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This research brief explores credit course taking behaviors among three cohorts of noncredit ESL students who enrolled in their first noncredit ESL course during Fall 2008, Fall 2012, or Fall 2015. By following these three cohorts from their first noncredit ESL term through Fall 2018, students' enrollments were observed over ten years, six years, and three years, respectively. This data allowed us to investigate whether students are more likely to make the transition to credit if given more time. Findings are disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, ESL level, and location of first noncredit and credit courses.

We found minimal differences in rates of transition to credit when following students over a period of three, six, or ten years. A majority of students who transitioned to credit did so within three academic years of their first noncredit ESL enrollment. However, there were noticeable differences when disaggregating by demographics: female students transitioned to credit at a higher rate than male students, Asian students at a higher rate than Latino/a students, and younger students at a higher rate than older students.

Most students who transitioned to credit enrolled in their first credit course at the Ocean campus, though a notable number of noncredit ESL students at Chinatown/North Beach and Mission enrolled in their first credit course at the same location as their first noncredit enrollment. Typically, students beginning noncredit ESL courses at higher ESL levels were more noncredit ESL

term through Fall 2018 to identify whether and when they enrolled in their first credit course. Students in this starting population fell into one of four categories with respect to their first noncredit ESL and credit enrollments:

1. Credit enrollment before first noncredit ESL enrollment (transition from credit)
2. Credit and first noncredit ESL enrollment in the same term
3. Credit enrollment after first noncredit ESL enrollment (transition to credit)
4. No credit enrollment (no transition to credit)

This brief will focus on the 7,899 students who transitioned to credit or did not transition to credit from noncredit ESL (Figure 1). Students who enrolled in a credit course before or at the same time as their first noncredit ESL course (n = 96) did not make up a large enough sample to include in this analysis.

**Figure 1. New noncredit ESL students, by first term of noncredit ESL enrollment and cohort**

First noncredit ESL enrollment	Cohort	Students excluded from analysis		Students included in analysis	
		Transition from credit	Credit in the same term	Transition to credit	No transition to credit
Fall 2008	10-year cohort	30	16	344	2,969
Fall 2012	6-year cohort	13	14	279	2,076
Fall 2015	3-year cohort	14	9	226	2,005
Total students across all cohorts		57	39	849	7,050

Noncredit enrollment includes any students who were registered for and attended at least 8 hours of a noncredit course section.

Credit enrollment was defined as any enrollment, in any subject, that resulted in a transcriptable grade, A-F, P/NP, or W.

Among the 7,899 first-

While there are some minor variations in rates of transition to credit and demographics across cohorts, by discussing outcomes for all cohorts in total, higher counts in each transition category allowed us to disaggregate across various demographic groups.

Students in all three cohorts transitioned to credit coursework within a similar number of academic years



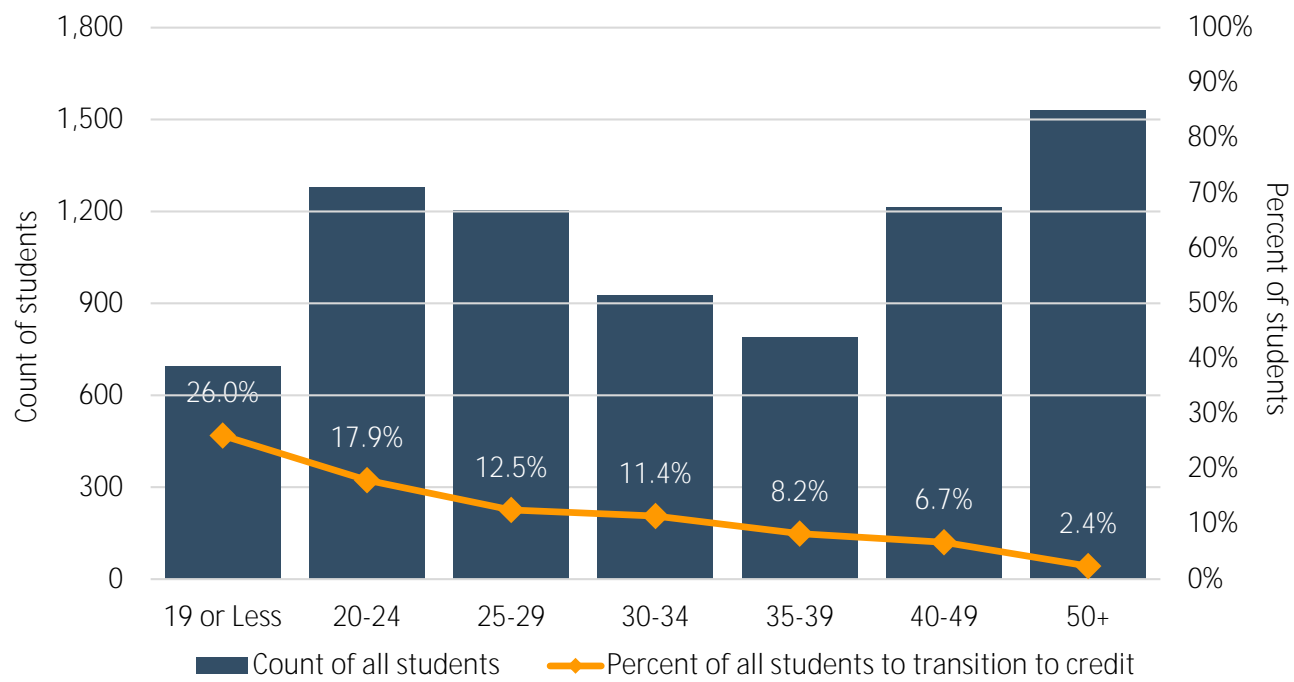
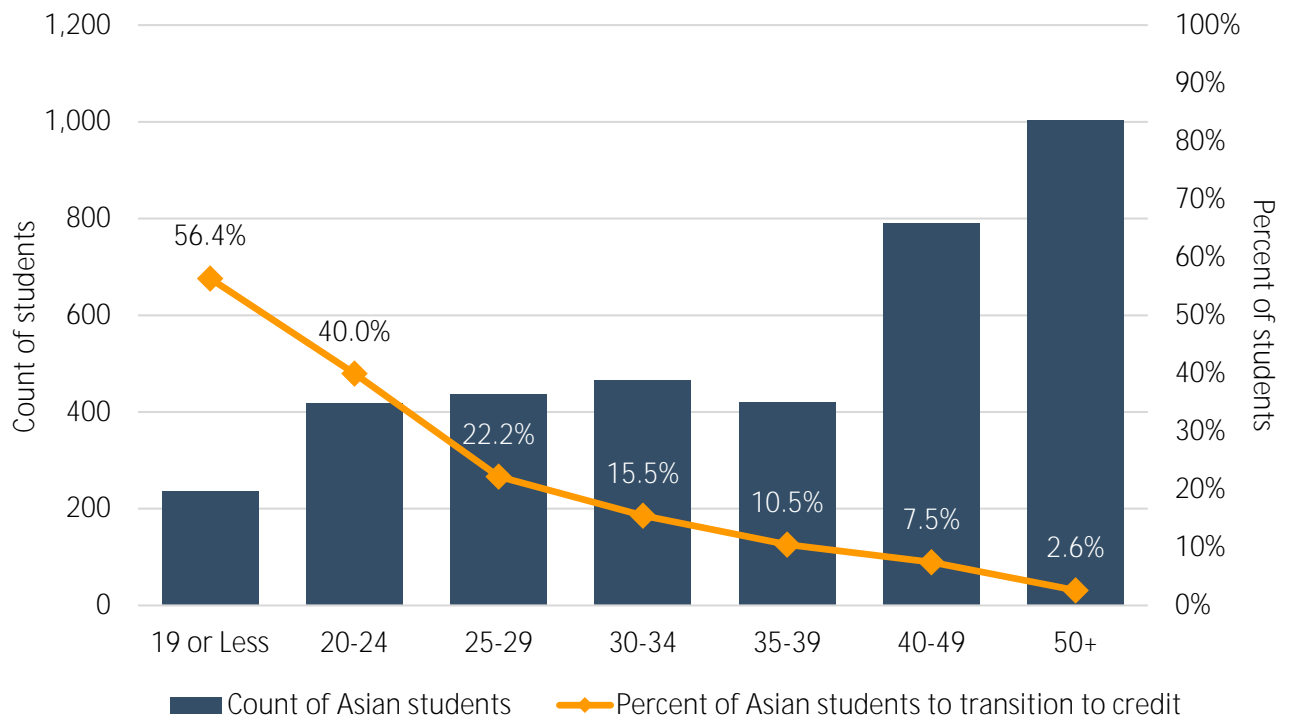


Figure 7. Percent of Asian students in all cohorts to transition to credit, by age group



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credit. Students transitioning to credit most often had a maximum ESL level between level four and level seven. Students who did not transition to credit saw some increase of average lowest and highest ESL level, though most frequently these students enrolled in a maximum ESL level between literacy and levels one, two, or three (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Transitions to credit and distribution of minimum and maximum ESL level groups for students in all cohorts**

ESL Level	Count of students	No transition to credit		Transition to credit	
		Percent of students with min level	Percent of students with max level	Percent of students with min level	Percent of students with max level
Literacy or ESL 1	4,633	62.3%	36.8%	28.0%	3.7%
ESL 2-3	950	11.9%	23.7%	13.2%	11.7%
ESL 4-5	1,286	13.8%	20.7%	37.1%	37.8%
ESL 6-7	474	5.2%	9.2%	12.5%	29.9%
ESL 8-9	148	1.5%	4.3%	4.9%	12.7%
No ESLN	408	5.3%	5.3%	4.2%	4.2%
Total	7,899	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As we would expect, students were generally more likely to transition to credit if they reached higher ESL levels. Students who began at a low ESL level were more likely to transition as they increased their ESL level, and students who began at a high level were more likely to transition than those who began at a low level (Figure 13).

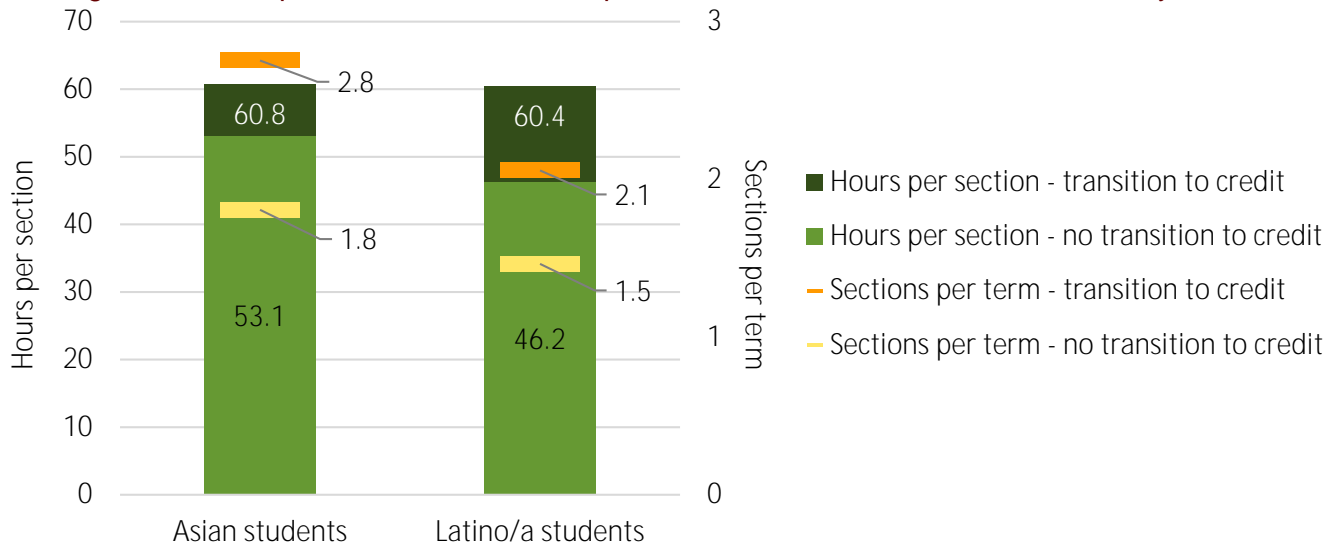
**Figure 13. Percent of students in all cohorts to transition to credit with combination of minimum and maximum ESL level**







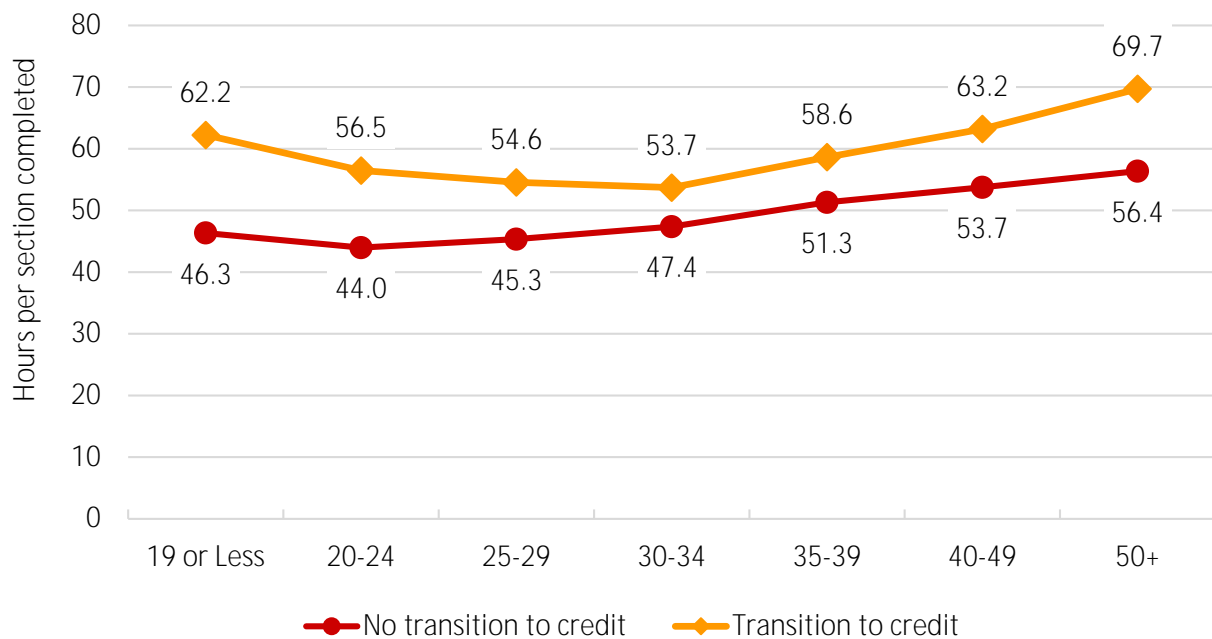
Figure16. Hours per section and sections per term for Asian and Latino/a students, by transition to credit



Female students enrolled in a slightly higher number of courses and sections per term as well as hours per term, while male students completed slightly more hours per section and hours per course. Among students who did not transition to credit, female students completed consistently more coursework than male students.

By age group, while sections per term remained relatively constant for students who did not transition to credit, students who transitioned to credit completed anywhere between 2.4 and 3.0 sections per term. Generally, hours per section completed steadily increased for students who did not transition to credit. For students who transitioned to credit, hours per section completed by age group steadily declined, with students age 30-34 completing the fewest hours per section; subsequent age groups completed increasingly more hours per section (Figure 17).

Figure17. Hours per section completed by age group transition category all cohorts



Across all three cohorts, about 64% of all students who transitioned to credit enrolled in credit ESL in their first credit term. The remaining 36% enrolled in credit courses in other subjects, and did not enroll in a credit ESL course, in their first credit term.

After studying the enrollment patterns among several cohorts of students, our analysis suggests that increasing the length of time a student has to transition from noncredit ESL to credit does not substantially increase the rates of transition from noncredit ESL to credit coursework. The majority of students in the 10-year and 6-year cohorts who transitioned to credit did so within three to four years. Some demographic groups are more likely to transition to credit than others, and students who transition to credit complete more noncredit coursework than those who do not transition to credit. There appear to be fewer variations in course taking behavior among students who do not transition to credit than between those who do transition to credit.

Additional questions were raised through the course of this analysis and may lead to future research. Future work may help us to understand students' progression through ESL levels. Since students across cohorts typically transitioned to credit within three to four years, additional research could include a greater number of cohorts with fixed lengths of time to enroll in coursework in order to create a larger sample of students and allow for further disaggregation.

CCSF Office of Research and Planning. (2019). Argos datablock: Noncredit attendance and course completion. Saved state executed April 29, 2019.

CCSF Office of Research and Planning. (2018). Noncredit numbers. Summary data: Noncredit classes and students. Retrieved from





