



PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION – FORCASTING STUDENT SUCCESS

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Definition of Prior Learning Assessment

- PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION EVALUATES LEARNING THAT MAY COUNT AS CREDIT TOWARD A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, CERTIFICATE OF DIPLOMA
- THE PORTFOLIO SHOULD DESCRIBE ALL NONCREDIT, JOB-BASED, OR OTHER LEARNING THAT HAS NOT RECEIVED FORMAL CREDIT FROM AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Types of Prior Learning Assessment

- TRANSFER CREDIT
- CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT
- CREDIT FOR ON-THE-JOB LEARNING
- COMPANY TRAINING PROGRAMS
- UNION ORGANIZED TRAINING PROGRAMS

Learning Outcomes

- CLARIFY WHAT STUDENTS WILL GAIN BY COMPLETING COURSES OR PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS
- BY CLARIFYING OUTCOMES, INSTRUCTORS CAN LEARN IF COURSES OR PROGRAMS ARE MEETING THEIR INTENDED AIMS
- THEY CAN ALSO HELP WITH REVISION OF EXISTING MATERIALS OR CREATION OF NEW MATERIAL

Program Based PLAR

- PROGRAM BASED PLAR PERMITS GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF PORTFOLIOS THAN DOES COURSE BASED PLAR
- IT ALLOWS FOR MORE FLEXIBLE ALLOCATION OF CREDIT ALSO

FACULTY BELIEFS (NOT FACTS)

- CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT IS A CHEAP WAY TO GET A DEGREE
- CHALLENGE FOR CREDIT IS A SHORT CUT, ALLOWING STUDENTS TO FAST TRACK THE COMPLETION OF THEIR CREDENTIAL
- STUDENTS WHO CHALLENGE COURSES ARE NORMALLY UNSUCCESSFUL

INITIAL RESEARCH

- WANTED AMMUNITION TO COUNTER THE “URBAN MYTHS” HELD BY FACULTY, AND USED AS REASONS FOR NOT SUPPORTING PLAR
- ALSO WANTED TO COUNTER MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING CHALLENGE EXAMINATIONS

STUDY

- REQUESTED INFORMATION ON THE SUCCESS RATE OF STUDENTS WHO HAD RECEIVED PORTFOLIO ASSESSED CREDIT FROM ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
- SAMPLE SIZE SMALL AS NUMBER OF COMPLETED PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENTS LIMITED

DATA REQUESTED

- INITIALLY THE ONLY INDICATOR EXAMINED WAS THE COMPLETION STATUS, BY METHOD OF STUDY, CHALLENGE, INDIVIDUALIZED, OR PACED (NORMAL CLASSROOM)

RESULTS

- 95.2% OF STUDENTS WHO CHALLENGED COURSES WERE SUCCESSFUL, 2.4% WERE UNSUCCESSFUL AND 2.4% WITHDREW
- INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY STATISTICS WERE 89.3%, 1.2% AND 9.5%
- STATISTICS FOR PACED STUDENTS WERE 99.4%, 0.0%, AND 0.6%

PRELIMINARY REPORT

- RESULTS WERE PRELIMINARY IN THREE WAYS
- FIRST WE WERE IN THE EARLY DAYS OF COMPILING A PICTURE OF THE BEHAVIOUR OF PORTFOLIO STUDENTS AT AU
- SECOND THE STUDY WAS NOT BASED ON OFFICIAL RECORDS
- FINALLY THE DATA WAS A SLICE-OUT-OF – TIME SNAPSHOT, DICTATED BY THE LOW NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

- THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS (75%) WERE IN ONE OF THREE PROGRAMS, OUR BACHELOR OF PROFESSIONAL ARTS, BACHELOR OF ADMINISTRATION, AND BACHELOR OF GENERAL STUDIES
- THE GRADUATION RATE FOR STUDENTS WHO HAD COMPLETED A PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT WAS 16%

REGISTRATION ACTIVITY

- THE MEAN NUMBER OF COURSES TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO STUDENTS WAS 8.6 COURSES
- AU UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM STUDENTS AS A WHOLE COULD BE EXPECTED TO TAKE AN AVERAGE OF 2.1 COURSES

MODE OF STUDY

- CHALLENGE REGISTRATIONS REPRESENT ABOUT ONE PERCENT OF TOTAL AU UNDERGRADUATE COURSE REGISTRATIONS
- THIS ROUTE TO ACCREDITATION IS NOTABLY HIGHER AMONG PORTFOLIO STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY AFTER APPLYING FOR ASSESSMENT

COMPLETION RATE

- WHEN COMPARING THE COMPLETION STATUS OF PORTFOLIO STUDENTS COMPARED TO UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM STUDENTS IN GENERAL, THE PASS RATES FOR PORTFOLIO STUDENTS WERE HIGHER IN ALL MODES OF STUDY

MODE OF STUDY, CHALLENGE

- PORTFOLIO STUDENTS FAILED 3.1% OF THEIR CHALLENGE EXAMS IN COMPARISON TO 14.7% OF GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- 93.8% OF PORTFOLIO STUDENTS PASSED CHALLENGE EXAMINATIONS VERSUS 79.5% OF GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- THE REMAINING WITHDREW

MODE OF STUDY, INDIVIDUALIZED

- PORTFOLIO STUDENTS FAILED 1% OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY COURSES IN COMPARISON TO 3.9% OF GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- 89% OF PORTFOLIO STUDENTS PASSED THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED STUDY COURSES VERSUS 58.7% OF GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- THE REMAINING STUDENTS WITHDREW

MODE OF STUDY, GROUPED

- PORTFOLIO STUDENTS DID NOT FAIL ANY GROUPED STUDY COURSES IN COMPARISON TO 11.6% GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- 100% OF THE PORTFOLIO STUDENTS PASSED THEIR GROUPED STUDY COURSES IN COMPARISON TO 73.3% OF GENERAL PROGRAM STUDENTS
- THE REMAINING STUDENTS WITHDREW

DISCUSSION

- THE FOREGOING DATA ON PORTFOLIO STUDENTS AT ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS TENTATIVE SINCE OUR PORTFOLIO STUDENT BASE ISN'T LARGE ENOUGH TO CONDUCT RELIABLE STATISTICAL PROFILES
- NONETHELESS, EVEN TENTATIVE RESULTS ARE NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE OF THE MARKED DIFFERENCE IN BEHAVIOUR OF PORTFOLIO STUDENTS

REGISTRATION RATES

- AT THE TIME OF THE DATA EXTRACT PORTFOLIO STUDENTS HAD REGISTERED IN AN AVERAGE OF 8.6 COURSES VERSUS 2.1 COURSES ACCOUNTED FOR BY A MATCHED SET OF “GENERAL” PROGRAM STUDENTS

STUDENT PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

- ON THE FACE OF IT PORTFOLIO STUDENTS SEEM TO BEHAVE LIKE PROGRAM STUDENTS WITH REAL PROSPECTS OF EARNING DEGREES, UNLIKE THE GREAT MAJORITY OF STUDENTS ENROLLING IN AU UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

INCENTIVE OR SELECTION MECHANISM

- PLA ACTS AS AN INCENTIVE BY GIVING STUDENTS A “LEG UP” TOWARD COMPLETING THEIR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS, BY AFFIRMING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN ABILITY TO STUDY SUCCESSFULLY, AND BY HELPING STUDENTS CLARIFY THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

SELECTION OR SCREENING MECHANISM

- THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT AS AN INCENTIVE IS BOUND UP WITH ITS OPERATION AS A SELECTION OR SCREENING DEVICE
- PORTFOLIO STUDENTS MAY BE THE SAME MINORITY OF AU'S PROGRAM STUDENT INTAKE THAT WOULD PERFORM WELL ANYWAY