Stakeholder Summary

Students in condensed, accelerated courses retain knowledge as well as those in traditional courses

University students enrolled in intensive full-day courses for one to two weeks, known as accelerated courses, retain knowledge as well as students in traditional, full-term course formats according to a new study from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). The study found that the accelerated format did not compromise short- or long-term knowledge retention in either first-year or fourth-year students.

Project Description

How Much Do Students Remember Over Time? Longitudinal Knowledge Retention in Traditional versus Accelerated Learning Environments examined 270 participating first- and fourth-year students at Brock University who were enrolled in either a traditional or accelerated course format during the 2013-2014 academic year. One day in the accelerated course covered approximately two weeks' worth of material in the traditional format. The course content and evaluation criteria were the same between both course formats, as were the instructors. Following completion of their course, students were given quizzes three, six and 12 months later to determine how much knowledge from the course had been retained.

Findings

When asked upon course completion if they would have preferred one format or the other, most students preferred the course in which they were enrolled. However, that preference was much stronger for those in the accelerated course, with more than 95% saying they preferred the condensed format. In the traditional courses, 17% of first-year students and 25% of fourth-year students would have preferred the accelerated format.

Knowledge retention diminished progressively with each follow-up quiz, regardless of course format, level of study, age, gender, degree or specialization. The authors argue that since the accelerated course format does not compromise knowledge retention, the courses are "a practical and feasible option for students in higher education."

Authors of *How Much Do Students Remember Over Time? Longitudinal Knowledge Retention in Traditional versus Accelerated Learning Environments* are Brent E. Faught, Madelyn Law, Michelle Zahradnik, Brock University.