

Health Informatics Capability in New Zealand

A Report to the Tertiary Education Commission November 2006.

This report was prepared by Karolyn Kerr, and the National Steering Committee for Health Informatics Education in New Zealand

This paper is a collaborative project between the Health Informatics Faculties of Victoria University of Wellington, The University of Auckland, University of Canterbury and University of Otago. It outlines the current situation facing the field of health informatics in New Zealand and presents recommendations to enhance health informatics as a recognised discipline within New Zealand.

- Currently the field of health informatics within New Zealand is still maturing. Potential employers have identified health informatics skills as valuable and that lack of appropriately skilled staff as a challenge to implementing the Health Information Strategy of New Zealand.
- However, despite the lack of skilled staff, many employers do not seek to increase the skills of staff by supporting them to complete health informatics courses. Potential employers appear reluctant to hire recent graduates because of the high cost of training and amount of management support it is perceived that new graduates require.
- It is difficult to get a graduate with both IT and health experience and the recent graduates face the challenge of getting a job in an industry that prefers more mature graduates with previous experience.
- Several of the New Zealand Universities run health informatics programs to meet the diverse needs of their students. Almost all of them are struggling to gain sufficient numbers to remain viable.

In order to address the weaknesses in the current situation the paper proposes;

- More marketing to both potential employers and students to ensure that the value of a health informatics formal qualification is recognised and rewarded.
- National agreement on a post graduate health informatics curriculum would improve the effectiveness and marketability of the programmes.
- There is likely to be industry demand for short courses and continuing education that could contribute to formal qualifications.
- Business as usual within the educational institutions will not generate the necessary level of promotion and funding across the broad range of stakeholders to enhance health informatics within New Zealand. The involvement of organisations such as HINZ, the Health IT Cluster and the Ministry of Health is required to ensure there is sufficient supply of health informatics graduates to meet the predicted shortfall.
- The HINZ Education Subcommittee would provide a diverse and inclusive forum for ongoing work for the development of health informatics education within New Zealand.

For a copy of the full report, please contact Rowena Cullen, Associate Professor, Victoria University of Wellington or you can link to the document from here;

<http://www.mcs.vuw.ac.nz/~peterk/healthinformatics/tec-hi-report-06.pdf>