



The Modern Use and Efficacy of Associate Degrees in British Columbia Public Post-Secondary Education

Background

Associate degrees in British Columbia were introduced in early 1990s and with the goal to facilitate transfer and to “provide an educational experience that lays a solid foundation for further study” (<https://www.bctransferguide.ca/learn-more-about/associate-degrees/>). While two general AD programs are legislated (Associate of Arts and Associate of Sciences), many post-secondary institutions include AD specializations to signal applicability to possible baccalaureate majors students may pursue post-transfer, as well as to highlight eligibility for post-graduate work permits. Enrolment in AD programs at BC public PSIs has been relatively stable; for the period 2014/15 – 2023/24, on average 18K students are enrolled in ADs each year (STP 2025). However, the AD completion rate has been low throughout the history of AD in the province: roughly 7% of the students enrolled in the AD programs at public PSIs each year complete the program (Biggsby, 2016; McQuarrie, 2022). This project is aimed at assessing how BC public post-secondary institutions currently use ADs, and how they perceive the program’s advantages and disadvantages.

Purpose/ Goal

To review the current views and usage of offering associate degrees (ADs) at BC public post-secondary institutions

Scope

BC public post-secondary institutions

Objectives

The objectives of the study include:

1. To review the available literature on the use of associate degrees in British Columbia
2. To review of institutional websites BC public post-secondary
3. To identify factors that may affect the AD use at BC public PSIs
4. To compare the use of ADs with other programs (e.g., university transfer, diploma) to identify potential alignment
5. To assess the perceptions on AD use from institutional professionals (registrars, admissions offices, deans, advisors)
6. To identify areas for future research and, if appropriate, recommendations for practice

Suggested Methodology

Literature review

Review of PSI websites

Survey/interview of BC post-secondary professionals

Timeline

Completion date for this project will be no later than March 2027.

**Budget**

Maximum budget available for this project is \$25,000. This figure is inclusive of all hourly charges, travel and associated costs, and GST.

References

Biggsby, K. (2016). Exploring available data sources to measure success of associate degree students.

<https://www.bccat.ca/reports/SuccessAssociateDegStudents2016.pdf>

McQuarrie, F. (2022). The feasibility of reverse transfer in the BC Transfer System.

<https://www.bccat.ca/reports/ReverseTransfer2022.pdf>