TELAS
TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING ACCREDITATION SCHEME
An initiative of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE)

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1. Context and background:

There has been a significant rise in the facilitation of online learning. It is estimated that 5.8 million students are enrolled in online courses, which represents a 263% increase over a period of twelve years (Online Learning Consortium[1]). Further 77% of institutions have acknowledged that online learning is crucial to their long-term strategy. Meghan Bogardus Cortez, an associate editor with EdTech: Focus on Higher Education, highlights the need for quality to expand with the increase in online learning[2].

Various endeavours and initiatives have been established such as scorecards[3] and rubrics[4], to evaluate the quality of online learning and provide guidance in the development and enhancement of online learning environments. Professional associations, such as the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) have a major role to play in regard to assuring the quality of online learning in higher education. This ASCILITE initiative currently referred to as the Technology Enhanced Learning Accreditation Scheme (TELAS), seeks to introduce an internationally benchmarked accreditation scheme that will assess, assure, certify and recognize the quality of online learning.

The TELAS is being implemented across a number of phases including:

Phase 1, which resulted in the production of a draft TELAS accreditation framework, which will be the basis for conducting the quality assessment of online learning.

Phase 2, which was significantly informed by the TELAS Strategic Advisory Group (Professors Steve Warburton, Shirley Alexander, Ron Oliver and Mark Brown) and a National Summit involving key Australasian senior higher education leaders, resulting in the conceptualization of the accreditation scheme.

Phase 3, which will see the facilitation of consultative workshops with Educational Technology practitioners. These workshops will be a vehicle by which the draft TELAS accreditation framework will be finalized, measures of performance suitable for each of the criteria in the Accreditation Framework will be identified and quality indicators that would inform the assessment of online learning will be ascertained.

2. TELAS project goals:

1. Raise awareness of good practices transpiring in the integration of technology enhanced learning, across the tertiary sector, particularly in the Australasian region.
2. Assure the quality of online learning transpiring across the tertiary sector, particularly in the Australasian region.
3. Encourage and motivate excellence in the utilisation of digital technologies in tertiary learning and teaching.
4. Promote and recognise exemplary innovation and practice in the sustainable use of educational technologies to progress pedagogical practice.

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[1] Available at http://www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2016/06/students-and-higher-ed-leaders-put-their-faith-online-classes-infographic

[2] Available at: http://www.edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2017/01/your-university-s-online-course-code

[3] OLC Quality Scorecard Suite available at: https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/consult/olc-quality-scorecard-suite/

[4] Quality Matters Rubric available at: https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards/higher-ed-rubric

5. Externally validate online learning and provide a measure of performance that could be benchmarked and compared broadly across the global higher education sector.
6. Enhance ASCILITE's reputation as Australasia's foremost community, leading and advocating for excellence in the use of digital technologies in tertiary learning and teaching.
7. Promote ASCILITE's relevance with senior leaders, particularly in the Australasian tertiary education sector.

3. Strategies to achieve the project goals:

A. Develop and validate a *TELAS Accreditation Framework* that provides criteria to assess and guide the enhancement of online courses.

B. Conceptualise a process that can be formally implemented through/by ASCILITE to:
    I.   Assess and accredit online learning against the *TELAS Accreditation Framework*
    II. Award online courses with an accreditation standard (e.g. Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Sliver, Bronze)
    III. Provide course and institutional leaders with recommendations and a guide for the enhancement of assessed online learning.

C. Design and develop a web portal to support the:
    - Implementation of the *TELAS Accreditation Framework* and associated TELAS initiative;
    - Dissemination, sustainability and advancement of excellence in the use of digital technologies to progress pedagogical practice; and
    - Promotion and recognition of excellence in online learning practice.

D. Create a network of champions to promote and progress this initiative.

E. Generate a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of this initiative.

4. Longer-term proposition:

Global benchmarking of accredited online learning. Currently, potential partnerships with like associations to ASCILITE in the US, UK, Ireland and Europe are being explored. The proposition being investigated is for the partners to facilitate the TELAS in their region and the results of these regional assessments to be saved into a database and used to provide benchmarks of where assessed online learning is positioned locally, nationally and internationally.

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