

MASTER OF EDUCATION THESIS DEFENSE

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Thurs. August 18, 2011, 1:00 p.m.

Location: Robertson Library, Room 209

Student Perceptions of an English Academic Preparation Program: To What Extent Are International Students Supported?

ABSTRACT

The University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) English Academic Preparation (EAP) program is designed to assist non-native English speakers (NNES) upgrade their English proficiency levels through language intensive classes. Successful completion of the UPEI EAP program gives students unconditional admission to pursue an undergraduate degree at UPEI. This program has enabled the UPEI to admit more individuals than traditional admission requirements requiring applicants to have a designated language proficiency score would have allowed. This M.Ed thesis set out to establish whether the UPEI EAP program is adequately preparing students for academic study at UPEI and positively contributing to students' overall experience at the university. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed in this exploratory case study. Qualitative methods were utilized to conduct a one-on-one interview with the EAP Program Coordinator, review the program's original business proposal, and conduct student focus groups. While, quantitative methods were used to review EAP course evaluations completed between 2004 and 2008. Four themes emerged from the data: EAP environment, level of difficulty of EAP courses, student satisfaction, and program policies. The results indicated that the UPEI EAP program is successful at creating an environment that fosters linguistic, social, cultural, and personal growth and providing a foundation for EAP students to grow as learners. The EAP program could benefit from re-assessing the level of difficulty of its courses to ensure that they are at par with first year credit-based courses and meeting students' learning needs and reviewing program policies regarding student conduct, course expectations and the current admissions policy to further enhance program accountability.