

Concurrent Session G
Tuesday 1 September
1.30pm – 2.20pm



Session 6
X-factor UOW: Student Co-curricular Learning Experiences
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Alexandra McPaul has had a diverse career, traversing design, recruitment, procurement, environmental sustainability and co-curricular learning. She has worked at the University of Wollongong for the last four and a half years. Over the past eighteen months, she has been the Project Manager for the university's Co-curricular Learning Opportunities & Recognition Project. Within this role she has consulted broadly with key internal stakeholders including executives, academic staff, program coordinators and students in addition to key graduate employers to develop UOWx. One of the highlights of her time at UOW was volunteering as the lead interior designer with the student initiative, Solar Decathlon. As a team the group designed and built the Illawarra Flame house and won the international solar-building competition in China.

Co-curricular reward and recognition are increasingly becoming an essential part of student learning and engagement programs and have the potential to significantly add value to an institution's recruitment strategies and graduate employability portfolio. But any such program must balance a complex set of issues including equity, integration, quality assurance and funding. This paper describes the development of UOWx a new co-curricular reward and recognition program for University of Wollongong students. It outlines the consultative development process, the program principles and the program elements that have been designed to maximize student benefit while maintaining a lean administrative structure and budget.

Launched in 2015 UOWx enables students to explore new ideas and extend their learning experiences outside formal course work. It provides formal recognition for participation in a variety of university-based extra-curricular involvements. The Co-curricular program includes opportunities for mentor roles, student leaders, project team members, student representatives and volunteers. The vision for co-curricular learning at UOW is to engage students in challenging, transformative co-curricular experiences, which contribute to their success as outstanding graduates who are equipped to make significant contributions to society and their future workplaces. Transferrable skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and communication, which students further develop through their Co-curricular Learning experiences, contribute significantly to their employability and success beyond university.

All decision were made using the lenses of our design principles

- Simple: we wanted the initial solution to be able to be implemented in 2015.
- Equitable and Accessible: we want to ensure that students at our smaller, regional campuses can access opportunities and that all students will be able to have an equal opportunity to be recognised.
- Digitally enabled: we want to ensure this is supported by effective digital systems and we endeavour to deliver some of the symposiums online.
- Learning-focused: we want to promote informal learning to students through their involvement in these experiences.

University of Wollongong has chosen to implement a solution, which has two avenues for recognition. The first is UOWx Record, an official university document listing a student's verified involvement in approved co-curricular programs. The second is the UOWx Award, which requires a

student to have participated in five roles (including three different types). A 'Role Eligibility Framework' was developed to determine which experiences would be recognised. Extensive consultation was undertaken throughout 2014 with staff, program coordinators, students and employers. Staff who coordinated co-curricular programs for students were required to complete an application form to demonstrate how they met the eligibility requirements. This was assessed and the Steering Committee decided upon the outcome. Fifty-five roles have been included to date. Work continues on the consultation around the Co-curricular Policy and development of the accompanying procedures. A symposium series is being developed to engage students in interactive, issue-based forums about topics outside of their discipline area. The intention is to draw upon external speakers and stretch students intellectually. Additionally, we continue to develop the governance to recognise community volunteering for our regional campus pilot. In Orientation Week 2015 we began to promote and market UOWx to new students. We had over 500 students register their interest online over the first week. Work on UOWx continues to progress. The presentation will include both the process thus far and the opportunities for the future development of UOWx.