

Sector Wide IT Benchmarking - A Journey to Good Practice And Beyond

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Abstract:

Over the last decade institutions have become increasingly reliant on Information Technology (IT) infrastructure not only to support their administrative systems, but also the delivery of academic programs to students both on and off campus and research activities. The corresponding investment in this infrastructure is not insignificant, and the question of what represents an appropriate level of expenditure and more importantly how to maximise the benefit to end users or identifying best practice is increasingly occupying the minds of IT managers at all levels.

A number of sectors, including the health and finance sectors have made significant progress towards developing frameworks for collecting and analysing data about IT operations. However, measuring various attributes relating to IT in the context of higher education represents unique challenges. The IT environment across the higher education sector is by no means heterogeneous, but rather it is a highly diverse and complex environment. Finding the common ground and understanding necessary to make comparisons can be extremely difficult.

This paper provides a brief account of the journey that has been undertaken by the Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology through its IT Benchmarking Project to develop such a framework. It reflects on the difficulties encountered, the lessons learnt and where the future might lead as IT Directors strive to achieve best practice across various facets of their operation.