TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

MEMORANDUM

TO	Faculty Board , Victoria Business School
COPY TO	
FROM	Dr Chris Eichbaum, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)
DATE	14 June 2018
PAGES	
SUBJECT	KickStart – next steps

Issue

Evaluation of KickStart pilots and decisions on next steps

Background

KickStart takes the form of short video clips that introduce a course, and no less importantly, the course coordinator or principal lecturer to the students enrolling in that course in any given trimester.

The suggestion that VBS should look to pilot KickStart arose out of a visit to Macquarie University by the then Dean, Bob Buckle, and the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) in 2016.

KickStart – as it used by Macquarie – is accessed by students immediately upon their enrolment in a course. It is typically part of a package that may include print or audio, as well as a video resource. The package may be used to signal activities (such as reading or reflection) that students might undertake before a course starts. While some KickStart packages might relate to a discipline within a degree, it is important to rehearse what KickStart is not. Because it is directed at students once they have enrolled in a course it is not a marketing instrument per se (setting to one side that it may contribute to the reputational capital that may sustain 'marketing in a broader sense). It is not designed as a complete substitute for the kind of comprehensive information that might be provided through a course outline.

KickStart is, at its essence, an initiative that seeks to bridge teachers and learners by establishing a relationship between the two in advance of the formal learning and teaching process starting. What this means is that, when that formal process does start key participants – individual students and the course coordinator or principal lecturer – have already been introduced to each other, and the former know something about the latter. At its best KickStart will convey the sense that the 'teacher' is an individual with a passion for their subject matter and a real sense of investment in 'their' 'students'.

An example of a Macquarie styled KickStart video can be found at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvheJ7XfHBI

Assistance to pilot KickStart was sought from the VUW Learning and Teaching Fund and an application was approved. With the transfer of Chris Eichbaum to the Vice Provost (Academic and Equity) position, responsibility for the leadership of the pilot was assumed by the Acting Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Janet Toland, and by Dr Michelle Renton of the School of Marketing and International Business.

The objectives informing the KickStart pilot include a number of the elements rehearsed above. As the Minutes of the Meeting of 29 May 2017 record, Janet Toland noted that "the purpose of the videos is to make [students] feel welcome and engaged and less nervous by personalising the lecturer and telling them what to expect when they come to university."

The initial phase of the KickStart project involved the organisation, production and delivery of videos across four 100 level VBS 'core' courses – MARK101, QUAN102, MGMT101, and INFO101, as well as a fifth video 'explaining' the INFO major.

Based on an initial evaluation it was recommended that VBS

1. Continue the current emphasis on 100 level videos and use Course Finder as the distribution platform;
2. Adequately resource KickStart and other related offerings;
3. Broaden the KickStart project and incorporate aspects that students find most relevant into future videos (May and July 2017 Evaluation Report)

Funding for the pilot included provision for a two-stage evaluation, and the first evaluation report was provided to FMT at its meeting on 29 May 2017. The Minutes of that meeting indicate a wide-ranging and constructive discussion. No specific decisions regarding KickStart are recorded, but the inference that may clearly be drawn from those Minutes is supportive.

In February 2018 a second series of KickStart videos was launched. This resulted in short introductory videos being completed for all of the core courses in the BCom degree. In February 2018 students were advised that the following videos were available:

- **FCOM 111—Government, Law and Business**
- **ECON 130—Microeconomic Principles**
- **MARK 101—Principles of Marketing**
- **MGMT 101—Introduction to Management**
- **QUAN 102—Statistics for Business**
- **INFO 101—Foundations of Information Systems**
- **ACCY 111—Accounting / ACCY 115—Fundamentals of Accounting**
- **ACCY 130—Accounting for Decision Making**
- **An overview of first year Accounting subjects**

Following the roll-out of the second phase of videos a further – focus group informed – evaluation was conducted. The key take out from this evaluation is neatly distilled in the following observation:

"The findings reported here generally support those found in the 2017 survey [reported in the May/July Report]. Overall participants feel positively toward the KickStart videos and they do appear to have a role in lessening pre commencement apprehension. However a lack of easy accessibility to the videos remains an on-going issue." (April 2018 Focus Group Evaluation Report, emphasis added)

Considerations

It is important to once again rehearse both what KickStart is and what it is not (in terms of the primary driver).

It is an aspect of learning and teaching, and encouraging quality learning and teaching through early engagement and meaningful interaction between students and teachers. It is not, primarily a marketing tool. It is designed to provide information to students once they have decided to enrol in a course, not – primarily – to influence the choice of course (although this may occur).

There is one other consideration that, while not primary (as a driver of this initiative) is nonetheless material, and that is the development of digital literacy and capacity on the part of those involved in the development of KickStart videos. While it is not a criticism of the work undertaken, in order to ensure the timely development and posting of these videos staff were assisted by means of scripts, studio-based recording, and third party editing. Teaching staff may well have acquired useful knowledge and skills through this process, but one approach to the development of media of this kind is to provide the opportunity for design and execution (within an agree framework where the purpose of these kinds of videos and their length is a given) in the hands of teaching staff themselves. In essence, it should be possible for a staff member to record a KickStart styled video (and undertake modest editing of it) in their own office or in a purpose designed space in Rutherford House. For the purposes of the discussion that follows this might be referred to as a 'one click' option. In essence, KickStart provides an opportunity to incentivise and scaffold greater digital literacy and competency on the part of teaching staff.

One issue already noted above is the means of delivery and accessibility of these kinds of videos. There are a number of aspects to this. For the purposes of the trial delivery of the videos (as a complete set) was by way of campaign monitor (marketing) software and the posting of YouTube links on course Blackboard pages. This contrasts with the 'Macquarie' model in two respects – firstly in that model a student is provided with the KickStart package as soon as they are enrolled and they receive the 'package' that relates to the course or courses they are enrolled in. It is timely (on enrolment) and it is tailored (they receive material relating to the course(s) they are enrolled in. The evaluations of the VBS pilot suggest that providing students with a list that includes, but that is not confined to, the courses they have enrolled in risks some dissipation of the message and reduction in engagement.

One option would be to include KickStart videos with the Course Finder system – and this is recommended in the initial evaluation. However there are a number of problems with this approach. There are technical issues (which will not be rehearsed here, but which – at the present point of time – constitute a significant barrier to progress. More importantly, including KickStart videos on Course Finder (as a public facing resource accessible on the University web site) means that the weight of KickStart shifts from being a learning and teaching resource to being an aspect of marketing (accepting that the two are not completely discrete). It also means that there is a real risk of production standards trumping authenticity. In discussions with colleagues at other business schools it is clear that students value 'authenticity' over production standards and that, in some material respects, the 'home baked' and 'one click' style is more likely to invite student engagement. In short, for an audience that is used to polish in visual media, a rough diamond can be more interesting.

Unfortunately, at the present point of time, we do not appear to have access to a platform that will allow a KickStart package to be sent to a student when that student completes the enrolment process. Moreover, if we want KickStart to be tailored, then it appears that our Learning Management System – i.e. Blackboard – provides the most appropriate means of delivery. That means we do enable tailored messaging and engagement, but the timing of it is dependent on when access is provided to Blackboard.

Recommendations

At its most recent meeting FMT approved the following recommendations

That FMT:

Note the reports provided in respect of the KickStart pilot conducted over 2017 and 2018 and extend thanks to the Project Manager, Dr Michelle Renton, and the other members of the Project Team

Note that KickStart is <u>primarily</u> designed to enhance the learning and teaching experience and encourage positive outcomes by means of student engagement, achievement, and completion

Note that discussions have been held with CAD and ITS and that VBS staff developing and recording KickStart videos will be supported, including by way of a 'production booth' in Rutherford House

Agree that KickStart should, until alternative arrangements are available and fit for purpose, be delivered by means of Blackboard

Agree that KickStart videos should be developed for all VBS courses with the objective that all such courses will include this additional resource by the end of the 2019 academic year

Direct Schools to ensure that Blackboard sites for courses will be made available to students no later than two weeks prior to the start of the relevant teaching period

Invite the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) to submit this paper to Faculty Board for consideration and discussion.