
Tertiary ICT Enrolments: Attracting Students – A recipe for success?

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Abstract

The Wintec School of IT offers a range of ICT qualifications, building from foundation certificates to diplomas, with 3 specialisation streams, and a degree. These provide potential students with a comprehensive selection of ICT vocational education and training pathways, leading to a wide variety of employment opportunities in the industry.

In this poster the authors explore a variety of strategies designed to help maintain the viability of these ICT programmes, in spite of the peaks and troughs of fluctuating demand.

Introduction

Following a global trend, tertiary ICT enrolments in NZ declined from a peak in 2002 to a trough in 2007. In spite of the fluctuating enrolment numbers the Wintec School of IT has managed to retain its full range of ICT qualifications.

This poster explores a variety of strategies considered by the authors to be critical to the continued success of school's ICT programmes.

Content

An analysis of Wintec ICT enrolment trends, illustrated in fig.1, mirrors the downturn in NZ tertiary ICT enrolments from 2002 to 2007, followed by a subsequent reversal, coinciding with the global economic recession.

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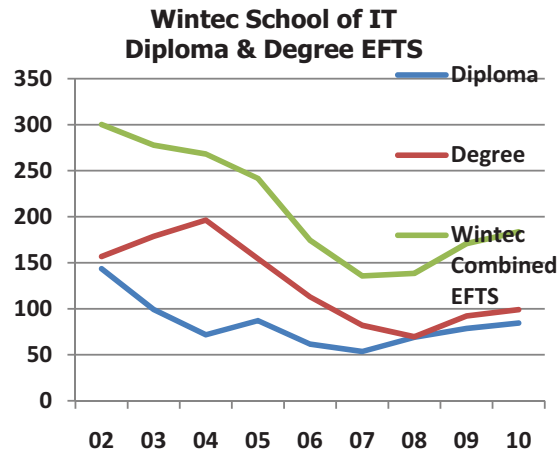


Fig. 1 Wintec School of IT Enrolment Trends

In spite of the decline, enrolment numbers were considered healthy enough throughout the downturn to maintain the dual pathways of diplomas and a degree.

Key success factors or strategies, reviewed on a yearly basis, that are considered to have helped maintain the viability of the School of IT include:

- The foundation certificate programmes that allow 'second chance' students, both school leavers and mature students, to meet the entry requirements for the diploma and degree programmes. The 27% contribution to the diploma level 5, illustrated in fig. 2, is typical for each intake.

- The provision of 3 distinct diploma streams, programming, systems support and technician, with a well defined pathway into the third year of the degree
- The number of international students enrolling in both the diploma and the degree programmes
- The formation in 2006 of the Waikato ICT Professional Learning Community (PLC), an association of Waikato secondary school ICT teachers. Professional development (PD) evenings, one event per term, are jointly planned and organised with a light meal provided, sponsored by Wintec marketing. Wintec enrolment data is analysed to identify contributing secondary schools and the ICT teachers from these schools are invited to the third year degree student capstone project presentations
- The integration of industry certification courses with the diploma and degree programmes, specifically Cisco CCNA, IT Essentials and Microsoft's MCP for Windows Server 2003/2008.
- Strong working relationships with industry as a result of engaging through the Employer Partnership Group (LAC) and the degree 3rd year projects

Conclusion

An analysis of a snapshot of ICT enrolment data reinforces the proposition that the success factors, or strategies, considered key to maintaining the viability of Wintec School of IT programmes, are working.

References

Wintec MIS (Arion) (Accessed March 2010)

Fig. 2 Source of DipICT L5 Enrolments for 2010