

NISTS 2023

BE A CONNECTOR FOR TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

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Research Poster

2853 - Students' Experiences Applying to Transfer Credits

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Transition Programs and Supports

In this session, we share results from a study of students' experiences applying to transfer credit between postsecondary institutions (in Ontario, Canada). The results are pertinent to researchers as there is relatively little research on this part of the transfer process. The results are pertinent to institutions as students' decisions about where to transfer can depend on their expectations of the amount of credit they will receive and of the ease of transferring credits.

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Students' Experiences Applying to Transfer Credits

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CONTEXT

In September 2021, the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer (ONCAT), launched a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of transfer student decision making and experience in Ontario (Canada).

The poster shares early findings from the second stage of the study, which focuses on students' experiences applying for transfer credit.

The first stage focuses on students' transfer intentions/plans. The third stage focuses on students' experiences in their receiving programs.

METHODS

- Data: Interviews with 13 transfer students who recently transferred and have their final transfer credit assessment.
- Analysis: Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

RELATED LITERATURE

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 18(3), 328-352.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Students' experiences transferring credits can vary greatly:

- Some programs do pre-assessments, some evaluate transfer credit at the time of enrollment in the program, and some do this each term, leaving the student unsure about which credits will transfer until the end of their program.
 - Some students request batches of courses to be transferred at different times in their program.
- Few students receive explanations with their assessments, but many are told they can write or call if they have any questions
 - Some students contest their initial transfer credit evaluations and some don't.
- Fees: Everyone pays an application fee. Some pay a fee per transfer credit application, while others don't
- Resources: Every program submits a transcript when they apply; some programs require syllabi for prior courses, while others (typically in the case of articulated pathways) don't.

Evaluation of PLAR is complex, sometimes handled by people in different offices, and can have its own fees.

In comparison to transfer between institutions, internal transfer is typically easy. In fact, it can be as easy as applying to enroll in a new major in a student portal, receiving a notice of acceptance, and seeing previous courses redistributed in your new program's timetable — no cost, no materials needed!

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This work was exploratory as the literature on this part of the transfer process is thin. Therefore, these preliminary findings should be taken mainly as hypotheses to be tested with more data and analysis (including future studies on this topic)

That said, the variability in the transfer credit application and assessment processes that we are seeing so far point to both potential efficiencies and inefficiencies in those processes.

NEXT STEPS

- More transfer application interviews
- Deeper analysis of the data collected
- Stage 3 of study

QUESTIONS FOR AUDIENCE

- What do you think of these preliminary findings?
- If we were to present on the students' experiences in their receiving programs next year, what would you like to learn?