REDESIGN PROJECT: REDESIGN READINESS CRITERIA FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Some ‘units’ at the Australian Catholic University and ‘subjects’ at James Cook University may be more ready than others to be the focus of a large-scale redesign effort. Because of prior experiences with technology-mediated teaching and learning, and because of numerous attitudinal factors, some academic staff members may be more ready to engage in large-scale redesign efforts to achieve the program’s goals.

Those interested in participating in the redesign program will be asked to think carefully about which units are good candidates for redesign at their institution and to respond to the following Redesign Readiness Criteria.

Completing the readiness criteria also enables each institution to assess collectively its strengths and weaknesses, gaining an understanding of what it needs to do to address gaps in its preparation early in the process. No institution perfectly meets all of the readiness criteria, especially at the beginning of the planning process. Every institution will discover things it needs to work on in order to carry out a successful unit redesign. The readiness criteria are designed to help you select the unit with the highest chance of success. Answering each as honestly as possible—and providing data to support your answers—will lead to the most positive outcome for your institution.

As noted above, this program will require you to establish a redesign team because of the multiple dimensions involved in large-scale unit redesign. The first activity of the team will be to complete the responses to the following readiness criteria. In some cases, you will be asked to read an article, discuss the reading as a team and make a tentative decision, which may change as you learn more about the redesign process.

1. Unit Choice

Choosing the right unit is the first step in a successful unit redesign project. Units that face academic or resource problems or both are the best targets. What impact will redesigning the unit have on the curriculum, on students and on the institution—i.e., why do you want to redesign this unit? Please be specific—i.e., provide data on pass rates, enrolment numbers, and so on.

Is there an academic problem in this unit such as a high failure rate? Does the unit face a resource problem such as how to meet increased enrolment demand with no commensurate increase in resources? Is the redesign linked to some larger institutional goal—e.g., a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), campus strategic plan, a re-accreditation process?

2. Redesign Model

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select a redesign model. Please read "Six Models for Course Redesign", which describes six possible models for unit redesign. At this point in the planning process, which redesign model do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

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1. The terms ‘unit’ and ‘subject’ are used interchangeably and refer to study modules of one or two semesters in duration, not entire degrees or majors, or single classes within a unit/subject. NCAT documents which refer to ‘courses’ within an American context are analogous to units and subjects in Australia.

When you look at the models chosen by successful redesign projects, you will notice that certain disciplines select particular models—e.g., math uses the emporium model, foreign languages use the replacement model, and so on. What aspects of the model you are thinking about using fit your particular discipline and your particular students? Have other successful redesign projects in your discipline used this model?

3. Assessment Plan

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select an assessment model. Please read "Four Models for Assessing Student Learning," which describes four possible models. At this point in the planning process, which assessment model do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

Successful large-scale redesign efforts begin by identifying the intended learning outcomes and developing alternative methods other than lecture/presentation for achieving them. Have those responsible for the unit identified the unit’s expected/intended learning outcomes in detail? Do you have baseline data for the unit in its traditional format? If so, please describe. If not, how do you plan to collect baseline data and compare it to student learning outcomes after you have redesigned the unit?

4. Cost Savings Plan

When you develop your redesign plan, you will be asked to select a cost reduction strategy. Please read "Cost Reduction Strategies," which describes a number of strategies for producing cost savings. At this point in the planning process, which cost savings strategy do you think would be most appropriate for your redesign? Why?

What does cost savings mean in practice? In the past, cost reduction in higher education has meant loss of jobs, but that’s not the NCAT approach. In every NCAT unit redesign project, the cost savings achieved through the redesigned units remained in the department that generated them, and the savings achieved were used for instructional purposes. By reducing the cost of offering the redesigned unit, institutions have been able to reallocate and do what they would like to do if they had additional resources.

5. Learning Materials

Successful unit redesign that improves student learning while reducing instructional costs is heavily dependent upon high-quality, interactive learning materials. Are the participating academic staff members able and willing to incorporate existing curricular materials in order to focus work on redesign issues rather than materials creation? What learning materials are you thinking about using in your redesign?

Ideally, one wants the academic staff to have a "head start" in the redesign process if possible. Is the discipline one with a comparatively large existing body of technology-based curricular materials and/or assessment instruments? Are the academic staff members willing to use these materials if they meet unit objectives? Will they employ an appropriate blend of using these materials and created “home-grown” materials in a non-dogmatic fashion? Are

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they willing to partner with other content providers such as commercial software producers or other universities who have developed technology-based materials?

6. Active Learning

Greater student engagement with unit content and with one another, supported by information technology, is essential to achieving student success. Do the unit's academic staff members have an understanding of and some experience with integrating elements of computer-based instruction into existing units to support active learning?

Sound pedagogy is the key to successful redesign projects. When sound pedagogy leads, technology becomes an enabler for good practice rather than the driver. Some academics may have a great deal of enthusiasm for large-scale redesign but little prior experience in this area. It is difficult to complete a successful project by starting from scratch. Having some experience helps to prepare for large-scale redesign efforts. Have the academic staff systematically thought about and investigated alternative methods for empowering students to learn? What evidence can you provide to demonstrate staff experience with integrating computing into existing units in order to support active learning?

7. Collective Commitment

A collective commitment is a key factor for the success and the sustainability of redesign projects. As part of the planning process, you have been asked to form an institutional team. Please describe the members of your team, the skills they bring to the project and what their roles will be in both the planning and implementation phases of the project.

Are the academic staff members ready to collaborate? Have they engaged in joint conversations about the need for change? Are decisions about the unit made collectively—in other words, beyond the individual academic staff member level? Substantive changes cannot rely on academic staff initiative alone because they are systemic and involve changes in such areas as policy (class meeting times, contact-hour requirements, governance approvals); budgeting (planning and processes that support innovation); systems (registration systems, classroom assignments); and, infrastructure (equipment purchase and deployment). What is the level of support for the project beyond the departmental level?

Submission Procedures

Institutions wishing to participate in the program should send a narrative addressing each of the seven readiness criteria (about one page each) as they apply to the selected unit, focusing on evidence that demonstrates the way in which they meet each criterion.

Please include a cover page with your proposal on which you:

- List all team members by name including titles, academic affiliation, phone numbers and email addresses;
- Identify the person who is the primary contact for your team project, with the understanding that the primary contact will share communications appropriately with the rest of your team.
Responses to the Course Readiness Criteria should be submitted electronically to Carolyn Jarmon, NCAT Vice President, at cjarmon@theNCAT.org with a copy to your Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (James Cook University) or Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning & Teaching) (Australian Catholic University).

**Deadline for submission: Thursday 13 October 2011.**

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