

Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits

February 1995

Objective

To have all degree-granting institutions in Canada approve, adopt and implement by September 1, 1995, a pan-Canadian protocol providing for the transferability of first- and second-year university courses [including the final year of studies leading to a diploma of college studies (DCS) in Quebec and the university transfer courses offered by community colleges and university colleges in British Columbia and Alberta].

Background

At their meeting on August 30-31, and September 1, 1994, the premiers endorsed the CMEC proposal to work with partners on an action plan to increase accessibility, equity, and mobility for postsecondary students, and agreed that CMEC should consider the feasibility of setting a target date for the recognition of postsecondary credits across Canada.

There was general consensus among the participants at the First National Consultation on Education held in Montreal in May 1994 that there are a number of constraints on postsecondary student mobility at the national level. In September 1994, representatives of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) jointly recommended that CMEC address, on a priority basis, the removal of barriers to postsecondary student mobility among Canadian provinces and territories, including barriers to the transferability of university credits.

The ministers agreed at the CMEC meeting held in Charlottetown on September 26-27, 1994, to have Canadian degree-granting institutions implement measures for the recognition of credit transfer for the first two years of undergraduate study by September 1995.

Rationale

- Barriers to university student mobility are being dismantled in many jurisdictions around the world, in recognition of:
 - the educational advantages that accrue from greater mobility;
 - the changing needs and characteristics of the student body; and
 - the growing need for individuals to return to university during the course of their working lives.

- In Canada, the difficulties experienced by transfer students in having their previous university work recognized inhibit mobility and are damaging to students.
- The lack of consistency in the rules and procedures governing credit transfer among the universities, and at times within an institution, leads to substantial confusion for the student and may result in inconsistencies in the recognition of credits.
- Just as barriers to interprovincial trade are being reviewed on a pan-Canadian basis in order to make Canada more competitive economically, so, too, must barriers that restrict student mobility be addressed to make the most effective and efficient use of the nation's human potential.
- A number of provinces in Canada, notably Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, have already taken concrete measures to standardize and facilitate university credit transfer.
- It is desirable for university credit transfer to be harmonized across the country.

Situation analysis

The composition of the university student body in Canada has changed dramatically in recent years. For instance:

- students today, both full-time and part-time, are older and more mobile;
- women account for 53% of full-time undergraduate enrolment, and for 60% of part-time enrolment;
- many full-time students are employed, and most part-time students combine studies and work.

The concept of lifelong learning has become a reality, with more and more individuals moving from school to work and back again.

Increasingly, for work-related or personal reasons, students are forced to relocate and to resume their studies in another institution, either within the province or elsewhere in the country.

In Canada, all degree-granting institutions offer undergraduate programs of study of high academic quality and standards. Indeed, the fact that graduates of any degree-granting institution, from small liberal arts colleges to large multi-disciplinary institutions, compete on an equal footing for admission to graduate school and perform well in their graduate work has been a recognized strength of the Canadian university system.

Universities have expressed support for inter-institutional student mobility, and many have entered into agreements with sister institutions with the express purpose of creating opportunities for students to complete a portion of their undergraduate studies at another

institution. For example, twenty-eight universities across Canada have formed the Canadian University Student Exchange Consortium (CUSEC) and the members of the Regroupement des universités de la francophonie hors Québec have put in place a student exchange program. Within these programs, students are ensured full recognition by their home institution for the credits earned elsewhere.

The senates of the universities in Nova Scotia have already implemented a policy providing for full transferability of first- and second-year courses within the Nova Scotia university system. The University of Prince Edward Island has gone a step further and has committed to recognize credits earned at any university in Canada.

CMEC invites all member institutions of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) to implement a pan-Canadian protocol on the transferability of credits earned during the first two years of university study [including the final year of studies leading to a diploma of college studies (DCS) in Quebec and the university transfer courses offered by community colleges and university colleges in British Columbia and Alberta].

The Protocol

Given the importance of promoting student mobility across Canada at the university level;

given the high quality and standards of all universities in Canada;

given the evolving characteristics of the Canadian university student body where students are generally older, more mobile, and more likely to be forced by work-related or personal reasons to register in more than one university to complete their undergraduate work;

given the need to reassure students that all course work satisfactorily completed in the first two years of university study will be considered for recognition of credit should they be granted admission at another university; and

given the need to reassure students that the process of transferring to another university in Canada will not result in undue additional costs or in the need to repeat essentially equivalent previous learning experiences,

the [name of university] undertakes to take the necessary measures to ensure that, by September 1, 1995, all course work completed by transfer students during the first two years of university study in Canada [including the final year of studies leading to a diploma of college studies (DCS) in Quebec and the university transfer courses offered by community colleges and university colleges in British Columbia and Alberta] will be recognized and fully credited for the purposes of granting a degree provided that:

1. the transfer student is deemed admissible and has been presented with an offer of admission;

2. the transfer student has achieved a passing grade in his/her course(s) and has obtained grade levels that would normally be required of continuing students; and
3. the credits earned are related to the program of study in which the transfer student will register, or the credits can be counted as electives for the program of study.

Academic autonomy

In requesting all member institutions of the AUCC to adhere to this protocol on the transferability of university credits, the ministers of education wish to reassure the universities on the following points:

1. the protocol in no way infringes on the academic autonomy of the university;
2. the protocol applies to transfer students who are deemed admissible by a university. It does not reflect on the policies and practices used by the universities in deciding upon the admissibility of students who apply for admission with advanced standing; and
3. the protocol is consistent with the integrity of university programs and the right of universities to determine program design and delivery, to determine academic prerequisites, and to establish admission criteria and certification requirements of academic achievement.

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