

## Stakeholder Summary

### Ontario students perceive gap between skills learned in postsecondary and those needed in the workplace

Postsecondary students perceive a gap between the skills they think they will need in their future careers and those they are developing while in university or college, according to a survey conducted by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) and eCampusOntario. The largest gaps were in creative/innovative thinking skills, business etiquette, leadership and teamwork.

The Ontario government purchased in 2017 a blanket, three-year licence to online learning platform Lynda.com that provides the province's postsecondary students with free access to the site. HEQCO partnered with eCampusOntario to evaluate how well this initiative is serving students, with a particular focus on whether access to Lynda.com can help address the perceived skills gap among students. The first step in this multi-year evaluation involved surveying students about how they perceive their skills and their level of interest in online skills development.

A group of 6,360 students was recruited through the Student Life Network to complete a 10-minute online survey. The survey focused on both transferable skills (for example, problem solving, teamwork, leadership and organization) and professional skills (for example, financial literacy, data analysis, public speaking and IT skills). Some of those surveyed also participated in focus groups. The results are reported in *Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students' Perceptions on the State of Their Skills*, a new report published by HEQCO.

"Both the survey and focus groups revealed a perceived misalignment between the skills that students think they will need after graduation and the skills being developed during their postsecondary experience" the report says.

Many student focus group participants were unaware of the fact that the Ontario government had purchased blanket access to Lynda.com. Survey respondents displayed an openness to strengthening their skills through online videos, however they were more likely to use the platform to learn skills they perceived they were already developing in their programs. There was less interest in using Lynda.com to address deficits in skills like leadership, teamwork and business etiquette, even though students indicated that these are the skills that would be needed to succeed in the workplace.

Future research conducted as part of the HEQCO and eCampusOntario partnership will allow for comparison of survey findings with aggregate data of postsecondary students' actual use of Lynda.com.

*Minding the Gap? Ontario Postsecondary Students' Perceptions on the State of Their Skills* is written by Danielle Lenarcic Biss and Jackie Pichette, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.