WHOLESCALE INSTITUTIONAL CURRICULUM REFORM

A. Robertson

Abertay University (UNITED KINGDOM)

Abstract

Abertay’s strategy for teaching and supporting learning has been transformed over the last three years, catalysed by the university’s new teaching and learning enhancement strategy. This presentation will give an overview of the changes implemented with emphases on the change management approaches employed and also how technology has enabled new ways of working, thereby increasing students’ engagement and active learning.

The key features of Abertay’s approach include:
1. Increased flexibility and student choice.
2. A suite of new interdisciplinary electives.
3. Move from 15 to 20 credit modular structure.
5. New academic calendar including mid-term feedback weeks.
7. New literal grading scale and implementation of Grade Point Average (GPA) for degree awards.
8. Staff-centred approach to academic professional development.
9. Professional recognition CPD scheme aligned to all four descriptors of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF).
10. Support for scholarly communities of practice including seminars, workshops, resources, blog, funding scheme for teaching and learning innovation.

Involving staff in the development of our change initiatives and policy development via a combination of short life task groups, seminars and more formal consultation through university governance systems, and the relatively small size of the university (3500 students, 200 academic staff), have all enabled whole institutional change to be implemented remarkably quickly and with much more ownership than would otherwise have been possible.

It is also important to highlight the role of new technologies at Abertay. Full implementation of electronic management of assessment (EMA) since 2015-16 has significantly increased student satisfaction, as evidenced by the National Student Survey (NSS) and improved staff’s efficiency as well as effectiveness. Further developments include new technology-rich collaborative learning environments, science laboratories which promote richer student-staff interactions and new ways of learning (2016-17), and a complete refurbishment of our library in summer 2017, building on the lessons learned and the university’s strategic vision for teaching and supporting learning.

Other trends at Abertay include richer interactions between staff and students in class though piloting of new technologies, e-portfolios to support reflection and development (formative and summative), trials of online exams and, most recently, learning analytics to provide early warning indicators of students at risk.

Keywords: Leadership, Change, Curriculum Reform.