



MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (MPHEC) – Academic discipline influences Maritime students' transition pathways to the workforce

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Fredericton (NB) — The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission's (MPHEC's) latest report, drawn from the Commission's Class of 2012 survey of Maritime University Graduates, provides university-bound students with guidance to assist in critical decision-making about an education intended to prepare them for both further studies and the workforce.

"Our goal, as always, is to provide the best evidence-based knowledge to students who are considering their future," said Commission spokesperson Christian Lacroix. "They can look to us for answers to questions such as, what educational pathways and employment outcomes can they reasonably expect? And how do these outcomes vary with the field of the first degree?"

Two years on from completion of the first degree graduates had the following profiles by discipline cluster:

- Humanities Arts and Social Sciences: 31% had already completed a second credential; 35% were still in school. The remaining one-third had not pursued further study.
- Physical & Life Sciences and Mathematics: These graduates were the most likely (74%) to pursue further studies within two years, and at the time of the survey, over half (55%) were still in school.
- Commerce and Administration: 47% of these graduates had not pursued further studies while a further 31% had completed a second credential. Just 22% reported they were still studying at the time of the survey.
- Applied Arts & Sciences and Professional: Of the four discipline clusters, this one saw the highest proportion by far (62%) move directly into the workforce after graduation.

At first glance, comparing employment outcomes two years after graduation might lead to a conclusion that graduates of applied and professional programs were the most successful in their transition to the workforce. They had the highest incomes and the greatest likelihood that their jobs and education were strongly linked. But what this report makes clear is that judging graduates' employment success only two years after completion of the first degree is premature.

"So many graduates are still in the midst of transition at that point," Lacroix continued. "That is especially true of arts and sciences grads, who are often pursuing further education and supporting their study by working in fields not connected to their first degree. Or they do a second credential and thus enter the workforce later than their applied and professional degree counterparts. The Commerce grads are often working in their field full-time even when they pursue further study, such as a professional designation like a CPA or MBA. So putting those income profiles side by side is like comparing apples and oranges."



MPHEC

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“In order to best prepare students for what to expect from their postsecondary studies in the Maritimes, the Commission is now planning a six-year-out study of the Class of 2012 to revisit the progress of graduates and provide further valuable insights about how education and employment trajectories unfold. At the end of the day, that is what we are here for – to serve students,” Lacroix concluded.

Survey data collection was conducted by Advanis Inc. on behalf of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. The survey was conducted between September 30th and December 1st, 2014. The total sample for first degree holders is 2,187, with a margin of error of ± 2.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The report is available on the Commission’s website: www.mphec.ca

The MPHEC was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an arm’s length organization accountable to the ministers responsible for postsecondary education in the Maritimes. The Commission comprises 20 members representing universities, the public-at-large (including students), and the three Maritime governments. The Commission’s primary orientation in carrying out its duties is to give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as lifelong learners.

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