

# BC Student Outcomes Research Forum

## Terms of Reference

### 1. BC STUDENT OUTCOMES

#### 1.1. OVERVIEW

For over 25 years, BC Student Outcomes has collected and communicated quality information from former British Columbia post-secondary students through several annual surveys. The survey results describe former students' satisfaction with their programs as well as their education and labour force outcomes. BC Student Outcomes is a collaborative enterprise across all public post-secondary institutions (PSIs), the Ministry responsible for Advanced Education, BC Stats, and other agencies.

#### 1.2. PURPOSE

The purpose of BC Student Outcomes is to collect and disseminate information from former students about their post-secondary education and their labour market and educational transitions. The findings serve to:

- ensure sound and reliable data for development of post-secondary education and labour market policy
- provide timely and relevant information for program evaluation and educational planning
- ensure that information is available to help prospective students make informed decisions about education and training
- contribute to the accountability and success of the B.C. post-secondary education system
- contribute to a comprehensive understanding of post-secondary education in B.C.

#### 1.3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The BC Student Outcomes Research Forum (the Forum) oversees all aspects of the BC Student Outcomes program from data collection to reporting of survey results. The Forum is co-chaired by one or two representative(s) from the Ministry of Advanced Education (the Ministry) and one or more elected representative(s) from the participating post-secondary institutions.

BC Stats is responsible for providing operational support, day-to-day management, advice, reports, and for implementing decisions concerning the outcomes surveys, as directed by the Forum. BC Stats is responsible for developing an annual plan and budget for approval by the Forum and the Ministry.

## 1.4. FUNDING

The Ministry, the participating post-secondary institutions, and the Industry Training Authority (ITA) provide financial resources to BC Stats for BC Student Outcomes. The Ministry provides the majority of the funding, with the participating institutions contributing additional funding to offset the cost of collecting data from their former students. Ministry funding is specifically intended to collect data to support educational and labour market planning and ensure sound and reliable data are available at the institution and system level for post-secondary policy development and accountability initiatives. Ministry funding is also intended to support post-secondary institutions in their efforts to collect high quality information from their former students and to assist in the storage, analysis, and dissemination of that information. In addition to funding, institutions contribute expertise and staff time to ensure that BC Student Outcomes maintains a consistently high level of quality and relevance.

The Ministry and BC Stats sign an annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that articulates key deliverables related to BC Student Outcomes and reflects the advice from the Forum.

## 2. BC STUDENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH FORUM

### 2.1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Forum oversees BC Student Outcomes, which includes the collection and dissemination of survey data related to labour market and educational transitions of former students on behalf of the participating institutions and the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education.

### 2.2. GOALS OF THE BC STUDENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH FORUM

- To ensure the purposes of BC Student Outcomes are met effectively and efficiently
- To promote the use and dissemination of Outcomes information
- To facilitate analyses of these data independently and in conjunction with other data sources

### 2.3. OPERATIONAL TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE BC STUDENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH FORUM

The Forum, as the body that oversees BC Student Outcomes, comprises members who are actively involved in the key elements of data collection, analysis, and reporting of outcomes data. The Forum operates as a partnership among participating institutions, system agencies, and the Ministry; the partnership is one of shared interests, shared funding, and shared expertise.

The activities of BC Student Outcomes are either initiated by the Forum or referred to it by the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education, BC Stats, or any other organization. The Forum is responsible for setting the direction for relationships with external bodies.

The Forum makes appointments to the teams and appoints *ad hoc* committees as required. The Forum is responsible for strategic planning for BC Student Outcomes and for approval of the budget.

The Forum approves the format and content of the standard reports and other publications, and of the Student Outcomes website. The Forum will advise on new or *ad hoc* surveys. The Forum decides the overall surveying schedule, approves the questionnaires, and determines specifications for survey eligibility.

Data collection activities are focused primarily on these groups of former students: diploma, associate degree, and certificate students, trades apprentices, and baccalaureate students.

BC Stats acts as a responsible steward of the BC Student Outcomes' databases on behalf of the participating institutions, the Forum, and the Ministry.

## 2.4. COMPOSITION OF THE BC STUDENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH FORUM

The Forum is a representative body, made up of individuals from participating institutions (see Appendix 1), from the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education, and from other major provincial organizations involved in the collection, storage, or use of post-secondary student outcomes data. Members of the institutional research community must constitute at least half of the Forum.

The Forum will consist of:

- PSI members: one representative from each participating public post-secondary institution; these members will be involved in institutional research and planning functions and together will have experience with the broadest possible range of programs and institutional structures
- Ministry members: up to four members designated by the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education
- The Executive Director, or designate, of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)
- A liaison representative from the Industry Training Authority (ITA)
- System-wide organizational members: as the Forum has need, the Forum can add members from other institutional groups, such as:
  - a liaison representative from the BC Registrars' Association (BCRA)
  - a liaison representative from the Senior Academic Administrators' Forum (SAAF)
  - a liaison representative from the Council of Senior Student Affairs Leaders (CSSAL)
  - a liaison representative from Information Technology Directors
  - other persons who may be appointed by a majority vote at a meeting of the Forum at which at least a simple majority of members are present

PSIs, the Ministry, and ITA (and other appropriate agencies, e.g. BCCAT) are voting members of the Forum. Other representatives and those involved in the teams or *ad hoc* committees are welcome to attend Forum meetings and will receive Forum communications. An official list of current Forum members is maintained on the SharePoint site.

BC Stats will attend all Forum meetings, participate in discussions, and prepare minutes for approval. BC Stats Forum attendees are non-voting members.

Members of the Forum will be selected through one of the following ways:

- The institutional research office at each institution will designate one person to be its representative on the Forum.
- The organizational members of the Forum will be chosen by their respective organizations.
- Ministry representatives to the Forum will be appointed directly by the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education.

Terms of Service on the Forum:

- All institutional and organizational members will be appointed to a three-year term, and the number of terms is not limited. Every effort will be made to ensure that terms of service overlap to provide functional continuity.
- As the Forum comprises working committee participants, all members must be actively involved in, or responsible for, or familiar with institutional and outcomes research at their institution or in their organization.
- If it is the opinion of the Forum that a system-wide organization no longer has an effective role to play, the Forum may remove the organization from the Forum with a two-thirds vote of a meeting at which at least a simple majority of members are present.

## 2.5. CHAIRS OF THE BC STUDENT OUTCOMES RESEARCH FORUM

The Forum will have two or more co-chairs: at least one will be an institutional member and at least one will come from the Ministry responsible for post-secondary education. The institutional co-chair(s) will be elected by a majority vote at a Forum meeting every second calendar year. Institutional co-chair(s) will hold the position for a two-year term. In the event that the institutional co-chair resigns, the Management Team may appoint an acting chair until the next Forum meeting.

The Ministry co-chair will be a Ministry-designated representative. This position is ongoing. When needed, new Ministry co-chairs are named by the Ministry.

## 2.6. TEAM STRUCTURE

The work of the Forum is carried out through four teams: Management Team, Communications Team, Technical Team, and Survey Team.

The **Management Team** performs executive functions for the Forum, having the authority and responsibility for all Forum decisions between annual Forum meetings. The Management Team reports to the Forum, at the Annual General Meeting and through email, as required.

The Management Team is responsible for setting operational policy and priorities, monitoring the Student Outcomes Plan, guiding budget development, and dealing with management and organizational

issues. The Management Team's responsibilities also include managing external relationships (with government, system agencies, and other external bodies), developing and distributing the Forum's annual report, and overseeing *ad hoc* committees.

The Management Team co-ordinates work of the other Teams, requesting Teams undertake projects as required, receiving their recommendations, and responding appropriately. The Management Team is responsible for developing and monitoring an annual Forum workplan. The Management Team can appoint *ad hoc* committees from one or more of the Teams, for specific purposes (for example, conducting a policy and procedures review).

The Management Team is co-chaired by the same individuals who co-chair the Forum and includes representatives, usually the (co-)chairs, from each of the other Teams. Immediate past Forum institutional co-chairs are automatically members of the Management Team.

The Management Team will review team membership annually to ensure balanced PSI representation.

The **Survey Team** determines the questionnaire content and question rotation schedules for each survey and reviews cohort definitions consistent with the overall direction and the surveying schedule set by the Forum, in consultation with BC Stats. The Team liaises with the Management Team, Technical Team, and Communications Team as required. Members are encouraged to participate on one or more of the other Teams.

The **Communications Team** is responsible for identifying potential audiences for outcomes publications, identifying data elements useful to the various audiences, developing communications strategies, preparing and presenting information about BC Student Outcomes to interested audiences, and evaluating the effectiveness of communications initiatives. The Team's responsibilities also include recommending reporting formats, determining reporting themes appropriate to each survey population, outlining an annual Highlights (or similar) document, and advising on website content. The Communications Team reviews and approves all Outcomes publications for release. Not all Communications Team members are expected to review all publications.

The **Technical Team** is responsible for reviewing technical issues related to data collection, methodological concerns, and technical issues around cohort specifications. The Technical Team's responsibilities include advising on program coding issues, helping to develop data dissemination tools, researching methodological issues, and maintaining currency of definitions and alignment with other statistical agencies and databases. The Technical Team advises the Survey Team on cohort definitions and other issues, as requested or approved by Management Team.

The Forum's Technical and Communications teams provide support and advice to the Management Team, the Survey Team, and to BC Student Outcomes overall. Team projects are undertaken at the request of Management Team or with Management Team approval.

Team membership, which is confirmed annually by the Forum, is for a three-year term and the number of terms is not limited. The Survey Team chair(s), Communications Team chair(s) and the Technical Team chair(s) shall be elected by a majority vote during the first Team meeting of each calendar year or through email. Team members include institutional members and representative(s) from the Ministry.

Subject matter experts or individuals from other areas of post-secondary education can be asked to join a team, if needed. Brief job descriptions are available in Appendix 2.

## 2.7. REVIEW OF FORUM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Forum will review its policies and procedures at least once every three years. Any amendments to the Terms of Reference will be ratified by the full Forum membership either at the Annual General Meeting or via email.

## 2.8. MEETING PROCEDURES

Forum business may be conducted through in-person meetings or by remote conference (such as teleconference). The Forum may approve motions only at meetings at which a quorum is present. A quorum exists when a simple majority of voting members are present, either in person or via remote conference. Decisions made via remote conference are as binding as those made in face-to-face meetings. Minutes will be kept of all the Forum meetings and of meetings of the teams; these will be available to all members.

The Forum meets annually and may meet at other times at the call of the chair(s). Each team meets at the call of its chair(s).

Forum members are expected to attend the annual meeting of the Forum. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, she or he may designate a person to attend on her or his behalf. Designated persons who attend meetings (with notice to the chair) may vote. Management Team members can designate others to attend Management meetings on their behalf, on occasion but not as a practice.

Guests may attend Forum meetings but may not vote.

## 2.9. VOTING PROCEDURES

Although the Forum strives to achieve consensus, matters before the Forum may be passed by a simple majority vote. All members present at a meeting will vote on matters before the Forum. Absent members can vote by their proxy and may ask an attending member to speak to any issue on their behalf.

Votes of the Forum can be conducted by electronic means. To constitute a quorum, a simple majority of members must vote within the given timeframe. All electronic votes will be open for a minimum of seven calendar days.

In the event of a disputed matter before the Forum, where one party determines that the outcome may conflict sufficiently with his or her organization's interests to warrant reconsideration, the member may request that the matter be referred to the Management Team for further consideration. Any deferred matter must be considered by the Management Team as soon as possible, prior to implementation of the decision.

## 2.10. OBLIGATIONS OF THE FORUM MEMBERS

The Forum is a collaborative effort among all post-secondary institutions. There is an expectation that all PSIs will be involved by providing membership to at least one Forum team each year. With the work spread across all institutions, the expectation is that none will be overburdened.

An individual accepting an appointment as a representative to the Forum must agree to the following:

- To make all reasonable efforts to attend the annual Forum meetings and prepare adequately for them.
- To participate actively in decision making at meetings of the Forum and at team meetings, where appropriate.
- To act in a manner befitting their professional standing and their organization or institution. All Forum members are expected to adhere to accepted professional standards of ethical conduct.
- To respect that BC Student Outcomes is subject to privacy protection provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) and to act in accordance with those provisions.
- To respect that BC Stats operates under the legal authority of the *Statistics Act*, which provides legislated guarantees to protect the privacy and security of individual responses.
- To adhere to the provisions of the Information Sharing Agreement that is in place between BC Stats and their institution or between BC Stats and the Ministry of Advanced Education or between BC Stats and the Industry Training Authority.
- To be prepared to undertake work on behalf of the Forum and BC Student Outcomes outside of regular meetings.
- To notify other institutional Forum representatives when publishing information based on the shared Student Outcomes data, if that information is presented for other individual institutions, rather than in aggregate. Publishing refers to reports or information available to an external audience, through posting on a website or through some other means of dissemination outside an individual institution.

Team members should be prepared:

- To attend team meetings, when they are called, and prepare adequately for them.
- To volunteer to help with at least one of the projects or tasks assigned to the team, each year.
- To agree to the same stipulations as outlined above for Forum representatives.

For a list of Forum members see [The Forum SharePoint](#), under Lists.

# APPENDIX 1

## PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

### **Post-Secondary Institution**

British Columbia Institute of Technology  
Camosun College  
Capilano University  
College of New Caledonia  
College of the Rockies  
Douglas College  
Emily Carr University of Art and Design  
Justice Institute of BC  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University  
Langara College  
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology  
North Island College  
Northern Lights College  
Northwest Community College  
Okanagan College  
Royal Roads University  
Selkirk College  
Simon Fraser University  
Thompson Rivers University  
University of British Columbia  
University of the Fraser Valley  
University of Northern British Columbia  
University of Victoria  
Vancouver Community College  
Vancouver Island University

### **Organization or Agency**

BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)  
BC Registrars' Association (BCRA)  
Council of Senior Student Affairs Leaders (CSSAL)  
Industry Training Authority (ITA)



## Appendix 2

### **Job Descriptions**

The expectation is that every institution will have at least one representative each year on the working groups of one of the Teams (Survey, Communications, Technical) so that the work is distributed equitably, and no one institution or person is overwhelmed with responsibility.

In terms of work and time commitments, it is expected that they will be minimal, only a few hours a month for most members. The Survey Team usually meets in September to discuss the survey questions and cohort specifications for APPSO and DACSO. The BGS questionnaire is reviewed in the spring. Communication Team members are responsible for reviewing publications as required. There are typically a half dozen publications in any given year; the peak period for reviewing publications is usually from April to August. As well, updates to the Communication Plan may be required. The Technical Team has in the past been an active team, involved in technical aspects of data dissemination and reviewing cohort issues. Team members may be required to do research for the team as required. The work is usually spread out during the year.

#### *Team Co-Chairs*

Team co-chairs are responsible for working with the team to allocate tasks as determined either by the Management Team or identified by the team itself. Co-chairs attend the Management Team meetings to represent and report on their Team's activities. Management Team meetings are approximately every two months.

#### *Team Members*

Team members are expected to work collaboratively with the co-chairs to accomplish the Team's tasks. Team members are expected to attend Team meetings as called or to collaborate online via email.