

# **Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) On Line: Evaluation of Ongoing Delivery from July 2008 to January 2009**

## **Final Report**

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# **I. Introduction**

## **A. Purpose of this report**

In reviewing ACE On Line, there are two phases to the evaluation research. The first phase evaluation was completed in August 2008. The progress report *Evaluation of the ACE for Distance Delivery Start Up* documented the course development and instructional test phase.

The purpose of the second phase of the evaluation is to report on the implementation of ACE On Line Go Live starting in July 2008 and ending in January 2009. This final evaluation report documents and analyzes the activities and initial results of the ongoing delivery of ACE On Line from July 2008 to the end of January 2009.

## **B. Background Information on the ACE Program**

The ACE program received system wide approval for delivery by colleges from MTCU in 2004. It is not a new program. ACE is the renamed and updated Basic Training for Skills Development Level 4 (BTSD 4) delivered by all colleges since 1964.

ACE is a non-postsecondary program designed to prepare students to succeed in postsecondary and apprenticeship training. There are 10 ACE courses in English and 11 in French. ACE is accepted as OSSD equivalent by Colleges and Apprenticeship for purposes of admission. The Ministry of Education has recently released a report comparing ACE courses to college-stream OSSD courses which concludes the courses are highly comparable.

Although an ACE certificate is available, many students only participate in the courses they need to meet the prerequisites for admission to further education. A student who wants to receive an ACE certificate can qualify by successfully completing a communications course, one math course and any two other courses. There is no charge for books or tuition. <sup>1</sup>

## **C. Overview of ACE On Line<sup>2</sup>**

### **i. Purpose of the Ace On Line project**

The purpose of the ACE On Line project was to provide ACE training in both English and French to 300 (275 English and 25 French) learners across Ontario by the end of December 2008

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<sup>1</sup> See College Sector Committee web site at <http://www.collegeupgradingon.ca/ace/announcing.htm>

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for the Development of ACE On Line Flow Chart.

as well as to develop the support mechanisms and materials required to promote learner success. In the winter of 2007, the College Sector Committee (CSC) worked with OntarioLearn, the online consortium of Ontario Colleges and the Embanet Corporation which hosts OntarioLearn courses. During this time, the 10 English language courses were developed and tested with volunteer students and staff. In July 2008, the delivery phase began implementation.

It should be noted that French ACE On Line had three courses ready for intake in July 2008. These courses were English as a Second Language, Communications and Core Math. The development of French ACE On Line was six months behind the English development. This was partly due to the fact that the English courses (aside from these three) were developed first and translated into French to avoid reinventing the wheel for the development of the French courses. At this time of this report, ten courses in French have been developed with the eleventh slated for completion in early spring. Six courses have yet to be validated.

From the project managers' point of view the purpose of this phase—the ongoing delivery phase of the project— was to “stabilize implementation, test out the broader bureaucracy of the program, make sure the curriculum worked, target as many colleges as possible, and get a handle on demand.” The purpose of the ongoing delivery phase was also to validate the content and ensure that sequencing within ACE On Line courses was on track. Promotion of ACE On Line was an ongoing goal during this phase as was the goal of getting more stable funding for the program.

The ongoing delivery phase builds on the instructional test phase which involved a sampling with a few students trying out a few modules. The focus on this phase is on ACE On Line students and faculty working through all of the course modules.

## **ii. ACE On Line Courses**

Ten English language courses were developed and eleven French courses are in the final development phase. The ACE On Line courses are:

Biology	Apprenticeship math
Chemistry	Technology math
Physics	Business math
Communications	Computers
Core math	Self Management and Self Direction

Anglais Langue Seconde (French colleges only)

### **iii. ACE On Line delivery and orientation**

ACE On Line is delivered through OntarioLearn, the distance education consortium made up of Ontario's colleges. The program has monthly intakes. Each session is 22 weeks. Beginning in April 2009, students will need to complete the program's Learn to Learn assessment and orientation prior to registering for English ACE On Line. This orientation piece of ACE On Line is now in the pilot phase and will Go Live in April 2009. The French version will be developed in the future. The Learn to Learn course is approximately 30 hours long. It includes five modules with the following objectives:

- become familiar with ACE On Line supports and resources
- become familiar with ACE On line communication tools
- determine and develop a plan for obtaining skills necessary for successfully participating in ACE On Line
- determine a goal
- develop an Individual Training Plan (ITP)

### **iv. Instructional test phase: English ACE On Line**

Before the Go Live phase, there was an instructional test phase from March to May 2008. Eighty-five student volunteers taking ACE courses in English in the classroom were recruited from across Ontario to try out a course module in their area of study. During the instructional test phase, the CSC used Embanet's test server to host the draft ACE courses. This was a test environment that lacked the full functionality available in the production environment that is being used for delivery during the Go Live phase which started on July 2, 2008.

## **II. Evaluation Goals and Methodology**

This section outlines the goals and objectives of the evaluation as well as how the research strategy was developed, the methods used to obtain data for this evaluation, and who the participants were. The overall methodology utilized was both qualitative and quantitative. The strategy for collecting data and feedback for this phase of ongoing delivery was planned by the researcher and project lead, Arlene Cronin.

### **A. Ongoing Delivery Evaluation Goals and Objectives**

The overall goal of the research was to collect and analyze feedback with respect to ACE On Line ongoing delivery (July 2008 to January 2009) to determine:

- student enrollment, course enrollment, course completion, non completion rates
- a profile of English ACE On Line learners in terms of age, gender, location, goals, etc.
- what supports students need to be successful
- what supports are working for students and what additional support are needed
- what instructional practices worked and what did not
- what is working well and how courses can be improved with respect to a) course navigation, 2) instructions and explanations, 3) interaction with the professor, 4) technical difficulties, 5) workload, and 6) tracking of students, etc.
- what supports do professors need to be successful; what supports are working and what additional supports are needed
- how the partnership is working among OntarioLearn, Embanet, the CSC and the college system to maintain an effective delivery system

## **B. Data Collection Methods and Evaluation Participants**

A variety of data collection methods were used. The project leaders tracked student registration and course enrollment on a monthly basis. These statistics on student and course enrollment are included in the evaluation.

Other data collection methods included telephone interviews, conference call focus groups, face-to-face focus groups and the use of Survey Monkey to administer on line questionnaires for English ACE On Line. The project lead for French ACE On Line also provided feedback. All participants in the research were assured confidentiality. The data collection period was September 2008 until January 2009. Data collection methods used for different respondents and participation numbers are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Participation Rates**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Collection Method</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>Total Possible Participants</b>
<b>ACE On Line Faculty -English<sup>3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus group (1 hour and a half)</li> <li>• Interviews (1 hour)</li> </ul>	8 2	11
<b>ACE On Line Students - English</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey Monkey questionnaire (evaluation form)<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Focus groups (one hour)<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Survey Monkey (participant profile)</li> </ul>	70 <sup>6</sup> 11 <sup>7</sup> 33	476
<b>Project leaders</b>	Focus group – English ACE On Line (one hour and a half) Interview – French ACE On Line	2 1	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>127</b>	

### III. Findings

#### A. Introduction

The findings are organized according to feedback from students, faculty and project leaders. The findings are organized by group because the feedback and input does not correspond exactly across topics. Common themes across groups will be analyzed by topic where appropriate under the *Evaluator's Analysis* (see p. 25). The range of topics covered in the evaluation are:

- statistics on student and course enrollment; course completion
- a profile of English ACE On Line students
- overall student impressions
- student supports
- course design, content and workload
- instructional practices
- professor supports

<sup>3</sup> Includes the ACE On Line counsellor.

<sup>4</sup> Represents all English ACE On Line Courses.

<sup>5</sup> Represents students taking Core math, Chemistry, Biology, Communications, Computers and Self Management Self Direction

<sup>6</sup> After an initial low response to the Survey Monkey On Line evaluation, students were provided an incentive of a \$10 honourarium after completing the survey.

<sup>7</sup> Students reviewed a \$25 honourarium for participating in an hour long focus group

- ACE On Line partnerships
- lessons from the project
- suggestions for change
- next steps

## **B. ACE On Line Student Participation**

This section outlines the overall picture of student participation in ACE On line from July 2008 to the end of January 2009. This includes 1) student enrollment, 2) course enrollment, 3) course completion, and 4) course incompletes.

**Table 2: ACE On Line English and French Overall Statistics July 2008 to January 2009**

<b>ACE On Line Course Statistics<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>
Enrolled students	462	26 <sup>9</sup>
Course enrollments	720	26
Course completions	42 <sup>10</sup>	N/A <sup>11</sup>

**Table 3: ACE On Line English Student Enrolment by Number of Courses July 2008 to January 2009**

<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Students</b>
1 course	282	61%
2 courses	133	29%
3 courses	30	6%
4 courses	15	3%
5 courses	2	

<sup>8</sup> Those who enroll but never start are at approximately 6% for English ACE On Line.

<sup>9</sup> All 26 students enrolled in English as a Second Language.

<sup>10</sup> These are preliminary figures only as of February 12, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> It is too early in the process for completions for French ACE On Line.

**Table 4: ACE On Line English Student Enrolment by Course July 2008 to January 2009**

	App. math	Bus. math	Core math	Tech. math	Bio.	Chem.	Physics	SMSD	Comm.	Comp.	Total
<b>July</b>	0	0	6	0	5	7	4	5	9	0	36
<b>Aug.</b>	1	0	8	0	8	13	1	4	3	2	40
<b>Sept.</b>	3	4	20	8	25	19	9	5	22	7	122
<b>Oct.</b>	3	2	14	2	14	14	3	3	10	8	73
<b>Nov.</b>	2	0	15	2	31	27	4	1	17	7	105
<b>Dec.</b>	2	2	17	1	32	26	3	2	14	3	103
<b>Jan.</b>	2	2	33	7	69	66	14	6	34	8	241
<b>Total</b>	13	10	113	20	184	172	38	26	109	35	<b>720</b>

### C. Student Profile

In August 2008, a link to a Survey Monkey on line student profile questionnaire was provided to all ACE On line faculty teaching English ACE On Line. Faculty posted the link in their course forums with instructions for their students to complete the profile.

Thirty-three students completed the on line questionnaire between July and December 2008. Student participation includes representation from all ACE On line English courses. The greatest number of responses was from Chemistry, Biology, Communications, Core Math, Self Management and Self Direction students. The least came from Apprenticeship math, Technology math, Business math, Physics, and Computers. These numbers are very much in line with numbers registered in each course.

It should be noted that the number of students completing the participant profile is small. However, the collection of this data is an ongoing process. These initial results provide a beginning.

The results of the Survey Monkey on line questionnaire on student profile reveal that:

- More female students (71%) responded to the questionnaire than male (29%).
- The greatest percentage of students responding were from Southern Ontario (48.2%) followed by Northern Ontario (28%) and then Eastern Ontario (25.8%); there were no responses from Metro Toronto or Western Ontario.
- The majority of students were working full (32.3%) or part-time (29%); the minority of students were full time homemakers/caregivers (19.4%) unemployed (12.9%) or a fulltime student (6.5%). The student focus groups reflected these findings in that most students were working full or part time.
- The large majority of students (72.7%) were experiencing on line learning for the first time.
- 67% of students responding were between the ages of 21 and 40.
- The most common reasons people chose on line learning were because of their family responsibilities (55.2%) and their work schedule (51.7%) followed by distance from a college program (34.5%) and desire to learn on their own (31%). This was also true of students participating in focus groups.
- Most students indicated they were taking ACE On Line to complete requirements to qualify for a college program (83.9%) as opposed to being more independent (25.8%) getting a job (19.4%) or getting an ACE certificate (16.1%). Most students in focus groups were taking ACE On Line courses to qualify for college programs and better job prospects as a result of more postsecondary education.
- The most important element of ACE On Line that students thought would contribute to their success was being able to work at their own pace on their own schedule (87.9%); this was followed by the ability to navigate the course (60.6%); good computer skills (51.5%), and frequent communication with professor (51.5%).
- Only 18.2% of students responding saw communication with other students as an important element of being successful on line. Students in focus groups had varying ideas about the importance of interaction with other students.
- The most common reason given that a student might drop a course was not having enough time or too many commitments to complete a course; other reasons for dropping

a course might be 1) not liking the course, 2) difficulty with course, 3) poor computer skills or 4) no money for the Internet

## **D. Overall Student Impressions of ACE On Line**

### **English ACE On Line**

This section include student impressions of English On Line. Overall, students in English ACE On Line consistently indicate that their experience with ACE On line is a positive one in terms of the convenience and flexibility they get from on line learning, the quality of their professor interaction and feedback, and the quality of the course materials. The most challenging aspects of ACE On Line for students is making the transition from classroom learning to on line learning where they must work independently without the ongoing presence of a professor working with them face to face.

**Almost everyone (93%) completing the Survey Monkey evaluation and everyone from the focus groups would take another course - even those who experienced some technical difficulties.** When asked whether they would take another ACE On Line course, students responded enthusiastically. Students said that they would love to take another course, that they enjoyed the ones they took, that they learned a lot and had a great opportunity. Some students' comments indicated that they are telling others about ACE On Line. The comment "I would love to take several courses. Lots of interesting courses and the material is great so far!" is representative of the kind of feedback that students gave in answer to this question.

#### **i. What students like about ACE On Line**

Almost all the students responding in the Survey Monkey on line evaluation said they like the convenience, the flexibility and the independence that ACE On Line offers them. They said they have the ability to work at their own pace, on their own time in the convenience of their own homes. For some, it is a way they can work and take courses at the same time. For others, ACE On line means they can fit education in with their other commitments. Other comments indicate that students enjoy the courses, find them informative, easy to follow with high quality materials and professors that will support them.

Students participating in focus groups indicated similar reasons for choosing on line learning in terms of flexibility, convenience and independence. They said that it fits with their lifestyles. They indicated that ACE On line is a very positive experience for them. Many of these students indicated that they were working full time—some had two jobs and others had family responsibilities. They felt overall, their professors were accessible and great in providing them

with quick responses and positive encouragement. They saw ACE On Line as helping them to reach their goals and a prerequisite for a variety of postsecondary programs.

***Student comments about what is working well about ACE On Line:<sup>12</sup>***

“It’s very convenient. It works with my schedule and I can go at my own pace.”

“It has taught me a lot about how to manage my own time and set goals.”

“I can work at my own speed, in the comfort of my own home when I have the time available to me.”

“That I don’t have to sit in a classroom.”

“I work full time shift work so I like the flexibility of the online course...”

“I like the fact that the courses are offered completely on line. This allows for the busier households to follow their ambitions as well.”

“I live in a rural area and access to school is difficult. ACE On line is always available.

**ii. What students find most challenging about ACE On Line**

The most challenging aspect of ACE On Line cited by students in the Survey Monkey on line evaluation is having to work independently without a teacher present. Students commented that it is challenging not having a teacher right there to make sure they get the work done, to guide them and to answer their questions right away. Similarly, some students indicate they miss not having face-to-face communication with peers. Another common challenge that some students identified is around difficulty with and navigation of course materials especially at the beginning of the course. Examples include learning the content, figuring out what assignments mean, writing tests, having to read a lot, and sending in reports. Self-motivation to do the work independently and time management were also cited as challenges but to a lesser degree.

Students who take more than one course at a time indicated that it could be challenging in to fit the courses in with their other commitments.

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<sup>12</sup> Direct quotes from ACE On Line students via the Survey Money On Line Evaluation and student focus groups.

***Student comments about what is most challenging about ACE On Line:<sup>13</sup>***

“I find time management is challenging to me because I work, have a son and need to upgrade to pursue my nursing education.”

“Self discipline is the hardest part. Also not having the verbal interaction with other students.”

“The most challenging aspects of the ACE On line courses are trying to navigate through the material without the ‘in person direction’ of the professor. It is a catch 22. I need the on line course but it is more difficult to learn through e-mail and on line chatting.”

“[It’s difficult} trying to learn from a textbook.”

“Not being able to speak with my professor is somewhat hard, though I have tremendous support to help me.”

“Having a group project where members had to communicate would be a bonus.”

## **French Ace On Line**

La Cité students tend to be from other countries and near the Quebec border. Boréal students are from the northern part of Quebec.

The French project lead reported that eight of the students registered in English as a Second language never started. In addition, seven of the eighteen students who were active were there out of interest in learning a language rather than having the goal getting an ACE certificate or going on to postsecondary. Moreover, because there was no pre-test at that time, some of the students were at too low a benchmark to participate in the course. The project leader stressed the importance of having a pre-test in the future. He also concluded that clients who want to learn English as a second language for their own interest were not the clients that the ACE course was intended for. This course is a college prep course with writing rather than oral development as the focus. The course is free and the students there for interest only do not have to do the course. Some want to improve their oral skills. This issue is a contributing factor for those who do not complete.

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<sup>13</sup> Direct quotes from ACE On Line students via the Survey Money On Line Evaluation and student focus groups.

The project leader also reported that all sixteen students from La Cité enrolled in the English as a Second language course were already in Academic Upgrading programs at the college. Some students read the content and did formative activities but did not hand in summative assignments. He noted that the ACE course English as a Second Language is not required by La Cité for the ACE certificate but that Boréal encourages students to take it in spite of the situation.

## **E. Student Perspectives on English ACE On Line Support**

### **i. Positive instructional supports for learning**

**Almost all of students (91%) responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation stated that they were getting enough support from their professor.** When asked how professors support their learning, students consistently identified four main factors. These factors relate to 1) quickness of professor responses, 2) professor availability, 3) quality of the response in terms of both content and tone, and to a lesser degree 4) quantity of responses.

Students indicated that their professors responded to their questions quickly. Comments indicated that prompt responses from professors mean that students can carry on with their studies. Students also noted that their professors were available to them in terms of providing assistance when they needed it. In terms of the quality of professor responses, students commented on quality of the feedback they received as being “detailed,” “thorough,” “easy to understand,” “complete” and “informative.” Students described their professors as “approachable, friendly, helpful and encouraging.” Some students indicated that there was a lot of communication and checking in with them from professors.

These professor strategies to support student learning were also echoed in both the student focus groups. Students used words such as “amazing,” “awesome” and “phenomenal” to describe their ACE On Line professors. Students who participated in the focus groups stressed the importance of getting back quickly to students. One student said that it would be very frustrating not to get a timely response because she cannot continue her studies until she gets a response. Students in the focus groups also emphasized the importance of “words of encouragement” and positive feedback from professors. At the same time, they indicated the importance of being specific about what they need to work on. One student said the positive feedback she got was “awesome” and that it just made her “feel great.” Some students commented on the fact that their professors were always checking in and marked their tests right away. One student spoke about being away from school for a long time and how her professor was her “life line.” Another talked about how her professor always asks, “Does this help?” and is committed to helping her learn.

## **ii. Additional instructional supports needed for student learning**

There were very few comments from students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation or in focus groups about not getting enough support from professors. A few times students said that responses could have been quicker or professors could have shown more concern. Some students thought that the more students a professor had the greater the time it took to get answers to questions.

### *Interaction with other students*

Students generally did not have a common agreement about the importance of interaction with other students to their own learning. While some felt it was important and miss this kind of interaction, others said they were too busy with their own studies to engage with peers. However, some people felt that there were ways that students could work together to help each other. In fact, one person indicated that she works with four other people in her community taking ACE On line and that they help each other. She felt it was very important to have other people to talk to.

### *Participation in forums*

Student responses from the Survey Monkey on line evaluation indicate that forums were not used as well as they could have been to promote students' learning. The majority of students did not find that the forums contributed to their learning. Many students said they did not participate in forums. Some did not know what a forum was. Some students had negative comments about forums. One person wasn't sure he could trust the answers of other students. Another student thought that forum discussions were difficult because people were at different levels. However, some students indicated the usefulness of forums. They pointed out that someone else may ask a question that you have or that one can remember material better by discussing it. Other comments suggested that forums provide a way to answer questions as a group.

### *Increasing support for learning*

Students had some suggestions for increasing student support. One suggestion was to have more generalized discussions as to the course topics rather than the professor waiting to be asked. In this way, students who are fearful of initiating a question may feel more comfortable asking questions in a general discussion. Another suggestion was to have conference calls every few weeks to discuss topics and assignments. Another idea was to have group assignments. One person recommended having scheduled on line conversations in the chat room. One professor

was identified as doing this. Students also spoke about the need to get specific feedback on where they went wrong on tests.

Another area where some focus group students indicated they needed guidance was around organizing their time and setting some goals within course time lines. They felt some guidelines with respect to time lines would help to keep them focused. They said this was especially true for students who are taking more than one course.

***Student comments on support for their learning:<sup>14</sup>***

“[My professor] is wonderful. He makes himself available and he really cares. His questions are well thought out.”

“I have not run into any issues. I am very satisfied.[I was] surprised at the quality of replies.”

“My professor answers questions promptly and gives a lot of feedback.”

“I have not had to ask my professor anything yet. However, I have looked through our discussion forums and know that he or she will help us along the way as needed.”

“Any questions that I have asked thus far have not only been answered in a timely manner that is easily understood, but with a rapid response.”

“It’s not that I don’t get enough support, I think I learn better in a school setting. If I don’t pass the online courses before next September, I’m going to take summer school classes.

“At times it has been hard to get a timely response to my questions.”

**iii. Technical support**

**The majority (63%) of the students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation indicated that they had had no technical problems. Eighty percent of students with technical problems got their problems resolved.**

Students in focus groups indicated they sometimes experienced minor technical difficulties. Examples of technical difficulties included problems with the password, accessing videos and an exam that disappeared. They were mostly satisfied with the technical help they got from Embanet describing it as “really good” and “very courteous.” One person noted, “Orientation is

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<sup>14</sup> Direct quotes from ACE On Line students via the Survey Money On Line Evaluation and student focus groups.

so important. Outline how to address technical difficulties. People may have no experience with computers. It can be a nightmare.”

#### iv. Course Design, content and workload

##### *Course Design*

**The majority (70%) of students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation and most of those in focus groups indicated that they found navigating the course easy or very easy.**

However, those that had some problems indicated that an orientation to the course design and how to navigate the course would have been helpful. Some examples of the challenges were: understanding how to navigate overall, understanding the tool bars at the top of the page, understanding how to write tests, and finding a simple course outline. One student said that when he clicked on the wrong row to submit an answer on his test, he lost the whole test.

Comments indicated that navigational tips and an orientation before starting ACE On Line would have helped at the beginning especially for first time on line learners. These comments were also echoed in student focus groups. Comments from focus groups emphasized the need to orient students to tests and set expectations about tests in an on line environment.

**The majority (70%) of responses from students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation indicate that instructions were clear enough and that there were enough instructions (84%).** Comments indicate that most students had no problems with the instructions. However, some students would have liked an introduction to explain how the course worked, and where to find things. Students in focus groups also raised these issues.

Some areas that students participating in focus groups identified as challenging were the way Chemistry tests are set up, too much information in a module, and a disconnect between their textbook, web resources and what they are tested on. As a result, some people are not sure what to study for. Comments from students also indicated that sometimes they did not have enough time to write tests as in the case of Chemistry.

##### *Course Content and work load*

**40% of students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation found the course content just right and a further 37% found it difficult.** Seven percent found it very difficult and 10% found it not difficult.

**However, the large majority (89%) of students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation thought the workload was just right and 74% found the content and course resources useful.**

Students in focus groups commented while they found the course content “challenging” “thorough” and “intense,” they thought it was excellent and at the right level. At the same time, they indicated they were glad that the length of time to complete the course was extended to 22 weeks from 14 weeks. Some ideas around course workload were to indicate whether or not a course was “heavy” and provide guidance on the number of courses it is feasible to take at one time.

**Forty percent of students responding to the Survey Monkey on line evaluation spend 5-10 hours a week on their course(s) and a further 31% spend more than 10 hours on course work. 21% spend less than five hours a week on course work.**

## **F. Faculty Perspectives on ACE On Line**

This section provides an overview in terms of faculty perspectives mainly on English ACE On Line. This includes what is working well, challenges, suggested changes and thoughts on faculty support

### **i. What is working well about ACE On Line**

There were several areas that professors thought were working well about ACE On Line. Professors indicated that the flexibility and convenience of ACE On Line was not only working well for the students but was working well for themselves as well. The ability to reach students who otherwise would not have the opportunity was also cited as positive. Another area that professors indicated was working well was the ability to make initial contact with students and build rapport. Professors indicated they are working hard to contact students, connect with them and support them. The “readiness of the course” was also cited as something working well. Professors commented that modules, assignments and the web site were well put together.

### **ii. Instructional strategies and communication with students**

#### *Overall strategies*

Professors outlined the kinds of strategies that they used to motivate and work with students. They indicated that they give students positive feedback and check in with them continually by e-mail. One professor commented that, “Words are so important. Pleasantness needs to come out in the words. If I have to be critical, I am very careful. They [students] also have to feel you care.

I also respond to their questions very quickly.” Another professor stressed the importance of the classroom environment and the need to “support students emotionally.” Supporting students emotionally means encouraging them by telling them what is good, stressing that no question is stupid and always asking if the feedback provided has helped them. “They need to feel me and know that I am there,” she said. Another person said, “I give students feedback immediately. Students like it. I try to be positive in every assignment and on what they need to improve. Levels of participation increase [as a result].”

Some professors put news and messages in the forum every few days. They noted that students might not want to communicate publicly in view of other students but prefer to communicate privately with the professor. In their interaction with students, professors break things down for students giving them step-by-step explanations to solve problems.

Some professors post their pictures. They noted that some students were posting and changing their pictures too even if it was just a cartoon character. The comment was made that students have different needs for contact with other students.

Professors indicated that there are aspects of communicating and working with students that are challenging. One problem is making contact with students who never respond back even after repeated attempts to contact them. Some students who have registered never respond back. This challenge was also reported by the French project lead. Other times the professor may through persistence find out what the problem is and be able to solve it. One suggestion was to have a student contact at every college as a way that students can contact the professor. One professor said that when she e-mails a student on the system she has no record of that e-mail. She also noted that she has received assignments from students but didn't think she got them when she had. She recommends having a flagging system for unread mail and forum postings.

One identified challenge is working with students on line who do not have a lot of formal education. The students may do assignments without reading resources even if they are encouraged to do so. However, the professor indicating this challenge thought that the orientation course would “help turn this around.” She also felt that as ACE grows and gets more experience, some students will educate others.

Another challenge is explaining complex concepts such as math by e-mail. Professors suggested that a white board or word document would be helpful for this. Then a student could respond and get immediate feedback from the professor. They also recommended supplementing course materials with more video clips to help people with the areas that they struggle with in a course.

Another idea was to develop student biographies with the ACE On Line counsellor to help introduce students to each other. Another suggestion was to have students identify a buddy in the Learn to Learn course.

### *Group discussion*

Some professors initiate a group discussion in their courses. Others note that their courses may not lend themselves to discussion. Those that use discussion noted that often not many students come to the discussions. They believe that students do not participate in these discussions for several reasons. One reason is that students may feel vulnerable in front of other students or not trust other students. Other reasons may be that the discussion is not graded or that students are at different levels. One professor noted, “Students have little connection in the forum. Someone posted a question in the forum but most want to talk to me. It’s the nature of the course.” However, some professors noted that once one student does well in a discussion, others come. A suggestion was made to make discussion part of course grades.

Some professors thought that opening up a chat room with a white board to discuss areas that are problematic would be helpful. Centra was recommended as a way to encourage group communication in courses around common issues. Other felt that chats were not realistic because students are working at their own pace, are at different levels, and only have limited time to study. They preferred using a discussion board. Other suggestions were to have conference calls with students and develop a Wiki as more of the students are familiar with Wikis.

### **iii. Course design, content and workload**

Professors indicated the most important addition to deal with navigational issues, textbooks, and other issues would be a front page or home welcome page at the beginning of each course that answers these questions and promotes ACE On Line. The front page should include a note to students to call the ACE On Line counsellor if they are feeling overwhelmed about their work load.

An issue was identified with the drop box for student assignments. A message that indicated who has submitted assignments is needed so that professors do not have to go through each module and each assignment to find out.

In some courses, professors thought that modules were too long or that there were too many assignments. A suggestion was to keep all modules the same length and take out some assignments.

In terms of content, professors felt that in the future, the course content could be made more vibrant and more engaging with animation, video clips and even conference calls to engage students.

In terms of workload, professors felt that students need advice as to how many courses they should be taking at one time. There was an indication that the Learn to Learn course and ACE On Line counselling which will Go Live in April 2009 will work with students to address these kinds of issues.

#### **iv. Faculty support**

Professors indicated that they liked the face-to-face meetings that had been organized as a way they could share their experiences. They suggested that these meetings should be held twice a year. They also noted that they get answers to their questions by contacting the project leader. Communication with each other was cited as very important. Professors recommended that they have their own home page and their own on line discussion. Additional workshops and training on areas related to on line learning where professors need more knowledge were also recommended.

Professors would like to be able to make their own course changes on Embanet because when they go through Embanet it takes too long to make these changes. They thought it would be better not to be dependent on Embanet to make these changes. They would like training on how to make these changes.

A few professors indicated that that found the continuous intake a bit challenging. One professor said that she didn't realize that the intakes would be overlapping. She indicated that with students from five intakes it was difficult to get to know students and keep them all straight.

Professors would also like to know how a student gets enrolled and how to address students who need help with enrollment. In the future, the ACE On Line counsellor will play this role. They also found that students need to be properly assessed before they take a course through a pre-assessment.

Other information that professors would like is a better explanation of the billing system when they invoice and the policy on taking a break from logging on every day. For example, if a person is away for three days can they leave a message stating this with the students.

## **G. Project Leader Perspectives on ACE On Line**

### **English ACE On Line**

The project leaders indicated that the project had met and exceeded its stated goals and their own goals for the ongoing delivery phase. These included:

- stabilizing the implementation of the program
- testing out the broader program system
- making sure the curriculum worked
- validating the content and sequencing of the content
- identifying the cycle of demand
- getting stable funding
- promoting ACE On Line more within colleges

#### **i. Lessons from instructional test phase applied to ongoing delivery**

Project leaders spoke about what they had learned from the instructional test phase that they had applied to the ongoing delivery phase. As a result of the first phase, they were able to tweak content and sequencing of courses, difficulty level and enhance course quality. They also were able to emphasize the importance of interaction with students with faculty. Now, faculty are more comfortable engaging students in an online experience.

#### **ii. Major learnings from the ongoing delivery phase**

From the project leaders' point of view the ongoing delivery phase was able to provide answers to questions and provided several important learnings.

##### *Cycle of demand*

The project leaders were able to identify the cycle of demand for ACE On Line through the ongoing delivery period of this project. It is clear that the demand in January is large. In addition, as the fall progressed, the demand grew. The project leaders will continue to track the cycle of demand over the next year.

### *Scheduling*

Ongoing delivery initially started with a fourteen-week semester. This was changed to twenty-two weeks in November 2008. The learning was that twenty-two weeks was a better time period for a session than having to re-enroll students every fourteen weeks because they needed more time to complete their courses. The 22 week length is also a better fit with the way ACE is delivered at most colleges.

### *Textbooks*

Knowing how many textbooks were needed was a big problem. There was an issue with distribution and who contacts the CSC for textbooks because they were free. In some cases, no one contacted the CSC for textbooks and in other cases the student, professor and the registering college all contacted the CSC. In addition, the cost of textbooks and shipping far exceeded the original estimate due to increases in textbook prices as well as a much larger than anticipated demand.

### *Importance of ongoing communication and promotion*

The importance of ongoing communication about and promotion of the success of ACE On Line was identified as key. There were monthly bulletins and ongoing communication with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Because ACE On line is new, ongoing communication and promotion with college distance departments was identified as essential especially around promoting the excellence of the program.

Initially, communication went through *OntarioLearn*. Now the program needs its own communication system in the view of project managers.

### *Communication with Embanet*

The project leaders indicated that there needed to be better communication links with Embanet. There was sometimes a disconnect between what the project leader were asking for and what Embanet thought this meant. As a result, some items did not move forward such as the assessment piece which was completed by the CSC in November.

In connection with Embanet, there also needs to be an understanding of the big picture by all those involved in ACE On Line. This included how course content fits with Embanet and how it all works. This was cited as especially true for the *Learn to Learn* orientation course.

### *Professor engagement with students*

The importance of instructor initiation and persistence in communication with students was reconfirmed.

## **ii. Student support**

Overall, faculty support of students was identified as working well as was the handling of technical problems by Embanet.

Project leaders identified the Learn to Learn mandatory orientation course and the pre-assessment that is part of this course as critical pieces for student success. Project leaders indicated that the *Learn to Learn* course developed as an orientation to ACE On Line will address student feedback around orientation and go a long way to addressing the 6% of students that sign up but never start courses. The thirty hour course will be piloted starting in January 2009 and will Go Live in April 2009. In the future, there will be more upfront analysis of why students leave courses.

The project leaders also emphasized the need to have a policy around how many courses a person can sign up for at one time.

## **iii. Course implementation**

Overall, project leaders indicated that the course content, difficulty level and overall design were working well. Project leaders also noted that professors were continually refining courses and wanting to do better.

They indicated the need to improve the 1) front page of courses with more information around course navigation and 2) testing for Chemistry and Biology. They will also be looking at moving to a “textbookless” approach, and looking at ways to structure courses to make them more relevant and holistic. This includes adding audio and video clips to the courses.

## **iv. Project Partnerships**

Overall, the project leaders said that partnerships on the project had worked very well. The OntarioLearn partnership was cited as working well with Durham College being a good choice to host the project. They cited a lot of support from Durham College and the Executive Director of OntarioLearn. In addition, because French colleges are not part of Ontario Learn, the CSC instigated an alternative route through Embanet. The overall partnership with Embanet was described as positive with most technical difficulties being resolved. The project leaders noted that the work of the faculty had been incredible and that “everyone was pulling in the same direction.” The leaders also indicated that MTCU had been particularly supportive. They indicated that the Ministry had recognized and respected the developmental nature of the program.

**v. Areas for future work**

*Download of ACE On Line*

The project leaders explained that each college LBS program had the opportunity for a free download of ACE On Line curriculum to use in the classroom. By the end of January all but one college had taken advantage of the download. There was an initial lag since some managers may not be promoting ACE On Line or talking about it with their staff because they may see it as completion with classroom learning. However, faculty want the materials. The project leaders addressed this issue by sending information about the download to LBS coordinators. Now, all but one college has accessed the download.

*Timelines for college course publications*

Another area that is problematic is related to college timelines for course publication and notice from the Ministry about program funding. Colleges needed the information about a January start up in September. ACE On Line missed the cut off date because there had not been notification of further funding. Some colleges took a chance and published course dates anyway even though funding had not been confirmed. In the future the Ministry needs to know publication cycles for the purpose of funding notification.

*Communication, promotion and future partnerships*

There is a need to develop promotional materials for ACE On Line. The CSC is in the process of developing a web site specifically for ACE On Line and will also be developing a brochure. They noted that even with no formal advertising, there had been an overwhelming response to ACE On Line.

The CSC will continue to build support for ACE On Line within the college system. There will also be more focus on communicating student success stories.

In the future, the CSC will also establish relationships with action centres, social services and WSIB. It intends to enhance communication with college faculty and staff. The CSC is in the process of working with Ministry of Health staff at the Brockville Mental Health Centre to offer Self Management Self Direction with provincially incarcerated clients with mental health issues. The CSC may also explore relationships with new groups that can benefit from ACE On Line. This includes adults with disabilities, Aboriginal adults and the deaf community. The CSC would like figure out how to involve and meet the needs of new partners—the distance departments in colleges— better.

#### *Program policies*

The CSC is now in a better position to develop guidelines and program policies for ACE On Line around who can participate, what they can take, how they enrol and how to involve other colleges. The CSC will also establish the Learn to Learn program as a pre-requisite to any ACE On Line course. These guidelines will be developed based on good practice based on student participation.

#### *ACE On Line stability*

The project leaders reported that the role of the CSC has been established in managing ACE On Line and funding has been stabilized for this fiscal year. The project leaders stressed the importance of a centralized administration through the CSC to provide consistency in managing the overall program including hiring, supervising, and supporting faculty. The next step will be to explore establishing ACE On Line as its own site similar to other programs, examine the ACE On Line process as a system and put the Learn to Learn orientation course and pre-assessment in place.

### **French ACE On Line**

The French project lead reported that through the period of July to January there were several major learnings. One learning was that the ACE course English as a Second Language was ready to go and a great course.

The areas for future work are to 1) fine tune the program and 2) to promote ACE on Line in the community in order to find new students especially in rural areas where adults could really benefit from the program. The project lead indicated the importance of promotion along with the

challenges for the French program—there are only two colleges for the entire province as opposed to English where there are twenty-two. In the next phase, French Ace On line will focus on enrolling students in the courses not yet delivered. The belief is that once the program catches on and opens doors for smaller communities and those who have lost their jobs, the program will meet its mandate. It was acknowledged that this will take time but the strengths of the program—the flexibility and ability to work at one’s own pace will keep people coming back.

## **IV. Evaluator's Analysis**

This section provides an analysis of the project outcomes against stated project objectives and evaluation objectives and recommendations for the future.

As stated in the project proposal, The purpose of the ACE On Line project was to provide ACE training in both English and French to 300 (275 English and 25 French) learners across Ontario by the end of December 2008 as well as to develop the support mechanisms and materials required to promote learner success. The evaluation objectives were to determine:

- student enrollment, course enrollment, course completion, non completion rates
- a profile of ACE On Line learners in terms of age, gender, location, goals, etc.
- what supports students need to be successful
- what supports are working for students and what additional support are needed
- what instructional practices worked and what did not
- what is working well and how courses can be improved with respect to a) course navigation, 2) instructions and explanations, 3) interaction with the professor, 4) technical difficulties, 5) workload, and 6) tracking of students, etc.
- what supports do professors need to be successful; what supports are working and what additional supports are needed

### **A. The Achievement of Project Outcomes Against Stated Project Objectives**

#### **i. Student enrollment**

The project exceeded its stated objectives in terms of projected student enrollments especially for English ACE On Line. Four hundred and sixty two students enrolled in English ACE On Line courses with many students taking more than one course between July 2008 and January 2009. This represents almost a 60% increase over what was originally planned. French Ace On Line met its objective of 25 students even though not all the courses were ready for delivery in July. A

further testament to the success of the project was the additional funding provided by MTCU to accommodate the additional numbers. Completions and incompletes were included and analyzed in the next round of evaluations. Completions of 42 represent only preliminary statistics at the present time. It will be important to determine why students enroll but never get started, and why they drop out after completing only a few modules of a course. The ACE On Line assessment and orientation process beginning in April will provide answers to questions about why people drop out or never get started.

In addition, the CSC has made ACE On Line course materials free to all college LBS programs and has begun to create partnerships with new constituencies to use ACE On Line.

**ii. Develop support materials and mechanisms to support learner success**

The project exceeded this objective. The support materials and mechanisms to support learner success are comprehensive and complete. In addition, the project leadership has set an environment of continuous improvement and self-reflection. Support materials and mechanisms are enhanced on an ongoing basis as new information and feedback become available. The project leaders listen closely to feedback from faculty and students and are quick to act. Evidence of this fact is the amount of congruence among students, faculty and project leaders on common areas that are working well (instructor support, course content, design and workload) and areas that still need improvement (more orientation and program enhancements). For example, project leaders have been keenly aware of the need for strong student engagement and interaction with faculty ever since the test instructional phase. They have stressed this point with faculty. Faculty have addressed this need and it has paid off in student satisfaction.

Faculty are continuously looking for ways to connect with and engage students through program enhancements such as video clips, conference calls and more animation in courses to make them more interesting. Students also suggest some of these program enhancements as do the project leaders.

*New courses*

Through the project, ten new English courses were developed and further refined for ACE On Line. Project leaders, faculty and students all attest to their completeness, usefulness and high quality. All three groups indicate the materials are challenging but at about the right level. All groups indicate that the course design generally works well. In addition, technical difficulties for students have been received for the large majority. Areas that are of concern or problematic have been addressed quickly by faculty and project leaders or will be in the future.

For the French ACE On Line ten courses have been developed with the eleventh ready for the spring. The next step will be for the new courses to be available for student intake.

### *Learn to Learn course and ACE On Line counsellor*

Of particular interest is a comprehensive, mandatory 30-hour *Learn to Learn* course which addresses the need for on line orientation and student planning along with ensuring that students have the pre-requisite skills to succeed in ACE On Line. An ACE On Line counsellor will teach the course and be available to students for individual counselling. Unfortunately, due to bottlenecks at Embanet, the course and counselling did not Go Live during the ongoing delivery phase of the project. This orientation and online counselling will address the most common piece of feedback from students—the need for more upfront orientation to all aspects of ACE On Line.

### *CSC as central administrator*

The CSC has worked hard to communicate and promote ACE On Line and integrate it into the college system by working with both current and new partners. Its wide provincial access to the college sector has allowed for a consistent and comprehensive approach across the sector. The CSC as a central provincial body has proven its ability to manage a highly complex program across the province with both known and new partners and ensure high quality program development, a high level of instruction along with excellent student support and high student satisfaction.

### *Student satisfaction*

Students are consistent in their high level of satisfaction with ACE On Line. Their high satisfaction level can be measured by both their satisfaction of instructor support they are getting (91%) and whether they would take another ACE On Line course (93%). Their comments show that ACE On Line allows them to fit courses into their schedule in a way that face-to-face learning could not. Mostly, they feel encouraged by their instructors, enthusiastic about the materials and challenged by them. Importantly, students and faculty agree on the most effective strategies for student interaction. The most important support for students is the support of and interaction with their instructor followed by a need to understand how the course and on line learning works.

Students offer constructive suggestions to make the program better in the future. These suggestions are mostly consistent across student feedback—such as more ways students could work together as a group, other ideas for faculty interaction with students and more orientation to

the courses and on line learning. Their identification of areas for improvement is consistent what would expect in the early stages of ongoing delivery of a new program. These areas are also consistent with project leader and faculty feedback.

### *Profile of the ACE On Learning*

A profile of the English ACE On Learner is emerging through the project. This profile shows that the majority of learners tend to be female, employed full or part time, between the ages of 21 and 40, first time on line learners with the goal of taking ACE On Line to get into a postsecondary program. New data can be easily added to the present profile in the future

## **B. Recommendations**

The evaluation identifies recommendations in several areas for work in the future. These areas are outlined below.

### **i. Future Evaluation**

A critical area to test out, refine and evaluate going forward will be both the Learn to Learn Course with the pre-assessment and the counselling services for ACE On Line services. As part of this support to students, it will be key to continue to gather information on the ACE On Line student profile and why students leave courses. It will also be important to track students concerns through this process along with the impact that these services have on student retention.

Another important area for evaluation is the French ACE On Line. It will be especially important to get faculty and student feedback in the next stages. It is recommended that the French ACE On Line have a separate but complementary evaluation strategy to the English in the next phases of the program.

### **ii. Formalizing the program infrastructure**

A great deal of time and effort was spent on formalizing the program curricula, training faculty, and get the courses up and running. The task now will be to take ACE On Line from a project to a program. Focusing on program infrastructure will need to include the following activities: securing ongoing funding for the program that will meet the cycle of demand, confirming the CSC as the administrator of the program, formalizing ongoing evaluation procedures, integrating faculty professional development, and enhancing partnerships with distance departments within colleges. The development of program policies and guidelines will also be essential. Importantly,

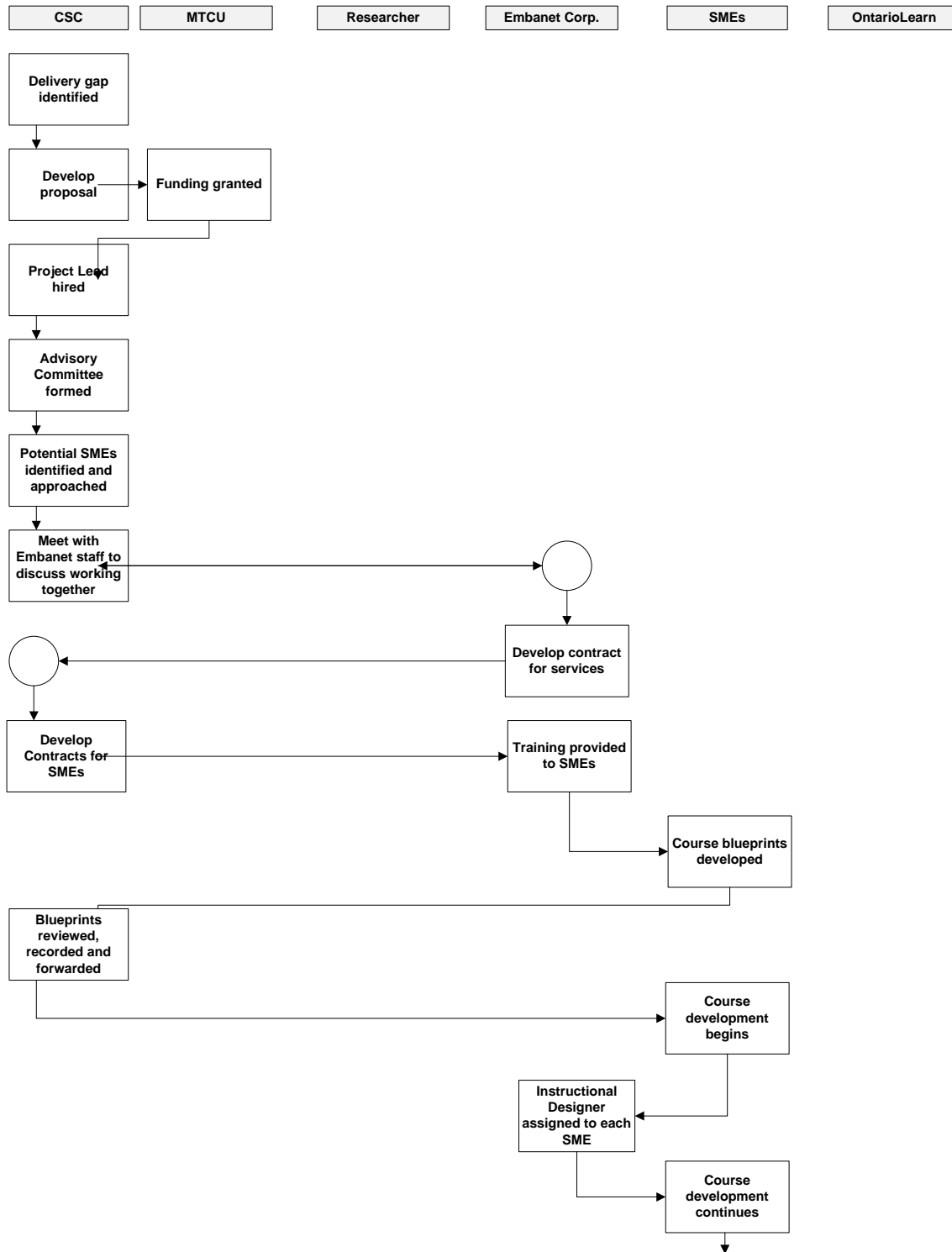
the CSC is developing promotional materials for ACE On Line. This will be critical for enhanced communication, promotion and buy in from new partners who can refer clients to ACE On Line.

**iii. Making program enhancements**

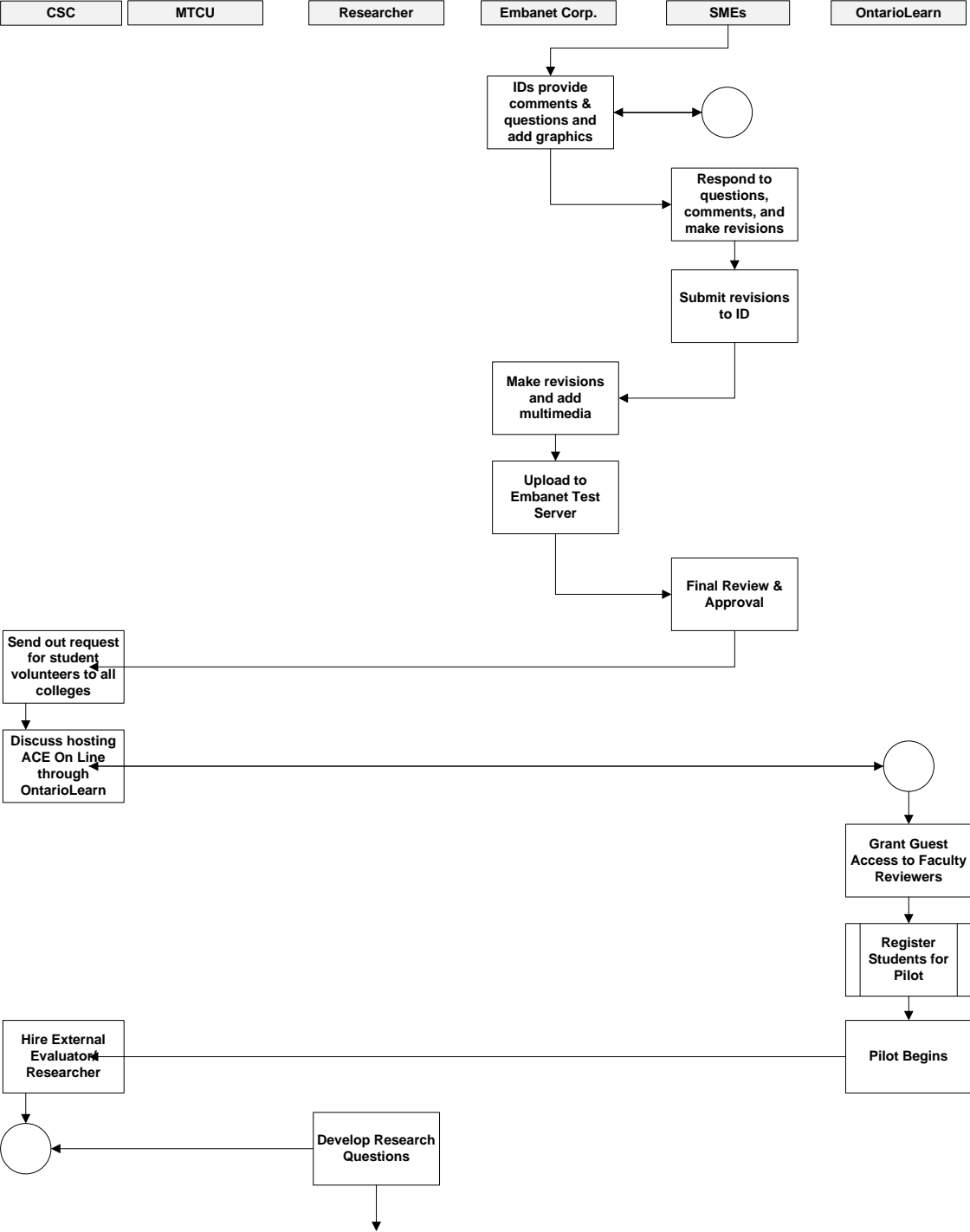
Feedback from all groups involved in the evaluation indicates there is room to improve the courses and make them even more relevant to students to help them learn. These enhancements include more audio and video clips, more animation and new ways to instruct and communicate with students, and have students work together. Forums are desperately underused. An important area for exploration might be new or different ways to use forums successfully. It would also be important to keep tracking instructor strategies that are most successful.

**Appendix 1: The Development of ACE On Line Flow Chart**

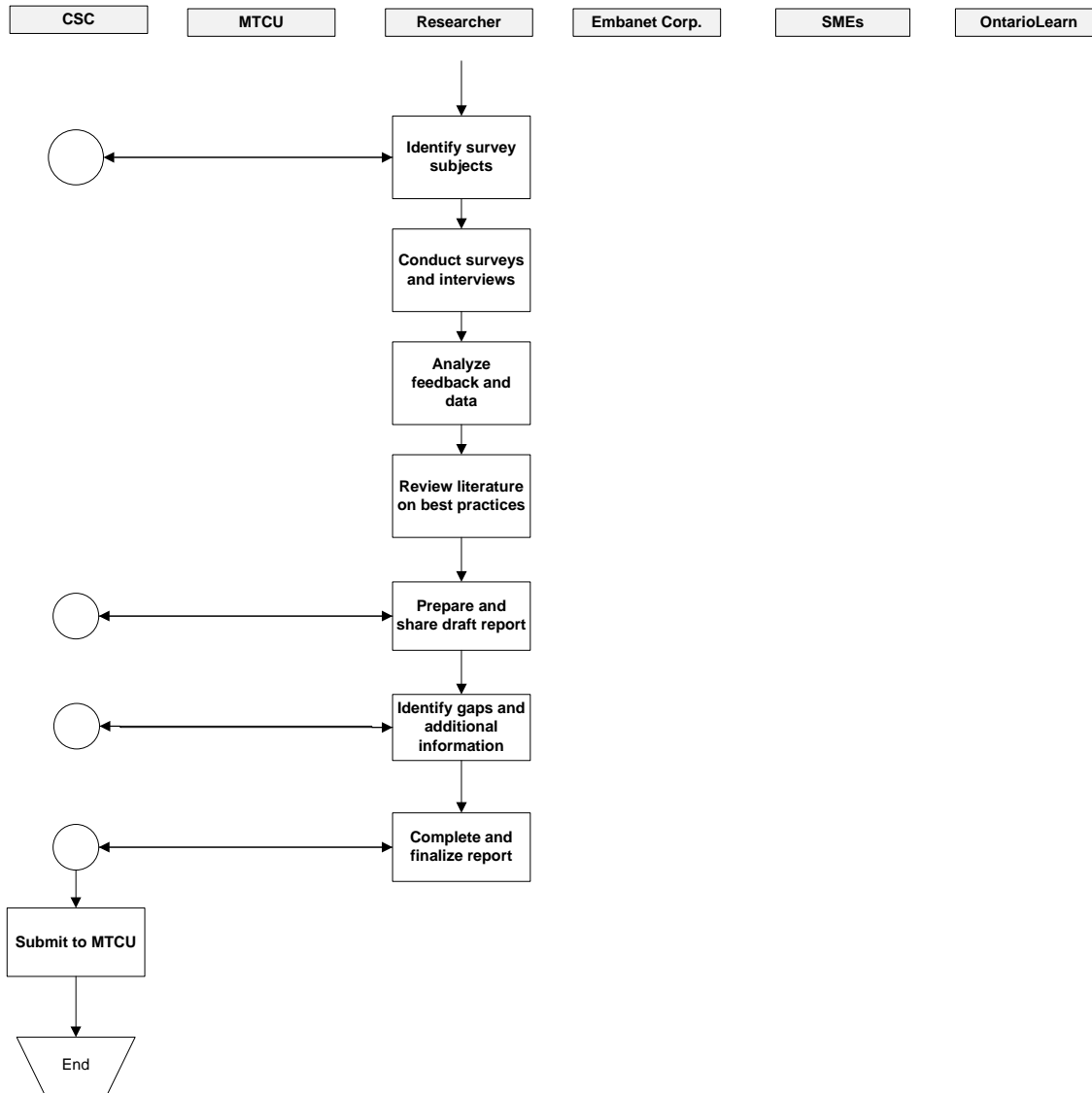
## The Development of ACE On Line



# The Development of ACE On Line p.2



## The Development of ACE On Line p.3



## **Appendix 2: Data Collection Tools**

# Participant Profile Survey Monkey On Line Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in ACE On Line. Since this is a new way to deliver ACE materials, we are interested in knowing a little bit about our students. The information you provide will also help us to identify the characteristics of successful students and help us to improve our material for future students. All responses are anonymous and confidential.

## 1. Which ACE On Line courses are you taking? (Choose all that apply.)

- Apprenticeship math
- Business math
- Core math
- Technology math
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Self Management/Self Direction
- Communications
- Computers

## 2. I am:

- Male
- Female

## 3. My age is:

- Under 20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- Over 50

**4. What part of Ontario do you live in?**

- Northern Ontario
- Southern Ontario
- Western Ontario
- Eastern Ontario
- Metro Toronto

**5. I am:**

- employed full time
- employee part time
- unemployed
- a full time homemaker/caregiver
- a full time student

Other (please specify)

**6. Is this your first on line learning experience?**

- Yes
- No

**7. If you answered NO to the previous question, how many online courses have you taken before ACE On Line**

- 1 other online course
- 2 or 3 on line courses
- more than 3 online courses

**8. I chose ACE On Line courses for the following reasons:  
(Choose all that apply.)**

- family responsibilities
- work schedule
- distance from a college program

- I like learning on my own

Other (please specify)

**9. My reason for taking an ACE On Line are:  
( Choose all that apply.)**

- to complete the requirements to qualify for a college program
- to get an ACE certificate
- to get a job
- to be more independent

Other (please specify)

**10. The elements of ACE On Line that will contribute to my success are:  
(Choose all that apply.)**

- frequent communication with my instructor
- frequent communication with other students in my course
- good computer skills
- the ability to work at my own pace and on my own schedule
- the ability to navigate around the course easily

Other (please specify)

**11. What would be the main reason(s)that you might drop this course?**

What would be the main reason(s)that you might drop this course?

Thank you for completing this brief survey. Please click the Done button to submit your response.

Done

## Student Feedback Survey Monkey On Line Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in the ACE On Line Pilot. Please complete this evaluation as fully as possible. Since ACE on Line is at the pilot stage, your feedback will be important in helping us make improvements to the courses for other students. Your responses to this evaluation is confidential.

### 1. Please indicate which ACE on-line course(s) you are taking. (Choose all that apply.)

- Core math
- Business math
- Technology math
- Apprenticeship math
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Self Management/Self Direction
- Communications
- Computers

### 2. What do you like best about your ACE On Line course(s)?

### 3. What are the most challenging aspects of your ACE On Line course(s)?

### 4. Approximately how many hours a week do you spend on course work?

- less than 5 hours       5-10 hours       More than 10 hours

### 5. How appropriate is the course workload?

- Too light
- Just right
- Too heavy

**6. Are you getting enough support in your learning from your instructor?**

Yes

No

**7. If you answered yes to question 6, how does your instructor support your learning?**

**8. If you answered no to question 6, how could your instructor support your learning better?**

**9. How well do the forums contribute to your learning?**

1 Not well at all     2     3     4     5 Very well

Comments:

**10. How easy was it to navigate around the course layout?  
(1 means not easy at all and 5 means very easy.)**

1     2     3     4     5 very easy

**11. What suggestions do you have to for making navigation easier?**

**12. How clear were course instructions?**

1 not clear     2     3     4     5 very clear

**13. Were there enough instructions?**

Yes

No

Comments:

**14. How difficult was the course content?**

- 1 not difficult  2  3  4  5 very difficult

**15. How useful was the course content?**

- 1 not useful  2  3  4  5 very useful

**16. How useful were the course resources such as the textbook and suggested web sites?**

- 1 not useful  2  3  4  5 very useful

Comments:

**17. Did you have any technical problems during the course?**

- Yes  No

**18. Were any technical problems resolved to your satisfaction?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Not applicable

**19. Would you take another ACE On Line course?**

- Yes  No

Thank you for your help evaluating the ACE On Line pilot.  
Please click the done button to submit your survey.

Done

## **Focus Group/Interview Questions for Faculty/SMEs/Counsellor for the ACE On Line Phase 2**

### **Introductions:**

What course are you responsible for in the ACE on Line pilot?

What stands out the most for you in terms of your experience so far in teaching this course?

### **Key Questions:**

Overall, what aspects of teaching ACE on line are working really well?

#### **Prompts:**

- building a relationship with, connecting with and supporting students
- connecting students with each other
- course content (difficulty, design, etc.)
- technical issues for students
- course navigation
- testing
- student work load
- student assessment
- support for SMEs
- resources

Overall, what aspects of teaching ACE on line are the most challenging?

#### **Prompts:**

- building a relationship with, connecting with and supporting students
- course content (difficulty, design, etc.)
- technical issues for students
- course instructions
- course navigation
- testing
- student work load
- student assessment
- support for SMEs

What suggestions would you make for improving the ACE on line experience for students? for yourself as an instructor?

What are some promising practices that can be further developed and shared from your experience?

What have you noticed are the characteristics of students

- who do well with ACE on line?
- who drop out?

## Focus Questions for Participating Students for the ACE On Line Phase 2

### Introductions:

What course are you taking?

Why did you choose ACE On Line over classroom learning?

What are your goals in taking ACE On Line?

### Key Questions:

Overall, what has worked/is working well for you in your ACE online course?

### Prompts:

- Interaction and support from instructor
- connecting with other students
- course content (difficulty, design, etc.)
- technical issues
- course navigation
- testing
- student work load
- student assessment
- flexibility of on line learning

Overall, what aspects of your ACE on line course are the most challenging?

### Prompts:

- Interaction and support from instructor
- connecting with other students
- course content (difficulty, design, etc.)
- technical issues
- course navigation
- testing
- student work load
- student assessment
- flexibility of on line learning

What suggestions would you make for improving the ACE on line experience for students?

## Interview Questions for Project Leaders

### Introductions:

1. What were the goals of the pilot phase?
2. What were the overall learnings from Phase 2?

### Key Questions:

3. How did you promote ACE on line during Phase 2? What worked well and what needs to be improved?
4. How well did the counselling and assessment addition work? Would you do anything different for another time?
5. What did you learn from the instructional test phase and as a result what changes did you make in Phase 2?
6. How well did the following aspects of the pilot phase 2 work? What worked well and what needs to be improved?

### Prompts:

- interaction and support from instructor for student success
  - how the instructor was able to connect students through course components like the forum
  - course content (difficulty, design, etc.)
  - technical issues
  - course navigation
  - testing
  - student work load
  - support for SMEs
  - building support for ACE on line across colleges in Ontario
  - working with partners on the project
7. What did you learn about the characteristics of students who are attracted to ACE on line? What characteristics have lead to their success? Why have some dropped out?
  8. What would you do differently for a full roll out of ACE on line based on everything you know now?
  9. What are the next steps for ACE on line? What are the opportunities and what are the remaining challenges?