



Northern British Columbia Student's Society

Third report:

Survey results on
**UNBC Graduate Students' Knowledge and
Interests in Intellectual Property**

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Executive Summary

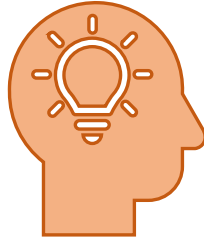
Knowledge and Training:

- 53% rate their IP knowledge as "good"
- 76% had no formal IP training
- 41% rely on self-study



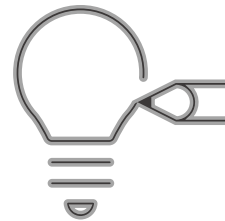
Current Interest:

- 70% consider IP relevant to their research
- 71% plan to use research in future business ventures
- Highest familiarity with copyright, followed by patents and trademarks
- Lowest familiarity with trade secrets and industrial designs



Learning Preferences:

- Workshops/seminars (primary choice)
- One-on-one expert consultations
- Online resources



Notable Gap:

While students show strong interest in commercialization and patents, current institutional support for innovation and commercialization appears limited.





Introduction

Understanding intellectual property (IP) is crucial for graduate students' academic and professional success. As UNBC students prepare to enter an increasingly competitive job market, they need practical knowledge of IP protection. This raises an important question: What is the current state of IP knowledge among our graduate students?

This report examines UNBC graduate students' and postdoctoral fellows' understanding of IP, particularly regarding research protection and commercialization. IP rights - including patents, copyrights, and trademarks - form the foundation for protecting innovations that drive economic growth.

The survey received responses from 17 graduate students, representing 2.5% of the graduate student population. While this is a small sample, over 90% of respondents indicated previous exposure to IP studies, suggesting engagement from students most interested in IP protection.

Method and questions

This study utilized an online survey distributed to UNBC graduate students over a two-week period in October 2024. The survey was sent twice through the NBCGSS email list. The survey consisted of 10 questions designed to assess:

- Current IP knowledge levels
- Familiarity with different types of IP protection
- Training preferences
- Research applications
- Future business interests

Participants received an introductory video explaining the survey's purpose along with the following questions:

1. What is your level of study?

- a) Masters
- b) PhD

2. What is your program?

3. How would you rate your overall knowledge of intellectual property protection?

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) Fair
- d) Poor

4. What types of intellectual property protection are you familiar with? (Select all that apply)

- a) Copyright
- b) Trademarks
- c) Patents
- d) Trade Secrets



- e) Industrial designs
- f) Geographical indications
- g) I'm not familiar with any of these

5. Have you ever received formal education or training on intellectual property?

- a) Yes, extensive training
- b) Yes, some training
- c) No, but I've done some self-study
- d) No, I have not received any education

6. What resources would help you better understand intellectual property?

- a) Workshops or seminars
- b) Online courses or webinars
- c) Informational articles or guides
- d) One-on-one consultations with experts

7. How relevant do you find intellectual property protection topics to your current research?

- a) Very relevant
- b) Somewhat relevant
- c) Not very relevant
- d) Not relevant at all

8. How likely are you to incorporate your current research outputs into your future business?

- a) Very likely
- b) Somewhat likely
- c) Neither likely nor unlikely
- d) Somewhat unlikely
- e) Very unlikely

9. Which aspects of intellectual property protection do you think might be most relevant to you're

- a) future career or business plans? (Select all that apply)
- b) Patents for inventions
- c) Trademarks for branding
- d) Copyrights for creative works
- e) Trade secrets for protecting confidential information
- f) Industrial designs for product appearance
- g) I'm not sure / None of them

10. What are the topics that you are interested in within the domain of Intellectual property?

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Results and discussion

In this section, we review and discuss the answers to the questions in greater depth. Among the respondents, 53% were Master of Science students and 47% were PhD students. Additionally, more than 40% of the respondents were students from the NRES program, as illustrated in the word cloud in Figure 1. One of the responses was from a postdoc fellow.



Figure 1) Study programs of responders

As shown in Figure 2, the overall knowledge of 53% of respondents was good, and 29% mentioned they have a fair knowledge of intellectual property protection.



Figure 2) Self-evaluation of respondent's knowledge of intellectual property protection

As illustrated in Figure 3, copyright emerged as the most familiar topic among the students, followed by patents, which ranked second, and trademarks, which ranked third in terms of familiarity. In contrast, trade secrets, industrial designs, and geographical indications, which are less frequently encountered in academic contexts, occupied the fourth position in terms of student familiarity.

This finding suggests that there is a significant level of understanding of copyright and patents among the students, with at least 11 respondents demonstrating familiarity with these subjects. Consequently, it would be beneficial to design courses that delve deeper into the complexities of copyright and patent law, enhancing students' knowledge and expertise in these critical areas. Conversely, given the lower levels of familiarity with trade secrets, industrial designs, and geographical indications, these topics may be addressed with less intensity. However, it remains important to provide foundational knowledge in these areas to foster a more comprehensive understanding of intellectual property as a whole. By doing so, educators can ensure that students develop a well-rounded perspective on the various facets of intellectual property rights, which is essential for their academic and professional growth.

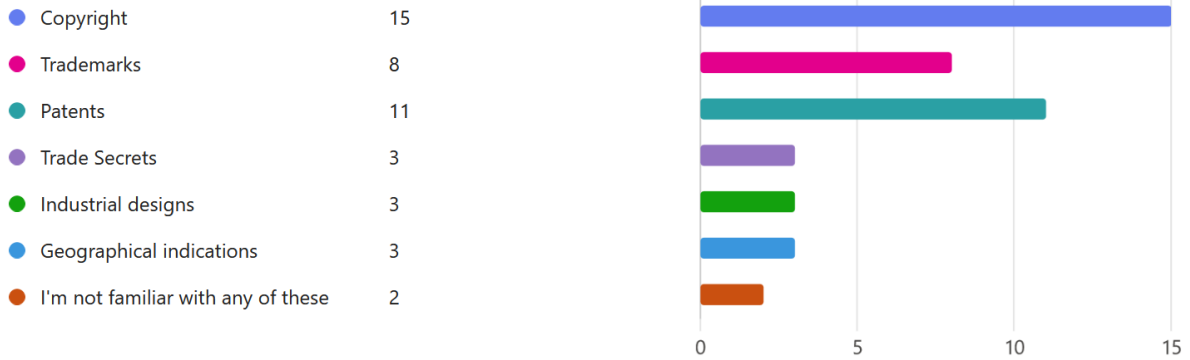


Figure 3) Familiarity of students with different types of intellectual property protection

Among the 17 students surveyed, 4 had received training in intellectual property (IP), while the remaining 76% had no formal training in this area. Notably, 41% of the students reported acquiring their knowledge through self-study. This indicates that, given their initiative in self-directed learning, offering specialized courses could be beneficial and well-received by these students. Such courses could build on their existing knowledge and further enhance their understanding of IP (Figure 4).



Figure 4) Source of knowledge for the participants

Based on Figure 5, more than half of the participants mentioned that, the workshops or seminars are their first preferences for learning in future. After seminars, one on one consultation with experts is their preference.



Figure 5) Preference in learning resources

How relevant is IP to the students current research? In answer to this question, 70% of students mentioned that IP is somewhat or very relevant to their research activity (Figure 6).

● Very relevant	5
● Somewhat relevant	7
● Not very relevant	4
● Not relevant at all	1

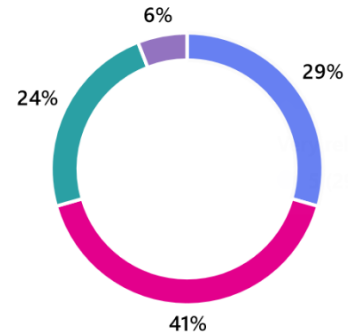


Figure 6) Relevance of IP to the student's current research activity

Another important factor for NBCGSS, UNBC, and Subspace is the perceived significance of current research outputs for the students' future business endeavors. Notably, 71% of students believe that their current research is either very likely or somewhat likely to be utilized in their future business activities as shown in Figure 7. This indicates that securing rights to their current research and implementing appropriate protections will have a substantial impact on their future business prospects.

● Very likely	8
● Somewhat likely	4
● Neither likely nor unlikely	4
● Somewhat unlikely	1
● Very unlikely	0

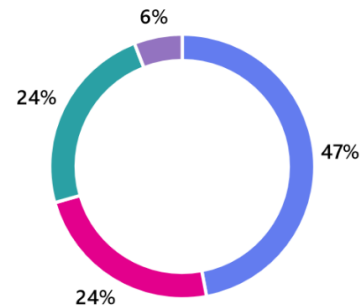


Figure 7) How likely are students to incorporate their current research in their future business

Based on the data presented in Figure 3, although 15 students indicated familiarity with copyright, only 10 students, as shown in Figure 8, expressed that they might utilize it in their future business endeavors. A similar pattern is observed with patents and trademarks.

However, in the case of trade secrets, the number of students who are familiar with these concepts is lower than the number who recognize their potential value for future business applications.

This suggests a gap between current knowledge and the expected application of that knowledge. Therefore, it would be advantageous to initiate workshops or seminars focused specifically on trade secrets to bridge this gap.

This observation is reinforced by the responses students provided to the final question, as illustrated in Figure 9. The term "patent" was mentioned most frequently, further supporting the points made in the previous paragraph.

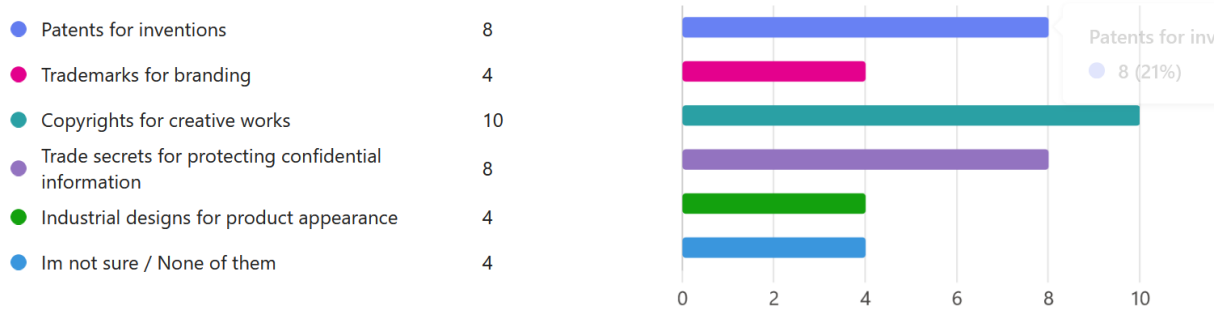


Figure 8) The aspects of IP that students expect to be more relevant to their future career or business



Figure 9) Priority topics within intellectual property

Student Feedback on Current Support

A notable response to our final survey question highlighted the gap in institutional support for commercialization:

"Commercialization is one of the most important domains, along with copyright and patent registration, which unfortunately is rarely addressed at UNBC. While publishing articles is valued, there is limited support for students with commercializable products. Unlike 3rd and 4th generation universities that provide innovation grants and research funds, UNBC lacks similar support systems for commercialization."

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey findings underscore the critical need for enhanced education on intellectual property (IP) among graduate students at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). Key insights include:

Familiarity Levels: While many students reported familiarity with copyrights, patents, and trademarks, there is a significant gap in knowledge regarding trade secrets and industrial designs.

Training Deficiencies: A large majority (76%) of respondents had no formal training in IP, although 41% engaged in self-study, indicating a proactive approach to learning.

Relevance to Future Business: 71% of students believe their current research will be relevant to future business endeavors, highlighting the importance of securing IP rights.

Preferred Learning Methods: Workshops and one-on-one consultations were identified as preferred resources for further education.

Thus, these findings suggest that implementing targeted workshops on IP, particularly focusing on patents and trade secrets, could greatly enhance students' preparedness for the evolving job market.