

BC International Student Survey

Final Report

*Prepared by Robert Adamoski, Associate Director, BCCAT
November 2015*



Research by
BCCAT



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*Project funded by BC's Ministry of Advanced Education.
Survey conducted by BC Stats.*



BC COUNCIL ON ADMISSIONS & TRANSFER
709 – 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver BC Canada V6B 3H6
bccat.ca | educationplanner.ca | bctransferguide.ca
t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576 | e info@bccat.ca

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BCCAT
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Executive Summary

The BC International Student Survey (BC ISS) was conducted during November and December 2014. The objective of the survey was to produce data reflecting the experiences of international students in the BC post-secondary system. The data will be utilized by the Ministry of Advanced Education and participating institutions to inform on-going reviews of policy and practice. This evidence-based approach to improving the experiences of international students will support the achievement of Goal 2 under British Columbia's International Education Strategy, Ensuring Quality Learning and Life Experiences for Students (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012).

Participating institutions received detailed data on students who attended the institution. The data were aggregated for this report. When possible, the report compares results from the previous BC International Student Survey, conducted in 2008 (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009). Between 2008 and 2014, there was

Over 9,200 students completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of twenty-five percent (25%).



Students relied strongly on guidance from family and friends as they made their decision to study in BC.

an 85% increase in the number of international students studying in BC public post-secondary institutions. In fall 2014, over 37,000 international students who held a valid study permit and were enrolled at the developmental, undergraduate or graduate study levels at a BC public post-secondary institution (and Columbia College, a private institution) were invited to complete an online survey conducted by BC Stats. Over 9,200 students completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 25%.

Respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with their post-secondary experience in British Columbia. Eighty-nine percent were satisfied or very satisfied with their institution overall, and 87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of instruction. Data from other provincial surveys referenced in this report suggest satisfaction levels remain high after completion of the program. Two-thirds of respondents indicated they were attending their first-choice institution, higher than the findings in 2008.

Students indicated they relied strongly on guidance from family and friends in making decisions to study in BC. Utilization of information from websites other than those maintained by the post-secondary institutions and information from agents, increased significantly since the last survey. Respondents indicated quality of education was the most important consideration in a decision to study in BC. Students at different study levels varied in their assessment of the importance of other factors, including institutional reputation, and safety and security. Study level also impacted the experiences of students as they arrived, sought information and received orientation to a BC institution. Less than one in ten respondents to the survey had graduated from grade 12 in BC.

The cost of living in BC was the most frequently cited challenge faced by international students who responded to the survey. Books, supplies, tuition, and housing were reported as more expensive than anticipated. Respondents were more likely to express concern regarding costs of housing and tuition the longer they resided in BC. Although students expressed concerns, existing evidence suggests annual tuition for international students in BC is competitive with other comparable jurisdictions.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated they worked, or intended to during their studies. The key reason to seek work was to gain experience and to prepare for a career, rather than to defray costs. Approximately two-thirds of respondents intended to stay in Canada following program completion, with almost 60% indicating plans to stay in BC. Again, there were important variations by study level. Among those intending to remain in BC, almost two-thirds intended to work and a further one-quarter intended to work while pursuing further studies.



In conclusion, the survey results indicate international students attending participating post-secondary institutions are very satisfied with the quality of education and instruction. These were important factors in their initial decision to study in BC, and the available evidence suggests those expectations are being met. International students gather information on BC institutions from a range of sources. This should be considered during promotion of educational opportunities in the province. A majority of the international students who responded to the survey intended to stay in BC or Canada, and of those intending to remain the province, a similar proportion intended to work. Throughout the report, the data show that the experiences of international students vary by level of study. This is an important consideration for those supporting international students through an educational program.

Approximately two-thirds of respondents indicated they intended to stay in Canada after the completion of their program and almost sixty percent indicated they planned to stay in BC.



> Acknowledgement

The Ministry of Advanced Education and BCCAT express appreciation to the following participating institutions:

British Columbia Institute of Technology

Capilano University

College of the Rockies

Douglas College

Justice Institute of British Columbia

Langara College

Northern Lights College

Royal Roads University

Simon Fraser University

University of British Columbia

University of Northern British Columbia

Vancouver Community College

Camosun College

College of New Caledonia

Columbia College

Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

North Island College

Okanagan College

Selkirk College

Thompson Rivers University

University of the Fraser Valley

University of Victoria

Vancouver Island University



Introduction

Globally, international student mobility has become a key component of post-secondary education (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013). In a 2014 survey of member institutions, the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada identified a depth of commitment to internationalization as a “most prominent finding”, with over 80% of Canadian universities identifying it as a top priority. (The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2014, p. 4).

There are a variety of motivations for increasing the global flow of students to and from Canada. Fundamentally, “creating new relationships between BC residents and people from other countries brings strong social and cultural benefits to our communities, as well as significant economic gains” (Ministry of Advanced Education 2012, p. 8). The intercultural benefits to host communities, domestic students and faculty are prominent in most discussions of the benefits of hosting international students. Universities Canada¹

noted that “academically focused rationales” such as innovative curricular design; program diversification, research partnerships and internationally informed graduates were also prominently cited in an earlier 2006 survey of Canadian universities (The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2014, p. 12).



Increasingly, institutions and governments in Canada recognize the significant economic impacts of international education. Research conducted by Roslyn Kunin in 2014 for the BC Council on International Education (BCCIE) showed international students total spending contributed over 2.3 billion dollars to the provincial economy, and generated almost 25,500 jobs (BC Council on International Education, 2014). Earlier research by Kunin compared international education (as a service export) to trade with various countries, and concluded international education is equivalent to the fourth largest goods export sector for BC and is comparable to seven percent of the total value of all goods exports. (Kunin & Associates, 2013). Writing in January 2015, the President of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) identified “international education ...as a cross-cutting public policy priority [underpinning] Canada’s diplomacy, trade and immigration objectives” (McBride, 2015).

International education is also important for BC post-secondary institutions. In a recent national survey, BC had the second-greatest proportion of universities making explicit reference to internationalization in quality assessment and assurance procedures, second only to Quebec (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2014, p. 9). In 2012, under Canada Starts Here: The BC Jobs Plan, government announced BC’s International Education Strategy. The Strategy aims to promote the two-way global flow of students, educators and ideas between countries through a number of actions identified under three goals (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012). The current survey was conducted in support of Goal 2 - ensuring quality learning and life experiences for students. By gathering comprehensive feedback from international students, the survey seeks to provide useful information to institutions and government regarding experiences of international students, and to inform evolving policy and practice.

Survey Methodology

This report presents the results of a survey funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, conducted by BC Stats, and overseen by the BC International Student Survey (BC ISS) Steering Committee² and the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer. The survey was offered to international students registered in BC public post-secondary institutions, and one private post-secondary institution. The purpose of the survey was to obtain direct feedback from international students about their experiences with the following:



Choosing: *What information sources did international students rely upon during research of post-secondary educational opportunities in Canada? What key factors shaped decisions to study in the province?*



Navigating: *How do international students describe their experiences after acceptance to a program in BC? Which information sources were consulted during preparation to arrive and undertake studies in BC? Was the information easily accessible? How effective was an orientation? Once studies began, what were the challenges, and where did they find support? How satisfied are BC international students with their experiences in BC?*



Goals: *Do they plan to work during their studies in BC? What are their plans following completion of the program at their current institution?*

Building on the initial BC International Student Survey conducted in 2008 by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, with support of BC's post-secondary institutions,³ the survey also pursued new lines of inquiry in order to inform policy and practices in international education. BC Stats, the central statistical agency of the Government of BC,⁴ delivered the survey with input from the BC ISS Steering Committee. Students were invited to participate via email, based on cohort information provided to BC Stats by each participating institution.⁵ The web survey was conducted in November and December 2014. The table below outlines distribution of the cohort and response rate by 23 participating public institutions and one private institution, Columbia College.

The survey seeks to provide useful information to institutions and government regarding experiences of international students, and to inform evolving policy and practice.

	Respondents	Cohort	Rate %
British Columbia Institute of Technology	493	1,469	34%
Camosun College	208	1,143	18%
Capilano University	209	794	26%
Columbia College	225	1,106	20%
College of New Caledonia	90	308	29%
College of the Rockies	59	202	29%
Douglas College	434	1,539	28%
Emily Carr University of Art and Design	161	428	38%
Justice Institute of British Columbia	1	2	50%
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	436	1,601	27%
Langara College	496	1,891	26%
North Island College	87	207	42%
Northern Lights College	61	232	26%
Okanagan College	112	478	23%
Royal Roads University	161	481	33%
Selkirk College	107	305	35%
Simon Fraser University	1,052	5,226	20%
Thompson Rivers University	402	1,749	23%
University of British Columbia	2,639	11,596	23%
University of the Fraser Valley	233	824	28%
University of Northern British Columbia	149	329	45%
University of Victoria	989	3,508	28%
Vancouver Community College	111	311	36%
Vancouver Island University	299	1,471	20%
OVERALL	9,214	37,200	25%

Student Demographics

The BC ISS captured feedback from a large number of students, providing confidence in the findings outlined below. In order to better understand how well those findings reflect the larger population of public post-secondary international students, it is useful to compare the demographic characteristics of BC ISS respondents to the population of international students attending public post-secondary institutions in the province.⁶ Additionally, comparing BC ISS respondents in 2014 with the 2008 ISS respondents allows for a more informed comparison of findings between the two surveys.

Respondents to the BC ISS were slightly older, on average, than the general population of post-secondary international students in BC. The median age for respondents was 23 years, compared to a median age of 22 in the population. Further, 64% of respondents fell within the key 18 to 24 year age range, compared to 73% of the population of international students recorded by the Student Transitions Project (STP). Female international students were slightly more likely to respond to the BC International Student Survey. Females constituted 51% of respondents and 48% of the international student population.⁷

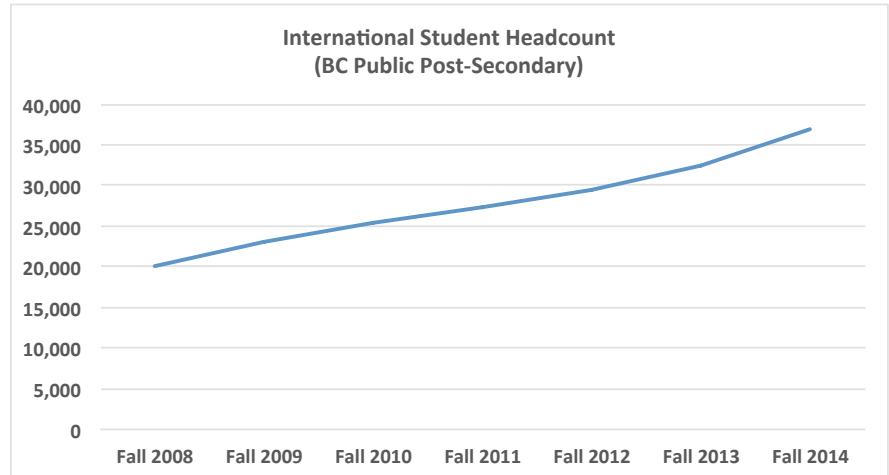
Previous research published by the Student Transitions Project (STP) indicates post-secondary international students in British Columbia are overwhelmingly of Chinese origin (BC Student Transitions Project 2014, p. 16). For the 2013/14 academic year, China was the country of origin for 39% of the international students in public post-secondary institutions. The next top countries of origin were India (8%), USA (6%), Korea (5%) and Japan (5%). The BC public post-secondary system is not unique in having the majority of international students originating in Asia. In 2014, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2014, p. 342) reported “[students] from Asia represent 53% of foreign students enrolled worldwide,” with the largest numbers from China, India and Korea.⁸

The population of international students registered in BC public post-secondary has increased significantly since 2008. Between fall 2008 and fall 2014, the number of international students grew nearly 85%.



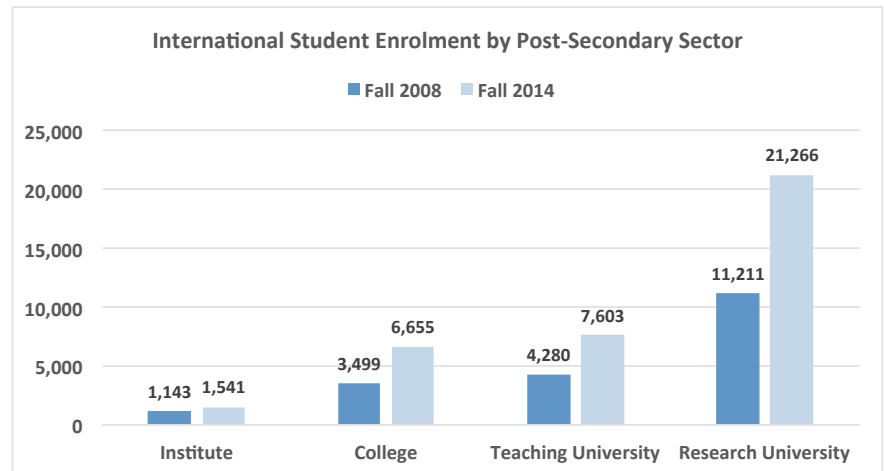
The cohort of students who chose to provide feedback through the BC International Student Survey was largely representative of the full population of international students in BC public postsecondary institutions.

China was the country of origin for 39% of the international students in public post-secondary institutions. The next top countries of origin were India (8%), USA (6%), Korea (5%), and Japan (5%).



(Source: Student Transitions Project, 2014 Fall submission)⁹

This growth is distributed across BC's public post-secondary sectors. Research universities and colleges have grown at the highest rate, increasing by 90% over the period. Teaching universities have grown by 78% and institutes have grown by almost 35%. During In the fall 2014 academic semester, 57% of public post-secondary international students were enrolled at research universities, while 21% attended teaching universities. Combined, colleges and institutes hosted 22% of public post-secondary international students.

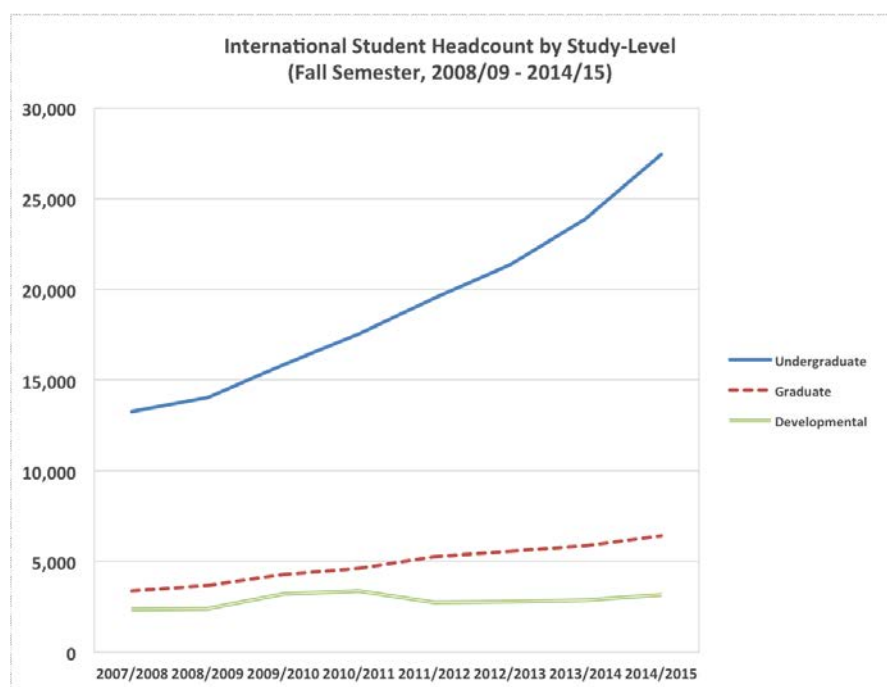


(Source: Student Transitions Project, 2014 Fall submission)

Student Program Characteristics

The following analysis considers respondents to the BC International Student Survey according to study level.¹⁰ Students undertaking educational programs at the developmental level (primarily English language training), the undergraduate level (leading to a certificate, diploma or baccalaureate), or the graduate level (Masters and Doctoral credentials) differ in many respects, impacting their approaches to studying overseas and their educational and lifestyle experiences in BC. Additionally, the lengths of programs at various study levels affect the experiences international students reflected on as they responded to the survey. For example, over 24% of undergraduate respondents and over 20% of graduate respondents had been in BC for more than 36 months when the survey was completed. Less than 6% of respondents from developmental programs had been in the province that long. Differences in student experiences relating to study level are used to better understand the aggregate findings of this large-scale survey, and to allow policy considerations to better reflect the needs of specific subgroups of international students.

Differences in student experiences related to study level are used to better understand the aggregate findings of this large-scale survey.

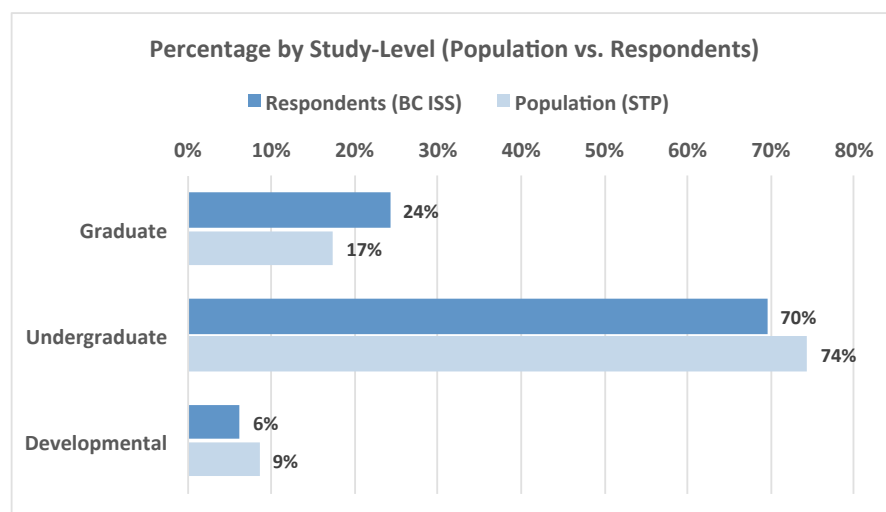


(Source: Student Transitions Project, 2014 Fall submission)

As noted by Universities Canada, post-secondary institutions in Canada typically focus recruiting efforts at the undergraduate level (The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada 2014, p.4). It is not surprising that the number of undergraduate students in BC's public post-secondary sector has realized the most growth since the 2008 survey. Growth in the number of graduate students is also notable, while the number of international students in developmental programs has remained relatively flat.

Undergraduate students are the largest group, constituting 74% of post-secondary international students in the province.

Comparing the proportion of post-secondary international students in BC at various study levels (based on data from the Student Transitions Project), with the proportion of respondents at each level allows us to recognize how aggregate data in the survey might over- or under-represent groups of students. Clearly, undergraduate students are the largest group, constituting 74% of post-secondary international students in the province. They are modestly under-represented in this survey, making up 70% of respondents.¹¹ Students in developmental programs are also under-represented among respondents, constituting 9% of international students and 6% of respondents. Graduate students were most likely to complete the survey. They made up 17% of international students in the province, but 24% of respondents to the survey.¹²



(Source: Student Transitions Project, 2014 Fall submission)

Below is a brief synopsis of key demographic features of these three student groups.

Undergraduate respondents pursuing certificates, diplomas, baccalaureates and similar credentials had a median age of 22 years – more similar in age to developmental students than to graduate students. They were reasonably evenly distributed across various institutional sectors, but were more likely to attend a research university (45%) than a college or institute (32%) or a teaching university (23%). Seventy-one percent lived in BC's lower mainland. Similar to graduate students, 20% of undergraduate respondents live on campus. Three-quarters of undergraduate respondents were enrolled in either arts and sciences (38%) or business and management (37%).



Over 2,150 graduate students responded to the survey, constituting 24% of respondents. Almost 90% of graduate respondents were attending a research university, with over two-thirds enrolled in Engineering and Applied Sciences (35%) or Arts and Sciences (33%). With a median age of 27 years, graduate students were older than undergraduates or developmental respondents.

Six percent of respondents (555) were identified as being in developmental programs—almost entirely English language training. Similar to undergraduate students, respondents in developmental programs were distributed evenly across public post-secondary sectors, attending research universities (26%), colleges and institutes (33%), and teaching universities (41%). The median age was 21 years, slightly younger than undergraduate students. Given the nature of English language training programs, only 11% had been studying at their institution for more than one year, and 9% were living on campus. Over one-quarter of respondents enrolled in developmental programs had yet to graduate from high school.

There has been dramatic growth at these institutions in the period since the previous survey of international students in the BC public post-secondary system. The majority of this growth occurred at research universities. The population retains similarities in age, gender balance and country of citizenship to the international student population of 2008. Students from China continue to dominate the post-secondary international student population in the province, which has been the case over the last decade. The cohort of students who chose to provide feedback through the BC ISS was largely representative of the full population of international students in BC public post-secondary institutions.



Student Satisfaction

The survey of 2008 indicated a large majority of international students in BC's post-secondary system were satisfied with their experiences in the province.¹³ The current survey finds respondents remain satisfied with their post-secondary experience in the province. Eighty-nine percent were satisfied or very satisfied with institutions, and 87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of instruction. These findings were consistent across study level.

**Level of Satisfaction with Aspects of Post-secondary Studies
(2014)**

Aspect	Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Facilities and equipment	91
Admission process	90
Overall Institution	89
Quality of instruction	87
Housing	86
Registration Process	86
Obtaining study permit	85
Local social network	84
Student Services	81
Recreation facilities	80
Academic advising	80

Although similar questions were asked in the 2008 ISS, the levels of satisfaction are not strictly comparable, as the 2008 survey utilized a five-point response scale while the current survey utilized a four-point scale. Nevertheless, comparisons of relative rankings within the two surveys remain valid. In both surveys, overall satisfaction with the institution, quality of instruction and admissions and registration process placed in the top four in terms of respondent satisfaction. In 2008, student services placed in the top four while in 2014, facilities and equipment ranked with the highest level of satisfaction. Two-thirds of respondents indicated they were attending their first-choice institution. This is higher than reported in 2008, when 58% of respondents reported enrolled at their institution of choice. Graduate students were more likely (74%) to be attending their institution of choice.

As a further point of comparison, the results of the BC ISS were compared to the results from two other surveys that incorporate the international student population in BC including the 2014 Diploma, Associate Degree, and Certificate Student Outcomes (DACSO) survey and the 2014 Baccalaureate Graduates Survey (BGS). The DACSO survey is administered to students 9 to 20 months following the completion of one of the included credentials¹⁴ and the BGS is administered to students two years after completion of a baccalaureate credential.¹⁵ Ninety-four percent of international student respondents to the DACSO survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with “the education they received” (four-point scale).¹⁶ Eighty-one percent indicated the quality of instruction was good or very good (five-point scale).¹⁷ Ninety-three percent of international student respondents to the BGS survey indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the education (four-point scale). Ninety-four percent rated course instruction as good or very good (four-point scale).

Clearly, international students in British Columbia are extremely satisfied with the quality of their education, and available evidence suggests satisfaction remains high after completion of a program.

The current survey finds that respondents remain satisfied with their post-secondary experience in the province. Eighty-nine percent were satisfied or very satisfied with institutions, and 87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of instruction.

Choosing

Previous BC K-12 Experience and Key Information Sources



Forty-three percent of respondents reported that they had lived in the province for 12 months or less. Thirty-six percent reported they had been in BC for more than 24 months.

Ninety percent of respondents indicated they had graduated outside of Canada, and 2% indicated they had graduated in another Canadian province.

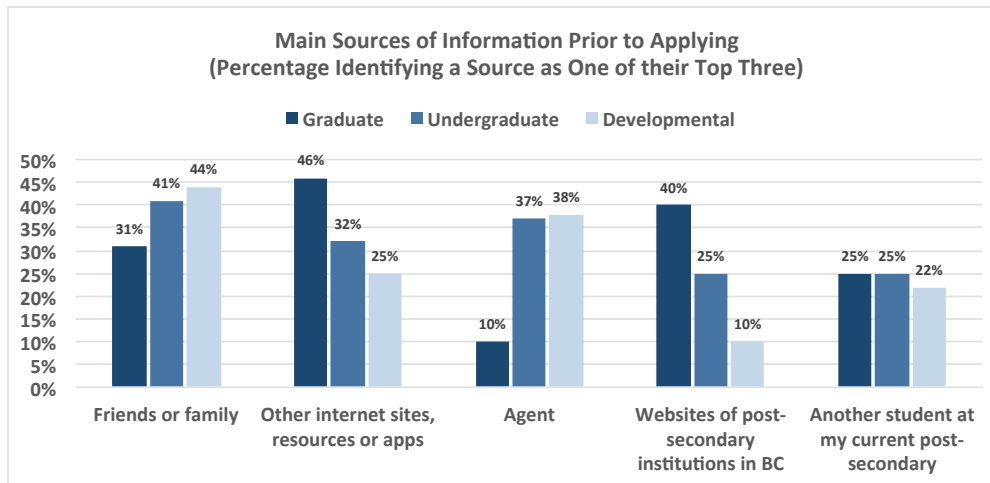
The BC International Student Survey provided a key opportunity to understand how international students chose to pursue post-secondary education in British Columbia. Careful consideration of student experiences can inform strategy and policy, and improve communications with future students. This section examines sources of information respondents relied on, and key factors that led them to study in British Columbia.

In terms of their time in BC, 43% of respondents reported they had lived in the province for 12 months or less. Thirty-six percent reported they lived in BC for more than 24 months. In addition, 16% of respondents identified English as a first language. These findings were similar to the findings reported in the 2008 survey. However, 20% of respondents to the 2014 BC ISS reported visiting BC prior to deciding to study here, while 26% of respondents to the 2008 survey indicated they had previously visited BC. Familiarity with BC prior to admission to a post-secondary program may influence the sources of information that prospective international students rely on, and the factors they consider to be important as they choose to pursue studies in BC. Previous exposure to BC's K-12 education system may also impact international students' subsequent experiences in BC's post-secondary system.

Previous research conducted by the BC Student Transitions Project (2014) found "international students who previously graduated from grade 12 in B.C. achieved better education outcomes than international students from other sources" (p. 29). Specifically, these students had higher credential completion rates and earned proportionately more baccalaureate credentials than did students with no previous education experience in the B.C. secondary school system.

Respondents to the BC ISS who indicated they had graduated from a senior secondary school (or the equivalent level in their country of residence) were asked if they graduated in BC, another Canadian province or elsewhere. Approximately ninety percent of respondents indicated they had graduated outside of Canada, 2% indicated they had graduated in another Canadian province and 9% indicated graduation in BC. Respondents who graduated from grade 12 in BC were less likely to have English as a first language (5%) than those who graduated in another province (9%) or elsewhere (19%).

The figure below includes the top sources of information respondents at each level of study relied on. Guidance from family and friends was important to all three student groups, and particularly undergraduates and developmental students. This source was also the most commonly cited in the previous BC International Student Survey (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009, p. 21).



Reliance on information from websites other than those maintained by post-secondary institutions increased from 2% to 35%, and reliance on information from agents increased from 24% to 30% since the last survey. Over 35% of developmental and undergraduate students relied on information from agents.¹⁸ Graduate students were less likely to rely on information from agents (10%), and more likely to rely on web-based information sources than the other two groups.¹⁹

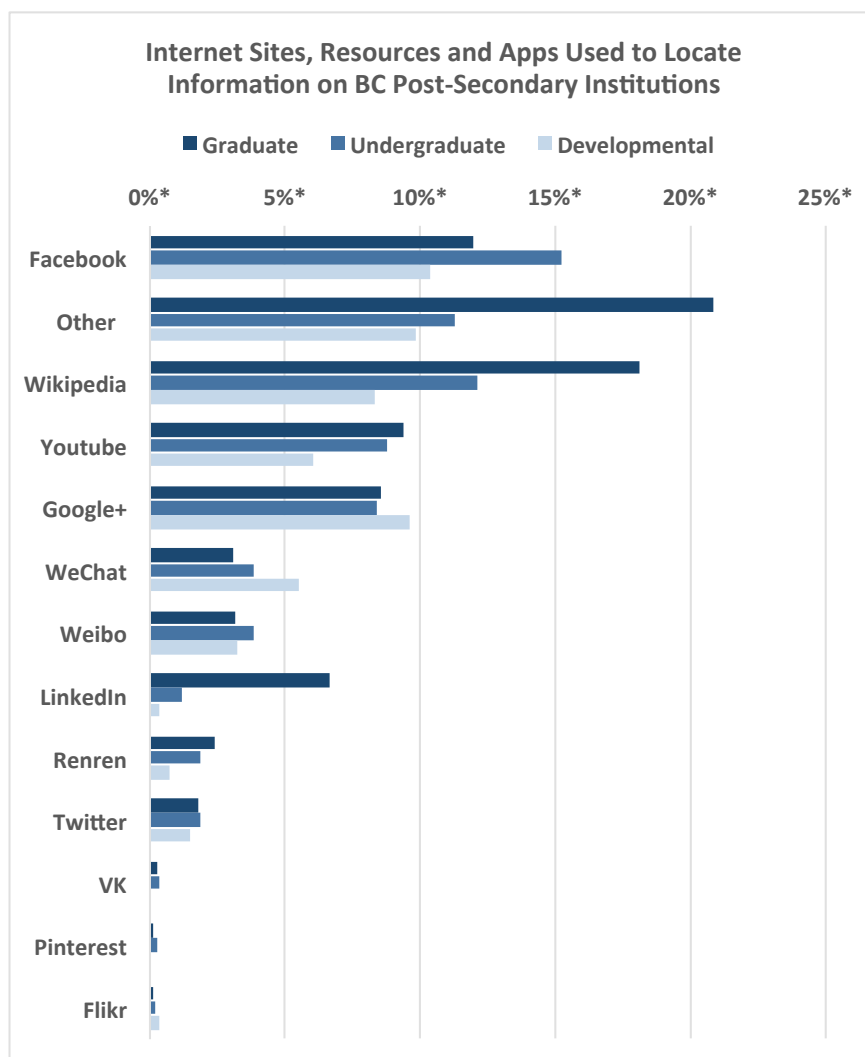
The growing influence of internet-based resources on decision-making processes for international students is evident in the findings of this survey. As mobile computing and social networking become more widespread globally, international students are increasingly turning to these sources to research and make decisions about post-secondary options. In 2014, the Canadian Bureau for International Education surveyed international students across Canada and found that “(the) overwhelming majority - 88% of students - indicated that they are active on social media.” (Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014, p. 35). Similarly, the BC ISS found a large number of respondents report using internet sites, resources and apps as their second most common source of information for preparation to apply to a BC post-secondary institution, following family and friends.

The recent CBIE survey identified Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+ and Twitter as the top social media networks among international students in Canada, and noted that Facebook and YouTube, in particular, are the two top social networks in every region analyzed in their study. (Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014, p. 35). While Facebook and

Guidance from family and friends was important to all three student groups, and particularly undergraduates and developmental students.

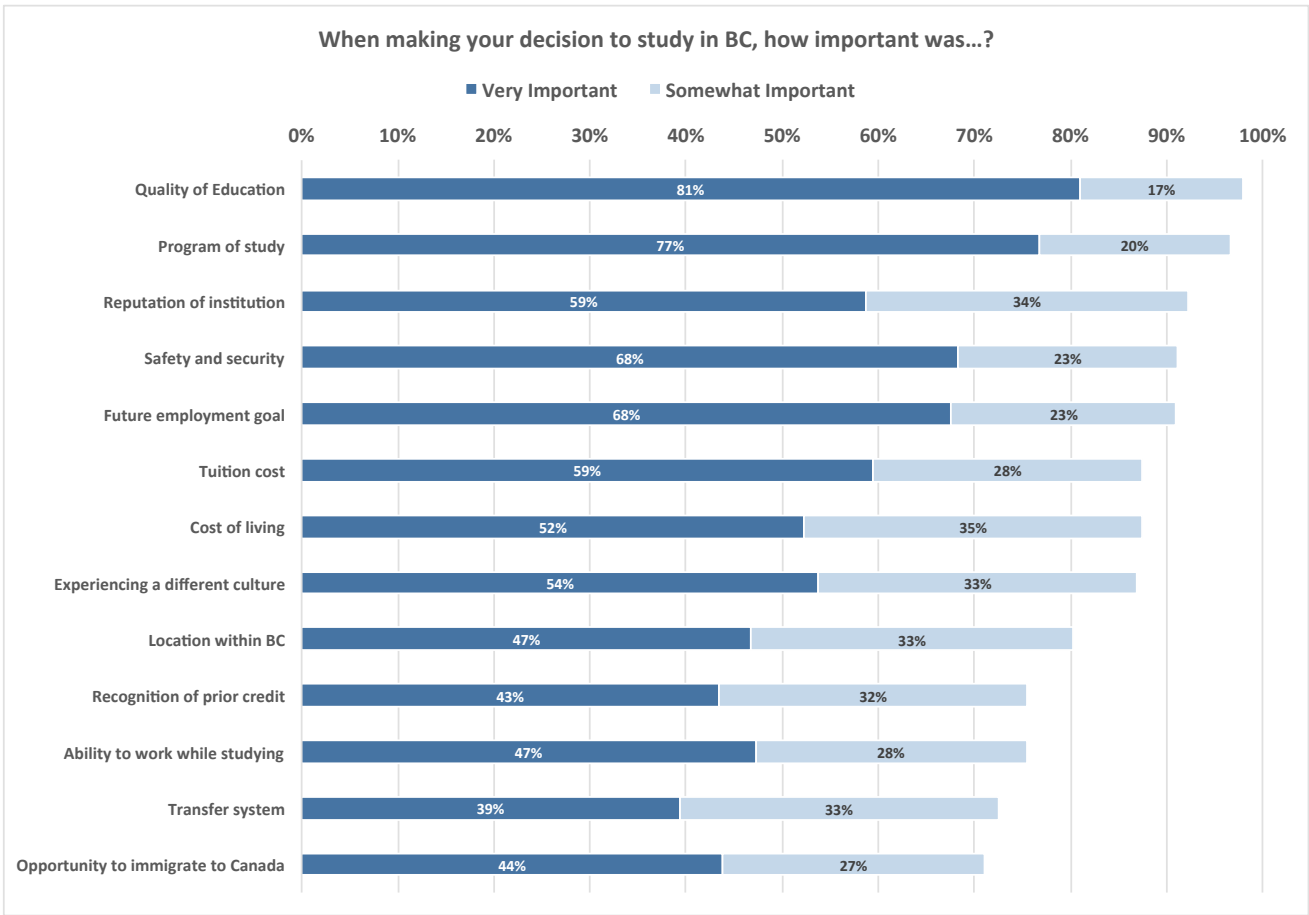


YouTube were important sources of information to survey respondents, analyzing results by study level reveals qualifications. Facebook was an important source for undergraduate students and the large number of respondents at this study level positioned Facebook as the most popular source overall at 14%. Wikipedia and YouTube were popular among undergraduate and graduate students. The latter made more use of LinkedIn. Students enrolled in developmental programs reported consulting WeChat and Google+ at higher rates than students at other study levels.



Key Factors in the Decision to Study in BC

This section considers key sources of information that influenced decisions to enrol in a specific program at a BC post-secondary institution.²⁰ One question for those interested in understanding international student decision-making is the relative importance of location, institution, and program to this group. Some authors have argued “location is now a secondary consideration for overseas students deciding where to study. Reputation and quality of teaching come first” (Shepherd, cited in Fawcett & Brenner 2013, p.7). Others, including a recent Canadian survey (Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014, p. 33), have found “students are slightly more likely to choose Canada as a study destination...before selecting a particular institution within Canada...” These elements are fundamentally inter-related, and it may be difficult to disentangle their impact on decision-making. The findings of the BC International Student Survey reflect the complexity of prioritizing these factors.

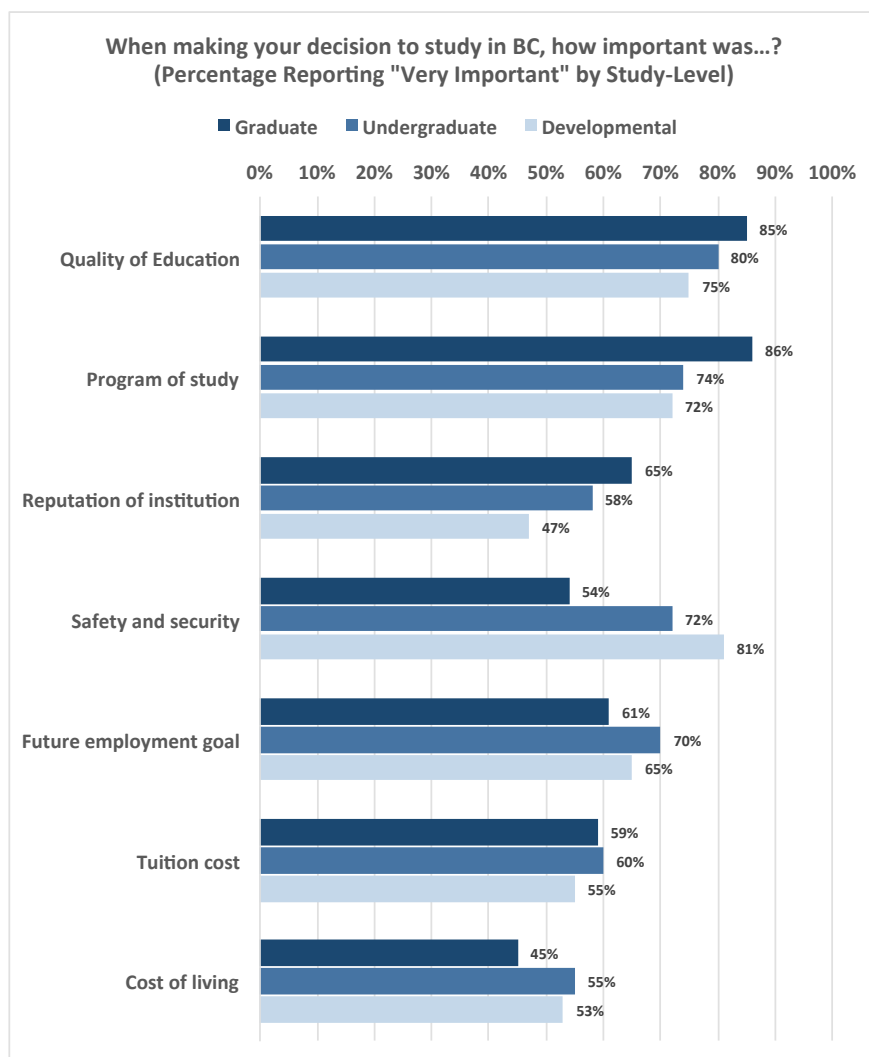




Respondents to the BC ISS overwhelmingly identified the quality of their education (98%) as the single most important factor impacting their decision to study in the province followed immediately by access to their preferred program of study (97%).

Respondents to the BC ISS overwhelmingly identified the quality of education (98%) as the single most important factor impacting a decision to study in the province followed by access to a preferred program of study (97%).²¹ The next most important tier of factors included institutional reputation (93%), safety and security (91%) and future employment goal (91%). Collectively, these factors support the claim that educational quality (and other institutional factors including program access and reputation) is increasingly important to international students. While safety and security is partially a function of political geography, other factors, such as immigration to Canada, location within BC and experiencing a different culture were, in aggregate, less important. The findings suggest institutional quality, reputation and capacity drive a good proportion of decision making for international students in BC.

Analyzing the major factors by study level, differences between undergraduate, graduate and developmental students can be identified.



The figure above focuses on respondents who indicated the factor was “very important” in a decision to study in BC. Quality of education was a crucial consideration for all study levels. The responses of graduate students indicate institutional variables (quality, access to program of study and reputation) are considerably more important than location-based variables for this group of students.

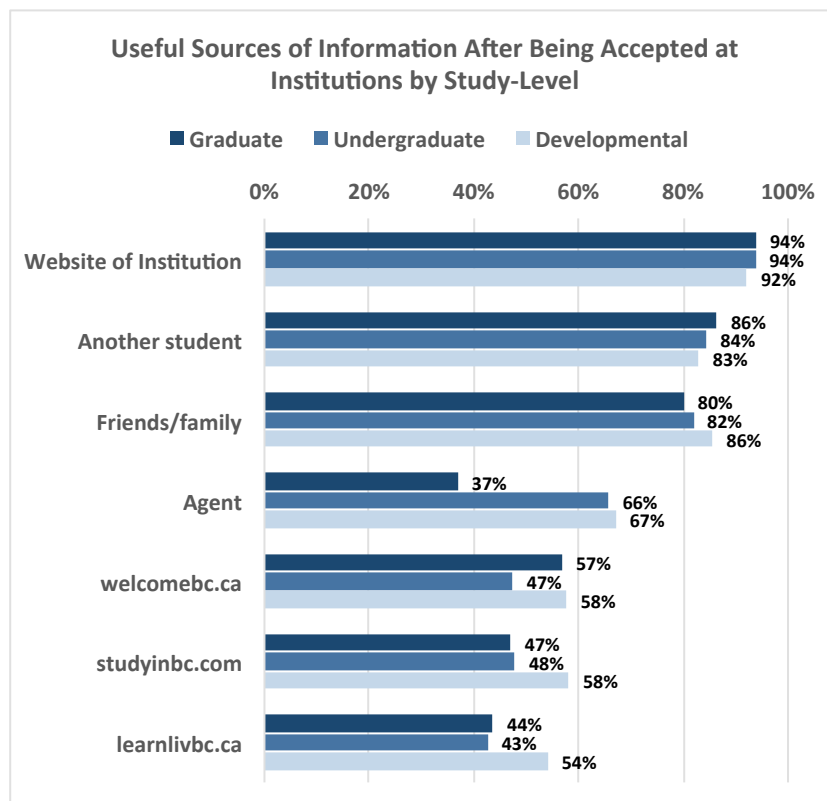
Quality and access are important for undergraduates as well; however, location-based factors (safety and security) rise in importance with this group. For developmental students, location-based variables are equally as important as institutional variables. Safety and security was the most highly ranked factor for this group of students, and the opportunity to experience a different culture (not included in the chart above), was also cited as very important by 61% of developmental students - considerably higher than students at other study levels. Tuition (59%) and living costs (52%) were important factors for respondents across all study levels. The report will return to these factors in a later section.



Navigating

Getting Started

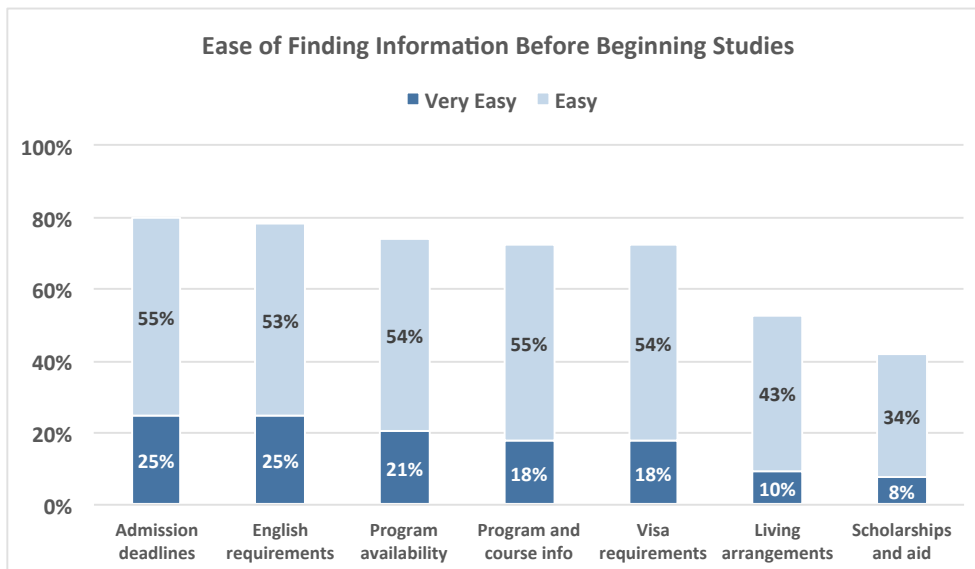
Respondents were asked how useful different sources of information were in helping to prepare to study in BC.



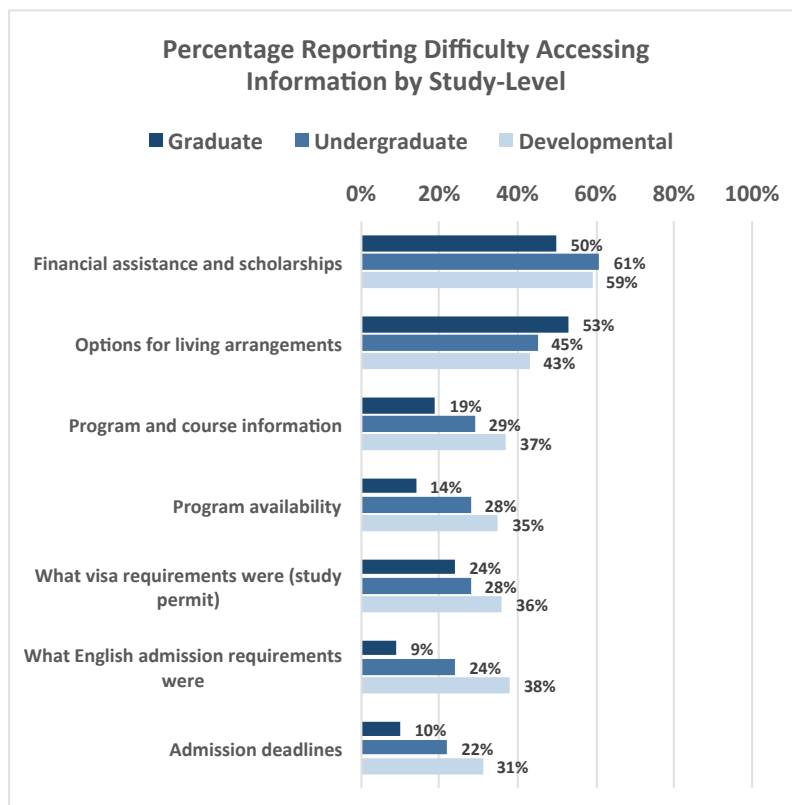
Respondents at all study levels indicated institutional websites were the most useful source of information while planning studies.

Respondents at all study levels indicated institutional websites were the most useful source of information while planning studies. Overall, 61% of respondents reported institutional websites were useful, and 33% found them somewhat useful. Developmental students appear to have relied on a wider range of information sources when navigating registration and relocation processes. Notably, these students were more reliant on direct communication with friends and family (86%) and more likely than graduate students to have found information from an agent²² to be useful (67% vs. 37%). Developmental students were also more likely to have utilized government websites to find information regarding studying in BC.

Survey respondents were asked about the ease or difficulty of finding information on specific topics prior to arriving at an institution. Overall, respondents at all study levels found it easy (or very easy) to access information about these topics. The rank order of various items remains unchanged from the 2008 survey.²³



Information on living arrangements, financial assistance, and scholarships clearly presented the largest challenges and approximately one-quarter of respondents had some level of difficulty gathering information about program availability, course information and visa requirements. The chart below reports the percentage of respondents indicating it was difficult or very difficult to find information on specified topics. When analyzed by study level, some valuable findings are highlighted.



Eighty percent of respondents at all study levels reported that their institution was helpful in preparing them for their studies.

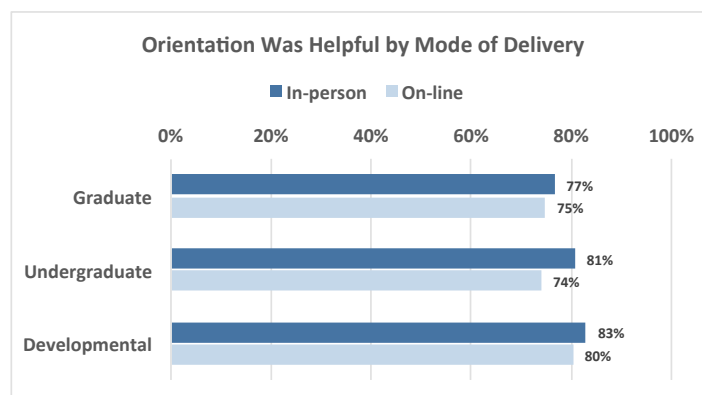
For areas surveyed, the level of difficulty encountered was inversely related to study level. Developmental students tended to have the greatest difficulty accessing information. Age and ability to speak English may be important factors. There were two areas where this pattern did not hold. Regarding information on financial assistance and scholarships, undergraduate students reported the highest level of difficulty, and options for living arrangements were challenging for graduate students. The higher median age of graduate students relative to respondents at other study levels may influence housing requirements. These students may be more likely to require housing that can accommodate spouses or dependent children, or may find housing designed primarily for younger, undergraduate students to be unsuitable for their lifestyle.

Uniformly, 80% of respondents at all study levels reported institutions were helpful in preparing them for their studies (very helpful - 27%; helpful - 53%). The survey sought further insight into this general endorsement by gathering respondent experiences on campus in three areas; new student orientation, adjusting to educational and extra-curricular environment, and key sources of support.

Orientation and Sources of Support

BC public post-secondary institutions recognize the importance of orienting students prior to, or early in their attendance on campus. In the 2014 AUCC survey of seventy-seven Canadian universities, it is reported 93% provide an orientation program to international students on arrival. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding orientation and if program content could be improved.

Overall, 22% of respondents reported attending an online orientation, and 62% reported attending an orientation in person. A large majority found orientation helpful or very helpful, with in person orientation (80%) somewhat more popular than online (75%). When examined according to the student's study level, developmental students (29%) were more likely to have participated in an online orientation than undergraduate (22%) or graduate (18%) students, and least likely to have attended an orientation in person.²⁴ The figure below summarizes how helpful students at each study level found orientations delivered in person and online.



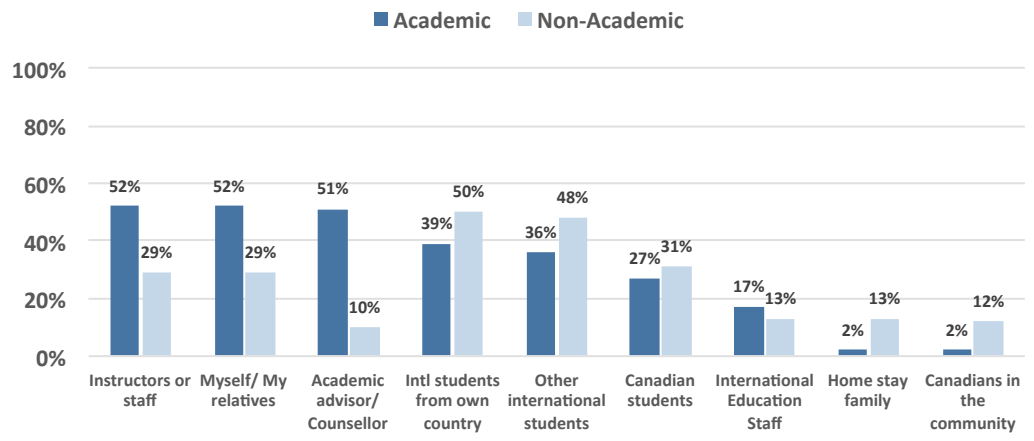


While developmental students reported they benefited most from orientations, and graduate students reported they benefited least, it is important to note three-quarters of respondents at all study levels found these sessions helpful. Online orientations have grown in popularity in part because they can be accessed by students in their country of origin, potentially allowing them to work through the material at their own pace, and to be more prepared upon arrival. Respondents indicated this approach, was marginally less effective than in-person orientation. Undergraduate students showed the clearest preference for in-person orientation.

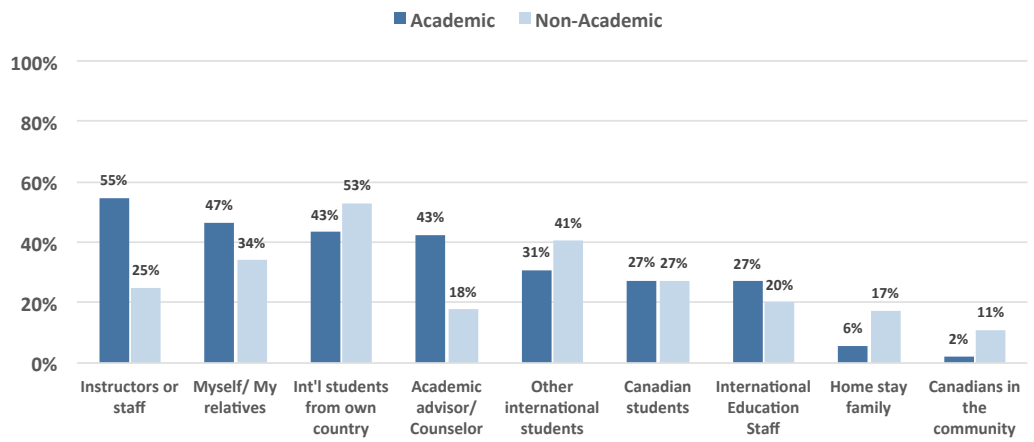
Supporting students during studies is key to academic success. International students may face additional challenges compared to domestic students including the need to adapt to a cultural, linguistic and social environment that may be quite new to them, without access to family and social support networks. As a result, these students may require more support to succeed.

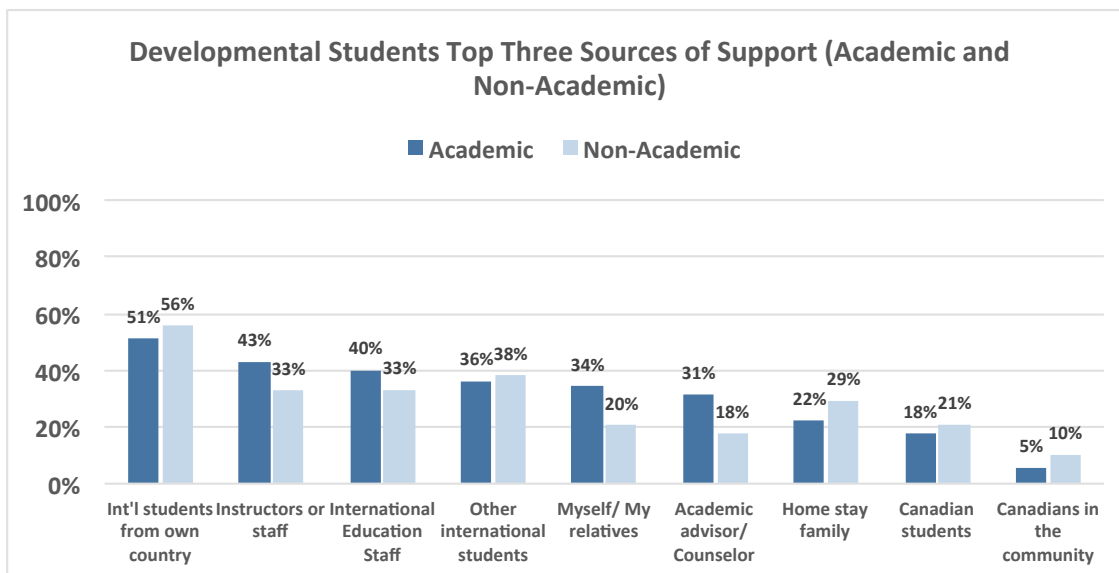
The BC International Student Survey asked respondents where they sought (or would seek) support for both academic and non-academic issues. Interesting patterns emerge when sources of support for academic and non-academic matters are compared at various study levels. Over 40% of undergraduate and graduate students reported relying on four sources of support for academic issues - institutional support including faculty, staff, and academic advisors; and non-institutional support including solving an issue alone or turning to fellow international students from their home country. These two groups also sought similar sources of support for non-academic issues; other students, international and Canadian—and relatives.

Graduate Students Top Three Sources of Support (Academic and Non-Academic)



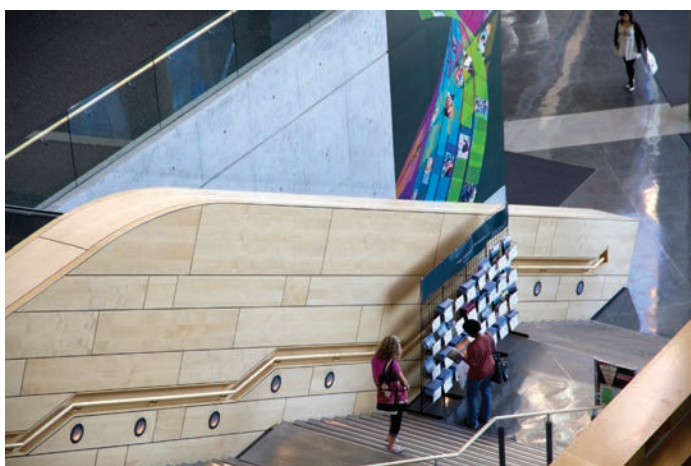
Undergraduate Students Top Three Sources of Support (Academic and Non-Academic)





Developmental students differ from students at other study levels regarding sources of support. Developmental students were more likely to seek assistance on academic matters from students from the same home country, international education office staff at the institution, and from their homestay family. They were less likely to seek academic support from advisors or to attempt to answer a question themselves. To the extent developmental students are primarily studying the English language, they may be able to find academic support from a wider range of English speakers, both inside and outside of their institution.

In terms of support for non-academic issues, developmental students were similar to undergraduates and graduates in relying primarily on other international students and international education staff. Importantly, Canadian students, Canadians in the community, and homestay families were among the least likely sources of support identified by students at all study levels.

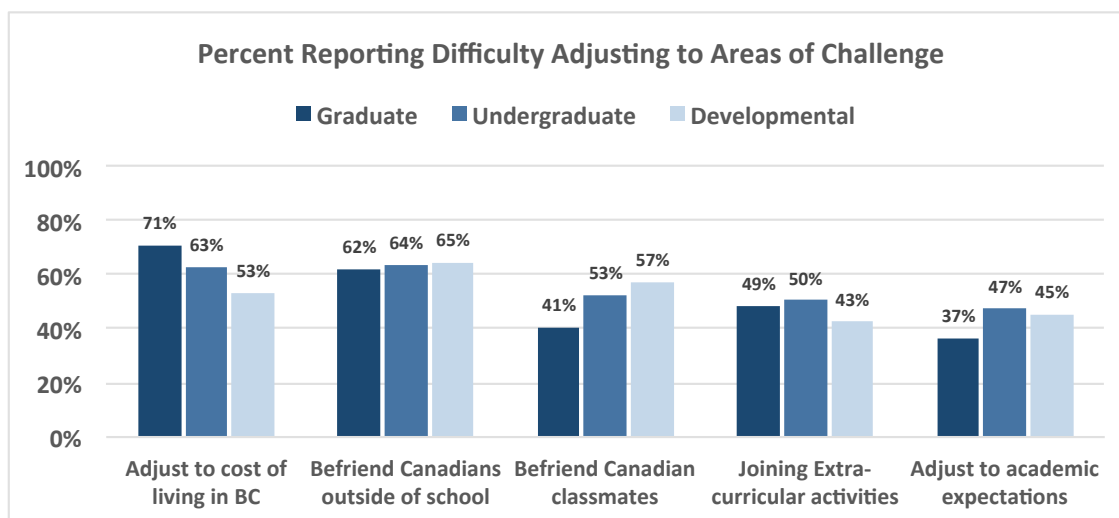


Getting involved in extracurricular activities, making Canadian friends, and adjusting to academic expectations remain challenging for respondents of the survey.

Challenges in the Educational and Extra-curricular Environment

Finally, respondents were asked to rate how easy or difficult it was to adjust to challenges commonly faced when beginning studies in a new country. In 2008, respondents identified getting involved in extracurricular activities, making Canadian friends, and adjusting to academic expectations as the most challenging (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009, p. 32). As indicated in the figure below, these areas continue to remain challenging for respondents of the survey.

The finding that international students attending post-secondary institutions in BC have difficulty engaging socially with Canadian students is consistent with the results of a recent national survey; “one of the strategic advantages of an internationalized campus - the formation of social bonds between international students and Canadian counterparts - has been unsuccessful” (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE] 2014, p. 38). Similar findings emerged from research conducted in Australia (Lawson, 2012), and the United States (Gareis, 2012). A survey authored by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2014) includes a number of recommendations to improve integration of international students, based on survey results and interviews with respondents (pp. 47-49).



Generally, graduate students found adjustments easier, with the exception of adjusting to the cost of living in BC.²⁵ While developmental students reported the most difficulty accessing required information early in studies (as noted earlier in this report), they did not describe exceptional difficulty adjusting to these challenges once arriving in BC. This likely reflects, in part, the shorter length of their program of study.

As noted above, cost (tuition and cost of living) emerged as an important consideration when respondents were asked about the process of choosing an international institution. The cost of living in BC was also the most frequently cited challenge faced by international students who responded to the BC ISS, and the degree of difficulty encountered by students varied by study level, with 71% of graduate students, 63% of undergraduates and 53% of developmental students reporting difficulty adjusting to cost of living.

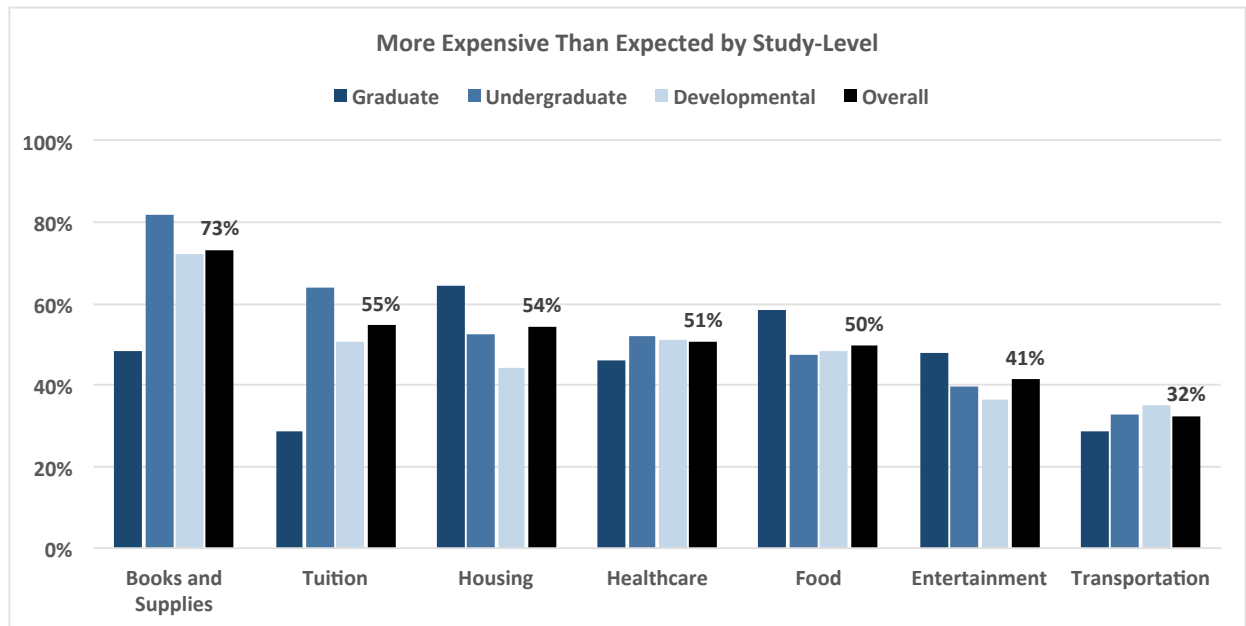
Given the efforts BC public post-secondary institutions invest in providing accurate information on tuition and living costs to prospective students, the findings relating to these areas may be surprising. It is, however, consistent with the latest national data from the 2014 CBIE Survey, which found that “...students are concerned about the cost of studying and living in Canada. Paying for tuition, books and other related study costs was the biggest financial concern for students, with 85% stating that they were either very (50%) or somewhat (31%) concerned with this cost” (CBIE 2014, p. 34).

Respondents were asked to report on actual costs relative to expectations. Overall, respondents found costs to exceed expectations in most areas. With the exception of entertainment and transportation, at least 50% of respondents reported paying more than anticipated. Undergraduate respondents most commonly identified books and supplies (82%), tuition (64%), and housing (52%) as expensive. Graduate students identified indirect costs including housing (64%), food (58%), and entertainment (48%) as more expensive than expected, while tuition fees did not surprise the majority of graduate students.



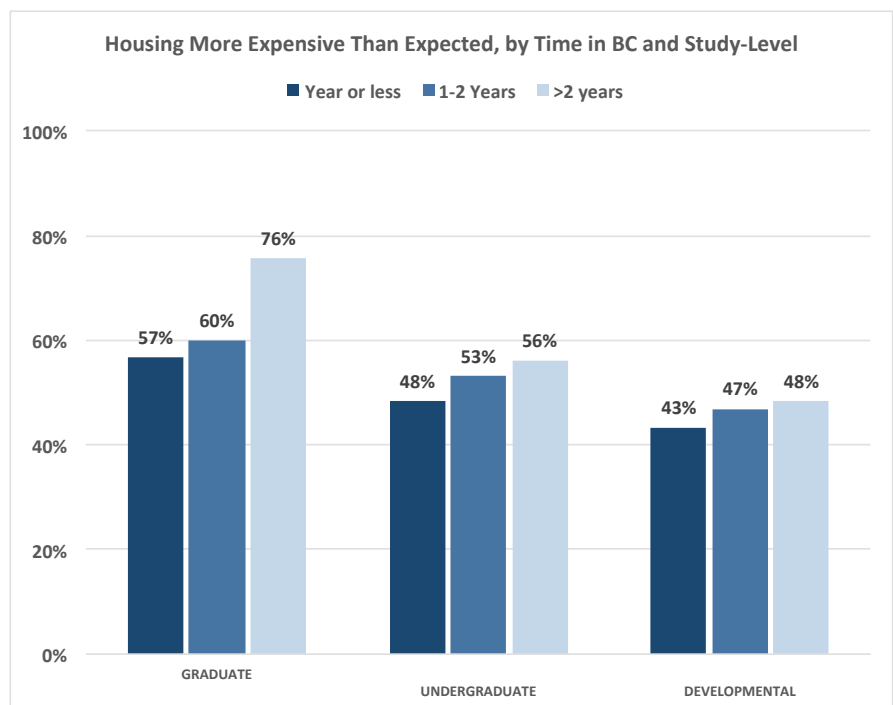
Seventy-one percent of graduate students, 63% of undergraduates and 53% of developmental students reported difficulty adjusting to the cost of living.

Undergraduate respondents most commonly identified books and supplies (82%), tuition (64%), and housing (52%) as expensive.



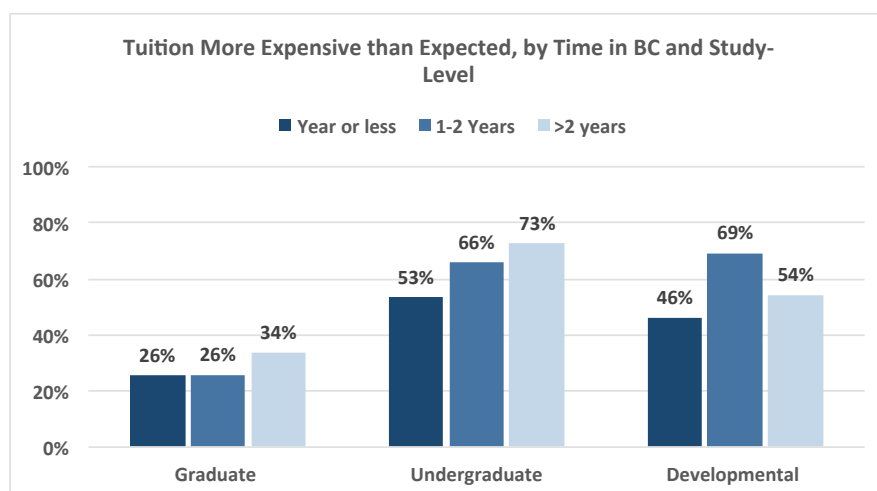
Survey data suggests concern regarding cost in key areas increases consistently and dramatically the longer international students remain in the province. For example, graduate students felt the cost of housing more acutely the longer they resided in BC. Graduate students were more likely to attend an institution in the lower mainland than undergraduates or developmental students, which likely contributed to this finding.

Survey data suggests concern regarding cost in key areas increases consistently and dramatically the longer international students remain in the province.



Similarly, undergraduate students expressed increasing concern about tuition costs as time in BC increased. Comments elicited from the survey suggest two possible reasons. Students commented on the significant gap between international tuition fees and those paid by the domestic students in their classes. Possibly, students become more sensitized to this gap as they settle into life in BC and day-to-day challenges of relocation and studying in a new country are mastered. Respondents also commented on the annual tuition increases that many experienced during their studies in BC. This increase in tuition is not unique to BC. Statistics Canada recently reported the significant rate of increase in international tuition across the country; particularly in undergraduate programs:

“Nationally, average tuition fees for international undergraduate students rose 5.3% to \$20,447 in 2014/2015, following a 6.8% increase in 2013/2014.... Average tuition for international full-time students in graduate programs rose 3.3% to \$13,934.” (Statistics Canada, 2014)



The cost of studying in BC is a concern to the majority of survey respondents. Books and supplies, tuition, and housing are seen as challenges. This concern affects a larger percentage of students as they remain in BC, and is worthy of further investigation. It is noted that the factors influencing cost, and perceived value, are complex. Included is the relative cost of international education in other jurisdictions, which are functions of tuition policies, cost of living, currency fluctuations, program length, and perceptions of the quality of education. In some cases, the return on investment is measured in subsequent career success.

Cost studies of Canadian post-secondary education for international students suggest costs are competitive.²⁶ A recent report finds tuition at virtually all BC colleges is highly affordable relative to other global options (Illuminate Consulting Group, 2015). However, tuition is only one measure of affordability. According to this study, the cost competitiveness of undergraduate university programs at BC universities drops consider-



ably when additional fees, costs of living, projected tuition increases and inflation are incorporated. The authors note that baccalaureate programs at the BC universities included in the study are four years in length (compared to three-year degrees in other key countries), and the cost of living for students attending these institutions in the BC lower mainland is significant. Graduate programs in British Columbia appear to be more affordable than comparable programs in Canada and internationally (Illuminate Consulting Group, 2015).

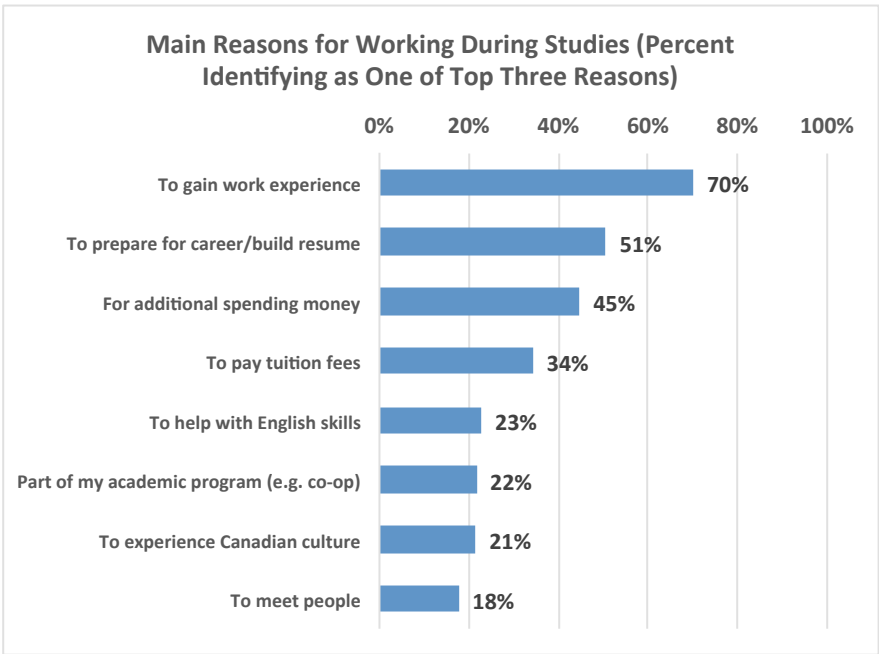
BC's robust transfer system enters into the equation when calculating the cost of an undergraduate degree as an international student. The lower tuition costs at BC colleges, and lower cost of living in regions outside of the lower mainland, offer savings over the first two years of a baccalaureate credential. Seventy-eight percent of undergraduate and 84% of developmental respondents to the BC ISS indicate the quality of the BC Transfer System was an important factor in the decision to study in BC, and 13% of international students entering the BC public post-secondary system over a nine-year period attended multiple post-secondary institutions. Students were more likely to enrol in multiple institutions if they first entered the system via a BC college or institute (BC Student Transitions Project 2014, p. 26).

The ability to partially finance study and living costs through work during studies may impact affordability for students. Seventy-five percent of all respondents to the survey indicated the ability to work during studies was important in the decision to attend school in BC.²⁷ This is higher than findings in the 2014 student engagement survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE); it was reported 35% of respondents indicated the chance to gain work experience was a top reason for choosing Canada as a study destination (McBride, 2015).²⁸

Overall, 68% of respondents to the current survey indicated they had worked, or planned to work while studying in BC.²⁹ Undergraduate students (71%) and graduate students (70%) were far more likely to indicate their plans included work. Only 45% of developmental students indicated they planned to work during studies. However, when asked to provide the reasons for working during studies, respondents cited motivations that went beyond tuition or earning spending money. The largest percentage of respondents indicated they sought work in order to gain experience (70%). This was also the most commonly chosen response at each study level.

Graduate students were more likely to indicate they worked in order to pay tuition (45%) compared to students at other study levels. Developmental students were more likely to report taking a job during studies in order to help with English skills (49%) or to experience Canadian culture (38%). Over 75% of respondents reported they found it difficult (52%) or very difficult (24%) to find a job during studies. Developmental students had the most difficulty (84%) while graduate students had the least (69%).

In conclusion, over 80% of respondents to the BC ISS indicated tuition cost and the cost of living were an important factor in their consideration to study in BC, and over 64% indicated adjusting to the cost of living was a challenge on arrival. Books, supplies, tuition and housing were most frequently identified as more expensive than expected, and while over two-thirds of respondents indicated intentions to work during their studies, more than three-quarters found it difficult to secure paid work.



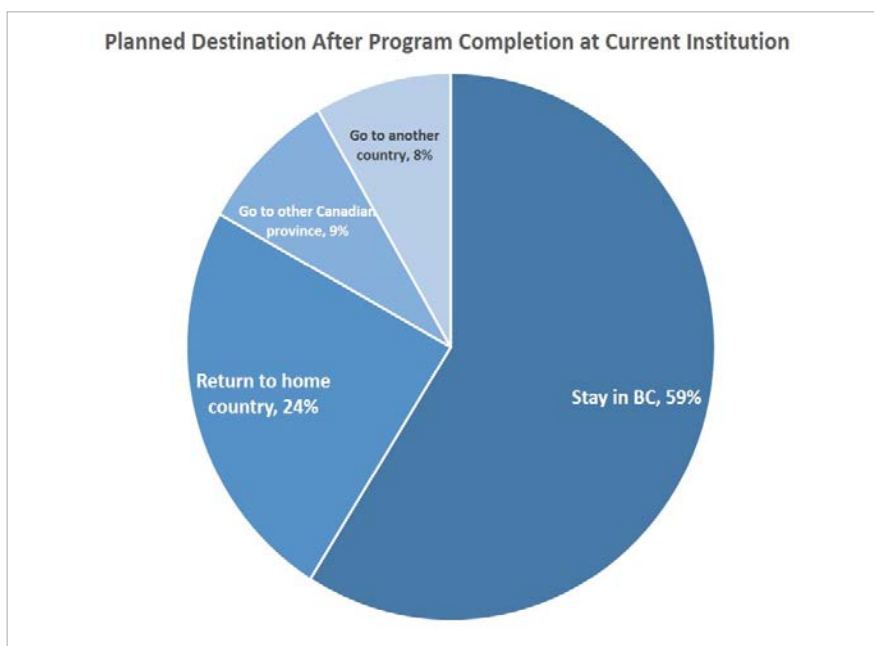
When asked to provide the main reasons for working during their studies, respondents cited motivations other than paying tuition or earning spending money. The largest percentage of respondents indicated that they sought work in order to gain work experience (70%).

The BC International Student Survey asked respondents about their plans after leaving their current institution, and found that almost sixty percent of them planned to stay in BC.

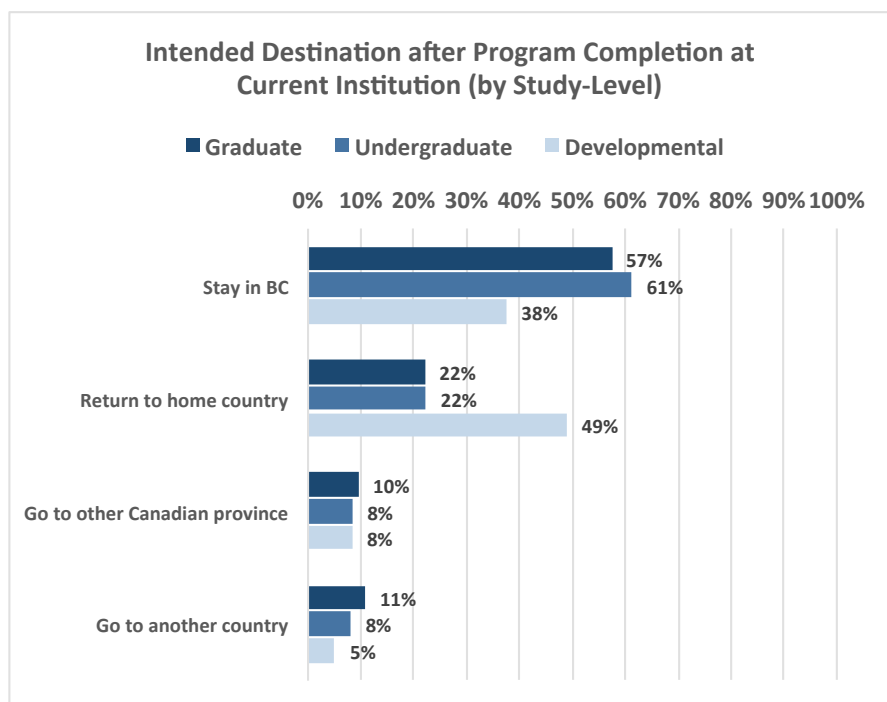
Goals

A key benefit of a robust international education system is the opportunity to invite talented students from around the world to experience BC. Some of them will choose to work in the province on a short- or long-term basis. As the Canadian Bureau for International Education notes, “(t)hese opportunities allow international students to be catalysts for stronger economic, scientific and political linkages between Canada and their home countries in the longer term, as well as contributors to Canada’s economy and society while they gain practical work experience to launch their careers” (McBride 2015) (See also, Government of Canada 2014, p.9). In many cases, these policy objectives align with the goals of international students. A national survey of international students in Canada recently reported, “approximately 50% of Canada’s international students indicate that it is their long-term goal to gain permanent residency” (CBIE 2014, p. 5).

The BC ISS included questions regarding plans following completion of studies. Sixty percent of respondents indicated plans to stay in BC, almost 10% planned to move elsewhere in Canada following program completion, and the remaining 32% planned to return home (24%) or visit another country (8%).³⁰



Undergraduate and graduate students were more likely to report intentions to stay in BC after leaving their current institution. Conversely, developmental students were more than twice as likely to report intentions to return to their home country.



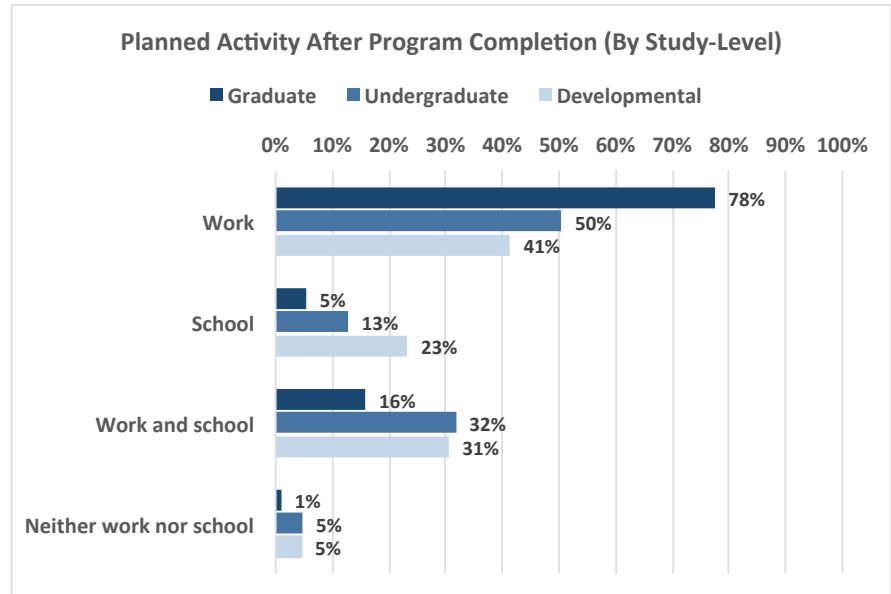
Respondents were also asked if plans after leaving their current institution focused on work, further education, or a combination. The majority of respondents intended to enter the workforce either full-time (56%) or in combination with further studies (28%). The table below illustrates, respondents who indicated plans to stay in BC were most likely to plan to enter the workforce full-time (63%) and least likely to plan to continue their education, alone or in combination with work. While the structure of the questions present challenges for comparison, there is indication that a greater proportion of respondents in the survey see an immediate future in BC than was the case in 2008.³¹

The majority of respondents intended to enter the workforce either full-time (56%) or in combination with further studies (28%).

Planned Activity by Intended Destination Following Program Completion

	Work	School	Work and school	No work or school
Stay in British Columbia	63%	8%	27%	2%
Go to another Canadian Province	51%	12%	31%	6%
Return to home country	47%	21%	27%	4%
Go to another country	31%	21%	34%	14%

Graduate students (78%) were more likely to report they planned only to work following studies than were undergraduate (50%) or developmental students (41%). Respondents in undergraduate and developmental programs were more likely to report intentions to continue studies, either full- or part-time.



BC's Student Outcomes Surveys allow further perspective on international student goals by examining early outcomes of students who completed post-secondary programs. In the 2014 DACSO survey³² the majority of international respondents were exclusively working (53%), while 24% were exclusively studying. Fourteen percent of international respondents were neither studying nor working compared to 9% of domestic respondents. As newcomers to the labour market in BC, international students (including those who have completed a sub-baccalaureate credential) might face more barriers than similarly qualified domestic students. Domestic students may have advantages in terms of linguistic and cultural fluency, network, and a prior work record familiar to potential employers. While these differences are apparent to some extent in the DACSO results,³³ the majority of international respondents report success in transitioning to work or further study in BC.³⁴ International student respondents to the DACSO survey in 2014 were also more likely than domestic respondents to describe employment as permanent, and to link education to employment.³⁵

The BGS is offered to BC students who have completed a baccalaureate, two years after credential completion.³⁶ Although results from the 2014 BGS indicate the median full-time income of international respondents was lower than that reported by their domestic counterparts, international students had a higher level of labour market participation and a similar unemployment rate to domestic graduates who responded to the survey.³⁷





Conclusion

Expansion in the international education sector in BC is supported by significant policy initiatives such as the Government of BC's International Education Strategy, as well as the efforts of post-secondary institutions to ensure campuses reflect a global perspective, preparing domestic and international students to succeed in the global economy.³⁸ The feedback offered by over 9,200 international students through the BC International Student Survey provides important insights into their experiences. Participating institutions received detailed results from students attending their institution to assist in reviewing and strengthening of policies and practices. This report supplements institutional findings with answers to a number of questions on a provincial scale.

What information sources did international students rely upon when learning about post-secondary educational opportunities in Canada?

Twenty percent of survey respondents visited Canada prior to enrolling in a post-secondary institution. Nine percent graduated from high school in BC. International students were most likely to rely on information from family and friends. Graduate students used institutional websites and other Internet sources, while undergraduate and developmental students showed more reliance on information provided by agents.

What were key factors that shaped a decision to study in BC?

Quality of education was overwhelmingly the most important factor for students deciding to study in BC. Institutional reputation, safety and security, and future employment goals were also cited as important. Safety and security was particularly important for students in developmental programs. Eighty-eight percent of respondents considered tuition cost as a factor in their decision to study in BC.

What information sources did international students consult as they prepared to arrive and undertake studies?

Respondents found institutional websites, and information gathered through family, friends and other students to be most helpful as they prepared to arrive and undertake studies in BC. Developmental students relied on a wider range of information sources, and were more likely to report that information provided by agents, and the information made available through government websites was useful.

Is the required information easily accessible? How effective was their orientation?

Respondents indicated most of the information required was accessible. Over 70% indicated information on admission deadlines, English language requirements, program availability, course information, and visa requirements is easy to access. Developmental students experienced the most difficulty accessing information in these areas. Information on housing, scholarships and financial aid continue to be difficult for international students to access, with housing information presenting a greater challenge for graduate students.


International students in BC public post-secondary institutions reported the orientation they received was helpful. Over 80% of developmental and undergraduate students found in-person orientations helpful. Students at all study levels found in-person orientations more helpful than those provided online, however, the difference was marginal for graduate and developmental students. Undergraduate students reported a clear preference for in-person orientation.

Once studies began, what challenges did they face, and where did they find support?

Consistent with findings from recent surveys in Canada, Australia and the United States, over half of respondents to the BC International Student Survey reported challenges in getting to know domestic students both inside and outside their programs. Respondents reported a number of costs associated with their studies were higher than anticipated. The cost of textbooks, supplies, housing, and tuition were identified as challenges. Undergraduate and developmental students were more concerned with annual tuition costs than were graduate students. Concerns about housing and tuition costs increased among students the longer they resided in BC; despite annual tuition costs in BC that seem to be competitive with other jurisdictions.

When faced with academic or non-academic challenges, respondents to the survey turned to a variety of sources for support. Undergraduate and graduate students reported turning to instructors, staff, and advisors for unsolved academic problems. Students in developmental programs were more likely to seek help for academic issues from other students.





For non-academic issues, respondents from all study levels looked first to fellow-students for support. International students from all study levels indicated they were less likely to seek support from Canadian students or Canadians in the wider community when dealing with academic and non-academic challenges.

How satisfied are international students with various aspects of their experience in BC?

Eighty-nine percent of respondents to the 2014 BC International Student Survey reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their institution overall, and 87% were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of instruction. All of these factors were also rated highly in 2008. The satisfaction rate for each of the 11 factors polled was 80% or higher. Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated they were attending their first-choice institution. Data from two other provincial surveys suggests students remain satisfied following program completion.

Do students plan to work during their studies in BC?

Undergraduate students (71%) and graduate students (70%) indicated they worked, or planned to work while studying in BC. A much lower percentage of developmental students indicated plans to work. Work was seen as a means to gain experience and to build a resume. Less than 50% of respondents stated they were working primarily to pay expenses or to earn supplemental income. Over 75% of international students seeking work reported difficulty finding a job during studies.

Following completion of a program, what are student's plans?

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents indicated they planned to stay in BC following completion of a program at their current institution, and 9% indicated they planned to relocate to another Canadian province. Graduate students were most likely to indicate plans to stay in Canada, while students in developmental programs were more than twice as likely to report intentions to return to their country of origin. The majority of students indicated they intended to enter the workforce after leaving their current institution, either full-time (56%) or in combination with further studies (28%). Respondents indicating plans to remain in BC were most likely to enter the workforce following a program. Results from two other province-wide surveys indicate international students who completed studies are successful in transitioning to work in BC.

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Endnotes

¹ Universities Canada was formerly the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

² See Appendix A for the Steering Committee membership.

³ Throughout this report, the previous survey will be identified as the 2008 survey, reflecting the year in which the data was collected. The final report (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, 2009) is cited in the year it was published.

⁴ Existing information sharing agreements between BC Stats and 23 participating public post-secondary institutions allowed for secure sharing of personal information required to deliver the survey, and allowed BC Stats (with the informed consent of respondents) to provide participating institutions with survey results. In addition, one private institution - Columbia College - entered into an information sharing agreement with BC Stats and participated in the survey.

⁵ Participating institutions were asked to submit contact information on all international students who held a valid study permit, enrolled and taking classes in the fall semester of 2014. Students who fit the cohort definition were included regardless of level of study or credential. Students not located in British Columbia (i.e. students at off-shore campuses or distance-only students) were excluded from the study. The questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

⁶ Although collected separately, the cohort for the BC ISS was drawn from the same sources as the data collected for the province's key source for public post-secondary student data - the Student Transitions Project (http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/student_transitions/). The modest difference in international student headcount between the BC ISS cohort and the Student Transitions project is in large part comprised of students from Columbia College, a private college that participated in the BC ISS but does not contribute data to the Student Transitions Project.

⁷ Population data from the Student Transitions Project (2013/14 academic year).

⁸ In order to identify any significant response bias by country of origin, a subset of respondents who attended the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and the BC Institute of Technology was analyzed. Combined, these institutions hosted 45% of the international students included in the full sample. Within this subsample, the response rates for students originating in China (21%), India (28%), USA (23%), and Korea (22%) were reasonably similar to the overall response rate (25%). Students from Japan (18%) were somewhat under-represented among respondents.

⁹ There is a minor variance (approximately 1%) between numbers reported from the Student Transitions Project and the annual international student headcount reported by the Ministry of Advanced Education. The majority of this variance arises from how student records with ambiguities are treated. In particular, a small number of international students are recorded as having Canada as their country of origin. The annual international headcount eliminates these cases while STP includes them.

¹⁰ See Appendix B for a detailed table aligning credential categories with the three study levels.

¹¹ Percentage among those students whose study level could be determined.

¹² The structure of the relevant question in the 2008 survey makes direct comparison of study levels difficult. In 2008, students were permitted to choose more than one study level, and a number did so (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009, p. 15). The only apparent difference in the study level

of students responding to the two surveys is at the developmental level, where a significantly larger percentage of students categorized themselves in 2008. Given the option to self-identify at more than one study level, it is conceivable that students may have indicated that they were both improving their English language skills and undertaking study at one of the other levels.

¹³ In 2008, 69% of respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their BC post-secondary institution, and 66% indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their program. (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009, pp. 46-47)

¹⁴ For further information on the DACSO survey methodology, see <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/DACSOPublications.aspx>

¹⁵ Further information on the Baccalaureate Graduates Survey, and recent full reports, are available at http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/BGS_Publications/BGSPublications.aspx. Note that, due to the differing response scales, levels of satisfaction between the DACSO and BGS questions with respect to quality of instruction cannot be readily compared.

¹⁶ Ninety-three percent of domestic students were satisfied or very satisfied with the education they received.

¹⁷ Seventy-nine percent of domestic students thought the quality of their instruction was good or very good.

¹⁸ Based on a supplemental analysis of a subset of respondents, students originating in China and Hong Kong identified agents as the most common source of information after friends or family. These were the highest percentages among those source countries with a significant number of international students in BC.

¹⁹ The following information sources were identified by fewer than 25% of all respondents: <http://studyinbc.com>; www.learnlivebc.ca; www.welcomebc.ca; workshops or school fairs in my home country; other student at institution; friends or family.

²⁰ There is extensive literature on international student decision-making processes. A number of works describe concern themselves with the nature of the academic enterprise and the impact of an increasing commodification of higher education (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009). A burgeoning literature driven by marketing-influenced analyses (often focused on the decision-making processes of students bound for MBA programs around the world) (Daily, Farewell & Kumar 2010) adapts models of the “pushes” and “pulls” that drive international student mobility (McMahon, 1992), or extends the “marketing mix” to student decision-making (Ivy, 2008).

²¹ Percentage of respondents indicating factor was “very important” or “somewhat important” in their decision.

²² Respondents at all study levels reported that agents were a useful source of information after acceptance at their institution somewhat more often in the current survey (62%) than they did in 2008 (52%)

²³ It should be noted that the 2008 survey offered respondents a five point scale while the current survey employed a four point scale.

²⁴ Fifty-six percent of developmental students reported attending an orientation in-person versus graduate students (62%) and undergraduate students (63%).

²⁵ Respondents were also asked to indicate challenges adjusting to climate, food, and interaction with instructors. None of these factors were identified as problematic by more than 30% of any study level.

²⁶ “When asked to identify their top three countries based on quality of education, respondents chose the USA, the UK and Australia. Those same countries also happened to feature the highest overall costs per year. While Canada ranked 4th in terms of quality of education, it ranked 6th in terms of cost, which suggests good value for money” (HSBC, 2014). See also (Illuminate Consulting Group, 2015).

²⁷ On June 1, 2014, a number of changes were implemented to federal regulations impacting international students in Canada. Among these, study permits for full-time international students at most public post-secondary institutions were changed to allow permit holders to work part-time off campus without applying for a separate work permit.

²⁸ Even when the comparison is restricted to those students who indicated in the current survey that the ability to work while studying was very important (47%), it appears that there are significantly different findings in the two surveys. It is possible that BC international students see employment during their studies as more important than do international students in other Canadian jurisdictions. It may also be the case that changes in federal regulations have increased the proportion of international students with an interest in working during their studies.

²⁹ In the 2008 survey, students were asked if they had obtained an off-campus work permit. Twenty-six percent indicated they had. Of those who had not obtained a permit, 62% indicated they intended to do so (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009, p. 38)

³⁰ BC ISS respondents were more likely to identify an intention to remain in the province and the country than did respondents to CBIE's recent national survey, which posed a more specific question, and found that "50% of all respondents indicated their intention to apply for permanent resident status in Canada... compared with 57% in 2013" (Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014, p. 36). They do note that international students from Western Canada were most likely to indicate a desire to stay in Canada, at 55% (Canadian Bureau for International Education 2014, p. 37).

³¹ In 2008, respondents were asked a multiple response question that allowed them to choose more than one answer. Fifty-four percent indicated that they intended to work in BC, compared to 63% in the current survey.

³² As described earlier, The Degree, Associate Degree and Certificate Student Outcomes survey collects information from respondents who completed all, or a substantial proportion of any of these programs. Respondents were surveyed between 9 and 20 months after leaving their institution. For further information on the DACSO survey methodology, see <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/DACSOPublications.aspx>

³³ International students responding to the DACSO survey in 2014 were more likely to report being unemployed (17%) relative to domestic respondents (9%).

³⁴ Sixty-two percent of international students responding to the DACSO survey in 2014 reported that they were employed. Thirty-four percent reported they were currently studying. Note that these are not exclusive categories.

³⁵ Eighty-four percent of international students responding to the DACSO survey in 2014 reported that the knowledge and skills gained in their program were useful in performing their job. This exceeds the high percentage of domestic students who reported that their knowledge and skills were useful in performing their job (79%). Seventy-four percent of international students responding to the DACSO survey in 2014 reported that their main job was related to their training. Seventy-one percent of domestic respondents reported a job related to their training.

³⁶ As noted earlier, the Baccalaureate Graduate Survey is offered to graduates two years after completion. For further information on the BGS survey methodology, see http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/BGS_Publications/BGSPublications.aspx

³⁷ International respondents had a higher labour force participation rate (91%) than did domestic graduates (89%) who responded to the BGS in 2014. However, their median full-time annual income was lower (\$41,000) than that reported by domestic respondents (\$50,000) and their unemployment rate was slightly higher (7% vs 6% for domestic respondents).

³⁸ See (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2012) and (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2014).

Appendix A: Steering Committee Membership

The BC International Student Survey Steering Committee provided expert advice on the development and administration of the survey, and feedback on the analysis of the results.

Robert Adamoski, Assoc. Director, Admissions and Research, BCCAT

Roger Barnsley, Co-Chair, BCCAT

Kathryn Beaulac, Sr. Policy Advisor, International Education, Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED)

Adrian Conradi, Assoc. Director, International Student Services, TRU

Lisa Domae, Vice President, Student and Educational Services and Planning, NIC

Rob Fleming, Executive Director and Co-Chair, BCCAT

Troy Hanschen, Registrar and Secretary to Senate, UNBC

Nancy Johnston, Exec. Director, Student Affairs, SFU

Phil Laird, Assoc. Provost, Global Learning, TWU

Randall Martin, Exec. Director, BCCIE

David McGuire, Exec. Director, UFV International, UFV

Karen McKellin, Exec. Director, International Student Initiative, UBC

Zareen Naqvi, Director, Institutional Research and Planning, SFU

Ajay Patel, Associate Vice President, International & Community Engagement, Langara College

Naomi Pope, (then) Director, Research and Analysis, Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED)

Roseanne Sovka, (then) Coordinator, Performance Measurement and Research, Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED)

Anna Tikina, Research Officer, BCCAT

Appendix B: Study-level Definitions

The table below shows the credential categories within the three study-levels used in this report.

PSI_CREDENTIAL_LEVEL		PSI_CREDENTIAL_CATEGORY
GRADUATE	1	DOCTORATE
	2	MASTERS DEGREE
	3	GRADUATE DIPLOMA
	4	GRADUATE CERTIFICATE
UNDERGRADUATE	5	FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE
	6	POST-DEGREE DIPLOMA
	7	POST-DEGREE CERTIFICATE
	8	BACHELORS DEGREE
	9	ADVANCED CERTIFICATE
	10	ADVANCED DIPLOMA
	11	ASSOCIATE DEGREE
	12	DIPLOMA
	13	CERTIFICATE
DEVELOPMENTAL (ESL)	14	DEVELOPMENTAL CREDENTIAL

Appendix C: 2014 International Survey Questionnaire

Note: A complete frequency table for all responses is available online at www.bccat.ca/research/iss

Section 1: Introductory Questions

To confirm, are you currently registered as a student at <INSTITUTION>?

1. *Yes – GO TO Q2*
2. *No – GO TO Q1A*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Q1A Are you registered at a different institution?

Q1B What Institution are you registered at now? [SHOW INSTITUTION LIST AND OTHER SPECIFY]

[NOTE: INSERT THIS INSTITUTION TO QUESTIONS WHERE APPROPRIATE]

What best describes the program are you taking?

1. *Bachelor's degree*
2. *Master's or doctorate degree*
3. *Diploma or certificate*
4. *Trades or apprentice*
5. *English language training*
6. *Other, please specify _____*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

How long have you been studying in B.C.?

1. *Less than 3 months*
2. *3-6 months*
3. *6-12 months*
4. *1-2 years*
5. *2-3 years*
6. *More than 3 years*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

How long have you been at [INST]?

1. *Less than 3 months*
2. *3-6 months*
3. *6-12 months*
4. *1-2 years*
5. *2-3 years*
6. *More than 3 years*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Is English your first language?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Do you live in residence on campus?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Section 2: Student Information and Decisions to Study in B.C.

Had you ever visited British Columbia before deciding to study here?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Have you graduated from senior secondary school (or international equivalent)

1. *Yes*
2. *No [GO TO Q11a]*
8. *Don't know [GO TO Q11a]*
9. *Refused [GO TO Q11a]*

[ASK IF Previous = YES]

Where did you graduate from high school?

1. *British Columbia*
2. *Canadian province other than B.C.*
3. *Elsewhere*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Before applying to [INST], what were your main sources of information on post-secondary education in British Columbia? Please select up to 3.

1. Website www.bccie.bc.ca *British Columbia Council for International Education*
2. Website www.learnlivebc.ca/
3. Website www.welcomebc.ca
4. Websites of post-secondary institutions in B.C.
5. Other internet sites, resources or apps [Go To Q11b]
6. Workshops or School Fairs in My Home Country
7. Agent
8. Another student from [INSTITUTION]
9. Employee from [INSTITUTION]
10. Friends or family
11. School counsellor or teacher in my home country
88. *Don't know*
99. *Refused*

[ask only if "5: Other internet" selected above]

What other internet sites, resources or apps did you use to get information on post-secondary education in British Columbia? Select all that apply:

1. *Facebook*
2. *Twitter*
3. *Pinterest*
4. *Flickr*
5. *Wikipedia*
6. *Google plus*
7. *Youtube*
8. *Weibo (Chinese Twitter)*
9. *Renren (Chinese Facebook)*
10. *WeChat (Chinese chat app)*
11. *VK (European social media site, popular with Russian speakers)*
12. *LinkedIn*
88. *Don't know*
99. *Refused*

Was <INSTITUTION> your first choice university or college in Canada for taking your current studies?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

When making your decision to study in British Columbia, how important was...?

1. *Very important*
 2. *Somewhat important*
 3. *Not very important*
 4. *Not at all important*
 8. *Don't know*
 9. *Refused*
- a. Quality of education
 - b. Quality of B.C.transfer system
 - c. Recognition of previous credits from abroad
 - d. Program of study
 - e. Reputation of institution
 - f. Cost of tuition
 - g. Cost of living
 - h. Safety and security
 - i. Future employment goal
 - j. Ability to work/earn money while studying
 - k. Experiencing a different culture
 - l. Location within B.C.
 - m. Opportunity to immigrate to Canada

After being accepted at [INST], how useful were the following sources of information in helping you prepare for your studies in B.C.?

1. *Very useful*
 2. *Somewhat useful*
 3. *Not very useful*
 4. *Not at all useful*
 8. *Don't know*
 9. *Refused*
- a. website www.bccie.bc.ca British Columbia Council for International Education
 - b. website www.learnlivebc.ca/
 - c. website www.welcomebc.ca
 - d. web site of [INST]
 - e. Agent
 - Q20f. Another student from [INSTITUTION]
 - Q20g. Friends or family

Once you had been accepted to study at [INSTITUTION], how helpful was [INSTITUTION] in helping you prepare for your studies in B.C.?

1. *Very helpful*
2. *Helpful*
3. *Not very helpful*
4. *Not at all helpful*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Before coming to [INSTITUTION], how easy or difficult was it to find information about the following topics?

1. *Very easy*
 2. *Easy*
 3. *Difficult*
 4. *Very difficult*
 5. *N/A; did not try to find information*
 8. *Don't know*
 9. *Refused*
- a. What visa requirements were (Study Permit)
 - b. What English admission requirements were
 - c. Program availability
 - d. Admission deadlines
 - e. Program and course information
 - f. Financial assistance and scholarships
 - g. Options for living arrangements

Section 3: Arrival Experiences

Do you recall attending an orientation session for international students at [INST] online?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

[IF = YES] How helpful was the orientation session that you received online?

1. *Very helpful*
2. *Helpful*
3. *Not very helpful*
4. *Not at all helpful*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Do you recall attending an orientation session for international students at [INST] in person?

1. *Yes*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

[IF = YES] How helpful was the orientation session(s) that you attended in person?

1. *Very helpful*
2. *Helpful*
3. *Not very helpful*
4. *Not at all helpful*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Was there any additional information that you would have liked included in the orientation?

1. *Yes: [Describe]*
2. *No*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

As an international student, how easy or difficult has it been to:

1. *Very easy*
 2. *Easy*
 3. *Difficult*
 4. *Very difficult*
 5. *Not applicable*
 8. *Don't know*
 9. *Refused*
- a. Adjust to different teaching/learning styles
 - b. Deal with teamwork in classes
 - c. Get involved in extra-curricular activities at [INST]
 - d. Interact with instructors & professors
 - e. Adjust to academic expectations
 - f. Make friends with Canadian classmates
 - g. Make friends with Canadians outside of school
 - h. Adjust to cost of living in B.C.
 - i. Adjust to food
 - j. Adjust to climate

When you have questions about your studies, what are you most likely to do? [Up to 3 responses]

1. Ask Canadian students
2. Ask international students from my own country
3. Ask other international students
4. Ask staff from International Office at [INST]
5. Ask academic or program advisor
6. Ask instructors and staff
7. Ask Canadians in the community
8. Ask my home stay family
9. Find the answer myself
88. Don't know
99. Refused

Which of the following are your best sources of **non-academic** support? [Up to 3 responses]

1. Canadian students
2. International students from my own country
3. Other international students
4. Staff from International Office at [INST]
5. Counselling services at [INST]
6. Instructors and staff
7. Canadians in the community
8. My home stay family
9. My relatives
88. Don't know
99. Refused

How satisfied are you with each of the following?

1. Very satisfied
 2. Satisfied
 3. Dissatisfied
 4. Very dissatisfied
 8. Don't know
 9. Refused
- a. Experience obtaining Study Permit
 - b. Admission process at <INSTITUTION>
 - c. Registration process at <INSTITUTION>
 - d. Academic advising
 - e. Quality of instruction
 - f. International Student Services
 - g. Classroom facilities and equipment
 - h. Recreational facilities on campus
 - i. The place where I stay (housing)
 - j. My local social network (e.g. friends, faculty and fellow students)

Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience at <INSTITUTION>?

1. *Very satisfied*
2. *Satisfied*
3. *Dissatisfied*
4. *Very dissatisfied*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

Since coming to B.C., how expensive have you found...

1. *Less expensive than expected*
2. *About as expected*
3. *More expensive than expected*
4. *Not applicable*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

- a. Housing
- b. Tuition
- c. Books and school supplies
- d. Food
- e. Transportation
- f. Health care
- g. Entertainment

Section 4: Work Plans and Future Plans

Have you worked at a job or do you plan to work at a job for money while studying in B.C.?

1. *Yes*
2. *No [Go to Q37a]*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

[ASKED ONLY IF = YES]

What are your main reasons for getting a job during your studies in B.C.? [SELECT UP TO 3]

1. *To pay tuition fees*
2. *For additional spending money*
3. *To prepare for career/build resume*
4. *To gain work experience*
5. *To meet people / experience Canadian culture*
6. *To help with English language skills*
7. *Part of my academic program (e.g. co-op, internship)*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

[ASKED ONLY IF = YES]

In your experience, how easy or difficult is it to find a paying job to do during your studies at [INST]?

1. *Very easy*
2. *Easy*
3. *Difficult*
4. *Very difficult*
8. *Don't know, have not looked for a job yet*
9. *Refused*

Where will you go immediately after you leave <INST>? [One response only]

1. *Stay in B.C.*
2. *Go to another Canadian province - Return to home country*
3. *Go to another country*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

What will you do immediately after you leave <INST>? [One response only]

1. *Work*
2. *School*
3. *Work and school*
4. *Neither work nor school*
8. *Don't know*
9. *Refused*

(LAST SURVEY WINDOW)

Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you have any final comments you would like to make, please use this space.

BC Council on
Admissions & Transfer **BCCAT**

709 – 555 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3H6
bccat.ca | educationplanner.ca | bctransferguide.ca | t 604 412 7700 | f 604 683 0576 | e info@bccat.ca