

2017 Decision Note Advice to Minister

Date: July 25, 2017

Cliff #: 104865

Issue: Approach to restoring funding for tuition-free Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language training at public post-secondary institutions, effective September 1, 2017

Background:

- Eighteen of the 25 public post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in BC deliver Adult Basic Education (ABE) and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) training. School districts also deliver ABE programs, but not ESL for adults.
- Effective January 1, 2015, provincial tuition policy changed, allowing public post-secondary institutions to charge tuition for ABE and ESL programs up to \$1,600 per full-time semester. Most institutions charge student fees in addition to tuition.
- ABE and ESL are pre-post-secondary programs designed to improve learners' literacy, numeracy, language and academic skills in order to continue into post-secondary education and find new or better employment.
- An ABE student may be missing one or more credits towards a secondary graduation diploma, or need a higher mark or new pre-requisite to enter a post-secondary program.
- ESL students in the public post-secondary system are typically immigrants and refugees who may have a post-secondary credential from another country and require higher English language skills for employment.
- The Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG) provides financial assistance to eligible low-income students in ABE, ESL and Adult Special Education¹ programs at public post-secondary institutions for wrap around supports such as student fees, books, transportation and childcare.
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- Several institutions have policies that limit students to two registrations in the same course unless exceptional circumstances present.

Analysis:

- A two phased approach is recommended for implementation of tuition-free ABE and ESL.

Phase 1: Initial Implementation

- Implementation of tuition-free ABE and ESL effective September 1, 2017
- No legislative or regulatory amendments or Orders-in-Council are required to implement this policy change. The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training has legislative authority

¹ Adult Special Education programs are work and life skills programs for students with developmental disabilities.

to direct colleges and institutes on policy. While teaching-intensive universities have greater independence, they have always been in compliance with government tuition policy.

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Phase 2: Consultation and Policy Framework

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Proposed Timeline

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Options:

Option 1 (recommended option): According to phased approach outlined above, implement tuition-free ABE and ESL effective September 1, 2017 with no additional policy changes.

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Option 2:

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Approved/Not Approved

Minister to specify if the recommendation has been approved or one of the other options or simply not approved.



Honourable Melanie Mark

July 27, 2017

Date

Attachment(s): N/A

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Treasury Board Submission – Request for Decision

Minister: Honourable Melanie Mark

Ministry: Advanced Education, Skills and Training

Date: 17/08/2017 Ministry Document #: 005/17

Title:	Eliminating tuition fees for Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning programs
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Issue:

Funding required to support the elimination of fees for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English Language Learning (ELL)¹ programs at public post-secondary institutions, effective September 1, 2017.

Request:

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Implications and Considerations:

- The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) is mandated to “provide greater access to adult basic education and English-language learning programs by eliminating fees”.
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¹ English Language Learning (ELL) is an interchangeable term with other acronyms used for English language instruction for individuals whose first language is not English. Other acronyms are ESL (English as a Second Language), EAL (English as an Additional Language) and ELS (English Language Studies). In the BC post-secondary sector, the ESL acronym has become the term commonly understood by post-secondary institutions for this English language training.



- Many post-secondary institutions (PSIs) charge student fees in addition to tuition, to cover costs such as health benefits and bus passes. These fees are fully covered under the Adult Upgrading Grant for eligible low-income students.

Background / Context:

Eighteen of the 25 public post-secondary institutions (PSIs) in BC deliver ABE and/or ELL training. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the post-secondary ABE and ELL delivery system.

School districts also deliver ABE programs, but do not deliver ELL for adults.

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ABE and ELL are pre-post-secondary programs designed to improve learners' literacy, numeracy, language and academic skills in order to continue into post-secondary education and find new or better employment.

In 2014/15, the federal government changed its funding model for ELL, through the cancellation of Annex A of the Canada-BC Immigration Agreement, resulting in a \$23.8 million (\$22.5 million federal; \$1.3 million provincial) reduction from post-secondary budgets.

Effective January 1, 2015, provincial tuition policy changed, allowing public post-secondary institutions to charge tuition for ABE and ELL programs up to \$1,600 per full-time semester. Institution budgets were reduced by a total of \$30.7 million (\$6.9 million for tuition-free ABE and \$23.8 million for ELL). Table 1 shows a component breakdown of the \$30.7 million. Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, combined ABE and ELL enrolment fell by almost 35 percent.



Table 1: ABE/ELL Funding in 2013/14

ABE/ELL Funding	2013/14 (\$ million)
Compensation to PSIs for foregone ELL tuition for federally-eligible ELL students e.g. permanent residents (federally funded)*	5.4
Compensation to PSIs for foregone ELL tuition for non-federally eligible ELL students e.g. Canadian citizens, refugee claimants (provincially funded)	1.3
Base funding to PSIs for ELL deliver (federally funded)*	17.1
Compensation to PSIs for foregone ABE tuition (provincially funded)**	6.9
Total	30.7

*Formerly funded through Canada-BC Immigration Agreement

** In addition, PSIs would have supported a portion of ABE through their annual base operating grant.

A timeline for ABE and ELL policy and funding changes can be found in Appendix 2.

Since 1981, the provincial government has provided financial assistance to eligible low-income students in ABE, ELL and Adult Special Education² programs at public post-secondary institutions for tuition and wrap-around supports such as student fees, books, transportation and childcare through the Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG). Appendix 3 provides a more detailed description of the AUG program.

Student Eligibility

ABE courses are courses granting K-12 credit, and are different from Continuing Education, which are general interest, non-credit courses. Appendix 4 provides definitions and examples of ABE and Continuing Education courses.

There are three general categories of students who access ABE:

- Students who require courses to complete their Adult Dogwood Diploma;
- Students who have graduated from K-12 but need to improve their grades to get into post-secondary education; and,

² Adult Special Education programs are work and life skills programs for students with developmental disabilities.



- Students who have graduated from K-12 but need additional courses to meet pre-requisites for post-secondary programs.

Eligibility for these students will not change as a result of the move to tuition-free ABE.

For ELL programs, the federal government provides training aimed at settlement and integration e.g. how to buy groceries, make a doctor's appointment. They also provide some mid-level ELL focused on employability e.g. resume writing.

ELL programs in the public post-secondary system provide pathways for immigrants to access further education and training and gain rewarding employment that is commensurate with the education and skills they gained before coming to Canada.

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Proposed Implementation Approach

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Appendix 1: Overview of the post-secondary ABE and ELL delivery system

Of the 25 public post-secondary institutions in BC, 18 are required to deliver Adult Basic Education programs under legislation.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) – 18 public post-secondary institutions as follows:

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. British Columbia Institute of Technology | 10. North Island College |
| 2. Camosun College | 11. Northern Lights College |
| 3. Capilano University | 12. Northwest Community College |
| 4. College of New Caledonia | 13. Okanagan College |
| 5. College of the Rockies | 14. Selkirk College |
| 6. Douglas College | 15. Thompson Rivers University |
| 7. Kwantlen Polytechnic University | 16. University of the Fraser Valley |
| 8. Langara College | 17. Vancouver Community College |
| 9. Nicola Valley Institute of Technology | 18. Vancouver Island University |

The other seven post-secondary institutions (Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Justice Institute of British Columbia, Royal Roads University, Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia, University of Northern British Columbia, and University of Victoria) are focused on applied research, specific scholarship and professional education in media, design and protection services and are not required to deliver ABE programs under legislation.

English Language Learning is provided at 17 public post-secondary institutions to serve a significant number of permanent residents who need the language training to transition into post-secondary education or career and employment training.

English Language Learning (ELL) – 17 public post-secondary institutions as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. BC Institute of Technology | 10. Northern Lights College |
| 2. Camosun College | 11. Northwest Community College |
| 3. Capilano University | 12. Okanagan College |
| 4. College of New Caledonia | 13. Selkirk College |
| 5. College of the Rockies | 14. Thompson Rivers University |
| 6. Douglas College | 15. University of the Fraser Valley |
| 7. Kwantlen Polytechnic University | 16. Vancouver Community College |
| 8. Langara College | 17. Vancouver Island University |
| 9. North Island College | |



Who teaches these courses?

Instructors have master or post-graduate degrees and a number of years of teaching ABE and ELL students.

Many have specialized training and experience working with adult literacy and ELL issues at the department, college and provincial level through curriculum, assessment and committee work.

Most instructors are passionate about the transformational potential of adult education and the impact of academic upgrading on the lives of adult learners.



Appendix 2: ABE/ELL Tuition Timeline

Date	Fees	No fees	Event
1977	Some fees likely		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Colleges and Institutes Act</i> enacted, ABE and other programming becomes essential offering of colleges. As more permanent residents settled, ELL programs emerged to support transitions.
1989	PSI-ABE: grads and non-grads	K-12-ABE: Non-grads only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12 – Tuition ABE fees eliminated for adult students who have not graduated. Fees for ABE in the Public Post-Secondary Institutions (PSIs) unaffected.
1991	K-12 & PSI-ABE: Gr.10-12	K-12 & PSI: Gr. K-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental level ABE becomes tuition free in PSIs. Institutions continue to charge tuition for academic upgrading ABE.
1998	PSI: ASE & ELL	K-12 & PSI-ABE: only non-grads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All ABE courses offered by public post-secondary institutions become tuition-free. ABE tuition-free policy does not apply to ASE and ELL programs, except those at very low literacy levels, and some career preparatory courses. School Districts continue to charge tuition for ABE courses taken by students who have already graduated from high school.
2002	PSI: ABE grads	PSI: ABE- non grads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted ABE, ELL and ASE funding rolled into PS block operating grants.
2003	PSI-ABE: grads	PSI: ABE- non grads & Fundamental level (<Gr.9 free to all)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AVED allows PSIs to charge tuition fees for students taking ABE who already have a secondary graduation diploma. Fundamental level ABE and employment preparation programs remain tuition-free.
2008		K-12 & PSI-ABE: grads & non-grads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BC Education Guarantee: ABE courses in the PSIs and K-12 system become tuition-free for all learners, regardless of graduation status. Institutions compensated for estimated lost tuition revenue (\$6.9M).
2012		PSI-ELL & ABE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April 1 - ELL in post-secondary institutions becomes tuition-free. April 12 – Federal government announces termination of Annex A of CBCIA. Institutions compensated for lost ELL tuition revenue (\$5.4M from Canada-BC Immigration Agreement and \$1.3 M from Province (through 2012/13 and 2013/14).
2014		K-12 & PSI-ELL & ABE: grads & non-grads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AVED budget for 2014/15 reduced by \$17.117M; institution operating grants reduced by \$17.117M based on proportion of ELL delivery. February/March – Province announces one-time ELL transition funding totalling \$17.2 million \$6.7M previously provided to institutions for ELL tuition compensation is no longer available. April 1 – Annex A expires. December - Province announces public post-secondary institutions may reinstate tuition fees for ABE and ELL beginning January 1, 2015 School Districts will no longer receive funding for ABE for graduated students in academic upgrading courses. Tuition fees in School Districts may be implemented in May 2015 ABE remains tuition free in School Districts for non-graduates and fundamental (below grade 10) courses
2015	K-12 & PSI-ABE & ELL: grads and non-grads		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January - VCC implements maximum tuition for ABE and ELL. Other PSIs follow suit over following 24 months \$6.9M in annual ABE tuition compensation removed from institution base operating grants February – Province announces one-time transition funding of \$6.9M to support ABE programs in PSIs May - School Districts implement ABE tuition for graduates.



Appendix 3: Adult Upgrading Grant

The Adult Upgrading Grant provides access to eligible low-income students to cover student fees, textbooks, supplies, transportation and unsubsidized childcare³.

Many students in developmental programs face economic and social barriers and are often the most vulnerable among public post-secondary students, including a proportionally high number of Aboriginal students. Students who access the AUG in particular are generally those who face a high number of barriers to education. In the 2016/2017 program year, the wrap-around supports most access were for student fees and transportation.

Eligibility for the grant is based on a family's gross yearly income. The chart below indicates the gross family income level applicants must be under to be eligible for the AUG.

Family Size	Income level
1	\$ 24,144
2	\$ 30,059
3	\$ 36,955
4	\$ 44,866
5	\$ 50,887
6	\$ 57,392
7 or more	\$ 63,898

Income levels listed in the table are based on income thresholds for Canada Student Grant for students from low-income families.

³ Tuition for Adult Special Education programs continues to be covered by AUG.



Appendix 4: Distinction Between ABE and Continuing Education

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION provides access to courses and skills training ranging from basic literacy through to provincial level and adult secondary school completion. The K-12 system defines ABE as courses that lead toward a high school diploma.

ABE programs support learners to achieve one or more of the following goals: high school graduation, further education, employability skills, and life management skills. Courses are offered both in the public post-secondary institutions and British Columbia school districts, and include the following types of courses:

- Computer Studies
- Language Arts
- Education and Career Planning
- English for Indigenous learners
- Fundamental Adult Literacy
- Science: Biology, Chemistry and Physics
- Mathematics
- Social Science: First Nations, Geography, History, Law and Psychology

NOTE: The above ABE courses are creditable towards a high school diploma and/or fulfill prerequisites for post-secondary credential (certificate, diploma or bachelor) programs. Courses are also articulated, allowing for course transferability around the 18 public post-secondary institutions across the province.

CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES are revenue-generating and non-credit offerings that do not lead towards a high school diploma or post-secondary credential. Courses may include recreational skills and industry or employment-related contract training.

Courses may include the following:

- Drawing: The Basics
- Silver Jewellery- Beyond Basics
- Spanish Conversation for Beginners
- Creative Writing for Beginners
- Leadership Essentials
- Navigating Within the Windows Operating System
- Marine Emergency Duties Basic Safety
- Emergency Child Care First Aid With CPR Level B

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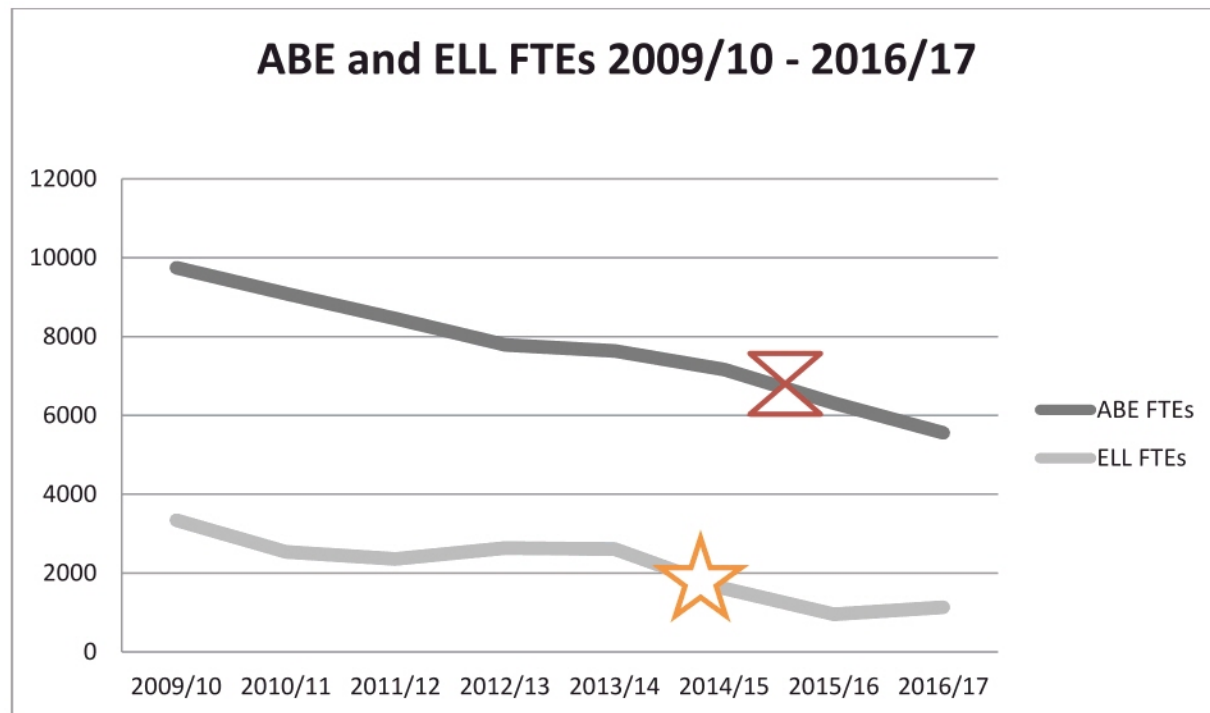
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Appendix 8: ABE and ELL FTEs 2009/10 – 2016/17



The steady decline of ABE enrollment may be attributed to a number of factors that are difficult to quantify. Some reasons include: changes to tuition policy, regional demographic shifts, increases in employment, and changes to the issuance of the Evergreen Certificates.

The significant decline in ELL enrollment corresponds to termination of Annex A of Canada-BC Immigration Agreement (CBCIA). Institution operating grants was reduced by \$17.117M based on proportion of ELL delivery.



Province announces tuition policy. VCC implements maximum tuition for ABE and ELL. Other PSIs follow suit over following 24 months.



Federal government announces termination of Annex A of CBCIA.

ABE and ELL FTEs

Fiscal Period	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
ABE FTEs	9,746	9,089	8,451	7,789	7,634	7,165	6,310	5,555
ELL FTEs	3,338	2,536	2,359	2,637	2,610	1,610	958	1,137

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