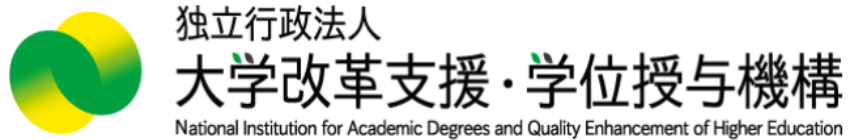# Connecting inside and outside of university:

A Case Study of the Korean Academic Credit Bank System and the Bachelor's Degree Examination for Self-Education System

独立行政法人
大学改革支援・学位授与機構
National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education

Academic Credit Bank Syetem

NILE BDES

In-Jong Park, Ph.D.

Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Education, Korea University

Head of the ON Institute of Lifelong Education

Ex-Director General of Division of Academic Credit Bank System, National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), Korea

nilejong@gmail.com

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Greetings

- First, I would like thank the organizers for inviting me as a presenter here at the 2022 NIAD-QE University Quality Assurance Forum 2022.

- The theme of this forum, "Connecting inside and outside of university: Toward further integration of learning styles" is very timely, as it is in line with the mission of the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) and the Bachelor's Degree Examination for Self-Education System (BDES), which can officially recognize diverse learning experiences as credits and academic backgrounds granted as a higher education system within and outside of universities in Korea. It also reaffirms the global trend of lifelong education.

- Particularly regarding the ACBS, the system itself must be expanded for it to keep pace with changing times, to sustainably discover diverse lifelong learning experiences of modern people, and officially recognize them as credits and academic backgrounds. At the same time, rigorous quality control is essential to ensure an educationally and socially favorable system without discrimination. I will also introduce the quality control methods currently in place in the ACBS.

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An Overview of the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE)
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Degree Examination for Self-Education System (BDES) and Academic
Credit Banking System (ACBS)

Part II:

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Part III:

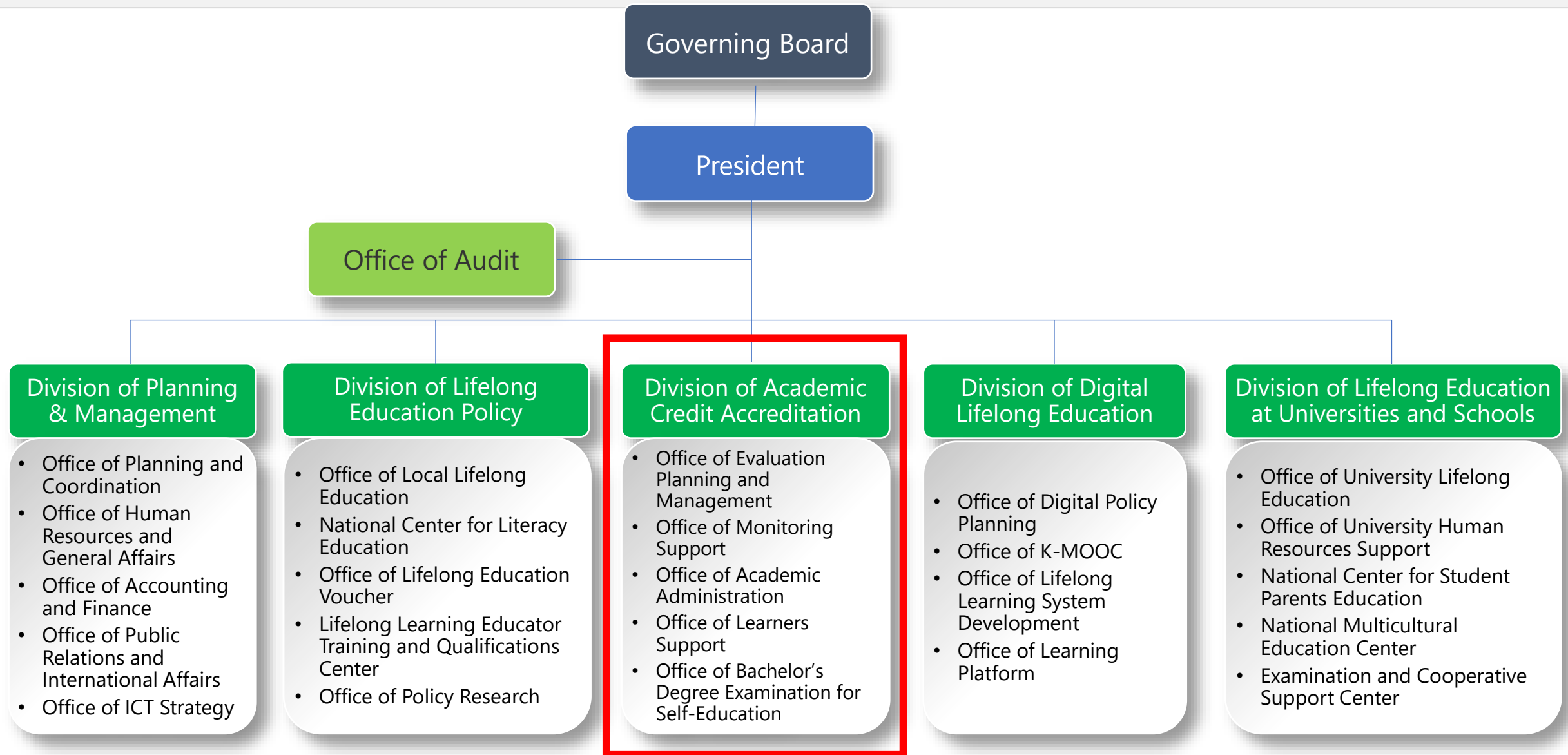Balancing Opportunity Expansion and Quality Assurance

Part I:

An Overview of the National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE)

The Current State and Learning Experiences Pertaining to the Bachelor's Degree Examination for Self-Education System (BDES) and Academic Credit Banking System (ACBS)

The Roles and Organizational Structure of NILE

- The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) is a government-funded institution that serves as the executive authority in relation to the Lifelong Education Policy aimed at revitalizing lifelong education among Korean people. It was established in February 2008 based on the Lifelong Education Act.

- The roles of the NILE (Article 19 of the Lifelong Education Act)
  1. Support and conduct research for the promotion of lifelong education
  2. Support toward the establishment of a master plan to be deliberated by the Lifelong Education Promotion Committee
  3. Support development of lifelong education programs
  4. Foster and Training lifelong education specialists including lifelong learning educators
  5. Establish networks between lifelong education institutions
  6. Support municipal and provincial institutes for lifelong education
  7. Deleted (08.06.2021).
  8. Handle matters related to the recognition of academic credits or level of education in accordance with the "Act on the Recognition of Credits" and the "Act on the Acquisition of Academic Degrees through Self-Education."
  9. Operate integrated management of Lifelong Learning Account System
  9-2. Handle matters related to the operation and management of literacy education
  9-3. Roles assigned under these acts or other ordinances
  10. Other projects necessary to achieve the objectives of the NILE

The Roles and Organizational Structure of NILE

Governing Board

President

Office of Audit

Division of Planning & Management	Division of Lifelong Education Policy	Division of Academic Credit Accreditation	Division of Digital Lifelong Education	Division of Lifelong Education at Universities and Schools
• Office of Planning and Coordination • Office of Human Resources and General Affairs • Office of Accounting and Finance • Office of Public Relations and International Affairs • Office of ICT Strategy	• Office of Local Lifelong Education • National Center for Literacy Education • Office of Lifelong Education Voucher • Lifelong Learning Educator Training and Qualifications Center • Office of Policy Research	• Office of Evaluation Planning and Management • Office of Monitoring Support • Office of Academic Administration • Office of Learners Support • Office of Bachelor's Degree Examination for Self-Education	• Office of Digital Policy Planning • Office of K-MOOC • Office of Lifelong Learning System Development • Office of Learning Platform	• Office of University Lifelong Education • Office of University Human Resources Support • National Center for Student Parents Education • National Multicultural Education Center • Examination and Cooperative Support Center

2022 Lifelong Education Policy Expenditure Budget, Ministry of Education (million won)

Policy Project Name	Budget	Commissioned Agency
Lifelong Learning Promotion Support (Operation of Lifelong Learning Account System + Operation of Lifelong Learning Educator Qualifications System + Korean Lifelong Learning Exhibition)	1,111	NILE
National Lifelong Education Statistics Development Project (OECD PIAAC + Lifelong Education Statistical Survey + Lifelong Learning Individual Survey + Maintenance and Improvement of Education Statistics Survey System)	2,381	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)
National Lifelong Education Center for the Disabled and Lifelong Education Support for Persons with Disabilities	2,948	National Institute for Special Education (NISE)
Lifelong Education Voucher Support	14,073	NILE
Support for Lifelong Education Examination	840	NILE
University-centered Lifelong Learning Facilitation Support	24,130	NILE
Administrative Support for Adult Literacy Education Programs	5,740	NILE
Development of Contents and Popularization of Korean Online Open Courses (K-MOOC + Match)	28,301	NILE
Sponsored by the NILE	8,840	NILE
Support for Revitalizing Local Lifelong Education (Support for Creating Lifelong Learning Cities + Development of Basic Materials and Result Management + Development of Lifelong Learning Indexes)	2,008	NILE
Establishment and Administration of ON National Lifelong Learning Venues	3,488	NILE
Development of a Qualification System (Development of a Korean National Competence System + Registration Management of Private-Sector Qualifications and Investigation into Actual Policy Conditions)	1,514	KRIVET
Total	95,374	

Note: 0.1% of the total expenditure budget for the education sector (84,819,106 million won), 1 won = 0.1 yen (as of August 11, 2020)
Source: Ministry of Education (December 2021). Ministry of Education FY2022 Budget Narrative for Major Projects

Korea in 2025: A Society with a Declining Birthrate and Super-Aging Population - A Usual Scene in the Subway

- Proportion of population aged 65 and above: 17.6% in 2022, 20.3% in 2025, and 39.8% in 2050
- Total fertility rate: 0.98 in 2018, 0.84 in 2020, and 0.81 in 2021

Some Statistics

- Total population (2022): 51.58 million people
- Population aged 65 and above (2022): 9.06 million; Economically active population (2022): 29.37 million; Births (2021): 260,000, Deaths (2021): 320,000
- Number of higher education institutions (2021): 426 (190 universities, 10 teacher's colleges, 134 junior colleges, 47 other types of institutions, 45 graduate school universities)
- Number of enrollments in higher education institutions (2021): 3,201,561 (1,938,254 in universities, 15,409 in teacher's colleges, 576,041 in junior colleges, 344,442 in other types of institutions, and 327,415 in graduate school universities)
- Percentage of student intake quota in higher education institutions (2021): 84.5% (94.9% in universities, 84.4% in junior colleges, 85.8% in graduate school universities)
- University enrollment rate among high school graduates (2021): 73.7%
- Tertiary enrollment rate (2021): 71.5%

Source: Ministry of Education (2021), 2021 Basic Statistics on Education. National Statistics Portal (KOSIS)
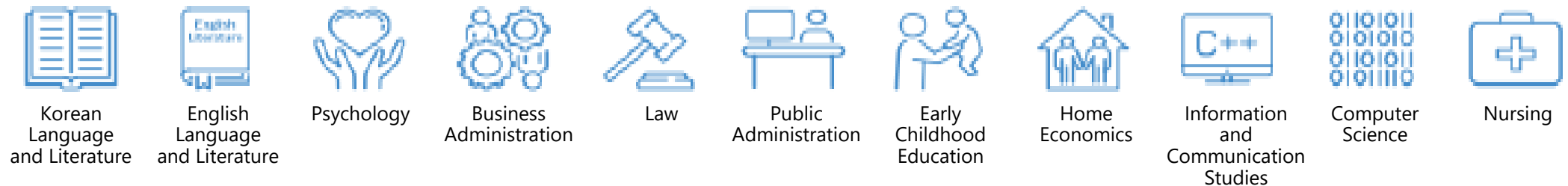
Why the BDES and ACBS?

- In an aging society with a fertility rate of 0.81 wherein 17.6% of the population consists of adults aged 65 and above, due to such factors as a decline in the number of suitably aged university and college students, a declining trend in the percentage of student intake quota in universities and colleges (which is currently at 84.5%), instability in the inflow of international students, and the fact that 426 institutions of higher education exist, it is predicted that the number of university entrants will decline from 430,000 in 2021 to 280,000 by 2040.

- According to the Ministry of Education, the annual unfilled quota of universities and colleges is estimated to grow from 85,184 seats in 2022 to 123,748 seats by 2024.

- This leads to the question of why the non-university higher education systems, the BDES and the ACBS, were created and operated.

- The reasons include the rigidity of learning opportunities offered in traditional universities and colleges, mandatory time and space constraints, high tuition fees, and the lack of changes in curricula and educational content despite the changing times. The ACBS overcomes various disadvantages of universities and colleges and has unrivaled advantages, such as cost and time savings through credit recognition for diverse learning experiences and qualifications inside and outside of traditional school settings, prior learning (PL), and so on.
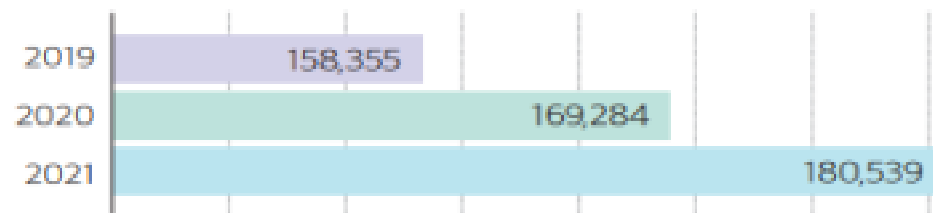
Learners in the BDES

- The BDES makes it possible for adults who are unable to pursue a university education due to physical or time constraints to obtain an academic degree through a course-by-course examination after studying through various educational resources on their own.

- In the late 1980s, to provide people opportunities to fulfill their willingness to pursue higher education, and to provide alternative opportunities to those who failed their entrance examination, dropped out of school, or have socioeconomic difficulties to attend university, the system was introduced in 1990. It awards bachelor's degrees in the name of the Minister through a four-step examinations.
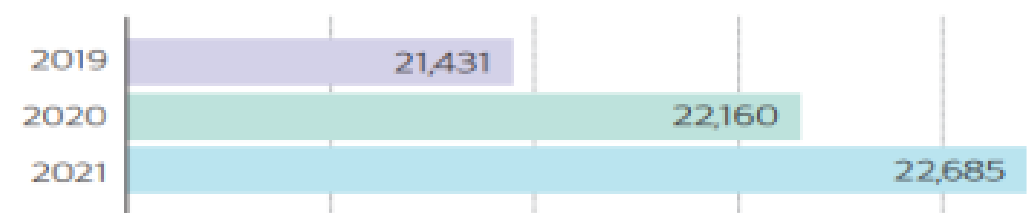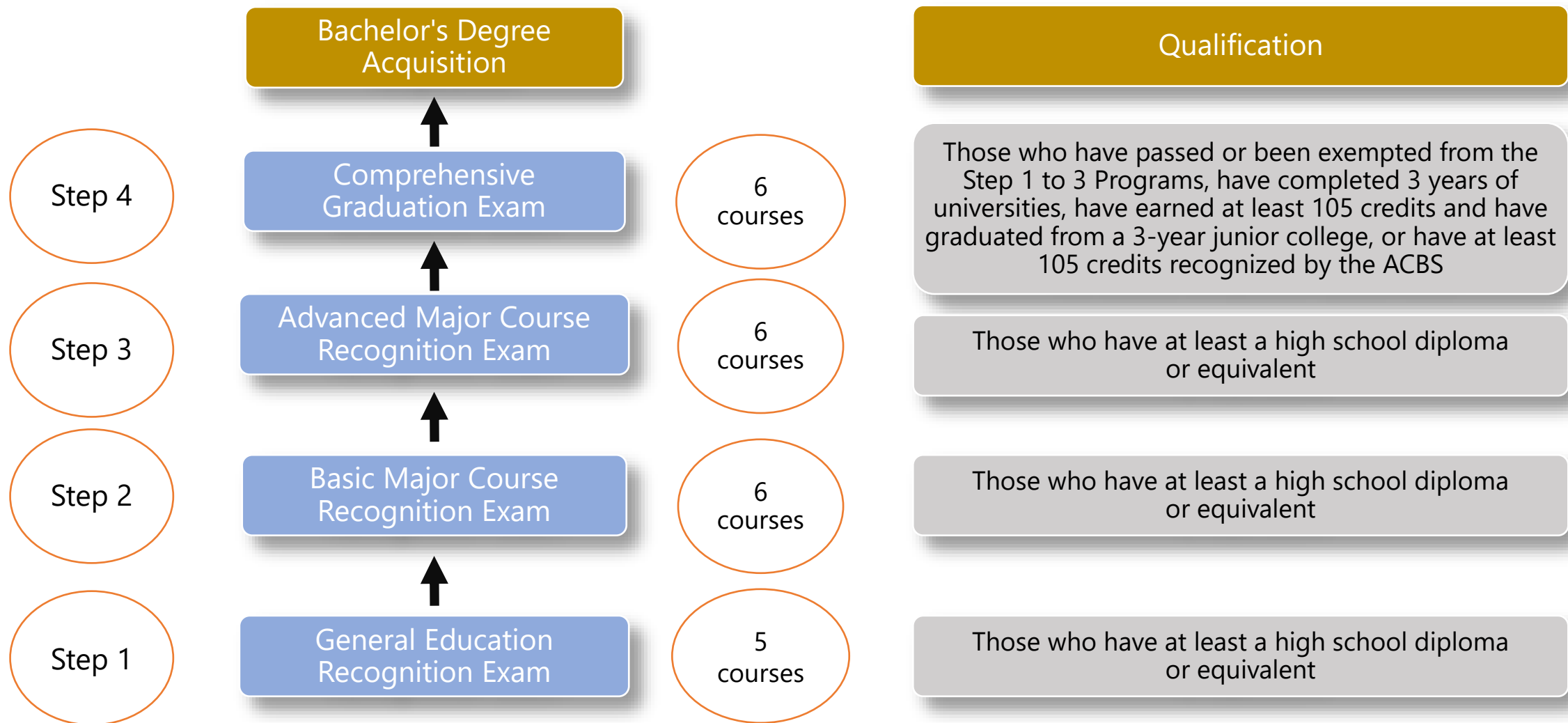
- 11 Academic Majors

Korean Language and Literature	English Language and Literature	Psychology	Business Administration	Law	Public Administration	Early Childhood Education	Home Economics	Information and Communication Studies	Computer Science	Nursing

- Enrolled students (3 years in total)

Year	
2019	158,355
2020	169,284
2021	180,539

- Degree recipients (3 years in total)

Year	
2019	21,431
2020	22,160
2021	22,685

Degree Acquisition Programs in the BDES

- Degree Acquisition Programs: All 4 Programs

	Bachelor's Degree Acquisition		**Qualification**
Step 4	Comprehensive Graduation Exam	6 courses	Those who have passed or been exempted from the Step 1 to 3 Programs, have completed 3 years of universities, have earned at least 105 credits and have graduated from a 3-year junior college, or have at least 105 credits recognized by the ACBS
Step 3	Advanced Major Course Recognition Exam	6 courses	Those who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent
Step 2	Basic Major Course Recognition Exam	6 courses	Those who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent
Step 1	General Education Recognition Exam	5 courses	Those who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent

Degree Recipients via the BDES (1992-2021)

Source: Ministry of Education and National Institute for Lifelong Education (2022).
2021 White Paper on Lifelong Education, p.162

Age Distribution of Degree Recipients via the BDES in 2021
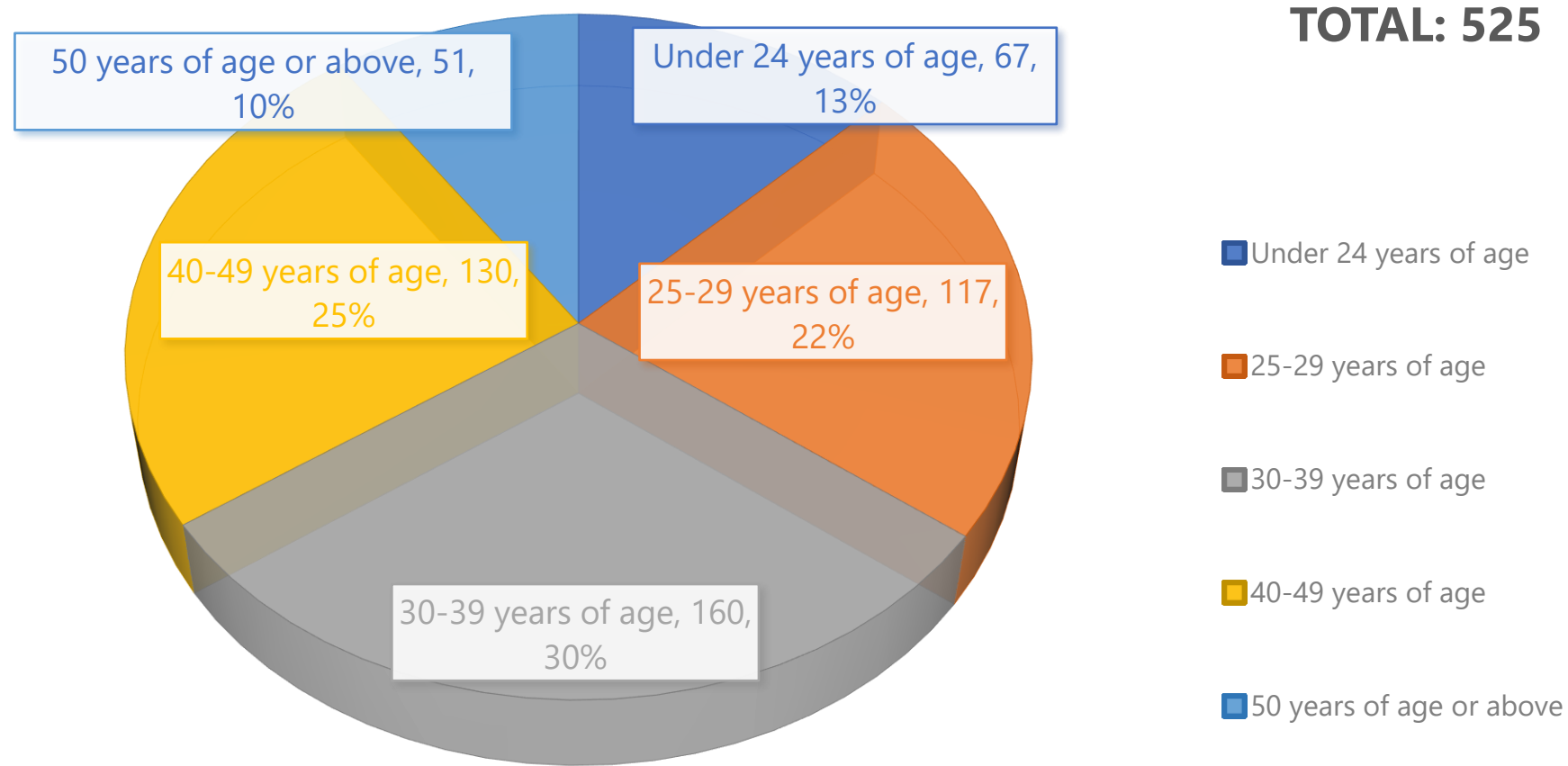
TOTAL: 525

50 years of age or above, 51, 10%

Under 24 years of age, 67, 13%

40-49 years of age, 130, 25%

25-29 years of age, 117, 22%

30-39 years of age, 160, 30%

- Under 24 years of age
- 25-29 years of age
- 30-39 years of age
- 40-49 years of age
- 50 years of age or above

Source: Ministry of Education and National Institute for Lifelong Education (2022).
2021 White Paper on Lifelong Education, p.163

Learning experiences and learners in the ACBS

- The ACBS recognizes as credits various forms of individual learning experiences and qualifications that occur not only within but also outside of school, and if the credits accumulate and meet certain standards, a degree equivalent to that of a university can be obtained.
- By 2021, standardized curricula have been developed and announced 26 times with 116 bachelor's majors and 111 associate degree majors
- Learning experiences recognized by the ACBS (credit sources)
  - Courses accredited by the ACBS: Courses at university-affiliated lifelong education institutes, cram schools, vocational training institutions, lifelong education facilities, distance learning facilities, etc.
  - Credit-Recognized Schools (priorly attended universities and colleges): Credits from junior colleges from which students were withdrawn or graduated and credits from universities from which students were withdrawn
  - Part-Time Enrollment: systems that allow the general public to take courses at university or college
  - Qualification: Credits can be granted for: national technical qualifications under the National Technical Qualifications Act; national qualifications under individual acts; and nationally recognized private certifications that have a recognition level equivalent to university credits. A maximum of three qualifications for bachelor's programs and two for associate programs can be approved.
    - For example, for national technical qualifications, the number of approved credits is 45 for professional engineers, 30 credits for technical directors, 20 credits for technicians, and 16 credits for industrial engineers.

Learning experiences and learners in the ACBS

- BDES: 4 credits per course and a maximum of 20 credits for Step 1 program, and a maximum of 30 credits for each of Step 2 to 4 programs with 5 credits per course can be approved.

- National Intangible Cultural Heritage: There are 119 types of intangible cultural heritage in such fields as traditional kinds of crafts, martial arts, dance, music, cuisine, and brewing, which are of great historical, artistic, and academic value and have been handed down over several generations, as designated by the Director of the Cultural Heritage Administration. Credits can be granted to holders of a national intangible cultural heritage for their specialized learning experiences. Examples of approved credits are 140 credits for holders of a national intangible cultural heritage, 50 credits for traditional educators, 30 credits for those who completed training, and 4 to 21 credits for trainees.

- K-MOOC ACBS Courses: K-MOOC began offering free access to excellent university courses to all citizens in 2015, and in 2021, K-MOOC offered a total of 1,358 courses. K-MOOC has recently gained popularity as an online learning service that breaks through the limitations of traditional university courses, especially following the spread of COVID-19. Since January 1, 2019, the ACBS evaluation and accreditation scheme which approves the existing K-MOOC courses as "accredited learning courses" have been introduced. 30 liberal art courses and 65 major courses offered by 11 universities have been recognized as credits in 2022.

Learner enrollment in the ACBS

(Unit: people)
TOTAL: 2,014,133

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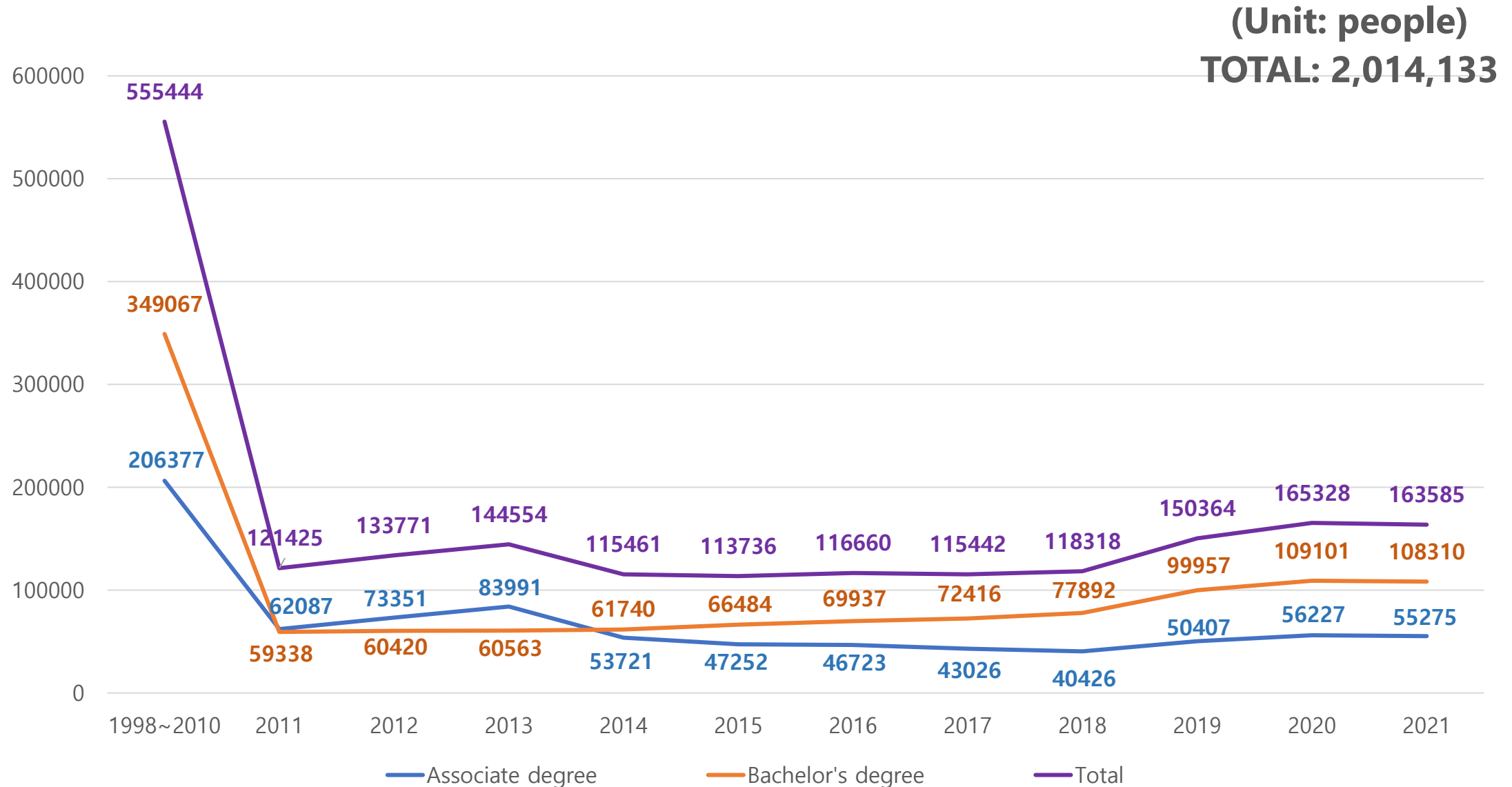
Current situation pertaining to degree recipients via the ACBS

Degree Recipients in the name of the Minister of Education

Academic year	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Total
2021	28,797	34,206	63,003
2020	23,902	30,074	53,976
2019	22,114	27,537	49,651
2018	21,295	24,681	45,976
2017	34,487	32,275	66,762
2016	26,190	26,412	52,602
2015	27,609	25,267	52,876
2014	53,953	21,917	75,870
2013	44,751	20,589	65,340
2012	37,571	19,690	57,261
2011	29,126	19,478	48,604
2010	21,912	26,051	47,963
2009	13,633	31,442	45,075
2008	7,957	24,748	32,705
1998～2007	29,304	51,699	81,003
Total	422,601	416,066	838,667

Degree Recipients in the name of a University President

Academic year	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Total
2021	450	4,607	5,057
2020	351	4,738	5,089
2019	259	5,177	5,436
2018	309	5,320	5,629
2017	390	5,614	6,004
2016	335	5,126	5,461
2015	304	4,803	5,107
2014	289	4,608	4,897
2013	273	4,160	4,433
2012	367	3,978	4,345
2011	459	3,291	3,750
2010	496	2,902	3,398
2009	425	2,616	3,041
2008	365	2,086	2,451
2001～2007	1,473	4,459	5,932
Total	6,545	63,485	70,030

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Age Distribution of Degree Recipients via the ACBS in 2021
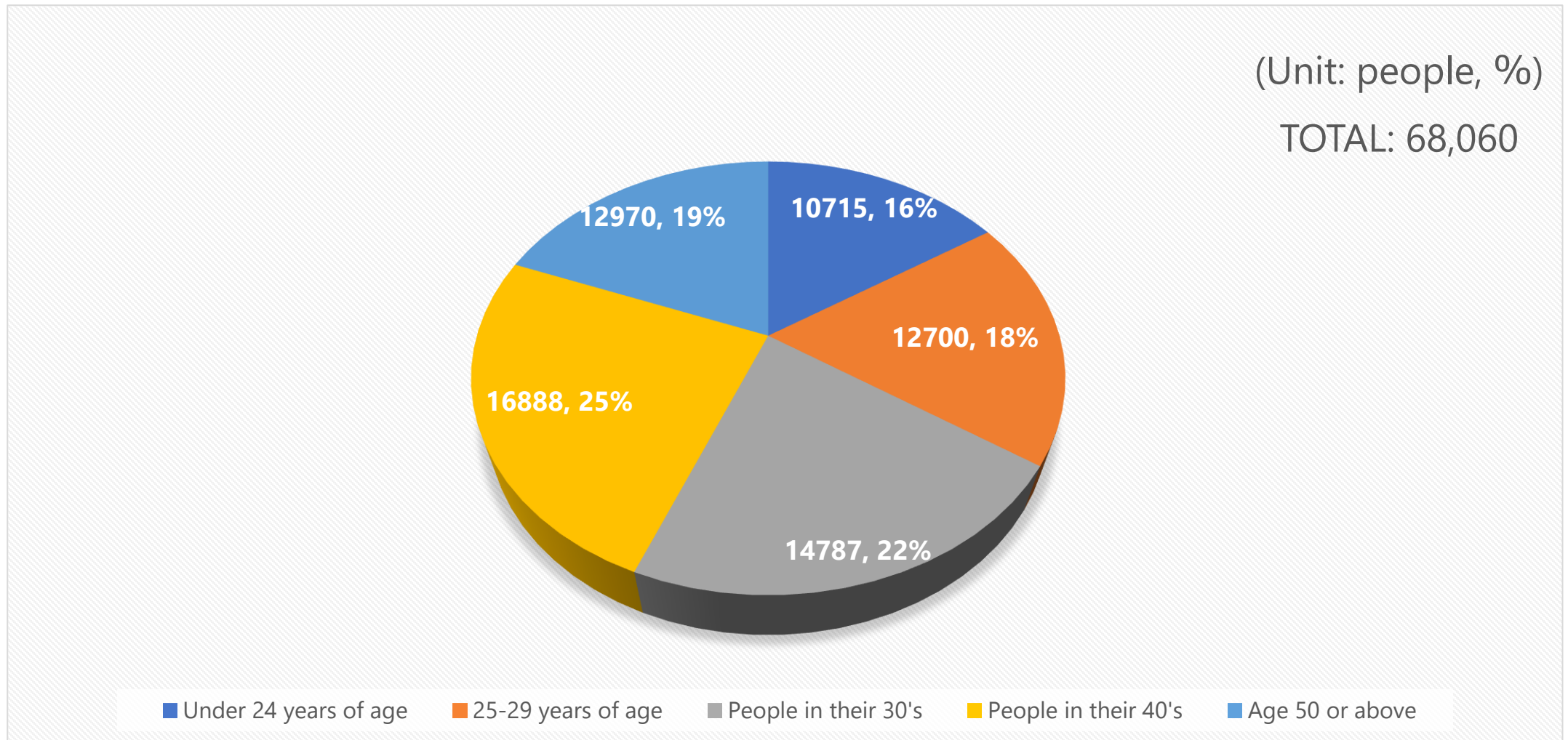
(Unit: people, %)
TOTAL: 68,060

10715, 16%
12700, 18%
14787, 22%
16888, 25%
12970, 19%

■ Under 24 years of age ■ 25-29 years of age ■ People in their 30's ■ People in their 40's ■ Age 50 or above

Source: Ministry of Education and National Institute for Lifelong Education (2022).
2021 White Paper on Lifelong Education, p.171

Types and Current Number of Institutions within the ACBS
(as of July 2022)

Institution Type	Number of Institutions
University-affiliated lifelong education institutes	191
Cram Schools	11
Vocational training institutions	62
Government-affiliated institutions	32
Technical schools	1
Special schools	6
Advanced major and special courses at junior colleges	4
Lifelong education facilities	18
Lifelong distance education facilities	92
K-MOOC	11
Total	428

Source: https://www.cb.or.kr/creditbank/eduIntro/nEduIntro1_4_3.do

Part II:

Quality Control in the BDES and ACBS

Quality Control in the BDES

- The BDES conducts examinations for 217 courses in 11 academic majors.
- In September 2015, examination eligibility was relaxed so that high school graduates can freely take the examinations for Step 1 to 3 without having to go through examinations for General Education courses (Step 1), Basic Major courses (Step 2), and Advanced Major courses (Step 3) in stages. By relaxing the eligibility requirements, the problem of lack of motivation to engage in self-education due to the prolonged period required to obtain a bachelor's degree was resolved, and opportunities to obtain a bachelor's degree were expanded.
- In parallel with this, the BDES continues its efforts to ensure the quality standards of degrees through high-quality examination questions that encompass the universal content of university courses: in 2019, the evaluation areas for 11 examination courses in the general education field were revised and announced, and in 2021, the examination courses and assessment areas for four majors (Law, Psychology, Public Administration, and Computer Science) were revised and announced. It is planned to gradually promote the revision of assessment areas for the remaining seven majors in the future.
- 35.7% of people who received their degrees through the BDES experienced a positive change in their employment situation, such as an increase in wages, a job change, or enrollment in an advanced school, and 55.7% of the degree recipients who are employed are satisfied with their jobs as a result of attaining their degrees.

Discrimination in the ACBS

A nursery school in Incheon (Kids' care house), Korea, 2015

- 2015 Case of Physical Child Abuse by a Nursery Teacher from the ACBS at a Nursery School in Incheon
- A quote by a member of the National Assembly, Choi, from a newspaper press release: "Nursery teachers from the Academic Credit Bank System are a problem."
- "We will avoid hiring teachers from cyber-universities and the Academic Credit Bank System as much as possible." (Director of Nursery School A in Suwon, Gyeonggi-do)
- In the early years of its implementation of ACBS, the system suffered (non)official discrimination, being compared to traditional universities, but cases of discrimination are now lower as the number of suitably-aged university and college students has declined and universities had to attract ACBS students.

Quality Control in ACBS
– Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programs

- Quality control of the ACBS consists of two areas: program evaluation and accreditation, and post-accreditation management.

- Program evaluation and accreditation: The evaluation determines whether the credits earned by completing the programs offered at educational institutions outside of the main university curriculum, such as university-affiliated lifelong education institutes, vocational education and training institutions, cram schools, various lifelong education facilities, and military units can be recognized as credits that have the same validity and equivalent quality level as completing a university program.

  - Basic operating environment (Yes/No Evaluation): 7 indicators including organization and availability of human resources, learning facilities, and equipment (administrative offices, support facilities for teaching staff and learners, etc.), and systematization of institutional management

  - Programs of study (70% or more out of 100 points): 16 indicators such as program administration performance, lawfulness of human resources, adequacy of learning facilities, suitability of study program (number of class hours, student quotas, teaching materials), classes, learner academic achievement and satisfaction, etc.

  - The evaluation is based on a written evaluation, but if necessary, a review team will be formed to conduct on-site evaluation (for a new institution, when the results of the written evaluation are inadequate, on-site evaluation of the program of study is required)

Quality Control in ACBS – Post-Accreditation Management

- **Post-accreditation management:** Management and supervisory actions by the Minister of Education, including examinations and inspections of matters concerning the administration of accredited programs at educational institutions that run accredited courses, and administrative actions against violations discovered as a result of the examinations and inspections
    - Periodic re-assessment: Regular examination and inspection of the overall administration of the accredited programs for compliance with relevant regulations to improve the substance and public credibility of the ACBS operation
    - Continuous re-assessment: Enhancing the management of the ACBS by examining and inspecting cases of illegal and improper activities, such as complaints, media reports, and inadequate management of academic affairs.
    - Inspection of learner recruitment advertisements: A sound institutional operating environment is fostered by surveying and inspecting learner recruitment compliance once a year (within-capacity recruitment, direct learner recruitment, misuse of a university name, etc.)

- **Penalty-point system administration and management:** Systematic analysis and management of cumulative penalty points for violations of rules and regulations of educational institutions in order to establish a foundation for administrative penalties for violations pertaining to the academic administration of the accredited programs.

Quality Control in ACBS – Public Notification System

- Concept: The public notification system is intended to actively disseminate and provide key information on ACBS institutions by means of information and communication networks; currently being implemented through the 2015 amendment to the "Act on Academic Credit Bank System."

- Background and objectives: Increasing public trust and use by actively upholding learners' right to know and expanding their participation, providing integrated user-centered and customized services, strengthening the voluntary accountability of educational institutions, and increasing transparency in their operation and public credibility.

- **Items and Scope of Public Notification regarding the ACBS**: 8 items and 17 scopes

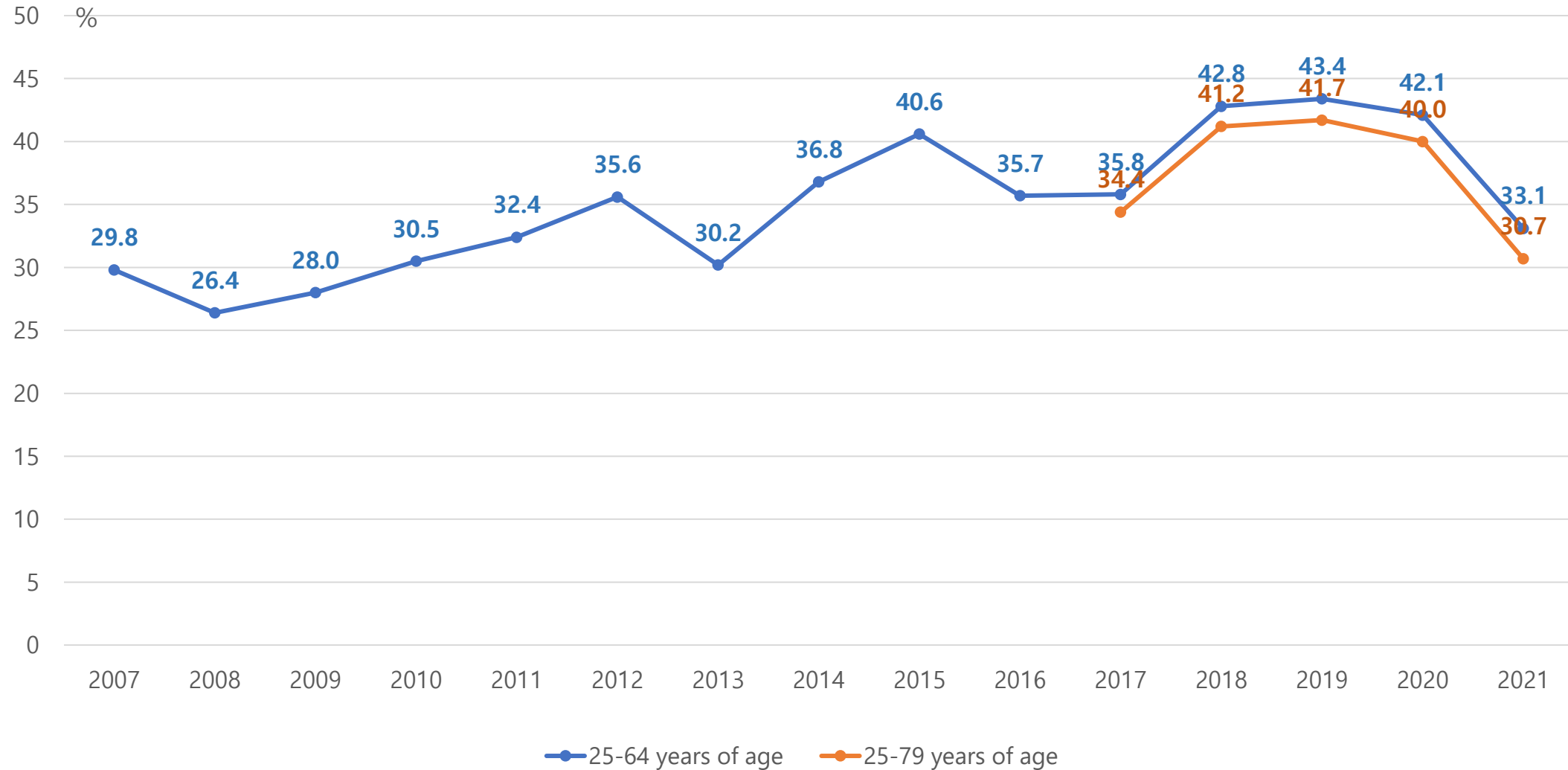| Public Notification Items	Scope of Public Notification	Frequency of Public Notification	Period of Public Notification
1. Basic state of institutional administration rules, facilities, etc.	A. Institutional administration rules and various regulations concerning the administration of accredited program	Every enactment and revision of rules and regulations	
	B. Current situation pertaining to school buildings and other facilities	Once a year	February
	C. Current situation pertaining to distance education facilities and equipment	Once a year	February
2. Matters concerning the current state and administration of accredited programs	A. Current situation pertaining to accredited programs	Once a year	February
	B. Annual schedule of the programs	Once a year	February

Quality Control in ACBS – Public Notification System

Public Notification Items	Scope of public notification	Frequency of Public Notification	Period of Public Notification
3. Matters concerning the current situation pertaining to learners, such as number of learners	Number of classes and learners by program	Twice a year	March, September
4. Matters concerning the current situation pertaining to professors or lecturers	A. Number of professors or lecturers	Twice a year	March, September
	B. The current state pertaining to professors or lecturers of all training institution and professors or lecturers affiliated with the relevant training institution	Once a year	March
	C. The current situation pertaining to professors or lecturers allocations to lectures	Twice a year	March, September
	D. Payment for professors or lecturers	Once a year	March
5. Study fees and accounting matters	A. Study fees by program	Once a year	February
	B. Budget and account settlement	Once a year	(Budget) June (Account settlement) August
	C. Current situation pertaining to scholarship provision	Once a year	August
6. Matters concerning the revocation of evaluation and accreditation	Details of violation and result of measures	Per administrative measure finalization	Within 15 days of the administrative measure finalization date
7. Institutional development and characterization plans	Institutional development and characterization plans	Once a year	September
8. Other educational conditions and the current state of institutional administration	A. Number of staff members	Once a year	September
	B. Current situation pertaining to study fee refunds	Once a year	September

Part III:

Balancing Opportunity Expansion and Quality Assurance

Percentage of Korean adults who engage in lifelong education by fiscal year

25-64 years of age: 2007: 29.8, 2008: 26.4, 2009: 28.0, 2010: 30.5, 2011: 32.4, 2012: 35.6, 2013: 30.2, 2014: 36.8, 2015: 40.6, 2016: 35.7, 2017: 35.8, 2018: 42.8, 2019: 43.4, 2020: 42.1, 2021: 33.1

25-79 years of age: 2017: 34.4, 2018: 41.2, 2019: 41.7, 2020: 40.0, 2021: 30.7

Source: Ministry of Education and Korea Educational Development Institute, Collection of Materials on the Actual State of Lifelong Education in Korea (for each year)

Chasing Two Rabbits: Educational and Social Demand Satisfaction and Accreditation

- The ACBS needs to be innovated to reflect social changes and overcome learning disincentives such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- With societal changes, curricular reorganization and departmental expansion reflecting technological innovations such as the 4th industrial revolution, as well as continuous updating of course names and content are necessary. The flexibility of the system to sustainably accommodate new changes is an advantage of the ACBS compared to universities.
- Under COVID-19, Korean universities and other educational institutions established online learning systems, but as shown in the previous figure, the participation rate of Korean adults in lifelong learning has plummeted, further increasing the polarization of education. It is necessary to further expand the BDES and enhance educational services to make it easier for students to take courses and obtain degrees in stages through examinations. The ACBS also needs to expand the shrinking learning opportunities for citizens by further activating the online learning system. In the future, it will be necessary to identify new learning experiences that are needed in society and recognize them as new learning experiences.

Educational and social recognition of the ACBS

- Quality control needs to be further enhanced to ensure that the ACBS is not discriminated against compared with traditional universities. A balance between the expansion of learning experience recognition and quality control should be maintained.

- The number of students obtaining national certifications through the ACBS has been increasing (social workers, nursery teachers, counselors, lifelong learning educators, etc.), and they are being employed without discrimination.

- Gradual increase in undergraduate transfer admissions and graduate school admissions

- More people participating in study abroad programs in overseas universities (graduate schools)

- Accepting military enlistment deferral: effective from the end of December 2018. Students must be enrolled in an offline institution under the ACBS, graduates of a high school and in a higher education institution that can be completed in less than 4 years, and no older than 28 years of age. Up to 730 days of deferral and less than 5 deferrals are permitted.

- December 2, 2021, the "Act on the Establishment of the Korean Scholarship Foundation" was amended to allow ACBS students to receive the income contingent loans (ICL); loans will be available from 2023.

- Fulfillment of university graduate employment requirements. There has been a recent increase in employment based on National Competency Standards (NCS) in Korea, and fewer cases of discrimination against ACBS students.

- Provision of subtitles and sign language for students with disabilities in distance learning courses (80% of programs will be subtitled by 2021).

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- Academic Credit Bank System Homepage. https://www.cb.or.kr/creditbank/base/nMain.do (English version). https://www.cb.or.kr/creditbank/info/nInfo7_1.do

National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE)

Joint Degree-Awarding Ceremony of ACBS and BDES

Thank you!