UWS Adds CIW Certifications to its IT Degree Programmes

Challenge

On 1 August 2007, the University of the West of Scotland merged with Bell College, creating Scotland's largest modern University with almost 18,000 students. The bigger, more sustainable institution is a four-campus regional institution, with campuses in Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and Paisley. The increased size and reach of the University opens up more opportunities for thousands of people across the West of Scotland in the Higher Education sector.

The University offers a broad range of study topics, from education, engineering and science to social sciences, business and computing. A few years ago, the University wanted to update its School of Computing with new curricula that would meet the growing and demanding needs of Information Technology (IT)-related industries.

The curricula at the time focused on vendor-specific software applications, separated into class "modules," including Macromedia and Adobe applications. The University began noticing a trend in the job market: Companies were demanding certified employees who had the skills to complete tasks associated with specific job roles to complement an accredited University degree.

Additionally, the University was looking for a new Web-based certification programme to entice students to register. Business Development Manager Patrick Afchain, Business Development Director Brian Cross, and Associate Dean for Research and Commercialization Professor Malcolm Crowe began searching for options that would meet these needs.

Solution

The University spent 10 months considering several different options but decided that most of those options lacked a clear certification path. In researching the CIW certification programme, the University found that it offered a complete solution to its needs. CIW representative and UK/EMEA Regional Director Marjorie Quigley worked with the University to develop a suitable programme.

Dr. James Stanger, CIW Chief Certification Architect, helped coordinate an on-site CIW Faculty Institute programme to train faculty at the University. The CIW Faculty Institute helped to ensure a smooth transition to and implementation of the CIW curriculum in the University's classrooms.

After the Faculty Institute programme was coordinated, a pilot programme was initiated in 2005, which was designed to prepare University faculty to teach the CIW curriculum. CIW Foundations was added to the first-year Web curriculum at the University. The following year, additional CIW classes were added to the University's course offerings. The University created a programme structure in its IT department based on CIW modules. The classes were structured on a Level 1, 2, and 3 basis and consisted of the CIW Foundations, Site Designer, E-Commerce Designer and Server Administrator series titles, among others. Ten CIW modules were created.

At the end of each module, students were given the opportunity to take a CIW certification exam, which offered them University credit as well as the chance to earn an industry-recognized certification. "CIW has a good entry point with Foundations as the first module," Afchain said. "It is easy for students to move through the certification pathways."

The University also applied to be a CIW Certified Testing Center (CTC), allowing CIW high-stakes certification exams to be administered at the University rather than at a third-party testing center. "[CIW] was job-role related and suitable for the continuing professional development (CPD) market as students can take modules in the evening and build up academic credit as well as CIW certification and also follow a career path," Afchain said.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND

- Scotland's biggest modern university with over 19,500 students and almost 1,600 staff

- Extensive range of programmes from degree and certificate level to MSc

HEADQUARTERS
Scotland, United Kingdom

PROGRAMME
Internet Technology
- BSc - 3 Years
- BSc Hons - 4 Years

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–Patrick Afchain
  Business Development Manager, UWS

CIW BENEFITS

For the School
- Existing exams and curriculum
- Quick implementation
- High-quality, standardized content
- Industry-sanctioned skills objectives
- Affordable pricing
- Outstanding customer service
- Personalized content options
- E-learning, classroom learning, self-study options

For the Student
- High-quality, standard-ized content
- Industry-approved skills objectives, industry-standard knowledge
- Both instruction and assessment
- E-learning, classroom learning, self-study options
- Industry-valued professional certification
- Affordable pricing
- Technical competence

Results

In the 2006-07 academic year, more than 270 students took at least one CIW module at the University. The majority of these students took the Foundations module and successfully completed the course. The number of students who completed the Foundations module exceeded University expectations, and the majority of the rest of the modules satisfactorily met expectations, according to Afchain.

The CIW programme experiences on-going participation from the initial implementation in 2005. CIW module offerings may vary from one academic year to the next. In 2009, 160 students completed a CIW module and in 2010 244 students participated in the program. The most popular modules continue to be the Web Foundations Series, with emphasis on the Site Development module and E-Commerce.

The University has several goals for CIW in the future, including increasing enrollment in CIW modules and working with CIW administrators to update various certification tracks to more closely fit the needs of the changing Scottish Web-related industry and education environments. A UK Facility Institute is now part of the program.

Recent developments in Scotland, including an agreement with the Scottish Qualifications Authority's Digital Media + ICT Vendor Alliance (DIVA) programme along with the success the University has had with CIW implementation, has led to an articulation agreement between colleges and the University.

Through this agreement, students who complete the CIW Foundations module at the UK college or further education (FE) level, would receive University or higher education (HE) credit at the University toward a postsecondary degree. Students entering the University with FE credits earned in CIW classes would then be immediately able to take higher-level CIW modules at the University and more effectively prepare for more advanced CIW certification exams, such as Master CIW Designer. For more information about the University of the West of Scotland, visit www.uws.ac.uk

For more information about the CIW programme, visit www.CIW-certified.com .

Instruction and certification in vendor-neutral IT skills for IT job roles
IT fundamentals, Web page authoring, networking, Web site design, Web languages, programming, security, network administration
- *Standardized industry skills objectives*
- *High-stakes certification exams*
- *Official CIW Curriculum*
- *E-learning, instructor-led and self-study*
- *Online assessment and instruction tools*