

**Chancellor's Chair for Teaching Excellence
2012 Recipient**

**Longitudinal Knowledge retention in traditional and
accelerated learning environment among freshman and
senior undergraduates.**



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Accelerated university courses are increasingly popular for students, professors and administrators. Students are attracted to such courses because they allow them to pursue higher education in the midst of competing career and personal demands placed on them. University administrators consider accelerated course delivery as a modality in attracting their own students while attracting quality students from other institutions. Previous research has reported that those who enroll in accelerated courses include both traditional and age mature students who often demonstrate enhanced qualities including superior motivation, excellent study habits, and exceptional time management skills (Schrum and Hong, 2002; Waschull, 2005). A recent investigation by Milligan (2010) demonstrated higher academic grades and greater self-esteem in physical therapy students following the completion of an accelerated course compared to peers who completed the same course content using a traditional and longer course delivery period. These results support the notion that accelerated courses could contribute to innovative approaches to course delivery through either stand alone compressed courses (<http://www.brocku.ca/news/11257>) or compressed courses sequentially within a term (<http://cupwire.ca/articles/49774>) in Canadian postsecondary institutions.

Despite the benefits associated with compressed courses; it is equally as important that students retain content over time. Comparative analysis of traditional versus compressed courses have reported conflicting results regarding retention of information over short and long term (Vreven & McFadden, 2007; Barabasz, 2006; Van Scyoc & Gleason, 1993). Furthermore, despite evidence suggesting retention benefits from compressed courses, no evidence is available outlining which types of accelerated courses are more efficacious. Factors such as course level (i.e., year 1-4 undergraduate, graduate) and concentration (i.e., major versus non-major) are at least a few considerations when determining whether the benefits of accelerated learning jeopardize or enhance knowledge retention of course content. A greater understanding of these factors will allow university stakeholders and administrators evidence-based knowledge in determining whether accelerated courses should be pursued to a greater extent in the postsecondary education environment.