

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

*Postsecondary Expectations Project
Learner Pathways and Transitions*

Learner Pathways and Transitions

An Overview of the CMEC Project

Higher education institutions must be viewed as, and must also work within themselves to be a part of and encourage, a seamless system starting with early childhood and primary education and continuing through life. [Article 3.b]

National and institutional decision-makers should place students and their needs at the centre of their concerns, and should consider them as major partners and responsible stakeholders in the renewal of higher education. [Article 10.c]

World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century; World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO, 9 October 1998

Why are some learners more successful than others in making the journey from secondary school to postsecondary education and from there to the labour market or other lifestyle choice? What are the barriers to successful transitions and to completion of the chosen programs of study? What should be done, and by whom, to assist learners to successfully complete their program of study and to make these critical transitions efficiently and effectively?

These are some of the questions that led ministers of education¹ to combine forces in a cooperative project on “Learner Pathways and Transitions.” This introductory section is a road map to the resource documents and reports on this project.

The methodology for the project is described on this Web site, and the complete set of discussion papers and reports is reproduced for the use of all stakeholders. As the various project papers reveal, the project has produced stimulating and often critical commentaries on how well learners are served by existing policies and practices and what actions would make a difference. While it would be a mistake to try to summarize the outcomes of the three regional round tables or the “challenge papers” around which much of the discussion of those round tables was focussed, one key conclusion stands out. The most important transition is from secondary to postsecondary education; actions to improve this transition for learners require the involvement of many different stakeholders. Unless this transition goes well for students, subsequent transitions and pathways may be compromised.

Ministers have reviewed the Summary Report on this project and have endorsed the need for action. A new CMEC project on postsecondary education accessibility has been launched to add to our understanding of, and to develop a portfolio of means to improve, the critical secondary-

¹This project was undertaken by nine provinces and the two territories. Quebec opted for observer status. A report on the final sub-component of this project — transitions among postsecondary education institutions — will be added to the Web site at a later stage.

to- postsecondary transition. Additionally, each jurisdiction will use the outcomes from this project in the evolution of its policies, practices, and programs at the level of the individual province or territory. But responsibility for action does not stop with ministers and public officials. Educators, learners, employers, and community groups can and should take action. Publication of the various documents on this project (see below) is designed to provide these stakeholders with the information and insights necessary to understand the challenges and to choose effective means of optimizing the returns for learners from our collective investment in postsecondary education.

Project Organization

The project was organized into four sub-projects as described in the following table. Three of those projects are the focus of the current report.

<i>Sub-project</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Key/Priority Question</i>
1	The transition from compulsory education to first postsecondary experience	What interventions are most effective in ensuring that a student who enters PSE directly from high school has a good chance of success in his or her PSE studies?
2	Progress through a PSE program	What interventions are most effective in ensuring that once a student enters a PSE program he or she completes that program in a productive and timely fashion?
3	Transition after completion of a PSE program to self- or other employment	What interventions are most effective in helping graduates quickly enter the labour force and earn enough to be self-sufficient?
4	Transitions among PSE institutions	Why do some students move from one PSE program and institution to another before completing the program in which they first enrolled, and what interventions can most usefully be made to minimize the cases where these moves result in a waste of learner time, and learner and taxpayer resources?

Reports and Resource Documents
(click on document title to access PDF version)

1. Learner Pathways and Transitions — Summary Report
2. Learner Pathways and Transitions in Postsecondary Education: Background to the Issues.
A discussion paper prepared by Norman Henchey
3. The Evolving Information Base for Learner Pathways and Transitions.
Statistics Canada
4. Challenge Papers
 - 4.1 About the challenge papers and their authors
 - 4.2 Summary of recommendations by theme
 - 4.3 The initial transition from K-12 to PSE
 - 4.3.1 Tom Collins An educator's perspective
 - 4.3.2 Kelly Foley A learner's perspective
 - 4.3.3 Alex Usher Income-related barriers
 - 4.4 Pathways through PSE
 - 4.4.1 John Blevins A provincial perspective
 - 4.4.2 Janet Donald An educator's and researcher's perspective
 - 4.4.3 Kelly Lamrock A recent learner's perspective
 - 4.5 Initial learning to earning transition
 - 4.5.1 Graham Lowe A researcher's perspective
 - 4.5.2 Ken Snowdon A public perspective
 - 4.6 Cross-cutting issues
 - 4.6.1 Roland Chrisjohn An Aboriginal perspective
5. The Round Tables
 - 5.1 The Round Table Process
 - 5.2 Participants in Regional Round Tables