Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Activity on the
Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)

Report
Province of British Columbia

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

British Columbia Report

Introduction

Formal education, non-formal and informal learning in British Columbia occur within a diversified post-secondary educational system, consisting of both public and private institutions.

As of September 04, 2007 the provincial public post-secondary system consists of 25 post-secondary institutions overseen by the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED). The 25 public institutions are made up of:

- 6 universities;
- 12 colleges;
- 3 university colleges; and,
- 4 institutes, 1 with an Aboriginal focus.

According to the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA), the regulatory agency for private training institutions in the province of BC, there are 526 registered private post-secondary institutions in the province, of which 210 are accredited.

Component 1. Contextual Factors

Component 1.1. Demographic Change

1.1.a **How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?**

While we have attempted to gather the most up to date demographic information for the overall post-secondary education system (public and private), in some cases we have used information for the public system only. Public enrolment figures do not include over 20,000 continuing education students at universities.

Overall Public Enrolments by Gender *

2003/04			2004/05			2005/06		
Male	**Female**	**Total****	**Male**	**Female**	**Total****	**Male**	**Female**	**Total****
174,415	204,449	378,864	177,103	206,963	384,048	180,271	213,659	393,920
46.04%	53.96%	100%	46.11%	53.89%	100%	45.76%	54.24%	100%

*2004/05 and 2005/06 figures do not include data from Royal Roads University as no gender breakdown was provided by that institution for the former year, and no headcount figures at all were provided for the latter.
** Totals do not include 'unknown' category in headcount, a figure that in each year is less than 1% of the total.

Overall Private Enrolments

The Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) and the Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA) are developing a process to capture student data for the private post-secondary system in British Columbia. The first round of data collection on the numbers of students in the system took place in November 2006, with results expected in June 2007.

Credentials: Public Post-Secondary System

Performance Measure	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Number of degrees, diplomas and certificates awarded	41,643	43,769	46,189	47,737

Annual performance is measured using a rolling three year average of the most recent academic years, e.g. the 2005/06 results are a three year average of the 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 academic years. Academic years start in September of one year and end in August of the next year.

Graduate Rate

This measure is the number of credentials awarded by public institutions per 1,000 people living in BC aged 18–29. It provides context for the number of credentials awarded. The rate compares credential data to the BC population aged 18–29 years, which was selected as the most appropriate representation of the age of post-secondary students in British Columbia.

Performance Measure	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
BC public post-secondary graduate rate (credentials per 1,000)[1]	63.1	65.4	67.8	69.5

[1] Annual credential performance is measured using a rolling three year average of the most recent academic years, e.g. the 2005/06 results are a three year average of the 2002/03, 2003/04 and 2004/05 academic years. Academic years start in September of one year and end in August of the next year.

Participation by Age

System Overall

Post-Secondary Education Participation Rates by Age, British Columbia (BC), 1976 and 2000								
	1976				**2000**			
Age group	**18-29**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**18-29**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**
% of population participating	14.4%	5.8%	2.6%	1.5%	28.6%	10.9%	5.2%	1.9%

According to the 2005 Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, the 18-29 year old, BC post-secondary education rate for **2005** was 30.8 (2005 figures for other age categories were not available).

Public System

Public Post-Secondary Education Participation Rates by Age, BC – 2005[*]					
Age	15-24[1]	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
% of population participating	32.22%	20.19%	11.54%	7.36%	2.48%

Data for this table is from 2004/05, 2005/06, and was taken from different sources than the proceeding table, resulting in a different breakdown in age categories.

Industry Training Participation
- 1998/99 – just over 15,000 active trainee/apprentices.
- 2005/06 – 26,525 active trainee/apprentices.
- 11% of BC pop. (age 15 and over) had participated in recognized trades training[†] in 2005.

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[*] The age group of a small percentage of participating students is unknown. Royal Roads University is the only BC Public post-secondary institution who has not contributed figures to this calculation.

[1] Due to BC Statistics' compilation of population data by five year groups, it was necessary to begin the first age category at 15.

[†] Recognized trades training is defined as a trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school, or apprenticeship training.

Aboriginal Post-Secondary Participation

Aboriginal people have been underrepresented in obtaining post-secondary education in British Columbia. The BC Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) has put a strong focus on improving access to higher education for Aboriginal learners.

Performance Measure	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Number and % of public post-secondary students that are Aboriginal	14,859 (4.0%)	16,119 (4.3%)	16,473 (4.4%)

International Participation

In 2004/2005 there were 27,324 international students enrolled in BC public post-secondary institutions, the largest number recorded to date. This represents an increase of approximately 19% over 2003/2004.

Participation by Socio-Economic Background

As noted above, in general terms there has also been an upward trend in enrolment among post-secondary students of Aboriginal status. For other socio-economic characteristics such as income levels, ethnicity, age, academic ability, and marital and parenting status, comprehensive reliable enrolment information for the British Columbia system is not available.

Although a BC specific breakdown is unobtainable, according to a Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation report, in 2001, 49% of young Canadians whose parental income was less than $25,000 were enrolled in college or university, compared to 77% of those from families earning more than $100,000.

1.1.b What are the demographic changes (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training?

Canada

Canada-wide, the projected growth of the post-secondary education age population is expected to increase until 2011, but will then drop dramatically for the following decade before it stabilizes. By 2026, there will be 300,000 fewer young adults between 18 to 24 than today to fill spaces created in recent years at post-secondary institutions for children of the Baby Boomers[*].

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[*] A baby boomer is someone who was born during a period of increased birth rates, or 'baby boom'. In Canada (as in other countries) the term 'baby boomers' refers most often to those individuals born between (and including) 1946 and 1964 (the post World War II 'baby boom').

British Columbia
The British Columbia population is growing, reaching over 4.25 million in 2005, an increase of 1.3% from 2004. In 2005, BC's population growth rate surpassed the Canadian national average. The median age of the BC population continues to increase, and even though the number of births is expected to slowly increase over the next decade, natural increase (births minus deaths) will continue to decline due to an increased number of deaths. The youth population that comprises the majority of the post-secondary enrolments is projected to grow until 2011. Within this population group, growth is strongest in the 25 to 29 year age group. The population of school aged children (5 to 17 year olds) is not projected to grow again until 2015.

As a result of the changing demographic situation, the major factor driving population growth will be migration to British Columbia. Between now and 2031, international migration will account for just under two-thirds of the population gain, while inter-provincial migration will account for just over one-third.

Many BC public post-secondary institutions, noting the decline of the traditional cache of 18-30 year old students, have indicated a potential shift in focus to include more adult learners and to attract international students and the growing population of Aboriginal people.

1.1.c   Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g. the low-skilled or high skilled) with respect to demographic change?

Nationally
Given that fertility rates in Canada have remained relatively low and stable for the past thirty years, it is clear that there will be insufficient numbers of Canadian-born individuals moving into the ranks of the working-aged population to replace the rapidly rising numbers of retirees.

British Columbia
In British Columbia, provincial policies have been developed to address the situation of the aging population. An important component of BC's labour market strategy is recognizing that immigration is a key source of labour force growth in BC.

The government indicated in its 2007 Speech from the Throne that BC will increase its effort to attract and recruit skilled workers.

One of the steps BC has already taken to draw and retain skilled immigrants is the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). The PNP is a tool for BC employers to fill critical skill shortages that exist in the labour market by nominating skilled foreign workers who bring expertise in those critical areas. The PNP will be substantially expanded and new efforts will be made to expedite entry for temporary workers in skills-shortage areas.

Provincial policy has also been developed in regard to immigrant settlement trends.

In BC, 90% of immigrants settle in the Greater Vancouver Metropolitan Area. These flows have had a positive impact on both the Vancouver and the BC economies.

In October 2002, BC and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) agreed to work together to encourage immigrants to settle in areas outside Vancouver and the Lower Mainland so that communities in other areas can share in the benefits of immigration.

A regional immigration strategy for BC is being developed that suggests a variety of approaches, involving building partnerships, and reviewing and identifying community resources and options for immigration. Regional immigration initiatives in BC will be accomplished through the development of active partnerships between community stakeholder groups outside Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, the Province of BC and CIC, with additional stakeholders involved as appropriate.

In 2005, the federal and provincial governments partnered to help BC communities attract immigrants. Eight areas of the province joined in the new Regional Immigration Initiative: Revelstoke, Powell River, Greater Vernon, Prince George, Okanagan, Nanaimo, Abbotsford, and the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District. Under the Initiative, each participating community develops an immigration strategy to increase awareness of immigration opportunities and to develop resources to enable them to attract business entrepreneurs, skilled workers, international students and investment dollars.

1.1.d   Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change?

No information discovered.

Component 1.2 Internationalisation

1.2.a   Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?

A number of programs involving development, assessment and recognition of multiple kinds of learning are woven into BC's strategy to integrate migrant populations. These programs include:

Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants (EASI) Initiative
The Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants (EASI) Initiative began in 2003 to build a more integrated system in BC that better supports the needs of skilled immigrants seeking entry into the workforce. Some of the services provided through the Initiative concern employment readiness, language training, skills and academic upgrading and workplace practice.

A broad range of stakeholders (regulatory bodies, professional and trade associations, unions, post-secondary institutions, non-government organizations, employers and employer associations, and government) are working together through the EASI initiative to promote a system that

recognizes that skilled immigrants in BC potentially require a number of services offered by an array of service providers in order to find employment based on their qualifications.

Skills Connect for Immigrants Program
The primary goal of the Skills Connect for Immigrants Program is to assist new immigrants to secure jobs that fully use their skills and talents. The program will respond to current and long-term skill shortages by assessing and bridging skilled immigrants into the workplace in areas that complement BC's growing economy.

The Skills Connect for Immigrants Program will:

- effectively assess the skills, qualifications and experiences of recent immigrants to BC;
- enhance skills, qualifications and experiences to meet BC labour market standards;
- offer workplace practice opportunities, such as workplace orientation (i.e. mentorship), that will help secure and sustain employment;
- provide career assessment and planning; and
- deliver pre-employment skills and other enhancements, including workplace language upgrading.

Skills Connect aims to assist over 5,000 immigrants over a three year period bridge into employment which better reflects their skills and qualifications.

Skills Connect currently focuses on connecting immigrants with employers in the construction, transportation, energy and tourism and hospitality sectors. Plans are underway to expand the program to include the health care sector.

The provincial commitment to this program of $4.8 million each year for three years will be matched by contributions from Citizenship & Immigration Canada (Enhanced Language Training) and Health Canada (Internationally Educated Health Professionals).

1.2.b   Describe any national policies or higher education institutional approaches that are currently being taken to promote comparability/compatibility, visibility and portability of learning outcomes through non-formal and informal learning to promote cross-border mobility?

BC has several initiatives to assist in the portability of learning outcomes. See below for some examples.

Foreign Credential Recognition Program
The province of BC is working with the Government of Canada to improve the process of foreign credential recognition through the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program.

The FCR program involves the Government of Canada working with BC and other provincial/territorial governments, licensing and regulatory bodies, sector councils, employers and

many other groups to improve the integration of internationally trained workers into the work force and society.

The issues being addressed include:
- accelerating the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials;
- implementing Enhanced Language Training and Bridge to Work initiatives; and
- providing up-to-date and pertinent labour market information.

The federal government is providing $68 million over six years to implement the FCR program and to fund key activities from its partners aimed at improving FCR processes in Canada. The objectives of the program are to work with its partners to ensure FCR processes across the country are fair, accessible, coherent, transparent and rigorous.

For a description of a BC based foreign credential recognition program see 2.1.e.

Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP)
Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP) is a pilot program aimed at helping landed immigrants put their construction knowledge and experience to use in BC. The program will help build careers in British Columbia's construction industry and provide employers with skilled trades' workers. ISTEP was developed through a partnership between the BC Construction Association (BCCA) and the Construction Sector Council (CSC), and it is funded by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program.

Landed immigrants who have experience in construction or who want to start a career in the construction industry will be matched up with employers who have jobs. Candidates will also be able to "challenge" provincial requirements in the same way trades people from other provinces can.

ISTEP is not a training program but through job coaches[*], immigrants will be advised about available training. The program will, however, be piloting an introduction to the trades program specifically targeted at immigrants. This will be a six week technical program that also has an additional six weeks of English language instruction specific to the trades.

There is no cost to employers, or to the immigrants, wishing to participate in ISTEP and there is no fee for the services provided by the job coaches.

ISTEP was launched in the winter of 2006 and it is scheduled to run in British Columbia for three years.

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[*] Job coaches are qualified trades people capable of assessing skills and job potential. They match suitable immigrants with employers.

Component 1.3. New ICT

1.3.a   Provide any evidence of modularisation of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer?

British Columbia has taken a leadership role in Canada in online learning, as well as in the area of credit transfer. There has been a strong effort to promote and coordinate these two endeavours, through the activities of BCcampus, the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT) and LearnNowBC.

BCcampus
BCcampus is an AVED sponsored collaboration of BC's 25 public post-secondary institutions. It has a mandate to develop online learning resources to provide students with greater access, choice, flexibility, mobility and success. BCcampus is responsible for coordinating the collaborative development of online courses and programs, and provides a single access point for learners to online courses at all public post-secondary institutions in BC. Since the inception of BCcampus in 2002, a range of processes, technologies, systems and core services have been developed for educators, institutions and students, including a made-in-BC "connector technology" which provides automated data transfers between institutions, allowing them to securely exchange information. The deployment of the BCcampus connector across the entire post-secondary sector will be completed in 2007.

BCcampus has invested in real-time connectivity between students and BC post-secondary institutions. Through a membership model, students become authenticated as learners in good standing with BC post-secondary institutions. Authenticated membership provides access to automated systems for course registration and instructional support.

BCcampus works with BCCAT to automate connections between the BC Transfer Guide and to assist students with admission, registration, and course transfer decisions.

British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)
BCCAT was formed in 1989 as part of the Access for All strategy of the provincial government. BCCAT's purpose is to coordinate the transfer and articulation efforts of institutions in the BC Transfer System. Transfer and articulation in BC have always been the responsibility of individual institutions, and BCCAT has coordinated and managed the processes involved.

The main roles of BCCAT are to:
- encourage institutions to develop policies and practices that facilitate the *transferability* of post-secondary credit courses so that credit granted at one institution can be applied toward credentials at other institutions; and,
- examine issues pertaining to capacity, demand, and student mobility and recommend polices and practices that facilitate the admission process for direct entry and transfer students.

BCCAT has responsibility for the 'Education Planner', an online database of provincial programs, admission requirements, tuition fees and other program-related information. It has developed a number of Transfer Related Research and Admission Related research projects to inform and ease the transfer and admission system in the province. The BC Transfer System is widely regarded as being among the most successful systems in North America.

LearnNowBC
Also known as the Virtual School, LearnNowBC is a single point of entry to information about distributed learning in British Columbia (in the K-12 system). This website contains both distributed learning course details and information about student services available online.

The Virtual School is an alliance of public distributed learning (DL) schools that enables coordination and efficiencies for online services such as websites, tutoring, course development, registration and access to courses.

Between BCcampus and BC Virtual School there are shared data elements for transfer, concurrent studies, and education and career planning through BCCAT.

1.3.b **Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.**

While there is no agreed upon definition of 'information and communication technologies', there are a number of occupations that are generally accepted as being part of the 'new' ICT. Listed below are a number of ICT occupations with the related employment qualifications for each:

Occupation	Employment Requirements
Computer and Information Systems Managers	- B.A. or M.A. in Computer Science, Business Administration, Commerce or Engineering is usually required.
Information Systems Analysts and Consultants	- B.A. in Computer Science, Computer Systems or completion of a college program in Computer Science. - Certification or training by software vendors may be required.
Web Designers and Developers	- B.A. in Computer Science, Commerce or Business, or completion of a college program. - Experience as a computer programmer or graphic designer is usually required.
Computer Programmers and Interactive Media Developers	- B.A. in Computer Science, Computer Systems, Engineering, Software Engineering or Mathematics, Or, completion of a college program in Computer Science. - M.A. or PhD. may be required. - Licensing by a provincial or territorial association of Professional Engineering.

As shown above, the qualifications necessary for these ICT qualifications are still overwhelmingly academic, rather than industry driven. This assessment is supported by a 2007 Business Council of British Columbia report which notes that to compete and grow, "ICT firms depend on ready access to a skilled and well educated workforce. In BC, much of this workforce is drawn from local post-secondary education and training institutions, which also play significant research and commercialization roles for the industry."

A further search on a leading Canadian internet recruitment and job search site did indicate a number of information technology positions that did not specifically require academic qualifications. However, these positions emphasized experience and skills in various computer programs and software systems, not (except in one specific case) industry based certificates or qualifications.

It should be noted, that as there are many hundreds of positions advertised on just the one site above, this overview cannot be taken as a fully comprehensive overview of ICT careers, or the merits of industry certification versus academic qualifications.

1.3.c   Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or 'learning assets'? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?

Secondary System

A student portfolio, described as a physical *or electronic* collection of materials, was introduced in 2004 for grade 10-12 students in British Columbia as a mandatory graduation requirement. The Graduation Portfolio is a form of assessment intended to complement more traditional classroom assessment practices.

Although the Graduation Portfolio is now an optional graduation requirement, a portfolio culture now permeates BC's schools, as students are required to collect and reflect on evidence of their unique learning. As an example, through the Surrey School District #36 First Class Portfolio Management system, all Surrey students develop an ePortfolio beginning in Grade 2.

BCcampus and partners have contracted with Sierra Systems to gather requirements for a province-wide electronic portfolio repository that will enable students to preserve their Graduation Portfolios and expand it over time. This initiative will provide students with a means to maintain, enhance, and transition their portfolio from secondary to post-secondary and into the work place.

Post-Secondary System

Electronic portfolios are increasingly becoming a part of many students' higher education experience. For example:

- The University of British Columbia ((UBC) BC's largest university, located in Vancouver) recently completed a three-year, campus-wide ePortfolio pilot project (Campus-Wide Online Environment for e-Portfolios), involving 12 projects, 2000 students, 91 instructors, and 37 staff.
- The University College of the Fraser Valley (an interior university college) developed the English for Career and Professional Integration (ECPI) course to help foreign-trained professionals continue their career paths in Canada through the development of a personal ePortfolio.
- All BC Faculties of Education now require their teachers-in-training to complete a portfolio during their under-graduate years.
- All BCIT Aircraft Maintenance Engineering students must complete a portfolio of their achievements.

Challenges

In a 2005 study conducted with students of UBC and an out of province Canadian university, three challenges/themes emerged in student acceptance of ePortfolios:

- Buy-in by students (motivation): During the study students noted that promoters of ePortfolios needed to do a better job of 'selling' the concept, leaving many students to view the activity as an added 'chore'.
- Assessment and ePortfolios: Challenges include understanding how ePortfolios would be assessed, and a perceived imbalance between the marks versus the time students believed would be required to carry out the work.
- The ePortfolio technology: Students cited difficulties with the technology used and the ePortfolio software.

Component 1.4. Economic Developments and Skills Shortage/Mismatch

1.4.a   Describe any legal framework, policy, programmes, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?

On April 27, 2007 the government of British Columbia released a WorkBC Action Plan and website that sets out provincial priorities and steps for how government will address skills shortages for the next five years and respond to longer-term labour market challenges. The Action Plan is available at **http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev/down/work_bc_action_plan_april27.pdf**

In February 2004, the International Qualifications Unit of the Ministry of Economic Development, in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, funded 16 exploratory and developmental projects across British Columbia.

These projects explored the current capacity, interest and strategic opportunities related to the labour market attachment of skilled immigrants in BC. Additionally, some projects identified best practices and developed resources to assist in addressing barriers to employment. The titles and objectives of the projects are as follows:

1.   Engaging Employers to Examine Labour Market Attachment for Skilled Immigrants – To engage employers across BC to identify attitudes and practices that positively affect the labour market attachment of skilled immigrants, and develop recommendations to enhance labour market attachment efforts.
2.   Skilled Immigrants as Community Assets – To support the conceptualization and/or development of strategic integrated bridging services for skilled immigrants in the Nanaimo area.
3.   Bridge to Your Future – To develop specific tools: an employment readiness assessment; an employment and program assistance matrix and a "Passport to Work" that summarizes the immigrant's personal employment goals.
4.   Credentialing and Employment of Skilled Immigrant Workers in the Fraser Valley Regional District – To develop alliances and partnerships (educators, immigrants, and

employers) that will identify recommendations that will assist immigrants with professional training.

5. ***Benchmarking of Bridging Programs for Skilled Immigrants in BC*** – To assist in the future evaluation of bridging programs for skilled immigrants by benchmarking existing bridging programs found in BC and across Canada and creating an evaluation framework based on these benchmarks.

6. ***Northwest Immigrant Skills and Services Project*** – To provide a skills inventory of landed immigrants, identify relevant support agencies and service providers to assist in labour market attachment, and identify employers seeking matching skills within the North Coast communities of Prince Rupert, Port Edward, Masset, Queen Charlotte City, Skidegate, Tlell and the surrounding First Nations communities of Metlakatla, Port Simpson, Hartley Bay and Kitkatla area.

7. ***Promising Practices in Workplace Practice Opportunities*** – To describe the role that workplace practice opportunities play in the full range of training, educating and employing skilled immigrants.

8. ***Skilled Immigrants and Labour Market Access in the Capital Region*** – To conduct a needs assessment, environmental scan, and facilitated strategic planning process involving a broad range of stakeholders to build regional capacity to address the labour market integration of skilled immigrants in the Capital Region District.

9. ***Inventory of Assessment Tools for Skilled Immigrants*** – To inventory and analyze the delivery of existing assessment tools used within the Lower Mainland to assess skilled immigrants in the following areas: English language proficiency, essential skills, academic qualifications, technical skills, and employability skills.

10. ***Enhancing the Labour Market Attachment of Skilled Immigrants within the Okanagan*** – To complete an environmental scan of career assessment and planning services and integrated bridging services for skilled immigrants, support the conceptualization and development of resources, assess the capacity of existing resources, and develop a series of recommendations that will inform future labour market attachment initiatives within the region.

11. ***Comprehensive Assessment and Career Planning Services of BC's Skilled Immigrants*** – To research and identify best practices of career assessment and planning services and develop a comprehensive career assessment and planning model that can be incorporated in whole or in part by the multiple stakeholders working with skilled immigrants.

12. ***Resources to Provide Direct Labour Market Information to BC's Skilled Immigrants*** – To develop a listing of professional and trade associations to support the flow of essential information to the skilled immigrant job seeker and to develop recommendations to assist professional and trade associations to develop services specifically designed for the skilled immigrant.

13. ***Towards an Integrated Assessment and Bridging Program in BC's Construction Industry*** - To develop a comprehensive strategic plan to increase the employment of skilled immigrants among construction contractors.

14. ***An Employer Survey of the Under-Employment of Skilled Immigrants*** – To identify skills and attributes required by a variety of employers to facilitate the labour market entry of skilled immigrants.

15. ***A Survey of Skilled Immigrants with Long-Term Attachment to the Labour Market*** – To identify the skills, attributes, and course of action taken by skilled immigrants who have overcome employment and language-related barriers and established long-term labour market attachment.

16. ***Services Review to Identify Providers of English Language Instruction with a Labour Market Component in BC*** – Additionally, the Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch of the

former Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services provided funding to support a province-wide survey to identify what labour market and language services are available and identify accessibility for labour market destined immigrants.

Common Themes in Key BC Research and Reports
A 2004 review of BC research documents and reports on skilled immigrants revealed a number of key themes. The themes include support for:

- implementing an integrated approach to address the wide range of needs of skilled immigrants;
- developing partnerships that include immigrant-serving organizations, the government, professional associations, and the private sector;
- placing greater emphasis on involving the private sector in creating workplace opportunities; and,
- expanding the availability of workplace opportunities such as mentorships and internships.

The above mentioned themes are evident in the work of the Looking Ahead Initiative, which is a multi-sectoral initiative dedicated to improving the labour market integration of immigrants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley of British Columbia. The Looking Ahead Initiative website, http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/, is intended to be a one-stop resource centre for people working in the field of labour market integration of immigrants. For immigrants, it provides a directory and links to job listings and other services to help find employment.

The themes are also evident in the work of the Employment Access Skills for Immigrants (EASI) Initiative and Skills Connect for Immigrants Program (see 1.2.a for descriptions).

1.4.b   Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?

The Province of BC recognizes that a short-term and long-term need for skilled workers must be addressed in order to maintain a healthy economy.

BC is experiencing a labour supply/demand imbalance that is resulting in skill shortages in some regions and occupations. Particular sectors and regions across BC are seeing short-term gaps in the availability of skilled workers. Employers in construction and oil and gas have voiced concern about their inability to fill positions and the loss of production capacity because of those unfilled positions. Some public sector occupations such as doctors and nurses also have regional gaps.

BC has faced skill shortages many times over the past half century, but in most cases the labour market has eventually corrected itself. The present situation is different, however. Four factors in particular are driving BC toward a potential skills shortage unlike any British Columbians have seen in the past, and affecting the degree to which markets may be able to respond on their own.

1. Demographic trends: By 2010 – for the first time ever – the cohort leaving the workforce will exceed the 15-24 age cohort entering it, as baby boomers begin retiring en masse. While

productivity improvements mean fewer people can do more work, this will not fully compensate for the large numbers of retirements expected in many sectors.

2. Technological trends in production are creating an increasing demand for workers with the skills and competencies to use new technologies. This trend is raising skill requirements for all jobs.

3. Economic trends are favouring countries and production facilities with a large pool of skilled workers. In order to create niche markets, increase comparative advantage, and attract capital investment, British Columbia must be able to demonstrate that it has a pool of workers with 'world class' skills.

4. Global competition for business 'inputs' is a serious consideration today. Both capital and labour are increasingly mobile, and will go where they see the best opportunities or return on investment.

BC will need to attract more people to our workforce, and they will need a greater level of skill.

Recent employment projections estimate there will be over one million job openings between 2005 and 2015, which will result from job creation and replacement openings due to retirements. Here are the top five sectors:
- Health Care and Social Assistance (164,930 openings)
- Retail Trade (102,030 openings)
- Educational Services (95,510 openings)
- Construction (84,680 openings)
- Accommodation and Food Services (83,020 openings)

In particular, the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic games in Vancouver/Whistler, British Columbia and related capital projects will create employment in key sectors such as: tourism, construction, communications, business and related services, and transportation.

A 2004 report by the Ministry of Economic Development estimated that the provincial government funds around $1.6 billion worth of skill- and education-related programs each year. The report also noted the additional resources of $400 million invested by the federal government in BC, the training capacity of more than 1,100 private training institutes, and 110 job-matching web sites available to British Columbians.

The provincial programs and policies to deal with this issue are grouped under four key objectives:

1. Increasing BC's workforce
- Ensuring BC also develops made-in-BC talent. In particular, BC must tap into the under-utilized populations in the province (youth, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, immigrants), helping them to become more active in the workforce.
- Attracting skilled people from outside the province.

2. Fuelling skill development
- In addition to making sure BC can bring new people into the workforce, it is critical that the province also improve the skill level of today's employees.

3. Matching skills to need
- Creating a skilled workforce is only part of the equation – just as important is making sure employers can find the right people.

4. Tools for long-term planning
- Developing a workforce that can drive BC's growing economy is a dynamic process – a continuing evolution of new ideas and initiatives to help BC anticipate and meet tomorrow's needs. These programs and policies are aimed at long-term workforce development and management – province-wide and sectorally. They are integral to the province's future growth.

1.4.c   Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g. poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.

Employment
The BC labour market has experienced strong growth in recent years. Demographic groups who have gained the most from the employment boom are men (whose unemployment rate in 2006 remained below the rate for women, reversing the trend of previous years) and young people aged 15 to 24. In 2006 the unemployment rate for the 15 to 24 age group dropped to 8.2% after ten years of the annual average unemployment rates for youth being consistently above 13%.

Unemployment rates among the Aboriginal off-reserve population also fell, from almost 20% in late 2004, to average around 10.8% for most of 2006. Although this remains more than twice as high as the non-Aboriginal unemployment rate, the positive note is that their labour market situation has been very responsive to the overall improvement in BC's economy.

Income assistance clients
The provincial employment assistance caseload and Employment Insurance (EI) claim loads have been changing as labour market conditions in the province improve. The proportion of "Expected to Work" or "work-ready" clients have been decreasing since 2002 as those who are able to work have found employment. A greater proportion of the current caseload have multiple employment barriers (low levels of education, limited work experience and essential skills) which impact their ability to find and retain employment.

In particular, the majority of those on an EI claim worked in lower skill level occupations. Almost 60 percent of work-ready claimants were last employed in an occupation that required a high school education or lower. Lower skill jobs tend to pay more than 20% less than the average provincial wage, and these jobs have not experienced an increase in wages since 2003, which is

leading to a widening gap in incomes between these occupations and the overall provincial job market.

To achieve long term labour market attachment for these clients, strategic, intensive and often long term interventions are needed.

Aboriginal Education
Recent administrative data from the public elementary and high school (K-12) system indicate that many Aboriginal youth continue to drop out of high school at a very young age. A Ministry of Education 2004 report shows that while conditions are improving, the process is very slow and there remains a long way to go. 54% of Aboriginal students who were enrolled in Grade 8 in 1997 had not graduated from high school six years later, compared with only 18% of the same cohort of non-Aboriginal students.

Policies must address this wide gap in high school graduation rates but it is a very daunting task. Ministry of Education data shows that the rate of Aboriginal students in the K-12 system who require special education due to learning disabilities is twice that of non-Aboriginal students and due to behaviour and mental disabilities is four times the rate of non-Aboriginal students.

1.4.d **Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.**

Mentoring Programs
There are a number of mentoring programs for skilled immigrants in BC and elsewhere in Canada. Researchers preparing a 2004 report found that information available from these programs was mainly anecdotal and regarded as best practices. They stated few formal or long-term evaluations had been conducted. However, the results of the evaluations that had been performed indicated a high success in that mentorships lead to full employment in approximately 70% of the cases.

Examples of Mentoring Programs in BC

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Job Mentoring Program
The job mentoring program offered by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. was initially designed for engineers, IT specialists and accountants, but now covers a wide range of professions. The program started in December 2000, and it is currently funded by the Government of Canada and other partners. The main purposes of the program are for individuals to be able to plan for their career in a more realistic way, obtain information about their profession, and expand their professional networks. The mentorship takes place over a twelve week period, with mentors devoting one or two hours a week to their mentees. Evaluation of this program has shown that it has helped many clients in various ways, such as providing a more realistic understanding of job requirements and facilitating the development of professional networks. Evaluation results have indicated that 70% of the mentees obtained employment, and out of this about 50-58% secured employment in their related profession.

The Bamboo Network Host Mentoring Program
The Bamboo Network Host Mentoring Program is delivered by the Multicultural Helping House Society. The Society receives funding from the Province of BC to support this and other programs. Volunteers are recruited from the community who are professionals or trades-persons with a similar degree or training as the newcomers. The volunteers act as both hosts and mentors assisting the newcomers to understand Canadian culture as well as supporting them in attaining their career goals. Similar to other mentoring programs identified for skilled immigrants, this program does not guarantee the individual a job. Instead it provides new immigrants with guidance on how to find work in their field, information on the registration requirements in their profession or trade, and information on where job opportunities may exist.

Job Shadowing Programs in BC

Stepping-up Program for Immigrant Women
This program is provided by the Immigrant Services Society of BC, and is funded by the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. Stepping-up assists women who are survivors of abuse to explore opportunities for employment. This 21 week pre-employment bridging program provides its participants with a variety of services including English instruction, life skills, career exploration, counselling, advocacy, a one month work experience and a job shadow. The job shadow is usually one day and is often used when individuals are unsure about the area they want to pursue.

1.4.e   Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g. retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly-skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.)?

Although the Province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada and various agencies are working to reduce the problem, significant barriers to labour market integration for skilled immigrants continue to exist at this time. Available evidence lends considerable support to the view that skilled immigrants would benefit a great deal, arguably more than any other single group, from recognition of their skills.

Skilled immigrants arriving in Canada encounter barriers to entry into their professions. These barriers have been documented in numerous reports conducted by government, immigrant-serving organizations, special task groups and committees. A 2004 study by the C.D. Howe Institute, *Immigrants' Declining Earnings: Reasons and Remedies*, indicates that the earnings of recent immigrants to Canada are declining, even though the people themselves are more skilled than those in the past. One of the issues is that many employers do not recognize foreign credentials, which, in part, can lead to significant underemployment. A number of other barriers faced by skilled immigrants that are repeatedly mentioned in the literature include:

- lack of Canadian work experience and references;
- lack of familiarity with Canadian business practices;

- lack of understanding of licensing and accreditation processes;
- sense of loss with respect to their professional identity;
- presence of systemic barriers to employment;
- profession specific language and cultural barriers; and
- lack of business and social networks and related supports.

1.4.f   Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.

Data not available.

1.4.g   Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g. teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e. that requires a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.)?

Occupations	Regulated Professional Status
Carpenter	Regulated by BC's Industry Training Authority
Dental Technician	Regulated by the College of Dental Technicians of BC
Dietician	Regulated by College of Dieticians of BC
Engineer	Regulated by Association of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of BC
Information Technologist	Not regulated
Journalist	Not regulated
Midwife	Regulated by College of Midwives of BC
Nurse Practitioner	Regulated by the College of Registered Nurses of BC
Teacher	Regulated by BC College of Teachers

1.5.a   What are the newly evolved 'skills and competencies' to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.

Human Resources and Social Development Canada, which has done extensive research in the area of workplace skills, has noted nine essential skills that "provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change." They are:

- Reading text
- Document use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral communication
- Working with others
- Thinking skills
- Computer use
- Continuous learning

Provincial Resources
British Columbia has developed the following resources for Essential Skills:

SkillPlan: a not-for-profit society was established in 1991 as a joint labour and management initiative of the BC construction industry to develop strategies to improve the Essential Skills of people working in the unionized construction industry in BC and the Yukon Territory.

AWAL (Applications of Working and Learning): was conceptualized and developed in 1997 with funding from Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and the BC Ministry of Education. AWAL is a professional development project for educators. Participants are placed in a variety of workplace environments to help them connect the curriculum they teach in the classroom with how that curriculum is used in the workplace.

TOWES (Test of Workplace Essential Skills): Formed in early 1998 by SkillPlan and Bow Valley College in Alberta, TOWES is an assessment that uses authentic workplace documents to accurately measure three essential skills that are needed for safe and productive employment. These skills are: reading text, document use and numeracy.

The Training Group at Douglas College (an urban based college in British Columbia)**:** Founded in 1992, the Training Group serves over 3,300 participants each year with career and workplace training solutions. It is currently cultivating partnerships with stakeholders, developing a communication strategy to encourage industry groups to support and recognize Essential Skills training, while reducing the stigma for learners to become involved in literacy training.

Other initiatives include: Aboriginal Essential Skills for the Trades (at Vancouver Community College, an urban based college in British Columbia); Essential Skills for Work Certificate Program (at Northwest Community College, a northern British Columbia rural college);

Foundations Workplace Skills Program (Douglas College, an urban based college in British Columbia); joint initiatives of MOE and the Industry Training Authority, and the Essential Skills Awareness Raising (Association of Canadian Community Colleges MOU in BC).

The Ministry of Advanced Education's Learning Programs Branch is developing a Workplace Essential Skills Action Plan (Policy Framework) to Promote Essential Skills Through Partnerships. BC plans to host a provincial conference on Workplace Essential Skills in the fall of 2007.

Work Futures
Work Futures[1] defines the skills necessary to work in the new economy as:

1. Career Development Skills involve the following competencies:

a) Personal Management Competencies include:
- Building a positive feeling about yourself;
- Interacting positively and effectively with others; and,
- Changing and growing throughout one's life.

b) Learning and Work Exploration Competencies include:
- Participating in lifelong learning that is supportive of your life/work goals*;*
- Locating and effectively using life/work information; and,
- Understanding the relationship between work and society or the economy.

c) Life/Work Building Competencies include:
- Securing/creating and maintaining work;
- Making decisions which enhance your life/work*;*
- Maintaining Balanced Life and Work Roles; and,
- Understanding the changing nature of life/work roles*.*

2) Occupation-Specific Skills
These skills are obtained through on-the-job training and experience, as well as specialized education or training. The need for skills upgrading or retraining will occur regularly for workers in the New Economy.

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[1] Work Futures: Occupational Outlooks provides a comprehensive description of close to 200 occupations as they relate directly to the BC labour market. It is for learners, individuals interested in changing careers or re-entering the labour market, and for career practitioners. It was jointly produced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada: BC/Yukon Region, and the BC Ministry of Advanced Education.

3) Employability Skills.

The term 'employability skills' was coined by the Conference Board of Canada in 1992 when it described the set of skills that employers identified as those needed for a high-quality Canadian workforce. This list includes Fundamental Skills, such as managing information, Teamwork Skills, such as working with others, and Personal Management Skills, such as learning continuously.

4) Skills Trends[1] in the New Economy

- Shifting structure of demand to that of higher-skilled workers;
- Increasing demand for new manager skills: nurture a respectful environment, develop decision making in employees, encourage innovation and experimentation, share planning, treat employees as partners;
- Gathering LMI through skills classifications systems;
- Multi-skilling for multi-tasking;
- Using work portfolios and skills portfolios in the workplace; and,
- Skills assessment, analysis and training in relation to the work world in elementary and secondary schools. Most school boards have developed career portfolios with skills sections for students.

1.5.b   Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession?

No evidence available.

1.5.c   Provide evidence, if any, of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship?

In the Work Futures definition of skills necessary to work in the new economy (question 1.5.a), understanding the relationship between work and society or the economy was listed as a competency under Career Development Skills.

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[1] Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information, http://www.makingcareersense.org/

Component 1.6. Others.

1.6.a   Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential – directly or non-directly – that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.

According to the Ministry of Advanced Education's 2007/08 – 2009/10 Service Plan, demand for post-secondary education will result from continued population growth and increased immigration. In particular, there will be more emphasis on life-long learning and English as a Second Language programs, along with increased need for more choice and flexibility in post-secondary education.

As previously mentioned, as the British Columbia population ages, implications for the labour market are that significant portions of the workforce will be eligible for retirement. This may result in labour pressures in many sectors. It is feasible that in such an environment, the willingness to recognize non-formal and informal learning will increase.

1.6.b   Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)[*]
In 1992 a BC government report, entitled the *Human Resource Development Report,* indicated that BC needed to have a greater capacity to assess prior learning and recommended that formal recognition should be provided for workplace training, informal and non-formal learning. In 1993, BC established a PLA Provincial Steering Committee, appointed a PLA coordinator and produced a set of PLA standards and guidelines. In 1994, the then Ministry of Skills, Training and Labour began providing targeted funds to public post-secondary institutions to support PLA activity.

In late 1998 the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) forwarded a set of implementation guidelines for PLA to AVED. In March 1999, the Ministry distributed these guidelines to all public post-secondary institutions with the recommendation that they be accepted for implementation. In fall 2000, colleges and institutes reported to the Ministry on the progress they had made implementing these guidelines as part of their regular reporting process.

Following the BC government's Core Review in 2001/02, responsibility for PLA was assigned to individual institutions and the Ministry withdrew from specific PLA activities and initiatives. Currently there is no provincial PLA framework.

It should be noted that although there is no overall steering mechanism for institutional PLA, PLA activity occurs at all public post-secondary institutions, and many private ones. Institutions have continued to report PLA activity to AVED as part of their annual audit process. Activity is

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[*] In British Columbia, an alternate term for Prior Learning Assessment is Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). Both terms will be used interchangeably within this document.

measured in student Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), which is a measure that converts all full and part-time student enrolments into the equivalent number of full-time enrolments based on a full course load. The extent of actual activity is probably much greater, since PLA activity is not consistently reported or recorded across all public post-secondary institutions. Public institutions have indicated that for 2004/05 the total FTE activity given over to PLA was 174.32 FTEs; for 2005/06, it was 158.9 FTEs[1] (figures not available from five public universities).

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[1] Both years figures include some ITA PLA activity, not correctly separated by institutions.

Component 2. Description of institutional arrangements

Component 2.1. Political and Legal Framework

2.1.a   **Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.**

The *College and Institute Act* indicates that the objects of a college and university college are to provide "comprehensive … adult education and continuing education." In this context, some adult education and most continuing education courses fall under the rubric of non-formal learning as they do not lead to a formal certificate and do not formally evaluate the learning.

In 1996, BC released "Charting a New Course" which described a strategic plan for the future of BC's college, institute and agency system. As part of the plan, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) was set in the context of: improving student-centeredness of delivery, facilitating student mobility and credit transfer, and improving access to education and training. PLAR was highlighted as a strategy that would lead to enhancing learning efficiency.

PLAR was implemented as a joint initiative between the public post-secondary institutions, the BC Council on Admissions and Transfers, the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology, and the Ministry of Advanced Education. Small grants were made available to institutions to develop and implement PLAR and annual reports on progress required.

As noted in question 1.6.b, there is currently no provincial PLAR framework.

2.1.b   **Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered 'No', describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered 'yes' or 'under development/discussion', please answer to the following questions.**

As noted above, there is no legislative or policy framework for PLAR in BC. PLAR is the responsibility of each individual institution. All BC public post-secondary institutions offer PLAR services to their students, although not necessarily in every program.

2.1.c   **Describe the aim(s) and principles stated in the framework?**

As noted above.

2.1.d   **Describe the historical background that this issue has been taken up. What are the most important drivers of legislation? If there has been already reform of the legislation, describe the change and the pressure which made the change.**

See questions 1.6.b and 2.1.a.

2.1.e   What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?

The International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES), operated by the British Columbia Institute of Technology, assesses foreign credentials and learning. Learning completed in foreign countries or the private sector can be assessed to gain advanced standing in a public post-secondary educational program, or to satisfy a credential requirement for employment. ICES analyzes educational course work completed in other countries, for the purpose of determining its BC or Canadian equivalent and what educational credits should be granted. Thus, individuals seeking employment in a provincially regulated occupation, admission to or advanced standing in an educational program or general employment can have their foreign education properly recognized. ICES also assists employers who were previously unable to evaluate international credentials for recruitment purposes.

In all, ICES has completed over 27,000 evaluations and served 20,000 clients. Between 2,500 and 3,000 evaluations are completed annually. More information can be found at: http://www.bcit.ca/ices/index.shtml

2.1.f   Describe, if any, operational systems to put the legal framework into practice. Who set up the system(s)?

As noted above, question 1.6.b provides a history of PLAR in BC.

2.1.g   Provide information, if exists, any evaluation of how they work or how they have not worked.

CT2T compiled an annual systematic report on PLAR activities until 2000/01. Since then, a formal evaluation of PLAR has not been undertaken.

2.1.h   Describe outreach activities or awareness-raising activities of the framework or the operational systems. How are the objectives of outreach/awareness-raising activities articulated? Which audience(s) do the activities mainly target?

PLAR is the responsibility of each individual institution and each one is responsible for advertising its PLAR services. The Ministry of Advanced Education provides information on PLAR planning documents and resources on its website, http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/welcome.htm.

Component 2.2. Governance and the Role of Government

2.2.a   List of 'who does what' for non-formal and informal learning and recognition of such learning.

Who	What
Post-secondary institutions (Universities, university colleges, colleges, and institutes)	Institutions are responsible for accessing formal, non-formal and informal learning for admission and assignment of credit. Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is available to varying degrees in all public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
Industry Training Authority (ITA)	The ITA allows individuals who have previous experience and/or training in a trade or occupation to apply for an assessment. The assessment service determines whether the individual is qualified to challenge the certification exam for their trade, or to receive equivalent status that enables them to supervise the training of other apprentices in their field. The assessment is based on individual trade specific application packages. The ITA has introduced a service level standard that applications will be processed within 60 days of receipt of a complete application.

2.2.b   List of 'who does what' for formal learning and recognition of such learning.

Who	What
Post-secondary institutions (Universities, university colleges, colleges, and institutes)	Institutions are responsible for internal quality assessments of new programs and for accessing formal, non-formal and informal learning for admission and assignment of credit. Each public college, university college or institute must have an education council, or an equivalent body, to set criteria for academic standing, standards and the grading system. In the case of the research universities, the senates are responsible for academic governance. A Peer Review process was introduced in 2002/2003 for all new degree and non-degree programs proposed by public institutions. Full program proposals are posted on a web based system for 30 calendar days. Peer institutions are expected to review proposals and provide comments related to program quality.

Industry Training Authority (ITA)	The ITA is a provincial government agency with legislated responsibility to govern and develop the industry training system in BC. The ITA's powers include the development of programs, setting program standards, and candidate eligibility for participation in industry training programs funded by the authority. The ITA is also responsible for setting examinations and assessment standards and procedures for industry training programs and for policies on the recognition of training obtained in another program or jurisdiction. The ITA reports to the Ministry of Economic Development.
Regulatory bodies & professional agencies	Many regulated professions have associations that conduct accreditation reviews of post-secondary education programs pertaining to professions. Examples are the College of Dental Surgeons, the Canadian Association of Social Work, the BC College of Teachers, the BC Industry Training Authority, and the Certified Management Accountants of Canada.
Degree Quality Assessment Board	The Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB) reviews new degree proposals to ensure all degrees offered in British Columbia by public, private, or out-of-province public institutions meet the same high standards. The DQAB makes recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education who approves all new degrees offered in the province. The DQAB also conducts institutional reviews of private institutions, applications from a private institution to use the word university in their name, and applications from both public and private institutions to obtain exempt status. Exempt status allows institutions to have their degree proposals go directly to the Minister without a DQAB review.
Private Career Training Institutions Agency (PCTIA)	PCTIA is responsible for providing consumer protection to students and prospective students of registered institutions and for establishing standards of quality that must be met by accredited institutions. BC private institutions offering career programs equal to, or above, $1,000 in tuition and equal to, or above, 40 hours in duration must register. Accreditation is a voluntary process available to registered institutions where the institution and its programs are evaluated by the Agency's quality standards. Programs taken at a PCTIA accredited institution will not necessarily be recognized for transfer credit at any of the public post-secondary institutions.
British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)	The mandate of the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer ((BCCAT) as discussed in question 1.3.a is to facilitate admission, articulation and transfer arrangements among BC post-secondary institutions by encouraging institutions to develop policies and practices regarding the transferability of post-secondary credit courses so that credit granted at

	one institution can be applied toward credentials at other institutions. BCCAT is funded annually by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Institutions work together to establish transfer arrangements.
Articulation committees	All public post-secondary institutions participate in articulation committees. Articulation requires the submission of course and program material to other institutions for detailed assessment for the purpose of awarding transfer credit. The BC articulation process ensures that all courses and programs receiving transfer credit have met the same standard as that of the institution awarding the credit. There are currently sixty-nine accreditation committees in specific subject or program areas. BCCAT sets the guidelines for articulation committees.
International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)	ICES (as discussed in question 2.1.e) evaluates the credentials of people who have studied in other provinces or countries and determines comparable levels in BC and Canadian terms.

2.2.c   Describe the direct and indirect role of government in the practice.

British Columbia operates on a shared responsibility model with governance of post-secondary education shared between the Ministry of Advanced Education and the public post-secondary education institutions.

The Ministry of Advanced Education provides leadership and direction, establishes policy, and provides funding to the post-secondary system. The Ministry also provides financial assistance to students. The majority of public services for which the Ministry is responsible are delivered by institutions and organizations within the public post-secondary system. Various mechanisms are in place, such as legislation, funding agreements and reporting requirements, to ensure accountability for public funds.

Public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia have a significant and appropriate degree of autonomy from government in many areas. This autonomy allows institutions the necessary independence to determine how to effectively meet the needs of their students, their communities and the province. These institutions develop and deliver programs and courses, provide education and training to students, undertake research, and serve the educational needs of their communities.

2.2.d   Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue? Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Ministry of Education are moving forward in discussions on a more integrated delivery of programs and services to adult learners. The two ministries have jointly facilitated meetings with public post-secondary and K-12 officials which provided an opportunity to share information, discuss potential areas of collaboration and identify the barriers and opportunities for more coordinated delivery of ABE/adult education and trades in the regions.

AVED continues to work closely with MEd and the K-12 system on development of collaborative initiatives. For example, a committee composed of partner ministries and stakeholders has been established to review and develop mechanisms to provide more effective information on learner progress and success in adult literacy programs in British Columbia. Other initiatives being considered include pilot projects, a joint student outcomes survey, establishing a System Collaborations Steering Committee and developing a common information and access portal for learners.

Inter-ministerial approaches are usually related to specific formal learning programs and collaborative efforts to meet labour market needs. For example, the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry of Health recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to agree on ways the two ministries will work together to implement strategies that will help to enhance health education and human resource outcomes in BC.

Component 2.3. Resources[1]

2.3.a   Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.

As stated previously, the Ministry of Advanced Education provides funding for FTEs at institutions, a number of these FTEs (174.32 in 2004/05) being used for PLA activity[2].

As also stated (in question 2.2.c), the Ministry of Advanced Education Service Plan notes that public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia have a significant degree of autonomy in which to decide how to effectively meet the needs of their students, their communities and the province.

The autonomy of institutions is reflected in the 'block funding' method of financing, whereby AVED provides annual block operating grants to each public post-secondary institution in BC. Each institution's share of the student FTE spaces and provincial funding is based on a number of factors including the number of funded spaces in the region compared to its 18-29 population, the regional 18-29 population growth rate, the ability to deliver the spaces and government priorities. Block funding gives institutions greater autonomy in deciding what programs to deliver with the funding provided.

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[1] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.
[2] Because of block funding and variable costs of delivery to different sectors, it is difficult to articulate an overall cost for PLA funding.

2.3.b **If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.**

AVED Targeted PLA Funding

96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
$1,020,000	$1,000,000	$1,033,401	$908,800	$869,000	$771,000 [1]

In 2002/03, AVED switched to block funding to institutions, instead of targeted PLA funding. $640,000 was provided that year for PLA initiatives.

2.3.c **Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is the cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.**

As stated above, while the government does provide funding that can be used by institutions for PLA services, PLA costs are then shared by institutions and individuals seeking these services. These costs vary by institution, and often within institutions (by program and/or credential). Below are some examples of specific BC public post-secondary institutions' PLA policies:

Camosun College (a Vancouver Island based urban college): Fees for Prior Learning Assessments are calculated at 50% of current fee levels for courses and programs with applicable levies assessed in addition to the tuition. Prior Learning Assessment fees are non-refundable.

Thompson Rivers University (an interior based university): The cost of PLAR for credit courses is equal to the course fee as defined by the tuition fee schedule. The cost for cost-recovery courses will be determined by the number of credits requested.

British Columbia Institute of Technology (a provincial polytechnic institute): There is a non-refundable fee charged in advance for assessment. The fee is usually between half and full tuition, depending on the complexity of the assessment process. Not all courses have PLAR credit available, and there is a limit on how many total PLAR credits students can receive.

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[1]Including $100,000 for PLA enhancement projects.

2.3.d   How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g. the average income, the income disparity, etc.) How was the decision made where to locate such centers? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors? How many training programmes exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.

As indicated previously, the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) is operated by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (Lower Mainland). PLA assessment is carried out at individual public post-secondary institutions located throughout the province.

Component 2.4. Others

2.4.a   Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

Nothing to note under this question.

Component 3. Description of Technical Arrangements

Component 3.1. Qualifications, Qualification Systems, Qualification Framework

3.1.a   What term does your country use for 'Recognition of non-formal and informal learning'? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.

As previously noted, British Columbia uses the terms Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in reference to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. One institution uses the term Prior Learning, Flexible Assessment and Recognition (PLFAR).

Within the BC public PSE system, the concept of PLA (or PLAR) is encapsulated within the term flexible assessment. Flexible assessment includes both formal and informal assessment activities (see question 3.3.b).

The term credential evaluation is used by ICES and others to refer to the evaluation of credentials issued in other provinces or countries. This evaluation process does not evaluate course content or make judgment on the quality of individual credentials but provides a general recommendation of comparability of education earned outside of BC to a BC education.

Other terms used in BC are:

Advanced Standing/Exemption – Advanced standing or an exemption is a placement to a certain level, based on assessment of previous work, or an achievement in a placement test, or through the approval of an appropriate institutional representative. In BC, credit is normally not granted for advanced standing or exemption. The student is not required to take the course to complete the program but is normally required to replace the exempted course with an alternate. The term Advanced Placement (AP) is also used when secondary (high school) students undertake post-secondary level courses and have the opportunity to show that they have mastered the material by taking AP exams.

Cluster Credit – Cluster credit denotes situations where two or more courses, in most cases credit courses, are combined in order to achieve equivalence to one course.

3.1.b   Describe if recognising of non-formal and informal learning is liked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, the impact of such linkages

No information available.

3.1.c   What kinds of qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas, degrees, licenses, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?

No information available.

3.1.d   Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing 'legitimacy' both in working life and in the educational system?

No information available.

3.1.e   If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?

British Columbia does not have a provincial qualification framework.

3.1.f   What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?

In 2000, BC colleges and university colleges were asked to comment on the issues they faced in implementing PLA initiatives. Although PLA was generally well accepted and promoted within the institutions, eleven of twenty institutions responding indicated they faced barriers in implementing PLA with the most frequently mentioned barriers being cost, the time involved, and the difficulty in finding qualified staff to conduct the assessments.

Component 3.2. Credit Accumulation and Transfer

3.2.a **Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory of sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used - at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors. Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.)**

No detailed overarching formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning exist at this time. Policies and practices regarding credit for these types of learning vary across programs and institutions. However, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education has worked to provide guidance to institutions that are establishing prior learning assessment policies and procedures.

Examples of Individual Institutional Policies for Granting PLA Credit to Own Students

Malaspina University College (a Vancouver Island based university college): Allowance for PLAR credit and PLAR method used is determined by each faculty. Methods of PLAR include portfolio, portfolio assisted assessment, skill demonstration, oral exam, audition, work sample and course challenge. Course challenge is used when a student is requesting 6 or fewer PLAR credits. Comprehensive methods are used when a request is for 9 or more PLAR credits.

University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV): UCFV awards a variety of PLAR credit through many methods. Senior level credit is available through PLAR. It is open to all programs to recognize prior learning. "Unassigned" credit is awarded through portfolio PLAR submissions. As of January 2006, the PLAR policy was being re-written to allow up to 75% of a degree to be earned through PLAR. However, institutional limits may differ from program limits depending on the determination by each faculty. PLAR practices include portfolio, course challenge, oral/written examinations, and workplace assessments.

Examples of Individual Institutional Policies for Granting PLA Credit to Transfer Students

North Island College (a Vancouver Island based rural college): North Island College will recognize credit earned through PLA at other public institutions. The award of such credits to students will be governed by previously negotiated transfer credit agreements.

University of British Columbia (UBC): Credits earned via PLA, challenge credit, or the equivalent, at another recognized post-secondary institution are acceptable at UBC, provided that the course to which those credits apply is recognized by the University as suitable for transfer credit. The University accepts only PLA credits that are assigned to specific courses.

PLA Implementation Guidelines
Most institutions in British Columbia have now implemented prior learning assessment services for learners. The experience of these institutions is reflected in guidelines developed by the Centre for Curriculum Transfer and Technology in collaboration with the post-secondary education system and endorsed by the Ministry of Advanced Education in 1999. The following select portions of the guidelines are relevant to credit arrangements:

<u>Education and Administration</u>
All institutions will identify any of their programs or courses which are listed in the BC Transfer Guide (or in other formal transfer arrangements) for which they will not accept credit awarded as a result of the assessment of prior learning.

 Policies include:
- Learners will receive recognition and credit for demonstrated knowledge, skills and attributes and not for experience alone.
- Credit will be awarded for learning reflecting knowledge, skills, attributes and values which are appropriate to the subject, course or program.
- In receiving institutions, credit will be awarded for learning which is consistent with the achievement levels required by the particular credential to be awarded.
- The assessment and recognition of prior learning and the determination of credit awards will be made by content specialists, with external advice as necessary.
- Learners will have access to prior learning assessment and learning opportunities appropriate to the content area.
- Credit awarded as a result of the assessment of prior learning will be identified as such on the transcript issued by the institution and transfer credit will be granted on the same basis as is granted for equivalent courses as identified in the BC Transfer Guide or in other formal transfer arrangements.
- Policies and information about the prior learning assessment process, including provision for appeal, will be readily available.

<u>Assessment</u>
The number of credits to be granted is determined by the institution based on their published learning outcomes or other criteria.

<u>Transcripts/Transfer</u>
Grades or credits may be assigned to PLA awards and will be entered accordingly on the learner's transcript.

Institutions will document PLA credit awards internally.

The percentage of a program's credits which can be obtained through PLA will be determined by the institution awarding the credential.

3.2.b   Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?

The decision on how much recognition a student will be given for demonstrated prior learning is at the discretion of the organization he/she is applying to, whether that is a college, university, secondary school or other educational institution, professional licensing or certification body, or employer. In post-secondary institutions it is usual for departments or programs to decide credit arrangements, doing so in accordance with institutional policies.

3.2.c   How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.

The way credit is provided varies across institutions, departments and programs. It is usual for departments or programs to make this determination, doing so in accordance with institutional policies.

Where multiple assessment options are potentially available to students, allocation of credit will also likely depend on the particular assessment option taken. For instance, a successful course challenge will probably result in a student receiving full credit for a particular course. Meanwhile, a successful applicant for advanced placement or advanced standing will likely not receive course credit, but may be exempt from requirements to participate in components of a program. The exemption may make it necessary for the student to substitute elective courses to complete credit requirements to graduate the program.

3.2.d   What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?

On a broad scale, PLA has the potential to contribute directly to the achievement of six pan-Canadian public policy goals: the efficient use of resources, the development of a lifelong learning culture, the advancement of social justice, co-ordinated and coherent labour force development, education and training reform, and the management of change.

In addition to contributing to broad public policy goals, PLA provides opportunities to individual learners, institutional providers and employers.

Learners may benefit from PLA in the following ways:
- achievement of educational goals in less time and often at less cost;
- opportunities for career mobility;
- enhancement of self-esteem; and,
- sounder decision-making about educational and career plans.

PLA affords educational institutions the opportunity to:
- enhance flexibility;
- foster higher completion and retention rates;
- serve increasingly diverse learners; and,
- promote meaningful partnerships with business and industry through PLA.

For employers, PLA may serve to:
- motivate the workforce to acquire more training;
- make the best use of limited training dollars;
- link workplace learning with educational credentials; and,
- enable the establishment of helpful partnerships with educational institutions.

PLA also encourages the use of a variety of assessment strategies and the explicit identification and articulation of goals of student learning.

Some factors learners may perceive as disincentives are:
- The process to attain credit for PLA may in some cases be complex; and,
- Losing the potentially enriching experience of attending a class one receives credit for through PLAR.

Some factors institutions may perceive as disincentives are:
- Financial loss (often students pay a lower fee for PLAR than they would to take the courses); and,
- Complexity involved in making assessments.

3.2.e Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.

As previously noted, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) is the provincial government agency with responsibility for apprenticeships and industry training programs in BC. The ITA is working to support existing apprenticeship options, and to identify new training approaches. This will lead to a training system that provides expanded opportunities for British Columbians, and better meets industry and labour market needs.

Apprenticeship
Apprenticeship is paid work-based training, usually combined with post-secondary education. Apprentices spend about 80% of their time learning skills on the job (under the direction of a highly skilled journeyperson) and about 20% of their time learning in a classroom setting. The length of an apprenticeship can range from one to five years, but most require four years to complete.

Apprentices and their employers are required to register their apprenticeship or industry training agreements (sometime referred to as an "indentureship") and to document the work-based training completed.

Technical training is offered at a wide range of public and private institutions in BC. Flexible alternatives are being developed to bring training closer to home for more British Columbians - including web-based and other forms of distance learning and mobile training delivery.

Successful completion of both components, along with examinations, is required before an apprentice earns a certificate or ticket and becomes a certified tradesperson in his or her trade.

Prior Learning Assessment
If a person has previous experience and/or training in a trade or occupation, he/she may be eligible to become certified in a shorter period of time than if he/she were new to the field. The ITA offers an assessment service that determines whether an individual is qualified to challenge

the certification exam for their trade, or to receive equivalent status that enables them to supervise the training of other apprentices in their field.

In order to qualify to challenge a BC Certificate of Qualification or Inter-Provincial Examination, or to qualify for equivalent status, a person must have his/her work experience assessed to ensure it meets the requirements for the trade he/she is applying for.

Youth Programs

Youth Exploring Skills to Industry Training (YES 2 IT)
Youth Exploring Skills to Industry Training (YES 2 IT) is a joint initiative of the ITA and the Ministry of Education. It is designed to increase awareness of trades amongst younger students, those in grades 6 to 9, as well as their parents, educators and communities. The program provides an opportunity for youth to have an engaging, hands-on experience applying some of the skills used in a variety of trade occupations while making connections with tradespersons in their communities. In addition, classroom learning activities support the hands-on experience and parental involvement increases education about career opportunities in the trades.

Funding and resources are available to schools, industry associations and other community organizations that successfully submit a proposal to hold a YES 2 IT activity in their community.

Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA)
Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA) is a career program that provides students with the opportunity to begin an apprenticeship while still in high school, and earn high school credits for doing so.

A Secondary School Apprenticeship involves part-time work within a trade - something many secondary students are doing anyway. Like other apprentices, secondary school apprentices need to find an employer who will hire them and commit to their training.

Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training (ACE IT)
Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training (ACE IT) is an industry training program for high school students. Through an ACE IT program, a student can take courses that will allow him/her to earn credit both towards high school graduation and towards completion of an apprenticeship program.

ACE IT programs are developed and offered as partnerships between school districts and post-secondary institutions, and classes are often taught at colleges. Local employers also get involved in the development of ACE IT programs, and students who complete these programs typically have very good success in finding employment.

Once a student successfully completes an ACE IT program he/she will get credit for at least level one of the technical training (in-class) component of his/her Industry Training Program. Through work experience placements that are usually part of the program, the student gets credit towards the on-the-job component of his/her training as well.

3.2.f   Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g. research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.

Most colleges and universities in British Columbia have embedded prior learning assessment and recognition options directly into their program offerings. The Province of BC has made significant contributions towards this accomplishment. For many years the Province furnished support for PLAR infrastructure development within the post-secondary system. For instance, the $640,000 AVED provided for PLAR initiatives in 2002-03 helped institutions to cover the costs of assessing and granting credit, training coordinators, and meeting other associated costs; it also provided support for PLAR "enhancement grants" to improve and increase the delivery of PLA services within the post-secondary system. This financial support is now provided through the institutions' "block funding" arrangements.

Co-operative Education
Co-operative education programs (referred to as "co-op programs") integrate semesters of paid employment with semesters of academic study. These "work terms" must be in fields relevant to the academic component, and students are evaluated on their work terms, usually as "complete" or "incomplete." When students complete co-op programs, a co-op designation appears on their credential.

In most programs that have co-op components, students have the option of whether or not to take the co-op component. If a student chooses to take the co-op component, the co-op work terms add to the time required to complete the program – usually three semesters or one year in the case of an undergraduate degree program.

Component 3.3 Assessment Methods and Procedures

3.3.a   Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognised? Describe different stages.

Assessment arrangements vary across sectors, agencies, institutions, departments and programs in BC.

The Province of BC has worked with a range of organizations and institutions to develop guides and frameworks for use in prior learning assessment. For instance, in 2003, BC, in partnership with Vancouver Community College, the College of Dental Technicians of BC, and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of BC, conducted phase one of the "PLA Tools for Dental Technicians and Licensed Practical Nurses" project which developed two PLAR student guides and PLA tools to assess the knowledge and skills of foreign-trained Dental Technicians and Licenses Practical Nurses in BC.

A variety of methods might be used to assess prior learning. These include demonstrations, structured interviews, and presentations of examples or products. Many colleges, universities, and professional licensing and certification bodies use written tests to assess an applicant's prior learning. Some organizations offer portfolio development courses.

The cost of PLAR depends on who is doing the assessment. Post-secondary institutions set their own rates, which vary depending on the complexity of the process (see question 2.3.c). Fees charged by professional bodies are also set by the bodies themselves and vary by occupation.

The length of time involved in prior learning assessments varies. It can range from a few hours to a few days depending on the complexity of the assessment.

Colleges and universities often have staff assigned to assist learners. In some instances, you must already be enrolled as a student at the institution. Professional licensing and certification bodies usually have trained staff responsible for advising applicants.

Foreign immigrants normally must be in Canada to participate in PLAR, but some organizations will allow them to start the process while still in their home country.

Although many people receive recognition for education and work-related qualifications through PLAR, this cannot be guaranteed. The decision on how much recognition to give is completely up to the organization one is applying to, whether that is a post-secondary, secondary school or other educational institution, professional licensing or certification body, or employer.

Example of Assessment Arrangements – North Island College
Most programs at North Island College (NIC) require that a student has applied to the college and can meet the program and course pre-requisites before beginning the PLA process.

Techniques for recognizing and awarding credit for prior learning are determined at the department level. Such techniques must be developed in accordance with NIC's general policies and its PLA policies.

NIC only grants credit toward a credential, not just for isolated courses. The options described here refer to requesting credit for one's learning and are quite formal. Instructors frequently informally review an applicant's prior learning and waive pre-requisites or allow a substitution for a course which they feel is redundant for the applicant. However, while a person may obtain entrance into a program or advance standing within a program through a successful informal review, to obtain credit for the course, one must go through a formal review which requires the submission of evidence.

College faculty who have the appropriate subject matter expertise perform the assessments and make the determination of competency and credit awarded. While assessing a student's prior learning they ask themselves if the student has demonstrated both the level and the depth of knowledge and skills equal to what would be expected of learners who complete the course or program.

Assessment arrangements include:

Indirect Assessment: Applying for Transfer Credit - Option A
Transfer is the most economical way of getting credit for learning acquired in another classroom. There are frequently time limits placed on transfer credit, however, and sometimes the course outlines just do not have a close enough match, so credit can't be given.

Direct Assessment of Prior Learning - Options B & C
College faculty directly assess a student's prior learning mainly through two ways:

1) Option B - a challenge examination; or,
2) Option C - portfolio assisted assessment, sometimes described as flexible assessment.

Credit is not awarded for experience. It is only awarded for learning that has occurred as a result of that experience.

Most University Transfer courses are assessed through challenge exams, but most other Programs (e.g. Nursing, Electronics) use portfolio assisted (or flexible) assessment. The procedures for each of these processes are a little different.

If a student is seeking PLA in the University Transfer courses, he/she will likely have to write a challenge exam, in which case the student must contact the course instructor first. The instructor will determine whether or not the student has a good background in the subject before proceeding.

The portfolio assisted (or flexible) assessment takes longer and usually involves a combination of documentation, skills demonstrations, assignments and sometimes tests.

A student choosing Option C, portfolio assisted (or flexible) assessment, will work with two different people, the advisor and the assessor. The advisor supports the student through the process, performing tasks such as working intensively with candidates to prepare for the assessment process. The assessor evaluates the student's evidence and may negotiate additional assessment as required.

Both challenge exams and flexible assessment use the same PLA Application for Credit form and both require faculty signatures before one can proceed.

Not all courses and programs are yet ready for assessment of prior learning. Most University Transfer courses have, or will develop a challenge exam for a student, but the student must first contact the course instructor. The programs which are currently available for PLA are identified in the North Island College Calendar and all have an associated Program PLA Information booklet.

Cost
Generally, the amount a student pays depends on how much credit he/she is requesting and how complicated the process becomes. The fee is normally assessed at 75% of the tuition for each course one challenges. If the assessment also requires site visits, clinical appraisals and the like, there will be additional charges to cover faculty time. As well, if a student is requesting PLA for

more than one course and requires portfolio assisted (flexible) assessment, there is a fee of $60 for ADV 001 (a required prep course for flexible assessments).

<u>Length of Time Required</u>
Time limits on students for completing the requirements for a PLA credit are determined by the individual departments in conjunction with the appropriate governance body.

Most programs have identified, in their Department PLA Policy, specific times in the year when they will provide assessments of prior learning. This means that although a student may work with the advisor at any time during the year to prepare everything for the assessment, he/she may have to wait some time to have his/her learning assessed.

3.3.b   Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g. competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g. psychological, financial, etc.).

Flexible Assessment in BC
As noted in question 3.1.a, PLA is encapsulated within the broader category of 'flexible assessment'. In order to capture the costs associated with PLA, the definition of PLA had become linked to the funding of students within base-funded program areas. PLA had been defined "as any activity that results in an award of credit and shortens program completion time." This definition was intended to allow for consistent reporting of PLA activity across the province. However, this definition disallowed flexible assessment activity within non-credit and non-base funded program areas, thereby acting as a disincentive for institutions to develop processes that accurately capture and report the degree and results of assessment innovation.

Assessment services have expanded and evolved to include a variety of assessment policies, procedures, tools, and awards. The term flexible assessment is used to broadly describe all the assessment options available to learners, not just ones that result in the awarding of credit, and shortens program completion time within base-funded programs.

As a result, flexible assessment is a term that has come to include:
- Formal and informal assessment activities within both base and non-base funded programs resulting in the award of credit;
- Formal and informal assessment activities within both base and non-base funded programs resulting in non-credit awards, e.g. advanced standing, exemptions and placement activities, and non-articulated transfer requests; and,
- Other related activities such as learner advising services, workplace-based training program reviews, and top-up learning.

Assessment Tools

There are a number of different processes and tools to assess and recognize learning. Examples include:

- Portfolio development/assessment - a portfolio is an organized collection of documents and other items that show what an individual knows and what he/she can do;
- Demonstration - written or non-written assessments such as essays, multiple choice tests, structured interviews, oral presentations, model building or practical demonstrations of a skill; and,
- Standardized exam.

Many practitioners consider portfolio development/assessment to be the best tool for identifying prior learning, primarily due to its use of reflection as a method of translating experiences into indicators of learning. The reflective process appears to identify knowledge and skills that may go undetected using other means of assessment. It also contributes to changes in how individuals see themselves as learners. This evolution, which takes place over the course of developing a portfolio, appears to have a positive effect on subsequent learning participation.

Other effective methods of assessment of prior learning are case studies and problem-based scenarios, as well as hands-on demonstrations, simulations, and structured interviews. In all cases, the selection of methods and tools should be based on considerations of what will maximize a candidate's opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

3.3.c   Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?

The players involved in setting occupational and professional standards differ according to whether the occupation or profession in question is regulated. The standards of regulated occupations and professions are set by both regulatory organizations and government. The standards of non-regulated occupations and professions are largely determined by employers.

The Province of BC has enacted legislation that confers upon post-secondary institutions the authority to set academic standards for their students. For further information see below.

Universities

The *University Act*, which governs British Columbia's research universities (University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, and University of Northern British Columbia), gives the universities the authority to grant degrees, diplomas, and certificates and to call themselves "universities."

The authority of each university to govern itself through the operations of a board of governors and a senate is outlined in the legislation. The academic governance of the university is vested in the senate, including the authority to establish student admission requirements; determine the conduct and results of all examinations; recommend revision of courses, instruction, and education in all faculties; and set terms of affiliation with other universities, colleges, or other

institutions. The senate may also require any faculty to establish advisory committees consisting of students of the faculty and members of the community at large.

Under the legislation, the Minister (Minister of Advanced Education) is prohibited from interfering in the exercise of a university's power to set academic policies and standards, establish standards for admission and graduation, and select and appoint staff. However, the Minister's approval is required for all new degree programs.

The *Royal Roads University Act* establishes Royal Roads University (RRU) on Vancouver Island as a special-purpose university. Some of the institution's responsibilities are the same as the research universities, but, instead of a senate, RRU has an academic council. In addition, several of the powers conferred on the senate in research universities are assigned to the president.

The *Thompson Rivers University Act* of March 2005: Under the *Act*, Thompson Rivers University (TRU) assumes responsibility for the provincial open and distance learning mandate of the British Columbia Open University and the Open College. As with RRU, many of TRU's responsibilities are the same as the research universities, but TRU operates with a university council and a Planning Council for Open Learning.

In addition, a few private theological post-secondary colleges are affiliated with a public university (the University of British Columbia). In such instances, the granting of affiliation means that the private theological colleges meet the criteria for affiliation established by the senate of the university, but it does not imply any scrutiny or approval of the course offerings of the private theological colleges by the university senate.

External and Internal Review
Universities have internal program review procedures based on institutional policies and procedures including mandatory review of all new programs by a university senate. New degree program proposals, as well as substantively revised programs, must be submitted to the Minister for approval. Approval of new degree programs may come about in one of two ways. If the institution has not been granted exempt status, it must submit its new degree program proposals to the Degree Quality Assessment Board for review. After performing its review, the board determines whether the new degree meets the criteria established by the Minister and makes its recommendations to the Minister. If the institution has been granted exempt status by the Minister, all of its new degree program proposals go directly to the Minister for approval.

Professional Accreditation
Many of Canada's regulated professions have associations that conduct accreditation reviews of university programs pertaining to their professions. In these instances, accreditation teams from the professions review reports provided by the universities and may conduct on-site visits in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the professions.

Examples of Other Organizations Related to Quality Assurance in Universities
All public universities in British Columbia are members of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). The association does not perform formal quality assurance functions; however, it does maintain membership criteria that address the primary mission of institutions. The criteria deal with the range of program offerings, the breadth and depth of

programs, the nature of members' relationship with parent institutions, the size of enrolment, institutional focus on scholarship, academic inquiry, and research, and compliance with the principles of academic freedom and responsibility. Institutions applying for membership must host an AUCC Visiting Committee that reports to the AUCC Board of Directors on a variety of items and recommends a decision on whether the applying institution is providing education of university standard.

The Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC) is a national organization composed of professional associations involved in promoting good practices by its members in accreditation of educational programs.

Colleges and Institutes

British Columbia's three university colleges, twelve colleges, and four institutes are established under the *College and Institute Act*. The *Act* provides the university colleges, colleges, and institutes with authority to grant associate degrees, diplomas, and certificates, the colleges to grant baccalaureate degrees with an applied focus, and the university colleges and institutes to grant baccalaureate and master's degrees with an applied focus.

All institutions have boards of governors, and all but one have an education council. These bodies have joint and independent powers. The board is responsible for managing and directing the affairs of the institution. The education council's independent powers include the power to set examination policies and to set curriculum content for courses leading to certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Powers that are exercised jointly by the board and the education council include curriculum evaluation. The education councils approve both degree and non-degree programs supported by provincial funding.

A few of British Columbia's public and private colleges have affiliations with universities in a limited number of programs.

External and Internal Review

As with public universities, the Minister must approve all new degree program proposals, including applied degrees, by public colleges, university colleges, and institutes. New degree program proposals are submitted to the Degree Quality Assessment Board for review if the institution does not have exempt status. The Degree Quality Assessment Board is responsible for reviewing the proposals and making recommendations to the Minister.

Professional Accreditation

(As noted under "Universities")

3.3.d **Has the issue been raised in your county of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.**

To the best of our knowledge, the issue has not arisen.

3.3.e How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalisation context?

AVED provides direction and support to post-secondary institutions in the area of prior learning assessment and recognition through such efforts as conducting projects in partnership with institutions and agencies to develop frameworks and manuals regarding PLAR practices and policies (such as the "PLA Tools for Dental Technicians and Licensed Practical Nurses" project described in 3.3.a). AVED has also organized and published PLAR related research regarding best practices, satisfaction ratings, challenges and achievements.

The institutions and organizations that conduct prior learning assessments have quality assurance mechanisms of their own as well.

The PLA policy of North Island College, for example, has a number of provisions that are directed at quality assurance. These provisions include the following:
- All college personnel involved in the assessment of prior learning will receive adequate education for the functions which they perform, and there will be provision for their continued professional development;
- Credit awards will be monitored to avoid giving prior learning assessment credits and other credits for the same learning; and,
- Prior learning assessment processes will be regularly monitored, reviewed, evaluated and revised as needed.

Component 3.4. Others

3.4.a Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

None.

Component 4. Stakeholder Behaviour

Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders[1]

4.1.a   Identify all possible stakeholders involved* (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2.

Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Provider of non-formal learning	Recogniser of such non-formal learning	Types of recognition received	Regulator	Main user(s)
British Columbia colleges and university colleges	British Columbia colleges and university colleges	Certificates and non-formal learning in continuing education courses	Ministry of Advanced Education and Ministry of Education	Adult learners
Post-secondary institutions, community based programs and the K-12 system	Ministry of Advanced Education and Ministry of Education	Certificates and diplomas in English Second Language and Adult Basic Education	Ministry of Advanced Education and Ministry of Education	Adult learners and English Second Language students
Out of province post-secondary institutions	Individual British Columbia post-secondary institutions (through PLA recognition)	Advanced standing in some academic programs	Professional bodies, ICES (in the case of international credentials)	Post-secondary students whose original studies took place outside of British Columbia

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[1] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.

* While this table aims to give a detailed listing of non-formal stakeholders, the wide range of public and private bodies involved precludes a definitive listing of "all possible stakeholders".

Provider of non-formal learning	Recogniser of such non-formal learning	Types of recognition received	Regulator	Main user(s)
Businesses contracted by the British Columbia government	British Columbia government	Non-academic credentials, i.e. a 2 day, non-graded Financial Management course resulting in a completion certificate	Unregulated	BC Public Service
Community-based literacy organizations (in partnership with community colleges or university colleges)	None	None	Unregulated	Adults with low literacy skills
Career Technical Centres	School districts and community colleges or university colleges	Entry level trades training (i.e. Secondary School Apprenticeship and ACE IT)	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Advanced Education	Grade 11 and 12 students
British Columbia school districts.	Ministry of Education and Ministry of Advanced Education	Diploma from the BC Adult Graduation Program and credit from the participating college/university college	Ministry of Education	Adult learners
GT Hiring Solutions (2005) Inc., the BC Society of Training for Health and Employment (THEO BC) and WCG International Consultants LTD	Varied	Short term certificate training and work experience	Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance	Income Assistance clients

Informal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholders Grid)

Types of skills gained by informal learning	Recogniser of informal learning	Types of Recognition received	Regulatory body and/or Provider	Main users (specify)
ICT skills	Public service, private businesses and industry (recognition demonstrated through job qualification requirements)	Informal but tangible recognition (job hiring, promotion, higher salary, increased responsibility)	Skills provided through work experience, leisure activities, or self-directed learning	Quite typically a skill set associated with younger employees (35 and younger) though not exclusively so
Essential Skills	Public service, private businesses and industry (recognition demonstrated through job qualification requirements)	Informal but tangible recognition (job hiring, promotion, higher salary, increased responsibility)	Unregulated	Adult learners
Literacy, lifestyle aid, health information, parenting skills, science knowledge, social and political issues	Not applicable	Informal	Knowledge Network - British Columbia's provincial public educational broadcaster	From pre-school children to seniors
Skills for prisoners (i.e. Job planning, literacy skills)	No particular recognizing body. Skills gained may be recognized in a subsequent work or academic setting	Typically informal	Ministry of Education (funding provided by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General) John Howard Society Elizabeth Fry Society	Incarcerated or recently incarcerated individuals (Elizabeth Fry Society works exclusively with females)

Component 4.2. Access

4.2.a   What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HEd, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

Secondary System

Trades Programs: Programs such as the Secondary School Apprenticeship and ACE IT programs (see question 3.2.e) involve secondary school students learning job skills in a trade, while getting high school and post-secondary credits. These programs require students to meet both work skill and academic requirements.

Adult Education programs: The Ministry of Education funds adults taking courses that lead to secondary graduation. A student is eligible for the adult graduation program if they are 18 or 19 years old and have already been out of school for at least one year. The student must take at least three courses as an adult, either through enrolment or through receiving the credit through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. The student must be on a clear path to graduation and can take the courses they need to reach the diploma requirements for the BC Adult Graduation Diploma.

Post-Secondary System

Prior Learning Assessment: As noted previously, every public post-secondary institution and many private ones have PLA recognition components in various programs. The recognition process is individualized at each institution and often within specific programs.

Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, and Continuing Education: The recognition process for courses and related certification in these fields is individualized at each institution.

Professional Programs

Professional bodies have their own sets of eligibilities for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. For example:

Certified Management Accountants (CMA) Canada – British Columbia: In BC, it is stated that a CMA member shall "sustain his/her professional competence by keeping himself/herself informed of, and complying with, developments in professional standards in all functions in which the Member practices or is relied upon because of his/her calling." It is therefore the responsibility of each Certified Member in BC to ensure they are fulfilling CPLD (Continuous Professional Learning and Development) requirements and reporting all such activities to CMA Canada – British Columbia. CPLD requirements for members are: 120 learning credits over a moving three-year period.

4.2.b   How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?

As noted, each public post-secondary institution has PLA recognition and varies in its approach to it. While PLA may be recognized for advanced credit in particular programs, it is generally not a factor in admission to an institution.

This varies from institution to institution. e.g. The admissions policy to Royal Roads University in British Columbia states, "Royal Roads University seeks exceptional individuals committed to a high level of achievement in our programs. Admission to a degree program is based on criteria that ensure the highest standards of academic quality and student achievement. These include formal post-secondary education, *life and/or work experience*, and personal attributes. All applications to Royal Roads are assessed on a case-by-case basis."

4.2.c   Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of 'click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.'). Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicise the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.

Post-secondary Institutions
This is individualized by institution. Some institutions have a general PLA site, others have their PLA information included in the program sections of their websites, or require a telephone call or personal visit.

Government
The Ministry of Advanced Education has a Prior Learning Assessment section on its public website (http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/welcome.htm). This site makes available PLA resources for students as well as resources for instructors and PLA practioners. For January of 2006, the total number of visits to this site was 510 – 68% of which were from the United States.

Out of Province Credentials
The International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) has a website operated through the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

<u>**Component 4.3. Participation**</u>[1]

4.3.a   How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels)?

National Age and Gender in PLA
While up to date information on this question is difficult to find, a 1999 Canada-wide study entitled "A Slice of the Iceberg" found that 65% of PLAR learners are female. The study's authors believe that this high percentage of female PLAR learners at most of the institutions was largely due to the high use of PLAR in programs related to occupations with traditionally high concentrations of female workers, (i.e. Nursing).

The study went on to note that, "nationally, 52% of PLAR learners were over 30 years of age. Approximately 38% were over the age of 35 years and 12% were over the age of 45 years. … The overall average age of PLAR learners was 33 years compared to 27 years for traditional students. …The use of PLAR by mature learners suggests that marketing activities to attract students over the age of 30 years may increase PLAR activity levels."

National and Provincial Participation in Job-related Training
According to the 2005 study, *Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program*, participation rates in formal[2], job-related training increased in all Canadian provinces between 1997 and 2002. While the largest growth was experienced in Quebec, participation grew substantially (over 20%) in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and **British Columbia**. BC was at 32% participation rate in 1997; 38.8% in 2002.

National Participation in Adult Learning
A June 2006 Canadian Policy Research Networks report noted that "Individuals with a university degree are five times more likely than individuals with a high school education or less to participate in adult learning" (the report is Canada-wide, not specific to British Columbia). Despite nationwide stresses on lifelong learning, "participation levels for less-educated learners have scarcely improved for five years," the report says.

4.3.b   Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.

No information found.

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[1] Note that some of the questions are to complement data to be collected in Annex.
[2] Though the designation here is listed as 'formal', this would cover job related training described as 'non-formal' in question 4.1.a.

4.3.c   Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the 'learning leads to learning' and 'training leads to training' track ? Who constitutes the 'disadvantaged group' in your country?

While we were unable to discover quantitative evidence linking current successful learning and training for certain groups to the recognition of their past informal and non-formal learning, a number of initiatives have been developed in British Columbia that accept that such recognition will in fact aid such groups get on the 'learning leads to learning' and 'training leads to training' track. The initiatives and groups targeted are described below.

Aboriginal Learners
As discussed in question 1.1.a and in question 1.4.c, Aboriginal success rates in secondary and post-secondary education, are measurably below that of the non-Aboriginal population. The BC government and stakeholders in Aboriginal education have addressed this issue through initiatives that take into account the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Two such initiatives are:

Aboriginal Special Project Fund (ASPF)
Since 2001, the Ministry of Advanced Education has provided about $11 million to fund 222 Aboriginal special projects, which have benefited more than 3,900 Aboriginal students. For 2006/07 the funding was set at $2 million. Evaluation criteria for this funding includes the proposal showing that it "supports and fosters program articulation, and promotes laddering between and among credentials, including a *prior learning assessment option.*"

Aboriginal Teacher Education in British Columbia: A Plan for 2006-2011
The Aboriginal Teacher Education Task Force, which includes members of Aboriginal organizations, public post-secondary institutions and the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, submitted this plan to the Association of BC Deans of Education. The plan is designed to increase the numbers of Aboriginal people enrolling in teacher education through a number of key strategies, including: "[Promoting] broader-based admission policies that consider work experience, and prior learning."

Immigrants
It has been recognized by the provincial government that immigrants to British Columbia are among those groups that face the greatest literacy challenges; as well, as previously noted, immigrants often face specific difficulties related to the recognition of previous learning. There are a number of organizations that provide assessment or recognition of previous experience, training and education, to aid immigrants to British Columbia in obtaining certification, continuing education and workplace advancement. These bodies include:

ArriveBC
The program helps skilled immigrants and internationally trained professionals in the Fraser Valley and Lower Mainland to gain employment in the construction and transportation industries.

Bamboo Network
As noted in question 1.4.d, the Bamboo Network is for immigrants in a profession or trade. This organization provides support through job search workshops, one-on-one employment support, referral to a mentor, networking sessions, job and apprenticeship placement assistance.

DIVERSEcity Skills Connect Program
This BC Skills Connect program is designed for skilled immigrants and internationally trained professionals. The program helps qualified participants in Surrey and the Fraser Valley to gain employment in the construction, transportation, energy, or tourism and hospitality industries.

Working Solutions for Skilled Immigrants
This BC Skills Connect program is designed for skilled immigrants and internationally trained professionals. The program helps qualified participants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley to gain employment in the construction, transportation, energy or tourism and hospitality industries (see question 1.2.a).

Component 4.4. Incentives and Disincentives

4.4.a   Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g. a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.) If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.

Data unavailable.

4.4.b   Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practised subject areas, etc.)

Simon Fraser University Integrated Studies Program
The Integrated Studies Programs (ISP) provide part-time, degree completion programs for mid-career adults that lead to a Bachelor of General Studies degree (BGS) from Simon Fraser University. The BGS degree is a Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences degree delivered through Continuing Studies in conjunction with the Faculty of Business Administration.

Over 250 students have graduated from ISP since they were established in 1995.

Integrated Studies provides a cohort-based degree; all students enrolled in an ISP cohort progress through the three-year part-time degree completion program as a group. The programs are uniquely scheduled to accommodate the working lives of mid-career adults who have the goal of completing a university degree.

ISP rely on implicit prior learning and recognition credits and a compressed teaching framework that allows students to maintain full-time employment as well as the cohort based approach that fosters co-operation among students and reduces student attrition.

Integrated Studies Programs offer a BGS degree with a choice of two areas of focus: 1) Liberal and Business Studies and 2) Aboriginal Leadership and Administration. Both areas within the degree are interdisciplinary in scope. The Liberal and Business Studies (LBS) area is the largest program offering, and a new LBS cohort commences each September at SFU Vancouver. The LBS program may be offered in other locations around the province when interest and demand is clearly demonstrated.

4.4.c   Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (e.g. earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?

Data unavailable.

4.4.d   Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).

Effective January 01, 2007 the British Columbia's Training Tax Credit Program will provide refundable tax credits for employees and employers engaged in apprenticeship programs administered through the Industry Training Authority. The tax expenditure for the training tax credit program is estimated at $29 million per year.

4.4.e   Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?

The government of BC has made explicit statements that increased equity is a prime motivation in its support and development of adult education and Aboriginal education strategies and programs. As discussed in previous sections of this report, adult education and Aboriginal education programs in BC are incorporating recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

4.4.f   Describe a situation in your country if stigmatisation exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?

A 1999 working paper from the Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) noted that immigrant, refugee and Aboriginal Canadians typically learn their own

language in an informal way and that their language fluency is a "huge but largely untapped resource in a highly multilingual country like Canada." The report noted that the informal language skills of these groups and individuals was not given the same weight by businesses and academic institutions as formal qualifications.

4.4.g   Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnership in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?

The current and predicted labour market shortages in BC are an incentive to employers to participate in non-formal and informal recognition arrangements.

Increase of the enterprise's human capital is an incentive for businesses to support their employees in adult education programs that recognize non-formal and informal learning, i.e. Simon Fraser University's Liberal and Business Studies Program (discussed in 4.4.b). A significant number of students in the LBS program are financially sponsored either in full or in part by their employers. Typically, employers agree to provide opportunities for their employees in the LBS program to apply learning to real projects within the organization during the three-year program period. All employers provide support in the form of time-off to attend classes. Sponsorship is an investment in the professional development of employees.

Component 4.5. Others

4.5.a   Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)

Below are some select examples of collective bargaining arrangements that involve provisions for non-formal and/or informal learning:

College Sector
- College sector employers (of the colleges, university colleges and institutes) are all members of the Post-Secondary Employers' Association (PSEA);
- Formal and informal learning for college faculty occurs primarily through professional development opportunities;
- The majority of college sector faculty collective agreements provide for about 2 months of paid professional development leave.

University Sector
- The universities are members of the University Public Sector Employers' Association which is registered as a society. The universities bargain with their individual employee groups;
- Formal and informal learning for university faculty occurs primarily through faculty research activities;
- The majority of tenured university faculty are engaged in research activities for varying periods of time (data not available).

K-12 System
- The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) represents the 41,000 public school teachers in BC.
- Since 1973, the BCTF has negotiated for set professional development days for the teachers they represent. Professional development is defined here as a process of continuous growth, through involvement in programs, services and activities designed to enable teachers, both individually and collectively, to learn and grow professionally in order to enhance teaching and learning.

4.5.b   Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

No information available.

Component 5. Case Studies on Benefits and Barriers.

Component 5.1. Economic Benefits

Flex-Track PLAR program – Douglas College
Douglas College has introduced a Flex-Track option for the Classroom and Community Support Program to allow students to take only the courses they need by awarding some academic credit for previous applicable learning including formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences. Up to 75% of the credential can be earned by obtaining PLAR credit from previous related career programs, university transfer courses, and related continuing education courses. Credit is also granted for life or work experience that relates to the Classroom and Community Support Program or credits from a private college program.

Further flexibility is offered through the option of conducting the assessment through an online PLAR opportunity called the Gateway Assessment. Students complete a ten hour two part assessment that incorporates the Occupational Competencies for Community Living. The format includes multiple-choice questions and self-assessments on twelve themes. Once the student has conducted the assessment, an instructor will advise whether the student has demonstrated sufficient learning to complete the program using the intensive PLAR credit process described below, or whether they should complete the credit courses.

Experienced community living practitioners can receive credit for the Classroom and Community Support program through an online PLA 15 week credit course which includes a narrative self-assessment and analysis by the instructor, multiple-choice questions and an interview. Students may also choose to complete the PLA for the Classroom and Community Support program through the traditional 'portfolio-assisted' PLAR method. The Flex Track and Gateway options reduce the timeframe required to complete the program and the cost to the student.

Component 5.2. Educational Benefits

Buddhist Integral Healing Practitioner Program in Dharamsla (Langara College, a Lower Mainland urban based college).
This program is a three year part-time studies program for Tibetan Buddhist nuns taught in two-week segments each year, followed by clinical practice. The program is provided to the nuns free of charge and faculty are partly funded by Langara College Centre for Holistic Health Studies. Almost all of the nuns would be considered non-traditional learners. Tibetan Buddhist nuns have traditionally been excluded from education, based on the way their servitude role evolved in Tibet. However, with cultural displacement the role of the Tibetan Buddhist nuns is changing. The nuns take health-related and wellness information back to their nunneries and communities and become a health care resource.

Component 5.3. Social Benefits

Learning and Leading Exchange (Langara College)
The Learning and Leading Exchange (LL&E) grew out of a *Learning and Leading* project undertaken in 2004-05 funded by the National Learning Initiative (see details of this project at http://www.hrvs.ca/initiatives/pg002_e.cfm). This project identified a need for opportunities for non-formal learning about leadership in the voluntary sector.

The purposes of the Learning and Leading Exchange (LL&E) are to:
- Develop a stronger culture of shared learning around leadership in community organizations in BC; and,
- Strengthen BC communities through increased individual and collective leadership skills and capacity.

The main format for learning is through the creation of 'learning pods', which are small groups of people who meet informally to share experiences and resources. A lead pod, consisting of individuals and representatives of key organizations (Self-Help Resource Association of BC, Volunteer BC, the Centre for Sustainability and the Community Development Program of Langara College Continuing Studies) has formed to provide guidance and direction to the project and to provide outreach and encourage the development of new learning pods. In addition to face-to-face meetings, an on-line learning group has been set up to facilitate the sharing of information, resources and reflections.

Component 5.4. Personal Benefits

Dialogues/Dialogue Days (Langara College)
For several years, the Community Development Program of Langara College Continuing Studies has held dialogues on a range of topics relevant to people working and volunteering in the voluntary (non-profit) sector and/or who practice community development.

Dialogue addresses the need to explore topics in an open-ended way, to share ideas and perspectives and to learn a different way of engaging with topics.

Each dialogue is different – the safety and tone of some dialogue sessions can invoke deep sharing and emotional breakthroughs among participants. Other dialogue sessions are more about ideas. However, people come away from dialogues having had a chance to connect with others in ways they do not often experience in their day-to-day lives.

Component 5.5. Others

No information under this section.

Component 6. Conclusion

6.a **Which national goals, if any, in your country, are 'the recognition of non-formal and informal learning' most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.**

Five Great Goals
The Government of British Columbia has identified Five Great Goals to be achieved by 2015 (these goals will guide activities and focus efforts across all ministries and government organizations in BC). One of these goals is to make British Columbia the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. Many of the activities undertaken to support this goal (i.e. enhancing programs to improve adult literacy, including community-based and workplace literacy programs, and supporting online learning in BC) are directly associated with lifelong learning.

Another of these 'Great Goals' is to "build the best system of support in Canada for persons with disabilities, those with special needs, children at risk, and seniors." AVED activities under this goal, such as the funding of Adult Special Education Programs, help bring lifelong learning opportunities to a wider group.

Campus 2020
In July of 2006, the government of British Columbia launched a major initiative entitled Campus 2020: Thinking Ahead. This initiative was designed to build on the strengths of BC's post-secondary education system and, in so doing so, to help develop a new educational framework for the province.

Campus 2020 is a consultative and forward planning process to examine BC's post-secondary system (public and private institutions) to help shape the future of advanced learning. Its goal is to identify a plan that will connect the opportunities of higher education, training and lifelong learning to the health and sustainability of BC communities, the BC economy and of the province, to ensure British Columbians are well-positioned over the next 10 to 20 years to succeed in the increasingly knowledge-based and global economy. A final report with recommendations to the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education was submitted on April 23, 2007.

6.b **What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalise the 'recognition of all types of learning outcomes – including formal, non-formal and informal learning' in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?**

One area in which there is an ongoing strategy to "operationalise the recognition of learning outcomes", through collaboration with stakeholders, is through the promotion of portfolio use, particularly ePortfolios. As noted, the use of portfolios in British Columbia is growing and is found throughout both the secondary and post-secondary system. Representatives of the British Columbia government, public post-secondary institutions, BCcampus, and K-12 School districts have gathered together to promote portfolio use, through representation on the BC Provincial Cross Sector Portfolio Working Group. As part of its mission, this working group will act as "the systemic provincial voice for ePortfolio use in lifelong learning and career advancement" and will "advocate and coordinate systemic portfolio use between different organizations and sectors K-12, post-secondary and career".

6.c **Address important policy issues for your counties which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.**

No issues to discuss in this section.

6.d **Please describe how much the 'Lifelong Learning for All' strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?**

Continuing Education
Every public post-secondary institution in British Columbia offers continuing education and contract training programs and services, which support the ideal of lifelong learning. These activities include: academic upgrading; career, technical and vocational training and retraining; onsite workplace training and retraining; and personal interest and recreation. The exact nature of the continuing education and contact training courses offered varies by institution and is guided by community demand and by specific training requests from business, industry and the government. AVED supports the ideals behind these programs and provides funding for the facilities that they take place in; however, the Ministry does not directly fund continuing education programs.

Senior Citizens
The majority of public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia have special fee policies for senior citizens (typically over age 60 or age 65). This ranges from discounts in registration fees to waiving tuition fees entirely for this group. Two institutions have 'Elder Colleges' within their body. These Elder Colleges emphasise learning for learning's sake (no exams or evaluation), are open to all participants age 50 or 55 and older (depending on which institution) and charge only a nominal fee.

Success in Instilling Life-long Learning
The BC College and Institute Student Outcomes (CISO) project annually surveys almost 18,000 former students from all BC's public colleges, university colleges and institutes. A 2001 CISO paper using 2000 data, indicated that 77% of former students surveyed indicated that their educational experience instilled a desire in them to be life-long learners.

6.e   Please list some 'factors' which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realise the 'Open Learning Society' scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Stakeholder Will
While government can implement policy and advance goals to promote an 'Open Learning Society', there does need to be a strong degree of 'buy in' from the non-governmental sector. This could involve post-secondary institutions, the private sector and industry giving credence to a wider range of learning, and to committing to ongoing professional development.

Economy
Factors affecting this approach might include increased competition for post-secondary institutions to attract new students in a thriving economy, and a continuing need to address skills shortages in certain trades and professions – a trend that has been accelerated by strong economic growth. In such an economic environment there is, perhaps, more of a need/will to promote educational development, to recognize more informal and non-formal learning, and to reach out to individuals of all ages. Obviously, a change in economic conditions could alter this.

Demographics
As noted, it is projected that the major factor driving population growth in BC between now and 2031 will be migration, with international migration accounting for just under two-thirds of that gain. In such a demographic situation, there is a greater focus on recognizing formal, non-formal or informal learning gained outside of British Columbia (and Canada) as a necessary part of filling key skill shortage areas. However, while this demographic projection is made by experts using the best available evidence, it is still just a projection. A shift in this trend, due to any number of economic, political or social factors in BC or internationally, could either lessen or accelerate this focus (depending upon whether the shift is towards greater or lesser growth in international migration).

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