

The Academic Support Systems Project (ASSP): A Case Study

Lorraine Rhind
CQUniversity Australia

Lorraine Rhind has extensive experience in the Higher Education Sector in Australia and New Zealand. She has a Bachelor of Business and a Masters of Arts in e-learning. Her current position is Projects and Reviews Officer in the Office of Learning and Teaching at CQUniversity Australia. Lorraine works with academic and professional staff from faculties, schools and divisions, across the institution. Her main role is to advise staff about program and course policy, review and accreditation requirements.

Lorraine is a member of the Action Group and two Academic Reference Groups associated with the development of the Academic Support Systems Project at CQUniversity.

In July 2007 CQUniversity Council commissioned a Review of Academic Governance, in response to a recommendation arising from the 2006 AUQA audit. One of the recommendations arising from the Review of Academic Governance identified the need to improve the processes relating to program and course approval, review and re-accreditation.

The Academic Support Systems Project (ASSP) was implemented to address this need and to develop a system to streamline business processes that impact on staff and students in the delivery of learning and teaching. The system developed by CQUniversity to undertake this role is Nexus. Nexus is tasked with the integration of a number of processes and databases into a single online system that will be more effective in supporting the learning and teaching governance processes of the university. The Accreditation module within Nexus supports the program development, enhancement, review and re-accreditation processes.

The Accreditation module is being developed based on a suite of Word templates that aim to provide a clear set of procedures to ensure that requirements for internal review and re-accreditation have been addressed. These templates were developed after extensive consultation with academic and professional staff.

The implementation of the Accreditation module aims to provide staff with the ability to easily access and enter all program and course accreditation information and perform all governance processes online with automated workflows. It will reduce duplication of effort and provide a central repository of all program and course related information, which will enable the university to meet external reporting requirements.

It is envisaged that information held within Nexus will be automatically populated into other systems such as the newly developed *e-course profiles* and *student handbook* thereby reducing staff workloads and duplication of data entry, minimising data entry mistakes and producing enhanced outcomes for students.

Whilst the development of Nexus and the incorporation of the three formerly utilised CQUniversity database systems into one online system has been complex and challenging, it has also provided opportunities for CQUniversity's Office of Learning and Teaching to work collaboratively with Faculties and undertake a number of activities to enhance academic outcomes. These activities include: an audit of programs to ensure alignment with the latest edition of the AQF; mapping of Learning Outcomes with Graduate Attributes and Assessment within courses and programs; and the development of a Coursework Program Framework.

This paper discusses the ASSP and will include the background leading to the perceived need and development of the system. The complexities and challenges faced by the project team including, but not limited to: the rationale for reducing three different systems into one; the multi-campus environments of the university; the business processes of the various user groups; and the different perceptions around the outcomes of the system for these user groups. The presentation will describe the journey of the project so far and how a variety of organisational areas, with different business priorities, have impacted on the development of this project.