STAR: Students tasting And reflecting on ICT Study Options via STAR Courses

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Abstract

The Ministry of Education's Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programme gives Year 10 to 13 students the chance to attend tertiary courses. Students get a taste of a subject or job area that interests them while learning new skills that can help them move into study or work. In providing a "fun" experience the likelihood of these students choosing to study computing is enhanced. This case shares the success at Wintec to stimulate interest.

Keywords

STAR, taster, multimedia, games programming

Introduction

Waikato secondary schools have been keen to take advantage of an opportunity to 'taste' an ICT course, and their girls have been especially interested in the multimedia STAR offering.

This year the School of IT has expanded its STAR programme to include games programming, in response to a perceived demand from mainly boys.

The Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) programme provides an excellent platform for promoting Information and Communications Technology tertiary (ITP) programmes.

The Wintec School of IT believes that its STAR courses strike a happy balance between enjoyment and presenting a realistic view of the complexity of ICT.

Content

Two ICT STAR funded programmes are offered by the Wintec School of IT; an Interactive Multimedia Technologies Taster and a Games Programming Taster, both of 2 days, or 10 hours, in duration.

The multimedia course is marketed as an exciting opportunity to explore a variety of multimedia topics within ICT. The content focuses on the art of manipulating text, capturing and then manipulating images using a variety of freeware and commercially available software. The Year 11 students and above develop a web site and upload their own content, including photos and video captured during the course.

The Games Programming is new taster for introduction in 2011. It targets Year 10 and above and is designed to allow students to learn the core fundamentals of programming as they develop an entertaining game that can be played with their peers and others.
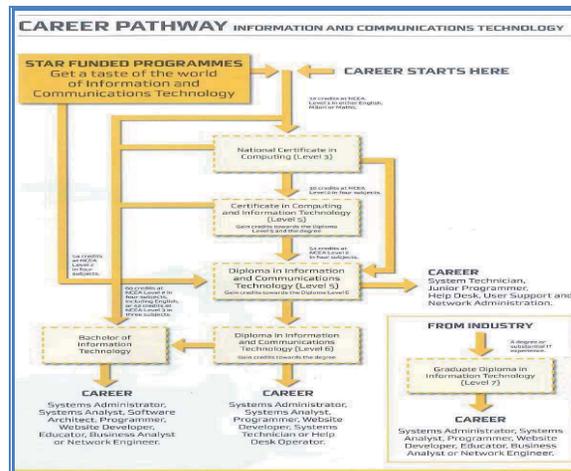

Figure 1: STAR Booklet ICT career pathway

Observations

The mainly female students in one of the Multimedia Technologies Taster classes were observed thoroughly enjoying the experience. Their creative web sites, featuring the photos and the videos that they had taken and edited during the course, were displayed with obvious pleasure. The potential of showing their web-based creations to family and friends at home and at school added to their excitement.

To date, the number of schools and students wanting to enrol in the ICT taster courses are very encouraging. Five courses have been scheduled for 2011, with maximum numbers for each course constrained by the available resources. One Games Programming Taster pilot has been scheduled this year to address the perceived latent demand from mainly boys.

Conclusion

The prospect of taking ICT STAR courses is attracting growing numbers of students, evidenced with increasing course demand and rising domestic enrolments from participating schools.

The key to successful outcomes, evident in the growing demand for these STAR programmes, is in having enthusiastic tutors who relate well to the student cohort.

References

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