



# Developing Canadian Higher Education Capacity for International Credential Transfer Assessment

October 2019

# ■ Agenda

- Setting the stage
- National international credential assessment practices
- Recommendations
- Discussion

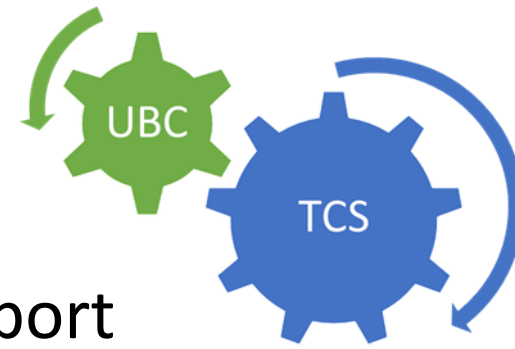
# Project Funder

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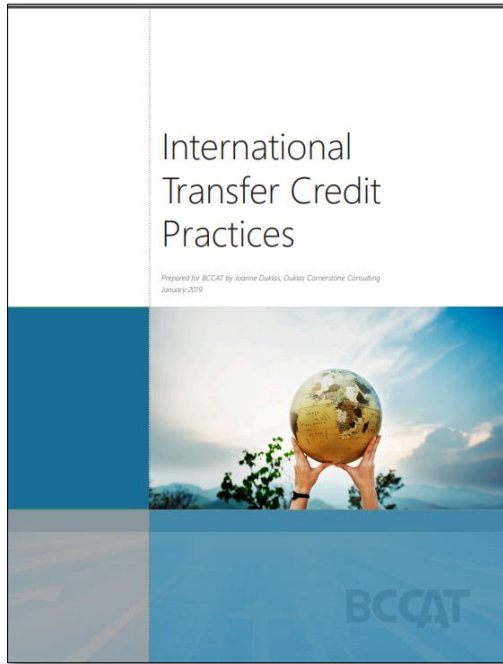
- Peer Reviewed Study
  - Peter Dueck, Royal Roads and faculty colleagues
- BCCAT Leadership and Support
  - Meg Stainsby, Anna Tikina, Valerie Yorkston, Dr. Rob Adamoski
- BC Context important

## BC Context



- Long history researching and building capacity to support student transfer and mobility
  - Fully integrated post-secondary transfer system supporting intra-provincial mobility of 55000+ students per year and transfer of 100s of thousands of credits
- High volume of international students come to study in Canada - most go to BC (152,390, 2017) and Ontario (294,350, 2017)\*
  - BCCAT - 2014 International student survey (9,200, examined learning and living experiences)\*\*
  - UBC/BCCAT Transfer Credit System Project

# ■ International Credential Study



- National study: International document assessment practices for transfer and exchange/study abroad credit

[http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/intl\\_transfer\\_credit.pdf](http://www.bccat.ca/pubs/intl_transfer_credit.pdf)

# ■ Project Objectives

- Current practices
- Challenges
- Options
- Identifying recommendations for improvement

## ■ The Context for International Transfer

- More than 600,000 international students on study permit in Canada\*
  - 435,415 are post-secondary students\*
  - 154% increase across all categories of international students between 2010 and 2018; 16% increase over 2017\*\*
  - 47% increase in study permits issued from 2015 to 2018\*
- Country specific volume increases since 2017: India (40%), China (2%), South Korea (5%+), France (4%), Vietnam (3%)\*
- Study abroad: ~50,000 – desire to double; most go to France\*\*\*

# ■ Research Approach

- Environmental scan
- Interviews
- National bilingual survey
  - 95 respondents for 81 institutions
  - 43% response rate
  - 82% completion rate



# ■ Challenges

CHALLENGE



## **Challenges**

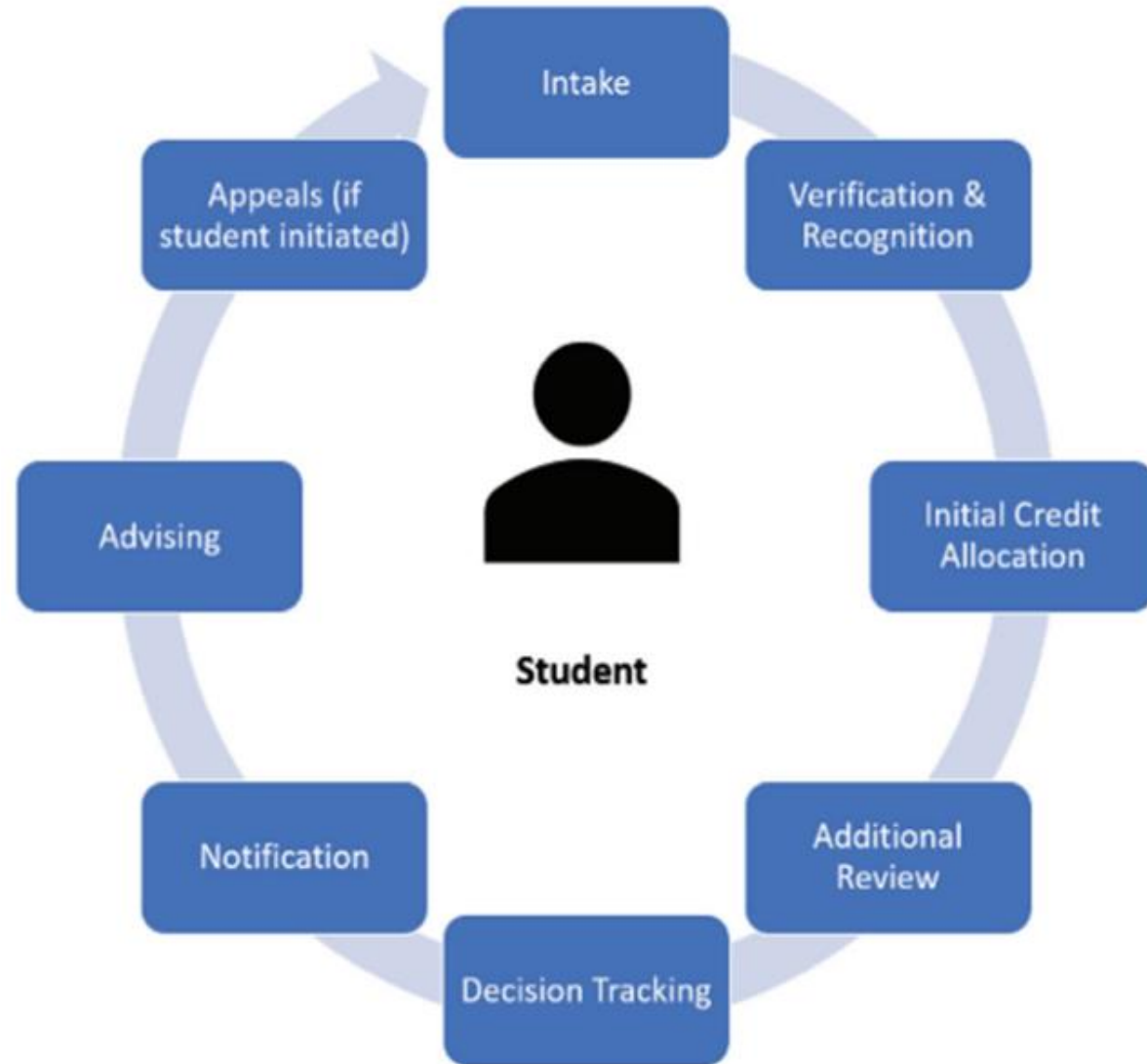
- Tracking gap – processes merged with regular processing
- Volume data gap
- Encouraging engagement from faculty

## **Proxy indicators**

- Volume of international students
- National survey
- Qualitative interviews

## ■ Typology

- 8 stage process
- Faculty and Registrar's Office key
- Mostly managed in-house
- Primarily manual
- Reliant on reviewing individual documents
- Advising woven throughout



## ■ Student Challenges

CHALLENGE



- Timely assessment
- Providing documents (official transcripts, course outlines) – 81%
- Receiving recognition for prior post-secondary studies – 72%
- Misunderstanding nomenclature – 70%
- Accessing information – 56%
- Navigating complex processes – 60%
- Paying for document assessments – 26%

## ■ Institutional Challenges

CHALLENGE



- Lack of resources and – 83%
- Identifying differences between educational systems – 85%
- Identifying fraudulent documents – 80%
- Determining recognition of prior institutions – 78%
- Accessing official documents
- Internal differences in policy and practice
- Lack of scalable system-wide supports (course equivalency database)
- Untimely decision processes

# Quality Assurance & Access Recommendations

- Enhance system wide quality assurance by providing training for faculty and staff - Enhance resources and tools
- Pre-determine transfer credit equivalencies
- Encourage blind equivalency reviews – focus on evaluating the course, not the student
- Integrate flexible assessment practices (including for prior learning assessment) – European Qualifications Passport for Refugees



## ■ Policy Recommendations

- Maintain one policy regardless of source of transfer – 57%
- Embrace policies and procedures that support flexibility, a student focus, and respect for international regional diversity – focus on learning outcomes; grant credit when non-substantial difference exists
  - Conduct further research into the traditional heavy reliance on detailed course syllabi - “Is it reasonable and efficacious to continue such reliance?”
- Establish strategic partnerships to enhance international credential evaluation capacity
- Embed explicit references to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the supporting Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) into local policy documents and public messaging

## ■ Efficiency Recommendations

- Develop document uploading and data exchange capacity with international entities – 87%
- Predetermine transfer credit equivalencies - Send only those with outstanding equivalencies to faculty for review
- Create a system level list of recognized international institutions
- Endorse and support national and international data exchange projects that hold the promise of establishing trusted connections to international institutions and organizations
- Create a system-wide equivalency and agreement database(s) of international courses and – 73%



## ■ Final Recommendations

Expand existing system-level equivalency and agreement database(s) to include international courses and agreements.

- Conduct additional exemplar research of system architecture designs and search capacities embedded in other database models that accommodate international courses.



## ■ Final Recommendations

Create new system-level resources, tools, and training for faculty and staff to expand their knowledge of the field of international document assessment.

- Assess the value of existing resources and training to avoid unnecessary duplication.

## ■ Final Recommendations

Establish strategic partnerships to enhance international credential evaluation capacity within post-secondary institutions, across the province and nationally.

- Research existing credential evaluator service providers and consider partnership opportunities to enhance efficiencies and provide greater coherence and supports for internationally educated students.

## ■ Final Recommendations

Endorse and support national and international data exchange projects that seek to connect to trusted international institutions and organizations

- Examples:
  - ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project - <https://www.arucc.ca/en/projects/task-force-groningen.html>
  - CanPESC GeoCodes Project - [http://arucc.ca/uploads/documents/2018-04\\_CanPESC-IC-Survey-Report\\_f.pdf](http://arucc.ca/uploads/documents/2018-04_CanPESC-IC-Survey-Report_f.pdf); <https://geocode.pesc.org/> - Public PSIs: 130 countries so far (2019); public HS: US and Canada being added in 2019

## ■ Final Recommendations

Explore alternative assessment approaches where possible (beyond relying on course syllabi) and where appropriate for establishing equivalencies that acknowledge substantial difference versus substantial equivalence.

Research document expectations for course syllabi to address the challenges faced by internationally educated students, faculty and staff.

## ■ Final Recommendations

Embed explicit references to the newly ratified Lisbon Recognition Convention and the supporting Canadian Quality Assurance Framework into local policy documents and public messaging.

# Lisbon Recognition Convention

Encourages adoption of:

- quality assurance and access practices informed by concepts such as substantial difference and a focus on learning outcomes.
- Basic principles: right to access qualifications assessment
- Canada wide and institutional responsibilities:
  - Provide coherent, transparent and reliable information (about education system and assessment procedures)
  - Specify decision timing beforehand (calculated from the time all necessary information in the case has been provided)
  - Recognize qualifications unless a substantial difference is shown.
  - If recognition is withheld, state the reasons for the refusal.
  - Provide information regarding possible measures the applicant may take in order to obtain recognition at a later stage.
- Student role: provide adequate information

# Discussion

# Discussion Questions

1. What type of training is needed to help improve credential assessment of international documents?
  - Faculty?
  - Staff?
2. What role might provincial and national organizations play to close this gap?
3. What strategic partnerships do we need to enhance international document assessment?
4. What other important strategies or resources should be considered that would assist institutions with assessment of international documents?

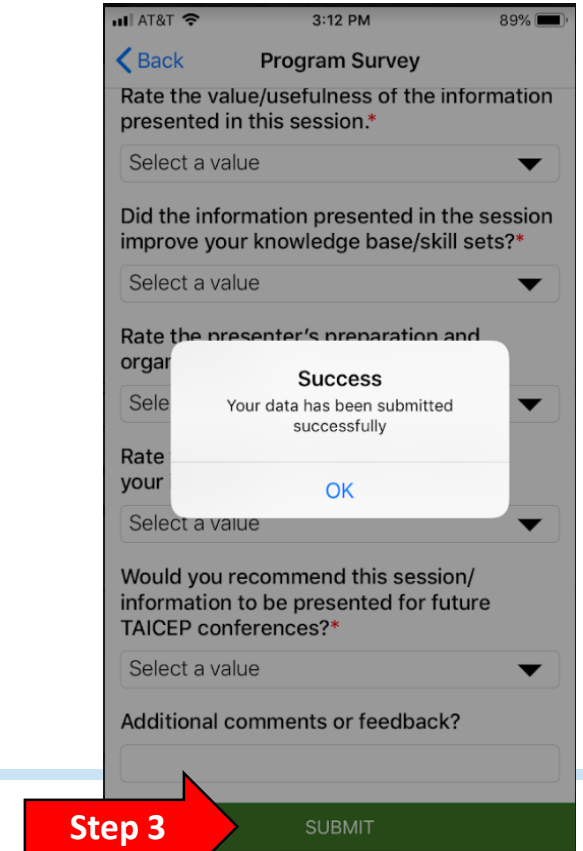
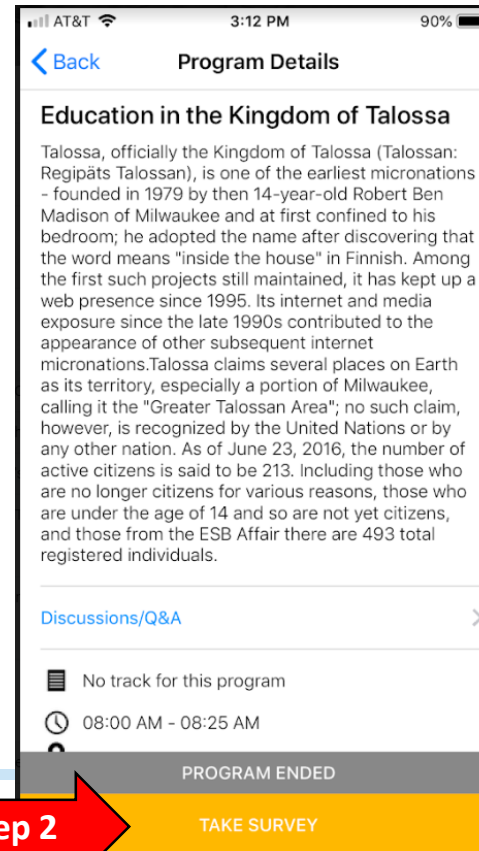
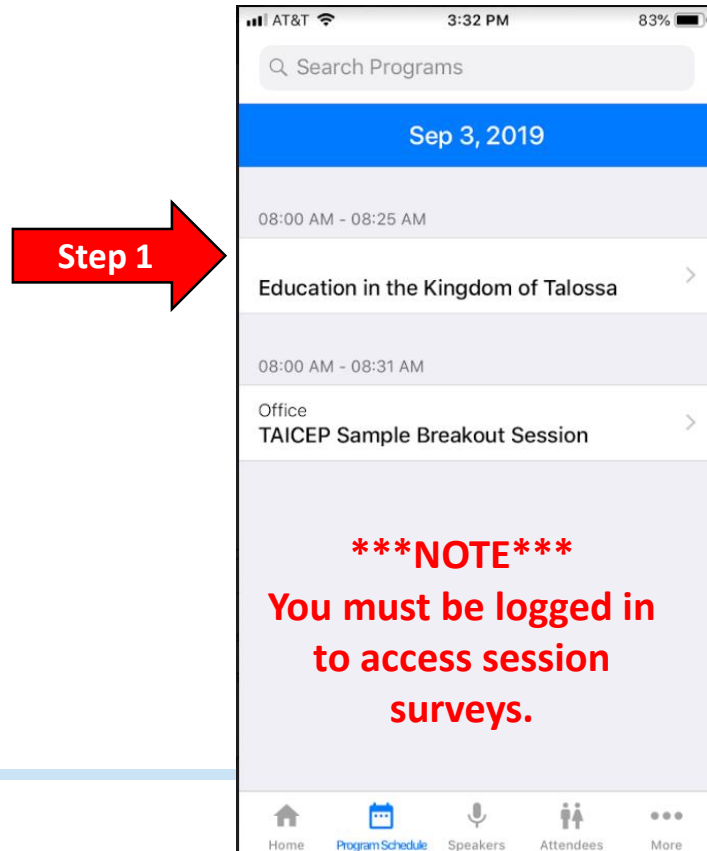


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Joanne Duklas

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