether credit granted for PLAR or other non-academic learning would be applicable to reverse transfer; whether stale-dated credit should be excluded; whether a reverse transfer applicant could be granted a credential other than the one they request
- Whether fees associated with the reverse transfer process would be waived or reduced

It is important for these issues to be resolved prior to the reverse transfer agreement being launched, so that all participants understand their roles and responsibilities in the process, and so that students receive consistent and accurate information. It is also important for all participating institutions to have equal input into making decisions on these issues and to work collaboratively. Informed and willing participation by both sending and receiving institutions is essential for reverse transfer agreements to function effectively.

3. Institutions interested in establishing a reverse transfer agreement should ensure that the process of identifying and contacting potential reverse transfer students follows the relevant privacy legislation and policies.

As mentioned in the literature on US reverse transfer agreements, these agreements generally use one of two methods to obtain student consent for practices around reverse transfer. One method is for the receiving institution to ask the transferring student, during the admissions process, to explicitly grant consent for their transcripts from both the sending and receiving institution to be reviewed and exchanged for the purposes of reverse transfer. The other is to treat all students/applicants as potential reverse transfer students, and to give each student the option during the admissions process to explicitly deny consent for transcript review and exchange. The literature suggests that the first option (granting consent) produces fewer potential reverse transfer applicants, but produces better qualified applicants for reverse transfer than the other option (denying consent).

In the context of BC privacy legislation, students would have to grant informed consent to allow either the sending or receiving institution, or both, to review and share their transcripts for the purpose of reverse transfer. In the BC context, requesting consent or denial would also require an explanation to the student of reverse transfer and its outcomes, to ensure informed consent. The consent process would also need to be consistent across all institutions participating in a reverse transfer agreement, to avoid unnecessary duplication or breaches of privacy.

# References

- Anderson, L. (2015). *Reverse transfer: The road less traveled. ECS education trends report*. Denver, CO: Education Council of the States. <https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/77/11877.pdf>
- BC Council on Admissions & Transfer [BCCAT] (2015). *Associate degree review*. <https://www.bccat.ca/system/associate>
- BC Transfer Guide (2021). Associate degrees. Retrieved from <https://www.bctransferguide.ca/associate>
- Bigsby, K. (2016). *Exploring available data sources to measure success of associate degree students*. Vancouver, BC: BC Council on Admissions & Transfer. <https://www.bccat.ca/pubs/Reports/SuccessAssociateDegStudents2016.pdf>
- Cortes-Lopez, E., & Taylor, J.L. (2020). Reverse credit transfer and the value of the associate's degree: Multiple and contradictory meanings. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 44(1), 61-77.
- Cowin, R. (2009). *How much academic instruction occurs outside research universities in BC?* BC Council on Admissions & Transfer research report. Vancouver, BC: BC Council on Admissions & Transfer. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED509842>
- Degree Authorization Act (2002), SBC 2002, Chapter 24. [https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02024\\_01](https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02024_01)
- Degree Quality Assessment Board [DQAB] (2021). Responsibilities and reporting. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/degree-authorization/degree-quality-assessment-board/responsibilities-and-reporting>
- Degrees When Due (2021). Home page. <https://degreeswhendue.com>
- Dennison, J. (2002). *Student access and mobility within the British Columbia post-secondary system: A critical analysis of research, public policy, and the role of the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer*. Vancouver, BC: BC Council on Admissions & Transfer. <https://bccat.ca/pubs/StudentAccessMobility.pdf>
- Heslop, J. (2021). *STP research results: Student mobility in the BC public post-secondary system*. Victoria, BC: Student Transitions Project, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/data-research/stp/psm-highlights.pdf>
- James, T., & Cowin, B. (2020). *Applying credit to multiple credentials*. Vancouver, BC: BC Council on Admissions & Transfer. <https://www.bccat.ca/pubpages/MultipleCredentials>
- Kalogrides, D., & Grodsky, E. (2011). Something to fall back on: Community colleges as a safety net. *Social Forces*, 89(3), 853-878.
- Karlinski, J. (1998). *Survey of registrars about the associate degree: report on findings*. Vancouver, BC: BC Council on Admissions & Transfer. <https://www.bccat.ca/pubs/SurveyOfRegistrars.pdf>
- Lee, J. (2021). Should I stay or leave?: Exploring the relationship between reverse transfer and degree attainment. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. DOI: 10.1080/10668926.2021.1910593
- Liu, V.Y.T. (2016). *Do students benefit from going backward? The academic and labor market consequences of four- to two-year college transfer*. Working paper, Community College Research Center, Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment. <https://capseecenter.org/do-students-benefit-from-going-backward/>

- Maier, R., & Robson, K. (2020). Exploring university-to-college transfer in Ontario: A qualitative study of non-linear post-secondary mobility. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 50(1), p. 82-94.
- National Student Clearinghouse Research Centre (2019). *Some college, no degree: a 2019 snapshot for the nation and 50 states*. rom <https://nscresearchcenter.org/some-college-no-degree-2019/>
- Ohio Department of Higher Education (2021). *Credit Where It's Due*. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/CWID>
- Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities (2021). Ontario qualifications framework: advanced diploma. <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/programs/oqf/certificate8.html>
- Pocai, J., & Davis, L. (2021). *Innovative strategies to close postsecondary attainment gaps: reclaiming earned degrees through reverse transfer*. Washington, DC: Institute for Higher Education Policy. <https://www.ihep.org/publication/innovative-strategies-to-close-postsecondary-attainment-gaps-reclaiming-earned-degrees-through-reverse-transfer/>
- Salzman, H., & Van Noy, M. (2014). *Crossing the boundaries: STEM students in four-year and community colleges*. Working paper, J.J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University. <https://scholarship.libraries.rutgers.edu/esploro/outputs/acceptedManuscript/Crossing-the-Boundaries-STEM-Students-in/991031549985404646>
- Siddiqui, J., & Miklowsky, J. (2020). *Attainment for all: Post-secondary transfers – reverse transfer*. Cary, NC: The Hunt Institute. <http://www.hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HI-HE-IB-2.pdf>
- Taylor, J. (2016). Reverse credit transfer: Recognizing and measuring student success. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 170, p. 73-86.
- Taylor, J. L., & Bragg, D. D. (2015). *Optimizing reverse transfer policies and processes: Lessons from twelve CWID states*. Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. <https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/optimizing-reverse-transfer.pdf>
- Taylor, J.L., & Gianni, M. (2019). Modeling the effect of the reverse credit transfer associate's degree: Evidence from two states. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(2), p. 427-455.
- Taylor, J. L., Rubin, P. G., Kauppila, S. A., & Davis, L. (2021). Unpacking implementation capacity and contexts for degree reclamation strategies: What factors move the equity needle? *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 29(27). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.29.5473>
- Weissman, S. (2021, October 18). 4-year degrees for California's 2-year colleges. *Inside Higher Education*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/10/18/california-community-colleges-expand-baccalaureate-programs>
- Wheatle, K., Taylor, J., Bragg, D., & Ajinkya, J. (2017). *The potential of degree reclamation: A path to reclaiming the nation's unrecognized students and degrees*. Washington, DC: Institute of Higher Education Policy. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED591575.pdf>

# Appendix 1

## British Columbia Post-Secondary Institutions Offering Associate Degrees

Institution	Associate Degrees Offered	Institution Status
Alexander College	Associate of Arts Associate of Arts with specialization in Business, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, or Mathematics Associate of Science Associate of Science with specialization in Computer Science or Mathematics	Private
Camosun College	Associate of Arts (General Arts) Associate of Arts in Economics, English, Pre-Social Work, or Psychology Associate of Science (General Science) Associate of Science in Biology	Public
Capilano University	Associate of Arts Associate of Arts with specialization in English, Creative Writing, or Psychology Associate of Science Associate of Science with specialization in Biology	Public
Coast Mountain College	Associate of Arts (General Studies) Associate of Arts with specialization in Archaeological and Cultural Resource Management, Criminology, First Nations, or Sustainable Communities Associate of Science (General Studies) Associate of Science with specialization in Environmental Geoscience	Public
College of New Caledonia	Associate of Arts Associate of Arts in Aboriginal Studies, Anthropology, English, Modern Classics, Psychology or Sociology Associate of Science Associate of Science in Biology, Chemistry, or Math and Computer Science	Public
College of the Rockies	Associate of Arts Associate of Science with major in Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Physical Geography, Math or Physics	Public

<b>Columbia College</b>	Associate of Arts (General Arts) Associate of Arts in Business Administration, Economics, Communication, Political Science, Psychology, or International Studies Associate of Science (General Science) Associate of Science in Computer Science or Mathematics	Private
<b>Coquitlam College</b>	Associate of Arts	Private
<b>Corpus Christi College</b>	Associate of Arts	Private
<b>Douglas College</b>	Associate of Arts for Future Teachers Associate of Arts with specialty in Anthropology, Communications, Creative Writing, Criminology, Economics, English, Geography & the Environment, History, Music, Performing Arts, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology, or Theatre Associate of Arts with thematic option in Environmental Science, Intercultural Studies, or Gender, Sexualities, & Women's Studies Associate of Science with option in Biology, Chemistry, Geology, or Mathematics Associate of Environmental Science	Public
<b>Fraser International College</b>	Associate of Arts	Private
<b>Kwantlen Polytechnic University</b>	Associate of Arts in General Arts Associate of Arts in Anthropology, Asian Studies, Criminology, Creative Writing, Economics, English, Geography, History, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology Associate of Science in General Science Associate of Science in Mathematics	Public
<b>Langara College</b>	Associate of Arts (general) Associate of Arts with concentration in Aboriginal Studies, Asian Studies, Canadian Studies, Classical Studies, Commerce & Business Studies, Creative Writing, English, Environmental Studies, Family Studies, Geography, History, Latin American Studies, Mathematics, Peace & Conflict Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, or Women's Studies Associate of Science (general) Associate of Science with concentration in Bioinformatics, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Environmental Studies, Food & Nutrition, Health Sciences, Mathematics, or Physics	Public
<b>LaSalle College</b>	Associate of Arts	Private
<b>Nicola Valley Institute of Technology</b>	Associate of Arts in General Arts Associate of Arts in Criminology or First Nations Studies	Public
<b>North Island College</b>	Associate of Arts Associate of Arts with Pre-Social Work concentration Associate of Science	Public

Northern Lights College	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Arts with concentration or specialization (minimum of 15 credits in a single discipline, including at least 6 second-year credits)</p> <p>Associate of Arts (AHCOTE [Alaska Highway Consortium on Teacher Education])</p> <p>Associate of Arts – Health Sciences</p> <p>Associate of Science</p> <p>Associate of Science with specialization or concentration (minimum of 15 credits in a single discipline, including at least 6 second-year credits)</p>	Public
Okanagan College	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Arts with emphasis in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications</li> <li>Creative Writing</li> <li>Crosscultural Studies</li> <li>Economics</li> <li>Environmental Studies</li> <li>Gender, Sexuality &amp; Women’s Studies</li> <li>Geography</li> <li>History</li> <li>Modern Language (French)</li> <li>Modern Language (German)</li> <li>Modern Language (Spanish)</li> <li>Philosophy</li> <li>Philosophy, Politics &amp; Economics</li> <li>Political Science</li> <li>Psychology</li> <li>Sociology</li> <li>Studies in Resistance &amp; Revolution</li> </ul> <p>Associate of Science</p> <p>Associate of Science with emphasis in Biology, Chemistry, Computing Science, or Mathematics &amp; Statistics</p>	Public
Selkirk College	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Science</p>	Public
Thompson Rivers University	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Science</p>	Public
Thompson Rivers University-Open Learning	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Science</p>	Public
University Canada West	<p>Associate of Arts with elective area in Accounting, Economics, Hospitality &amp; Tourism, Management, Marketing, Media Communication, Psychology, or Social Justice</p>	Private
University of the Fraser Valley	<p>Associate of Arts (general)</p> <p>Associate of Arts with option in International &amp; Development Studies, Media &amp; Communication, or Theatre</p> <p>Associate of Science</p>	Public
Vancouver Island University	<p>Associate of Arts</p> <p>Associate of Science</p>	Public

# Appendix 2

## Sample of US Reverse Transfer Agreements

	Minimum Number of Credits Earned at College (prior to transfer)	Minimum Number of Credits Earned at University (after transfer)	Process	Other Conditions
<p>University of Alabama  <a href="https://registrar.ua.edu/student-services/reverse-transfer/">https://registrar.ua.edu/student-services/reverse-transfer/</a></p>	None stated	None stated	<p>Transferring student indicates interest in participating in reverse transfer on application for university admission.</p> <p>Transferring student gives consent for university to share transcript with college.</p>	<p>College is responsible for evaluating credits, awarding degree, and notifying university.</p> <p>Some colleges may charge fees for reverse credit applications or evaluations.</p> <p>Some colleges may set guidelines on e.g. a maximum age for applicable transfer credit from universities.</p>
<p>University of Washington (UW)  <a href="https://registrar.washington.edu/students/reverse-transfer-program-faqs/">https://registrar.washington.edu/students/reverse-transfer-program-faqs/</a></p>	60	30	<p>UW identifies eligible students and notifies them; student contacts State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, which connects student with college; college determines whether student can receive associate degree.</p> <p>If associate degree is awarded, college sends amended transcript to UW, and UW adds associate degree to student's UW transcript.</p>	<p>UW does not charge student for a UW transcript submitted to a college for reverse transfer assessment.</p>

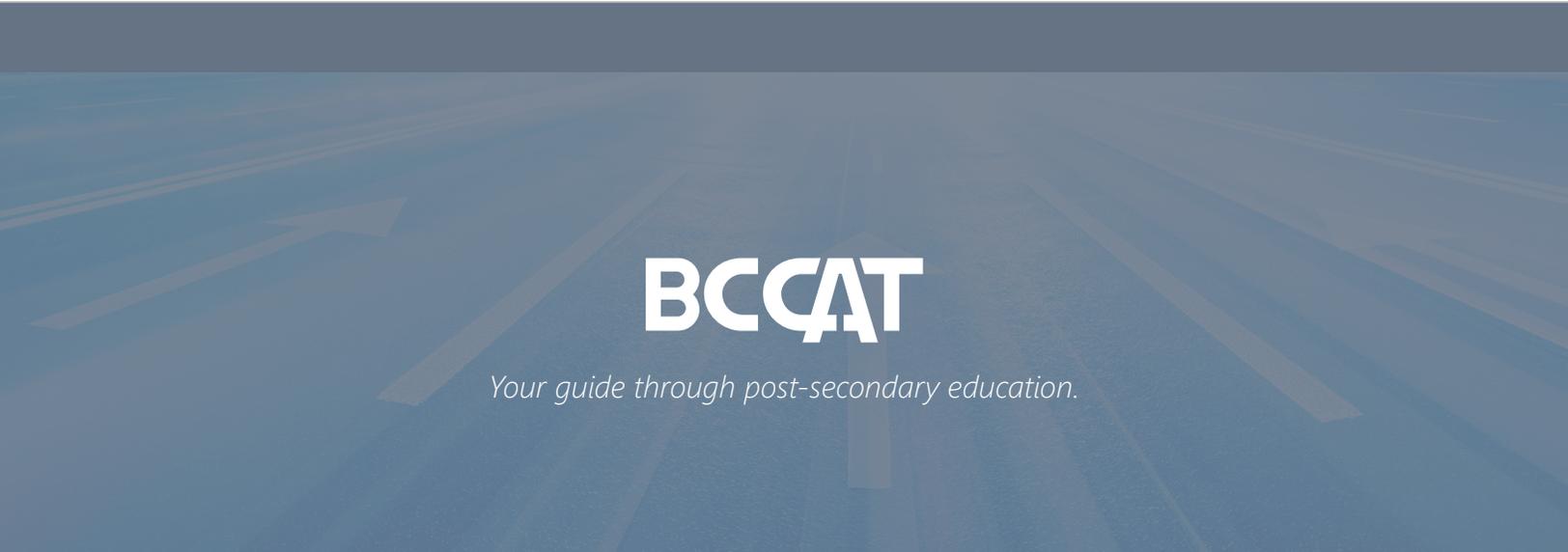
<p>Arizona State University (ASU)  <a href="https://students.asu.edu/reverse-transfer">https://students.asu.edu/reverse-transfer</a></p>	<p>15</p>	<p>30; students are eligible for reverse transfer once they have acquired at least 60 total credit hours from ASU and from the college.</p> <p>If a student has attended more than one college, ASU credits are transferred to the college where the student acquired the most credits.</p>	<p>Students in some pathway programs are automatically enrolled in reverse transfer when they transfer to ASU.</p> <p>Other students can apply for reverse transfer by giving ASU consent to share their transcript with the college they attended.</p>	<p>ASU does not charge students a transcript fee for sending an ASU transcript to a college for the purposes of reverse transfer.</p>
<p>California University of Pennsylvania  <a href="https://www.calu.edu/admissions/transfer/articulation-agreements/reverse-transfer-agreements.aspx">https://www.calu.edu/admissions/transfer/articulation-agreements/reverse-transfer-agreements.aspx</a></p>	<p>45</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>Student contacts university to initiate the process.</p>	<p>To be eligible, student must have enrolled at university within five years of leaving the college.</p>
<p>Colorado (statewide; 15 participating colleges and 14 participating universities) <a href="https://cdhe.colorado.gov/students/attending-college/colorado-reverse-transfer">https://cdhe.colorado.gov/students/attending-college/colorado-reverse-transfer</a></p>	<p>15</p>	<p>The student must have acquired at least 70 credit hours from university and college, including credits from university.</p>	<p>University notifies student that they are eligible; student gives consent for data to be shared between college and university, and university sends student's transcripts to college. College conducts degree audit and determines whether to award associate degree.</p>	<p>Student must have transferred to university prior to Summer 2012.</p> <p>Student must give permission for university transcript to be shared with college.</p> <p>Credit from degree-granting institutions other than the student's current university can count toward associate degree completion.</p> <p>To be eligible, student cannot have already completed an associate or bachelor's degree.</p>

<p>Connecticut (statewide)  <a href="https://www.charteroak.edu/catalog/current/sources_credit/reverse_transfer.php">https://www.charteroak.edu/catalog/current/sources_credit/reverse_transfer.php</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.southernct.edu/sites/default/files/a/inside-southern/onestop/registrar/reverse-transfer.pdf">https://www.southernct.edu/sites/default/files/a/inside-southern/onestop/registrar/reverse-transfer.pdf</a></p>	<p>At least 45 credits from one college</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>University notifies student that they are eligible for reverse transfer, and student applies through a centralized portal.</p> <p>If a student has acquired credit from more than one college, they apply for reverse transfer to the college where they have acquired the most credit.</p>	<p>When applying for reverse transfer, students indicate the type of associate degree they are applying for. They may be awarded a different associate degree (e.g. general AA rather than AA in a specific subject) if they are not eligible for the degree they have applied for.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------	-----------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>Florida (statewide)  <a href="https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7671/urlt/ReverseTransferGuidance-May2021.pdf">https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7671/urlt/ReverseTransferGuidance-May2021.pdf</a></p>	<p>30</p>	<p>30; to be eligible, student must be currently enrolled in the university and have acquired at least 60 total credits (university and college) with a CGPA of 2.0 or higher.</p> <p>College credits eligible toward reverse transfer can include e.g. challenge credit, dual enrollment, or PLAR credit. Credit given by the college for courses taken elsewhere may be excluded.</p>	<p>University must notify eligible students, and review student records at least once a year to identify eligible students.</p> <p>Students must give consent for their university transcript to be shared with their college.</p> <p>University is responsible for notifying college of the student's interest in acquiring associate degree through reverse transfer.</p> <p>College is responsible for conducting the degree audit. If the student is not eligible to receive the associate degree, the college must inform them of the requirements that were not met. The college notifies the university of the result of the degree audit.</p> <p>Students must have completed the general education requirement of either the college of the university.</p>	<p>Agreement only covers AA degrees, and only applies to state universities. State universities and colleges are permitted to establish reverse transfer agreements with private or out-of-state institutions.</p> <p>Participating universities and colleges must each designate a staff member to oversee reverse transfer. Each institution must maintain records of the numbers of students notified about reverse transfer eligibility; the number of reverse transfer applications; the number of degree audits conducted for reverse transfer; and the number of associate degrees awarded and not awarded through reverse transfer.</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>City University of New York (CUNY) (citywide/systemwide) <a href="https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/reverse-transfer/">https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/reverse-transfer/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/reverse-transfer/Reverse-Transfer-Manual-August-2019.pdf">https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/undergraduate-studies/reverse-transfer/Reverse-Transfer-Manual-August-2019.pdf</a></p>	<p>Minimum number of credits required to meet college's residency requirement (30 at most participating colleges)</p>	<p>Student must have acquired at least 60 total credits to be eligible. The 60 credits can include transfer credit from institutions outside the CUNY system.</p>	<p>Students opt in by indicating interest while enrolled at college. If student transfers to a CUNY university, opting in gives permission for the student's transcripts to be shared between the sending and receiving institution. College reviews transcripts from transferred students and notifies them when associate degree is completed.</p>	<p>To be eligible for reverse transfer, the student must have had a minimum GPA of 2.0 at the college granting the associate degree. The student also cannot have already earned an associate degree or bachelor's degree at CUNY or elsewhere.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------





# BCCAT

*Your guide through post-secondary education.*