

Initial Plan

Project Title: Factors affecting COMSC performance.

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Module: CM0343 – 40 credits.

Project Description: Cardiff University's School of Computer Science & Informatics is under constant pressure to improve the ratings it receives from the National Student Survey. It is also trying to increase the number of students it attracts each year. In particular Students from over seas. The School relies on its Students as a major source of income; due to this the Students are obviously held in high regard. Unfortunately there is no common agreement on the factors affecting policy and decisions when it comes to this area.

Within my Project I will aim to create a model which outlines the relationships of factors affecting policy and decision making, such factors are: Teaching quality, student numbers, contact time etc. The Model will aim to be useful for all that are involved in decision making and so they can simply understand the constraints and guides to policy and decision making. In turn this policy can be used as the basis for any future talks on strategy and policy within the School. Furthermore the model can be used for School management to use when looking at alternative policies.

Aims & Objectives

Benchmark COMSC performance: look at the ratings the School is receiving from the National Student Survey. Look into the detail they analyse the school, including the categories that are marked and how they are linked.

Research current policy and decision making: Arrange meetings with members of staff within COMSC to discuss current approach to attracting students and boosting ratings from the NSS. Preferred discussion method would be face to face but I realise this will not always be appropriate. SO I need to factor in for the use of Email and telephone conversations.

The factors the staff face that affect decision making will be the biggest question I need answered. After asking multiple members of staff about their approaches, affecting factors and the way in which they make/ use policy, I will document my findings and start to analyse the different ways in which processes are currently completed. This will also help me realise why there is no consensus currently, from this I will be able to start building an approach using one agreed direction.

Find a middle ground for policy and decision making that suits staff: linked with the information I will find from the above objective along with the modelling technique I choose (see below) I want to go back to the staff I have talked with, with me I shall take a revised way of tackling the current tasks they have problems or conflict with. This should give them an idea what my model will entail. This

will hope to get the staff on board with the idea of using one model to tackle the whole approach, including; boosting NSS ratings and attracting more Students.

Decide on an appropriate modelling technique: I will look at a variety of modelling techniques, looking for the model that will best fit this task. I will also take into consideration that Steve McIntosh believes this is best fitted to a system dynamics approach.

Interim report aims: Before I have published my interim report I hope to have achieved the following; all research complete on NSS and their criteria for scoring. All research regarding staff approach to the problem of NSS ratings and the problem of attracting more students. I will have decided on an appropriate modelling language and have begun to look into ways of building my model. Document my discussions with staff and how processes are currently completed, this will help me with the build of the model and also how the new approach will eradicate previous stumbling blocks for staff who have previously struggled with policy and decision making.

Build a model: The building of a model will be after the Christmas vacation when all research is complete. The model will obviously have multiple revisions to make it the best it can be. I hope for a variety of people to critique my model as I progress through the build. The list of people I would like to test are, but not limited to: Steve McIntosh, Alun Preece, Matt Morgan, Elaine Slater, Tracey Lavis. The thinking behind having such a wide range of people critique it is; there is a need for the model to be usable for all involved with the strategy and thinking of the School. Otherwise there will still be conflict when it comes to decision making. Gaining agreement early on will be what makes the model highly successful.

Final Report: A list of contents for the final report is obviously not clear at this stage. Although the final report will include the following as a minimum; a completed model, a dossier to explain the model and how it will aid decision/policy making in the future, the positive affects my research has had and when applied, how it can affect the NSS scores of COMSC(positively). Based on my findings; an overall report giving insight to how better to attract students especially those from over seas.

Weekly Plan

Week 1 : Voice any concerns with SBM.

Week 2: Submit initial plan.

Week 3: Explore option with staff for meeting regarding final year project(via email). Research possible modelling techniques.

Week 4: book meeting into available slots in calendar (preferably before week 10)

Week 7: Research the NSS, finding out what categories they review and how this relates to what needs to be changed by Cardiff COMSC

Week 8: Start collating information for interim report.

Week 9: Make sure all feedback from interaction with COMSC staff is documented.

Week 11: Hand in interim report. (Break for Christmas vacation and examination period)

Spring Semester:

Week 1: beginning drafting model.

Week 4: Beginning writing dossier for final report.

Week 6: begin collating final report

Week 9: Get draft of final report checked by SMB & ADP

Week 12: Hand in final report (break for Easter)