



**Benchmarking Applied Career Programs  
Final Report**

ESL and Languages Department  
Bow Valley College

Submitted by Hana Imai

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**January 13, 2010**

**Executive Summary**

The Canadian Language Benchmarks are increasingly becoming a common 'currency' that program providers, ELLs, and government employ when describing language proficiency. This project had the CLB positioned as a central component of its research instrument and methodology. It enhanced capacity by capturing and sharing best practices of the benchmarking process thereby encouraging broad engagement in the process by multiple stakeholders which in turn will carve out clearer pathways for ELLs who want reenter their professions or further education in Canada.

The Benchmarking Applied Career Programs project outlined a process for benchmarking career programs with the intention to better facilitate the bridging of ELLs from ESL or preparatory programs into mainstream college applied programs. The project analyzed and documented the language demands required of students for success in specific applied programs and confirmed that current entry level requirements are in alignment. Documenting the benchmarking process as it is executed at Bow Valley College allows a standardized process to be shared with key stakeholders in Alberta to better meet the needs of internationally educated language learners.

**Research Tool**

The research instrument used was developed at Red River College in Winnipeg, and later modified at Vancouver Community College. Bow Valley College has further modified the process to include the benchmarking of clinical or practicum placements, and assessments. This has been integrated in the benchmarking research process as through collaboration with instructors, coordinators and students in applied programs, it has been found that ELLs are generally successful in their classroom work, but have significant challenges in their workplace settings (clinical and practica). With workplace setting placements being an integral component of a large majority of applied career programs, benchmarking practica and clinical placements is essential to obtain accurate entry level benchmarks of applied programs as predictors of eventual learner success.

**Outputs**

This project met the following outputs:

- A documented methodology that facilitates the benchmarking of all components of an applied career program
- Recommendations to inform future projects
- Entrance CLB levels for the Education Assistant program at Bow Valley College

## **Outcomes**

This project met the following outcomes:

- Increased awareness of required language support for ELLs in mainstream programs
- A proven benchmarking process for Alberta post secondary institutions including both qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Benchmarking career programs creates direct pathways to further learning and career goals for ELLs

Some additional outcomes of the project were:

- Capacity building of stakeholder knowledge of Canadian Language Benchmarks
- Conference presentations and sharing of expertise

## **Recommendations**

It is highly recommended that institutions undertaking benchmarking research employ only those researchers with considerable experience working with higher level CLBs. Another consideration would be to ensure that there is enough time to complete all components of the research. This entails that researchers be given release time from their regular assignments for the duration of the project. Dissemination of the results to all stakeholders at the institution (e.g. admissions) can create buy in for further use of CLBs in applied career programs.

## **Presentations**

The findings of this project were submitted for presentation at both TESL Canada 2009 and TESL Ontario 2009. Both presentations were well attended and interest was garnered from the participants. At the TESL Ontario conference presentation, there was representation from CCLB in attendance.

The final report bound copy includes the Process Document, the Education Assistant Program CLB outcomes, and the College Success CLB outcomes. These documents were prepared by the project benchmarking researchers, Megan Taillon and Keltie Coad. These files are also available in electronic PDF format upon request.

## **Budget**

A signed copy of the final budget has been included.

There were adjustments made to several areas of the budget:

- Costs for benefits were higher than budgeted for as continuous employees were engaged for this project. It was necessary to draw from our pool of most experienced instructors as a solid background in benchmarking was necessary.
- ACCC Conference was substituted with TESL Ontario in order to meet the completion date of the contract.