ACU expands partnership with transformative digital platform

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has expanded its partnership with OpenLearning by signing a three-year usage-based agreement with the education software company.

ACU has signed the Software as a Service (SaaS) agreement to use OpenLearning's platform for the delivery of short courses, micro-credentials and internal professional development programs. In addition, OpenLearning will support ACU's team to build its capability in learning design, enabling the university to develop world-class online courses, with a focus on the health and education sectors.

The agreement builds on an existing partnership formed last year. ACU invested in OpenLearning due its alignment with ACU's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan and its focus on innovation, student-centred education and research-informed learning.

ACU is one of the fastest-growing universities in Australia and is ranked in the top 2 per cent of all universities worldwide. It has 35,000 students across its eight campuses in Australia and campus in Rome, Italy, and is offering online courses under the Government's Higher Education Relief Package.

In response to COVID-19, ACU moved the majority of its classes fully online in March and plans to have students gradually return to its campuses as restrictions are eased nationwide. A similar shift to online solutions has been taking place globally and it is expected that the virus will lead to long-lasting changes to the delivery of education worldwide, including greater attention from consumers on the quality of online learning delivered by universities, even when lockdowns are lifted.

ACU Acting Provost Professor Zlatko Skrbis said he could not have predicted how quickly this investment would come into its own, with the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic hastening the need to transfer more services online and for them to perform seamlessly.

"We first embraced OpenLearning as a valuable addition to our ability to deliver high quality courses in a continually transforming digital environment as part of our innovation agenda.

"The results of this improved capacity have been immediate and vital to our response to the epidemic. The speed and efficiency of ACU switching our learning and teaching to online has been critical in allowing the university to run as close to normal as possible under highly unusual circumstances."

OpenLearning Group CEO & Managing Director Adam Brimo said his organisation was excited to expand the, which would enable the delivery of short courses and micro-credentials, cost-effectively and in line with ACU's educational values.

"Like many universities, ACU has had to quickly adapt to a post-COVID-19 world in which education must be completely delivered online without sacrificing outcomes. The virus has accelerated a move to online learning and it has highlighted the challenges universities face in designing and delivering quality online learning experiences with traditional online platforms, demonstrating the need for OpenLearning.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with ACU and other leading universities worldwide."

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