

# Delivering New Curricula: A Case Study of delivering the new ICBC Curriculum in place of the Unit Standards based ICC Course.

Sarah Snell  
Rachel Conley

Programme Leader, Business Computing  
Universal College of Learning  
Palmerston North  
snell@ucol.ac.nz

methodology of the ICBC curriculum. The effects, advantages or disadvantages to students and lecturing staff during this transition will be discussed.

This paper concludes with suggestions for possible future improvements and recommendations for other providers planning to deliver this new curriculum.

## ABSTRACT

Universal College of Learning (UCOL) strategic directive to move away from unit standards was announced in 1999. This meant that the introduction and development of the new Introductory Certificate in Business Computing (ICBC) curriculum was extremely timely and appropriate to the strategic shift. The Information Systems (IS) section at UCOL decided to take on the new ICBC curriculum to replace the old unit standards based Introductory Certificate in Computing (ICC) Course. The ICBC curriculum was introduced in the first semester of the year 2000.

This paper will examine the process and method taken to implement this new course, including: internal and external academic approvals, as well as fiscal approval (MOE and NZPPC); why and how specific subjects were chosen and how it was to be delivered. The paper will also explore and explain the transition from, delivering and assessing to unit standards, to the new assessment

## 1. IMPLEMENTATION

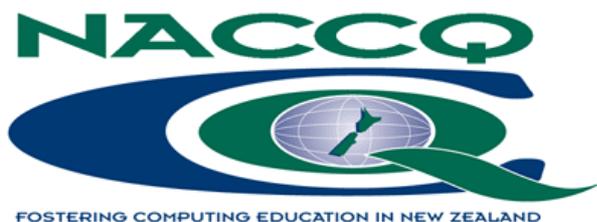
This paper discusses the introduction of the new Introductory Certificate in Business Computing (ICBC). The first step involved in delivering the new programme was to get accreditation and approval.

This required developing a business case plan, which was presented to the Academic Approvals Committee and the Director of Strategic Development (DSD). The DSD considers the new programme based on the financial viability of the course, marketing and academic information. Because we were replacing the ICC course with ICBC, the information we had to provide was similar in content and costs to ICC – hence this stage was not too arduous.

Once approval was given, Academic Services submitted the fiscal details to the Ministry of Education (MOE) for funding approvals.

The second step was to begin external consultation with our Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) to obtain approvals and documentation to be included in the accreditation application. This documentation included such things as letters of support for the new programme from IAC members, plus academic's CV's that would be teaching on the programme.

Third, the completed curriculum was presented to the Faculty Board of Studies (BOS) for approval and signing. This then went to the Academic Approvals Committee (AAC).



The final stage was external approval and accreditation from New Zealand Polytechnics Programmes Committee (NZPPC). As we had a number of new courses seeking accreditation in the institution, we had a visit from an NZPPC panel member to look at all courses being introduced. The ICBC curriculum was approved without any issues raised. This was a credit to the curriculum construction.

The entire ICBC curriculum was approved at one time. The advantage of this is that there are now a raft of subjects included. At any time you can change to one of these subjects without having to get additional approvals and having to go through the whole four steps again.

## 2. TOPICS CHOSEN

Once NZPPC approval had been given, the next step was to decide which modules from the curriculum would be developed and delivered.

The content of the curriculum has a wide range of modules. The selection process included, choosing topics that gave the students a set of core integrated key abilities that would enhance their employment opportunities, and topics that would help in the stepping stone process onto higher courses within the IS discipline.

Students enrolling on ICBC come from a diverse range of backgrounds and skill levels from school leavers, mature students retraining, people returning to the workforce after being at home for sometime, and a large number of ESOL students. This also needed to be taken into account when considering topics.

UCOL had been teaching the Introductory Certificate in Computing for 8 years. 4 of those years were based on Unit Standards. This meant that there was an existing collection of high quality self paced teaching resources. So when choosing topics for ICBC it made sense that we try to match our existing resources from ICC to the new ICBC curriculum so that we saved on resource time creation.

The structure was to be based on the old ICC with 4 topic areas that contained a number of modules in each. These topic areas with their clumped modules are as follows:

### **Technology**

Hardware & Software

Single User Operating Systems – these two modules are delivered and assessed together.

### **Applications**

Ergonomics

Wordprocessing

Spreadsheets

Database

### **Business**

Email

Internet

Written Communication

Accounting

### **Presentations**

Graphics

Desktop Publishing

Special Topic – User Documentation

## 3. DELIVERY

UCOL's new city campus and enrolment strategies have meant increasing efficiency and effectiveness of course administration and delivery. There are no set intake or cut-off enrolment numbers for courses at UCOL: in the first semester of the year 2000 there was a record number of 81 students on ICBC which followed on from the previous semester of ICC which had approximately 70 students. We can accept new enrolments at the beginning of each term if required. Students who choose this option merely have different exit points. Orientation is an issue with these students which needs to be resolved in the future.

These enrolment figures showed us that the ICC course was already successful and had maintained its popularity over a number of years. Even though the course has been around for a number of years it is still in its growth period of maturation. Hence we did not want to change the current philosophy of how the course was delivered, which is through flexible delivery.

With the delivery method for the new course staying the same as the unit standards based ICC, the only things to change were the content, resources and assessments.

### 3.1 Flexible Delivery

ICBC flexible delivery means the students can make choices about when they attend their classes allowing them to set a minimum or maximum pace. Students book into one specialist session for each of the four topic areas where they are given instruction. They then book into as many flexible sessions as they choose. These flexible sessions are facilitated by the lecturers. There are assessment sessions scheduled throughout the week for students to book into to complete required assessments. These sessions are facilitated by 3<sup>rd</sup> Year BAppIS students and a test login is used for students to access test data. Students are provided with learning timeframes to help them meet assessment deadlines.

With guidance from specialist lecturers, the students work through self-paced workbooks designed

to meet flexible delivery demands. Through the collaborative work of the authors, extra resources for the course are on the ICBC Intranet web-site and the shared read-only network drive.

All hard copy resources are issued to the student on their first day.

### **3.2 Mentoring**

A mentoring policy is used to support this flexible delivery approach. This begins by socialising students with lecturers, mentors and peers: this is one of the main philosophies of orientation week. The ICC course had always been a great confidence building course for all students, not only academically but socially as well. We wanted to build on this philosophy with the new ICBC course. This semester students have been encouraged to participate with peers outside of class time. One ICBC lecturer has been the driving force behind this initiative. She has encouraged students to organise many external activities including such things as indoor netball teams, computer games evenings, meals and general social gatherings – the students and lecturers alike all have ICBC t-shirts.

The mentoring role carries on from this and is designed to develop relationships with the students and to enable tracking of academic progress and attendance. The mentor sets up a weekly meeting time for students to attend to discuss relevant academic and personal issues.

## **4. RESOURCE CREATION**

We began the change process from ICC to ICBC by assigning one lecturer to each topic area that had experience in teaching these subjects. They were responsible for developing the student material (workbooks), delivery notes and assessments. To provide support to the lecturers we had weekly meetings to discuss progress and any problems they may be experiencing.

### **4.1 Assessment Creation and Moderation Requirements**

The first step was to look at the module descriptors for the ICBC curriculum to see where the differences lay within our current resources. All references to unit standards and irrelevant information in the old workbooks had to be removed and new information added. The biggest change was the new assessment methodology. Lecturers had to change their current thinking of assessing

competency based assessment at 100%, to a competent pass at 80% and passes with merit at 95%.

Lecturers collectively decided how much of the module content to assess. Each module descriptor contains an indication of the level of understanding that is required. Each performance indicator is shown at either R (Recall), C (Comprehension), A (Application) or P (Problem Solving). A minimum of 60% of R & C tasks need to be assessed and a minimum of 80% of A & P tasks need to be assessed. At this stage the lecturers needed to decide which parts of the task were important to assess and to write the assessments and marking schedules to match.

The moderation action plan has just been sent out and 3 modules that we deliver attract NACCQ moderation in August 2000 – this will allow us to check that our new assessment methodology is correct.

## **5. FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

The first semester of delivery of ICBC has been entirely successful. There has been no negative feedback from students that there are no unit standards in the curriculum, which was an initial concern.

After delivery of ICBC for one semester, we have reviewed the course structure and decided to change the grouping of some of the modules. The reason for this change in structure was due to evaluation of delivery timeframes. Some topic areas needed more content where as others had more than sufficient material. The changes for semester 2, 2000 are reflected below.

### **Technology**

Email  
Internet  
Hardware & Software  
Single User Operating Systems – these two modules are still to be delivered and assessed together.

### **Applications**

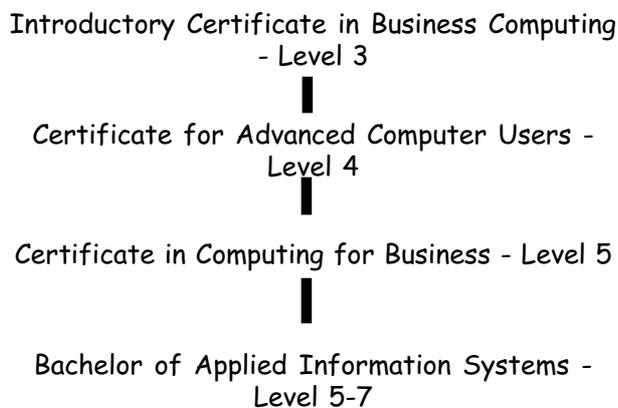
Wordprocessing  
Spreadsheets  
Database

### **Business**

Ergonomics  
Written Communication  
Accounting

### **Presentations**

Graphics  
Desktop Publishing



**Figure 1. The UCOL stepping stone model.**

#### Special Topic – User Documentation

ICBC remains an excellent starting point for students to continue with study in the IS discipline. During orientation week we gathered information from students regarding how they had heard about the course, why they were here and how they wanted to use their qualification. The majority of students were enrolled on ICBC to help them progress onto other computer related courses.

The graphic Figure 1. shows the stepping stone we provide within the computing field at UCOL.

The strength of ICBC is that once accreditation and approvals have gone through, it offers flexible module content and adaptability to meet student demand or industry recommendation.

The Introductory Certificate in Business Computing is currently awarded with a local UCOL certificate. A future proposal would be for a national NACCQ certificate to be awarded as an additional qualification. To go hand in hand with this, the exploration of the development of a non-unit standards based Level 4 certificate is recommended. We currently offer a Level 4 course (Certificate for Advanced Computer Users) at UCOL that provides an excellent stepping stone onto the Level 5 Certificate in Computing for Business. The NZQA NCC Level 4 curriculum is expiring with no replacement units being written.

For others that may be planning to offer the ICBC curriculum, we can only recommend it as a successful programme.