Advances in technology have resulted in a shift to more distributed learning, as universities, including the University of Regina, are increasing access to programs through availability of online distance education. Harasim et al. (1998) argued that instructional technology and networked learning represented change on a similar magnitude as the invention of the printing press. Participation in online distance education implies that learners will develop new learning competencies and be exposed to a range of different or unfamiliar learning experiences. In the 2007 fall semester, Dr. Rosetta Khalideen and Dr. Brian Campbell conducted a study to explore the perceptions and experiences of adult learners in online distance education courses at the University of Regina. The study was supported by the University of Regina, Centre for Teaching and Learning Scholars Fund.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was to examine adult learners’ attitudes and perceptions about distance education and instructional technology. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Why do adult learners take online courses?
2. How do adult learners experience these courses?
3. What models of distance delivery and support work better for adult learners?

Findings of this investigation will be used to inform our practices at the University of Regina and to help develop refinements to the effectiveness of our online courses.

Literature

There is a large amount of research that compares distance education to classroom instruction. Swan (2003) conducted a literature review on learning effectiveness of asynchronous learning environments. Swan concluded that the findings from research about online learning effectiveness are generally equivalent to those resulting from face-to-face instruction. Swan noted that the research suggested the unique characteristics of online learning may afford and constrain particular kinds of learning. Further, based on the literature review, Swan summarized certain strategies to enhance the effectiveness of online learning. These strategies were clustered in three areas: (a) Interaction with course interface and content, (b) interaction with instructors, and (c) interaction with classmates and vicarious interaction. Olson and Wisher (2002) did a comparative analysis of 47 evaluation reports for web-based courses. The majority of the reports compared
groups of students taking the same course face-to-face or online. Olson and Wisher concluded that the web-based courses appeared to be at least as effective as the classroom courses.

Conrad (2002) looked at the experiences of adults starting an online course. She noted that most adults were anxious when starting a new online course. She found that if the instructor established the right climate for learning, and provided learners access to the course materials prior to course start, it greatly reduced student’s anxiety. Hannay and Newvine (2006) conducted a survey of online students and found they strongly preferred distance education because it afforded them a high quality, flexible learning environment. Tyler-Smith (2008) examined issues that impacted attrition of first-time adult learners in online distance education. He argued that first-time elearners experience cognitive overload in the beginning stages of an online course, and suggested that this contributed to high drop out rates. Rivera (2008) researched what she termed as powerful learning experiences in an online learning environment. She noted that among other components, social interaction and emotions might be core elements of powerful learning experiences. According to Moore and Kearsley (2005), the research regarding distance education effectiveness clearly demonstrates that instruction at a distance can be as effective as classroom instruction, and that the absence of face-to-face contact is not in itself detrimental to the learning process. Further, based on their assessment of research in this area, they concluded that the environment in which learning occurs and the technology used, are not predictors of achievement.

A number of studies have examined persistence. Castles (2004) conducted a study to identify factors contributing to adult learner persistence at the Open University of the United Kingdom. She identified three key factors, including support, ability to juggle roles, and smooth interaction with the institution and tutors. Likewise, Stanford-Bowers (2008) examined perceptions of faculty, administrators, and students regarding persistence in online classes. She found that all stakeholders recognize that online learning is an evolving process. Stanford-Bowers concluded that administrators and faculty held an institutional perspective, while students held personal perspectives. She noted that when course activities and requirements conflict with convenience, students tend to drop out. Several studies identify differences between generations of students (Howe and Strauss 2003; Taylor 2006). In a study conducted at North Arizona University, Garcia and Qin (2007) found that while younger students perceived possession of stronger technological abilities, all age groups ascribed to traditional pedagogical beliefs. Kemp (2002) found that life events, external commitments, and resiliency were significantly correlated with persistence of adult learners in distance education. Bird and Morgan (2003), in their study of adults contemplating university study at a distance, concluded that more effective information provision, guidance and pre-entry orientation will improve student satisfaction and retention.

The issue of quality standards for online learning is an increasing field of research. Hutti (2007) reported on a state-wide quality study conducted for the Illinois Community College system. The Illinois study built on a very extensive study for the Maryland Post Secondary system, called Quality Matters (http://www.qualitymatters.org/index.htm). Hutti found that students, staff and faculty concurred on the most important quality benchmarks for online learning. Hutti found that technology related benchmarks tended to be considered the most important. A study by Moore and Kearsley (2005), based on their experience and assessment of research contended the three major causes of student dissatisfaction with online distance education course are: (a) bad course design and teacher incompetence, (b) wrong expectations on the part of students, and (c) poor technology or inability to use the technology properly.
**Results**

Students in the 2007 fall semester University of Regina online distance education courses were invited by course e-mail to participate in an online questionnaire. A URL was provided for each student to access the survey on the Internet. A total of 121 students (26%) responded. Results of the survey were coded in such a way that the identity of students or particular courses was not attached to the final data.

**Demographics and Respondent Characteristics**

The vast majority of survey respondents (85%) were female and ninety-five percent reported English as their first language. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were full-time students and seventy-nine percent indicated they were employed. Of those employed, thirty-eight percent indicated they worked full-time and forty percent indicated they worked part-time. A total of 8% of the respondents indicated they were aboriginal, and 7% indicated they were Métis.

The majority (89%) were undergraduate students; forty-six percent were first and second year students, and 47% were third and fourth year students. Nine percent of the respondents were graduate students. The respondents were dispersed among primarily three academic faculties: 34% in Arts, 34% in Social Work, 25% in Education, with 8% in other or the no response category. Most (64%) indicated they had never taken an online course from the University of Regina previously, and seventy-seven percent of the respondents indicated they had never taken an online course from another institution.

**Reasons for Taking an Online Course**

Table 1 summarizes the responses to the survey question about reasons for taking an online course. Based on this data, it is apparent that there is a range of motivations associated with the student’s decision to take online courses as the mode of study. Most (67%) of the students valued the flexibility afforded by online learning and many (50%) appreciated the provision of access that distance education affords, along with time and cost savings. A number of pragmatic reasons such as filling a required course, or taking the only course available further demonstrate the diverse reasons that contribute to student motivation for enrolling in online courses.

Table 1. Reasons for Taking an Online Course(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The course allows me flexibility in my schedule</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course is required</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can stay in my community and still access the course</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to learn online</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It saves me time and money</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>course is an elective</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there are no other courses available at this time</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Satisfaction Levels

Table 2 describes the level of satisfaction reported by the survey respondents regarding their experience as an online learner. Based on this data, 78% of the respondents were satisfied with their online course experience. Comments from those students expressing dissatisfaction included concerns about excessive readings, high workload, problems keyboarding, large class size, completion of group projects, preference for face-to-face interaction, dry content, and Microsoft Vista software compatibility issues.

Table 2. How would you describe your experiences taking and online course(s)? (n=121)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly satisfactory</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively unsatisfactory</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly unsatisfactory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are a sample of student comments related to satisfaction:

*It is stressful to be an adult learner from a non-academic background but I can’t imagine another way to acquire knowledge and still work fulltime.*

*I am a visual learner and prefer the classroom.*

*I am a single parent, taking online classes allows me to get the classes I need.*

Correlations Regarding Satisfaction Levels and Other Factors

Levels of student satisfaction are further analyzed by correlating satisfaction levels with other factors, including age of participants, year of studies, faculty, and program. Figure 1 illustrates levels of satisfaction by age of the students. Younger students, 19 years old and under reported lower satisfaction levels; 42% were unsatisfied. In contrast, 86% of respondents 40 years of age and over were satisfied.

Figure 1. Levels of satisfaction by age
Figure 2 illustrates levels of student satisfaction by year of study. Ninety-two percent of fourth year students report satisfaction with online learning course experience. In contrast, 70% of first year students indicate that they are satisfied. This data indicates that satisfaction with online study tends to increase as students advance in their years of study.

Figure 2. Levels of satisfaction by year of study (undergraduate)

Figure 3 presents the levels of student satisfaction according to the Academic Faculty that the student attends. Levels of satisfaction in Social Work were the highest (88%), followed by Arts (78%), and Education (67%).

Figure 3. Levels of satisfaction by faculty (n=112)

In addition to comparisons by Academic Faculty, levels of student satisfaction were correlated with the four programs of study offered in the online format. Student satisfaction was consistently high in the range of 80 to 85% in all of the programs.
Figure 4. Levels of satisfaction by program

![Bar chart showing levels of satisfaction by program](image)

**Models and Interest in More Online Courses**

Most respondents (61%) indicated a preference for fully online distance education, thirty-two percent preferred a blend of face-to-face/online, twenty-nine percent favoured a televised model, and nineteen percent preferred blended televised/online. The vast majority (93%) responded that the University of Regina should offer more online courses.

Figure 5 illustrates respondents preferred models of course delivery according to their program of study. Those students in the Adult Education program expressed a strong preference for online courses. Likewise students in the Justice Studies program, and Arts indicated a preference for mainly online courses. Students in Social Work favored use of a variety of modes, including a blended approach. Interestingly, this is also the approach that the current Dean of Social Work advocates for distance education.

Figure 5. Preferred models of delivery by program

![Bar chart showing preferred models of delivery by program](image)
Online Learning Obstacles and Persistence

As table 3 illustrates, time pressures, frustration with excessive content, lack of human content, and lack of courses to complete a program were ranked highly as major obstacles. Lack of high-speed network connection and lack of computer equipment received low ranking as barriers.

Table 3. Major Obstacles as an Online Learner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have time pressures (lack of time to study)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get frustrated with excessive course content</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I miss the human contact</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack courses necessary to complete my program</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack motivation</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get frustrated with technology</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have feeling of isolation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack access to high speed Internet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack computer skills</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I lack computer equipment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors related to persistence, as outlined in table 4, correlate closely to those outlined in the literature related to studies of persistence. Flexibility, access to courses, and a preference for online learning contribute to student retention. The following comment from a participant illustrates the importance placed on access and flexibility:

*I appreciate the flexibility and it is a great way to learn and meet others. It is challenging but very enjoyable. For people like me who live three hours from the city, this guarantees me the opportunity of education without having to relocate. It is absolutely wonderful and there should be way more.*

Most of the students expressed a desire for more online courses and some (17%) indicated the online course as scheduled was their only option as illustrated by this response:

*For the program I am taking, there is only one offering per term. It makes it difficult to get through the program time wise and to have the right course offered when a person schedule allows…and getting the perquisite courses done…quite a juggling act.*

*I like the opportunity to take more online courses that suit my needs as an Arts student. In addition I like the option to choose between online and face-to-face.*

*It is the way of the future. A way for students outside of Regina to complete courses.*
Table 4. Factors Related to Persistence

What influences you to continue in your online course?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What influences you</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can work at the course at my own convenience</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need the course to complete my program</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can access the course from wherever I am</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like working at my own pace</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like learning online</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find the online instructor(s) helpful</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was my only option</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive assistance from colleagues and family</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I receive technical support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attitudes Regarding Assignments and Learning Assessment

The majority of respondents (87%) indicated they would describe the assignments for their online courses as satisfactory. The following are a sample of comments from students that expressed concern regarding the assessment process:

...way too many assignments for a 100 level class. I find it more demanding than a 300 or 400 level course.

Way too complicated for a 200 level course...very tight timelines. Group work is a real challenge; trying to get together online with six other people that have conflicting schedules...flipping nightmare!

The online discussion groups take far too much of my time. They take more time than going to a class at the university...I feel like I have to be constantly checking the discussion forum.

Sometimes the expectations for group work are too much in a virtual environment...the collaborative software that takes longer to learn than the actual group project.

Survey question 26 asked the students which form of assignment worked best. Only 13% of the respondents favoured group work. Essays were favored by 53%, tests, quizzes and papers were ranked favorably by 40-45% of the students.

Completion of an Entire Program Online

In order to gauge the demand for full online programs, survey question 27 asked, “if it were available, would you take an entire program online?” Fifty-three percent of the respondents indicated they would not wish to take their entire program online. They offered a variety of reasons, including: need for human and classroom interaction, concerns about excessive workload,
lack of self-motivation to work independently online, preference for campus interaction, preference for a blended approach, desire for face-to-face group discussion and debate.

Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicated they would do an entire program online. They offered a range of reasons, including: convenience, accessibility, flexibility, ability to work and study, cost savings, and reduced travel time. The following comments by several of the participants are illustrative:

*Distance from campus is not a factor for me; I prefer the classroom because it fits best with my learning style. I prefer, or a blended approach for a program to balance flexibility and face-to-face interaction. If distance was an issue, or courses were not available to suit my schedule, I would definitely take an entire program online.*

*I would like to take part of my MSW online due to time and distance constraints, but since I am an older student and this is an opportunity to experience learning at the graduate level I do not want to abandon face to face interaction. The combination of online courses with face to face courses works well, especially in the winter months.*

*Provides an opportunity for adult learners who are part-time students or those outside of commuting distance to participate: greater diversity of learners online which increases the learning for everyone. Changing demographics in the workforce has created demand for employee development and online programs are able to meet this need.*

Figure 6. Desire to take a complete online program compared with respondents’ distance to campus

Figure 6 shows the correlation of student responses related to desire to complete a full program relative to distance from campus. In terms of distance to campus and desire to take a complete online program, students were evenly split. Those students living 50 km or over were not more in favour of taking a complete online program if it were available.
Figure 7. Desire for complete online program compared with respondents’ age

Figure 7 illustrates age of respondents correlated with desire to complete a full program online. The younger students (19 years or less) were least in favour of taking a complete program online. The 30 to 39 year olds followed by the 25 to 29 year olds had the highest percentage of respondents in favour of taking a complete online program if it were available. This may make sense in terms of where they are in their lives. That is, this age group is probably least available to attend classes. Students at this age are invariably working full time and tending to child rearing responsibilities.

Figure 8. Age of respondents compared with their distance to the campus

Figure 8 shows the age of respondents relative to the distance they live from campus. Students aged 19 to 39 years old were evenly distributed regarding distance. The majority of students 40 and over lived in excess of 50km from campus.

Suggestions for Improving Online Courses

Survey question 28 asked respondents to offer suggestions for improving our online courses. A total of 69 responses offered a variety of suggestions for improvements. These suggestions for improvements are clustered and summarized in table 5.
Table 5. Summary of Students Suggestions for Improvement of Online Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What suggestions would you offer for improving online courses?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer more online courses</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assure good course design</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assure assessment is fair and assignments are clearly communicated</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the workload and quantity of readings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less emphasis on group work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide adequate learner support/orientation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a variety of media</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quicker/more frequent instructor feedback</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less emphasis on the discussion forums</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Three research questions guided the study: (a) why do adults take online courses? (b) How do adults experience these courses? (c) What models of distance delivery and support work best for adult learners?

The sample in this study consisted of a blend of students ranging from on-campus to distance education students in a cross-section of academic disciplines and ages. Most (74%) were first-time online learners. There are a number of very encouraging results; only 5% of the respondents described their experience taking online courses as unsatisfactory. Further, 93% of the respondents indicated that the University of Regina should offer more online courses.

The first research question examined why students selected online learning. Our study found a wide range of motivations for online study. Clearly, the flexibility and convenience afforded by online learning appeals to most (67%) students. It is likely that on-campus traditional students also appreciated this flexibility in scheduling, however the distance learners (50%) also responded favorably to the provision of courses in their communities. Hannay and Newvine (2006) conducted a similar survey of 217 online students at Troy University in Florida. Similar to our study at the University of Regina, they found that online learning was more appealing to the older students as compared to the traditional 18 to 21 year-old on-campus students. Given the limited number and range of online courses available, the on-campus students represent a very small portion of the campus population.

As previously indicated, the results of this study show a high level of general satisfaction with online learning. Although generally satisfied, the students offer some very insightful suggestions for improvement. Several themes for suggested course improvement emerged from the data. The following are some of the key issues identified by the online students that have pedagogical implications: (a) excessive workload or quantity/quality of course reading, (b) the dynamics of group work, (c) assurance of high quality course design, (d) desire for more human contact or interaction. Muilenberg and Burge (2005) conducted a study of student perceptions of barriers to online learning. They identified technical problems and cost issues as primary
problems; online students at the University of Regina did not identify technology or lack of Internet access, or cost as critical issues.

The majority of our respondents (77%) were first-time online learners. Our data indicates that satisfaction with online study tends to increase as students advance in their years of study. Students with more online learning experience might be more familiar and comfortable with this method of instruction and perhaps have greater depth of experience to offer a more sophisticated analysis. According to Tyler-Smith (2006) first-time online learners are confronted with a range of unfamiliar, complex and multiple learning tasks, which contribute to a sense of anxiety in the early stages of the course. He maintains that cognitive overload is a contributor to high dropout rates. Tyler-Smith suggests that due to the variety of variables causing learner anxiety, there are few readily available solutions to alleviate this problem. Garcia and Qin (2007) investigated attitude differences between older and younger students enrolled in hybrid courses at Northern Arizona University. They concluded that while younger and older learners differ in terms of their comfort levels with technological learning, no generational differences existed in student perceptions regarding effective pedagogical practices. Our study did not reveal any major generational differences related to students technological abilities or attitudes regarding pedagogy.

Our final research question examined the student’s preferred models of distance education. The data reveals that most respondents (61%) preferred fully online distance education, thirty-two percent preferred a blend of face-to face/online, twenty-nine percent favoured a televised model, and nineteen percent preferred blended televised/online. The convenience and flexibility enabled by online courses is important to many of students; this must be an important consideration as when we develop future distance education courses. Those students in the Social Work program favoured a blended or hybrid approach, whereas students in the Adult Education indicated a strong preference for online model of distance learning, likewise students in Arts tended to favour the online model. The study data reveals that student preference for distance education modes is contingent on their community of practice or academic culture. Anderson (2008) argues that notions of blended learning should expand to include blending network and group-based learning models and activities. This is a concept for further study and has implications regarding the nature and design of future distance education programs.

The Centre for Academic Technologies and the Distance Learning Division has identified the general issue of quality standards as a focus for our future research. In addition, the topic of online group work dynamics and approaches for group projects and assessment is an area we wish to explore further. Only 13% of the participants in our study expressed a preference for online group work as an assessment process; this indicates that we need to refine our current practices. Most of our distance education students are mature adults learners; an area of ongoing interest for investigation is identification and analysis of generational learner attitudes and perceptions regarding online distance education.

The intent of the research was to study our online students’ attitudes and perceptions regarding distance education and instructional technology with the aim to improve our practices. Given the relatively small sample size it would not be appropriate to make broad generalizations, however the data of this preliminary study yields valuable insight regarding student perceptions and attitudes related to online learning. This study represents a start on our journey to better understand the dynamics of online learning from a learner perspective. Larger survey populations accompanied with more in-depth methods and longitudinal studies would yield further rich insight to guide our practices in this field. Adherence to the suggestions for improvements as provided by our students such as improved course design, appropriate rigor or workload and assessment methods will greatly assist with increased student satisfaction, retention and overall quality.
References


Appendix A

Information and Informed Consent

Dr. Rosetta Khalideen and I are conducting a study to explore the perceptions and experiences of adult learners in our online distance education courses. The study is funded by the University of Regina, Centre for Teaching and Learning Scholars Fund.

Findings of this investigation will be used to inform our practices and help to develop improvements to the effectiveness of our online courses. Our primary research questions are:

- Why do adults take online courses?
- How do adults experience these courses?
- What models of distance education delivery and support work better for adult learners?

A survey of all online students in our fall courses will comprise a major portion of the investigation and will be followed by interview of selected students. In order to survey these students we will contact them in your online course e-mail. A URL will be provided for each student to access the survey on the Internet. Results of the survey will be coded in such a way that the identity of students or particular courses will not be attached to the final data.

We propose to conduct the survey in mid-November and will contact students through your course e-mail during the first week of November. Please feel free to contact either Rosetta or myself if you have questions or wish further information.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Campbell
Appendix B

Questionnaire for Adults Learning Online

1. You are:
   - 19 years or less
   - 20 to 24
   - 25 to 29
   - 30 to 39
   - 40 or over

2. You are:
   - Male
   - Female

3. Please identify (optional) if you are:
   - Aboriginal
   - Metis
   - Inuit
   - Visible Minority
   - Other

4. English is your:
   - First Language
   - Second Language

5. How far away from the university do you live?
   - Less than 50 km
   - 50 – 100 km
   - 100 – 150 km
   - more than 200 km
   - out of the province

6. What is your current student status
   - Full time student
   - Part time student

7. Are you employed?
   - Yes
   - No

8. If you are employed do you work full-time or part-time?
   - Full-time (30 hours or more a week)
   - Part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
   - No answer

9. What is your the level of your current student status?
• Undergraduate
• Graduate

10. If you are an undergraduate student, what year are you in?
   • First Year
   • Second Year
   • Third Year
   • Fourth Year or more

11. If you are a graduate student, what year are you in?
   • First year
   • Second year
   • Third year
   • Fourth year or more

12. In which Faculty are you registered
   • Arts
   • Business Administration
   • Education
   • Engineering
   • Fine Arts

13. What program are you in?

14. Why are you taking an online course(s)? Check all that apply.
   • Course/s is an elective
   • Course/s required
   • There are no other courses available at this time
   • I like to learn online
   • It saves me time and money
   • I can stay in my community and still access the course
   • The course allows me flexibility in my schedule
   • Other__________________________________

15. Have you taken a University of Regina online course before?
   • Yes
   • No

16. Have you ever taken an online course from another institution?
   • Yes
   • No

17. How would you describe your experience taking an online course?
   • Highly satisfactory
   • Satisfactory
   • Relatively unsatisfactory
   • Unsatisfactory
• Highly Unsatisfactory
If you indicated satisfactory, above, why was it satisfactory?
__________________________________________________
If you indicated unsatisfactory, above, why was it unsatisfactory?
____________________________________________________

18. What model of distance delivered course works best for you? Check all that apply
• Fully online
• Televised
• Blended face-to-face and online
• Blended televide and online

19. Should the University of Regina offer more online courses?
• Yes
• No
If you answered yes, above, why?
If you answered no above, why?

20. What are the major obstacles you face as an online learner?
- I have time pressures
- I lack the programs I need
- I lack computer skills
- I lack access to high speed Internet
- I get frustrated with technology
- I get frustrated with excessive course content
- I lack motivation
- I have feeling of isolation
- I miss the human contact
- other

21. Of the three major obstacles identified, what is the biggest?

22. Have you ever withdrawn from a class?
- Yes
- No
If you indicated “yes” above, what were the reasons for withdrawing? Check all that apply.
- The course materials were too difficult for my level of preparedness
- The course was too face paced
- The instructor did not provide sufficient guidance
- I did not receive academic program advice
- There was no (or sufficient) technical support
- I preferred the face-to-face mode of instruction

23. What influences you to continue in your online course(s)? Check all that apply?
- I need the course to complete my program
- I like working at my own pace
- I like learning online
- I receive assistance form family and friends
- I find the online instructor(s) helpful
- I receive technical support
- I can work on the course at my own convenience
- I can access the course from wherever I am
- It was my only option
- Other

24. How would you describe the assignments in your online course(s)?

- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

If you indicated “satisfactory” above, why were your assignments satisfactory?
If you indicated “unsatisfactory” above, why were your assignments unsatisfactory?

25. How is learning assessed in your online course(s)? Check all that apply.
- tests
- quizzes
- essays
- research papers/reports
- group presentations
- other

26. Which form of assessment works best for you?
- tests
- quizzes
- essays
- research papers/reports
- group presentations
- other
Comments:

27. If it were available, would you take an entire program online?
- Yes
- No
If you indicated “yes,” why?
If you indicate “no,” why not?
28. What suggestions would you have for improving online courses?

29. Any other comments?

30. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group interview?