

Award submission

Submission from Centre for eCommerce and
Communications for actKM Awards 2010

30 September 2010



Prepared by

Helen Thompson

Director

Centre for eCommerce and Communications

University of Ballarat

PO Box 691, Ballarat VIC 3353

Email: h.thompson@ballarat.edu.au

Phone: (03) 5327 9418 / 0417 059 659

Summary

The University of Ballarat (UB) is Australia's only regional multi-sector university. We offer secondary schooling, technical and further education (TAFE), higher education, and research opportunities for 26,000 students and employ around 1,800 staff.

During 2009 a significant technological initiative was undertaken to improve the management of all UB policies and procedures. After considering a range of alternative knowledge management approaches, Planning Quality and Review (PQR) engaged the University's Centre for eCommerce and Communications (CeCC) to develop and implement a Policy Administration Management System (PAMS).

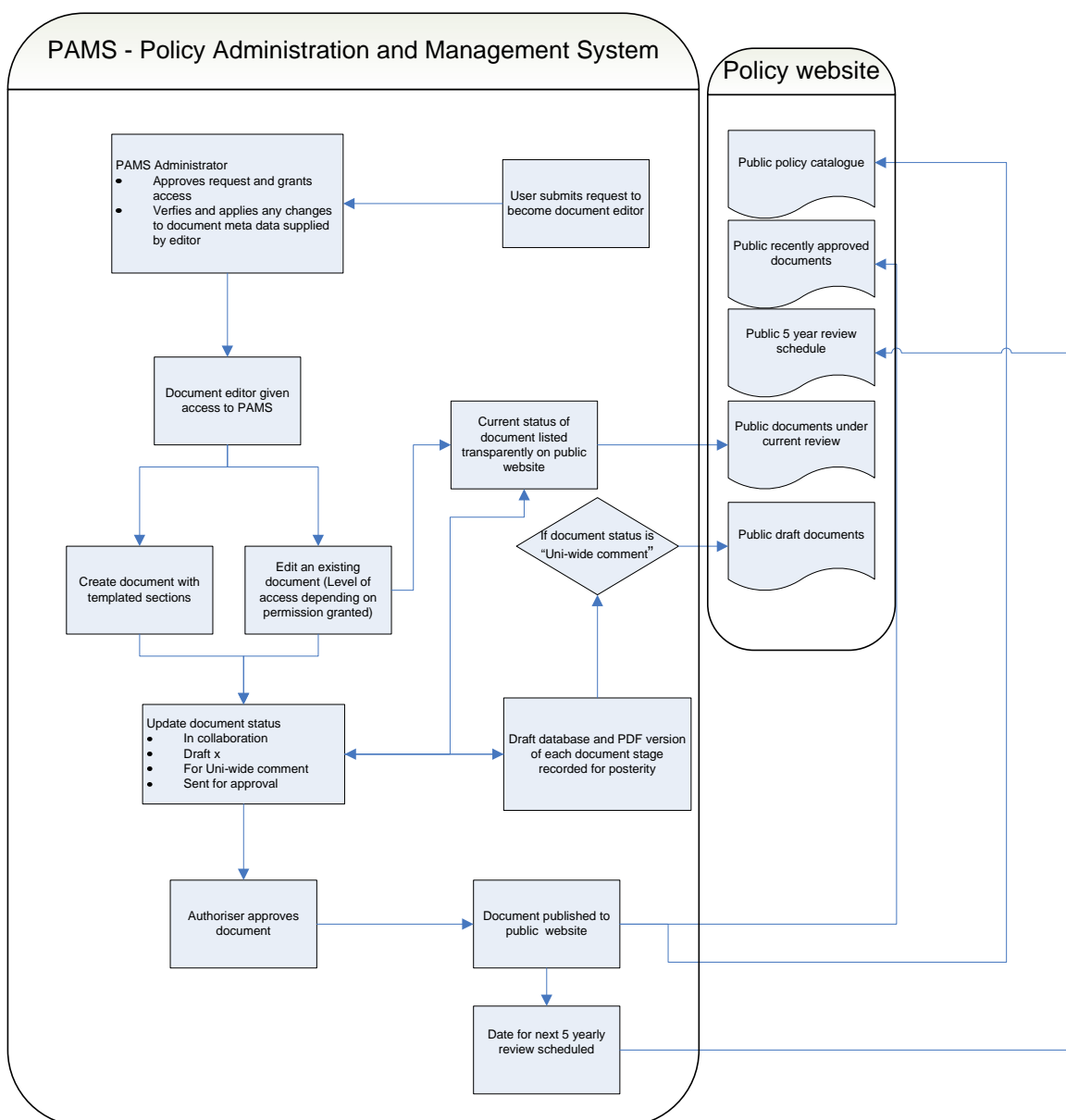


Figure 1: PAMS flowchart

The introduction of PAMS (www.ballarat.edu.au/policy) resulted in the establishment of a sophisticated web-based workflow system to support management, development, review, access and reporting for all organisational policies and procedures. The conversion from the previous manual system has increased organisational capacity, led to more effective use of resources, improved workflows, increased reliability and consistency of documents and resulted in more effective access to policy information and associated documents.

Background

This is a joint submission from Planning Quality and Review (PQR) and Centre for eCommerce and Communications (CeCC).

PQR leads the development, implementation and monitoring of planning and quality improvement strategies for the University of Ballarat. It establishes planning frameworks, collects and analyses key organisational data and coordinates quality improvement initiatives, including risk management, policy administration and compliance, benchmarking and other quality strategies.

CeCC operates as a business unit of the School of Business at the University of Ballarat. Through applied research, commercial activities and community engagement CeCC promotes innovation through the application of new technologies, and engages in knowledge transfer which has demonstrable relevance to, and impact on, communities and regions served by the University. For further information see www.cecc.com.au.

Prior to the PAMS project, CeCC developed a sophisticated, web-based product called Docbook Manager - a highly flexible web-based application which revolutionises the traditional publishing process. For more information see www.cecc.com.au/

Organisations utilising this single source publishing system include local governments, plain language legal publishers, state government departments and educational organisations. CeCC Docbook Manager is used to support editors and groups of subject matter experts in contributing updates to a centralised management interface for large books to be published online, in an easily browseable and searchable fashion. The system automates many of the workflow, editing and review processes and supports publication in multiple formats including web (HTML/Searchable) and hard copy (PDF, Helpfile, Word, Syndication or CD ROM).

The administration area provides contributors with the ability to completely manage the information within the system. Content management is performed using simple entry forms which feature What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editing wherever appropriate. This allows a contributor with only moderate computer skills to manage and enter information into the system.

Our initiative



Figure 2: Public website www.ballarat.edu.au/policy

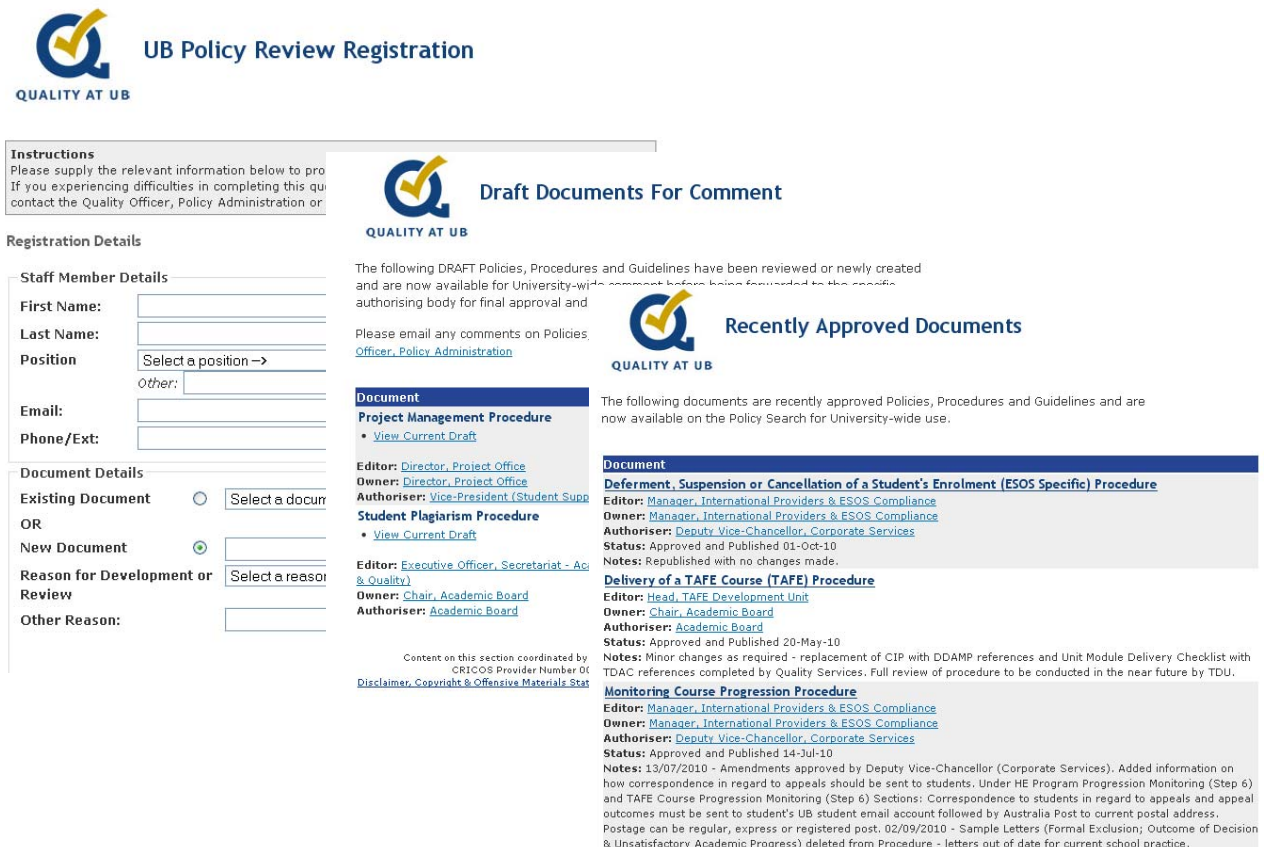


Figure 3: Examples of workflow process and automated web publishing



5 Year Review Schedule

Search options
Category:
Editor:
Owner:
Authoriser:
Span:

Legend

Current

Due For Review - 3 months

Due For Review - 1 Month

Overdue - 1 Month

Overdue - 3 Months+

Overdue - 6 Months+

Overdue - 1 Year+

<< 312 documents found matching criteria >>

Document	Pre 2010	2010	2011	2012	2013+
Academic Probation (Higher Education) Policy Editor: Manager, Workplace Relations Owner: Director, Human Resources Authoriser: Council	01-Mar-08				
Academic Probation (Higher Education) Procedure Editor: Manager, Workplace Relations Owner: Director, Human Resources Authoriser: Vice-Chancellor	01-Apr-07				
Academic Promotion for Level B Only (Higher Education) Procedure Editor: Manager, Human Resources (OD) Owner: Director, Human Resources Authoriser: Council				17-Feb-11	
Academic Promotion for Levels C, D and E (Higher Education) Procedure Editor: Manager, Human Resources (OD) Owner: Director, Human Resources Authoriser: Council				17-Feb-11	

Figure 4: Example of 5 year review schedule

Award submission

Criteria 1 - How well did the initiative achieve the objective (must relate/contribute to delivery of organisational outcomes in terms of core business)

Numerous issues regarding the management and administration of the University's policies and procedures had been identified and reported prior to the implementation of the UB Policy Administration Management System. These included:

- Outdated or incorrect version of documents being updated
- Several copies of the same document in existence, kept in numerous different locations
- Formatting, terminology, and definitions were incorrect and inconsistent
- Authorisation was not being obtained prior to publication
- Collaboration with relevant stakeholders was not occurring
- Staff were unaware how to find policies and procedures or whether they even existed

- The difference between a policy, procedure or guideline, or that these levels existed, was not well understood by staff
- Documents were years out of date, with no plans for review.
- A full-time person is required to manage the policy administration process

Key objectives of the project included:

- Effectively support the UB policy governance process by developing and deploying customised knowledge management services
- Actively engage key staff and stakeholders throughout all project planning and implementation stages
- Support more efficient and effective work practices
- Implement new processes to significantly improve cross unit cooperation and communication
- Make effective and efficient use of available technologies
- Develop systems, procedures or practices which facilitate improvement towards the achievement of the mission, vision and strategic goal of the University of Ballarat

Criteria 2 - How was the knowledge project implemented (strategies, methodology, innovation, and communications)

CeCC followed a fairly standard project methodology when implementing PAMS. Frequent communication with PQR representatives and key stakeholders was maintained throughout all project stages. Innovation aspects are demonstrated through:

- external party feedback which has highly praised PAMS for its workability and uniqueness
- the UB policy governance process being effectively supported by technology
- purpose-built software deployed to compliment the UB policy governance process
- practice change supported through rapid adoption and use of PAMS throughout UB

Consultation

- CeCC met with PQR representatives upon project commencement
- Requirements, project deliverables, timelines and budget were discussed and agreed
- Regular project implementation meetings were scheduled throughout the project implementation period

Approval

- A formal proposal was presented to PQR for their approval and sign-off
- Key stakeholder and senior management review and signoff was incorporated at all major project stages

Analysis and functional design

- Design requirements were thoroughly researched and understood before development of any prototype systems

Customisation of workflow elements

- Stakeholders were actively engaged in the development of customised workflow elements
- CeCC team members attended stakeholder forums and observed users during the project testing period

- Opportunities for further refinements were identified throughout the development period
- These refinements ultimately generated significant efficiency and quality benefits for internal and external stakeholders

Content redevelopment and import

- The PQR Quality Officer was collocated with CeCC during the content import and redevelopment period.
- CeCC worked closely with PQR and the web services team to develop the framework for knowledge base, the public website and other project elements.

Testing and quality assurance

- PQR and relevant staff were involved through extensive testing and quality assurance processes at various stages during the development period.
- Their feedback assisted in refining the delivered services.

Documentation and training

- A 'train the trainer' approach was used. This resulted in a rapid transfer of knowledge and uptake of the new service and systems.

Ongoing support

- CeCC provides ongoing support for PAMS with the primary mechanism for logging support requests is through the CeCC Online Helpdesk.

Criteria 3 - What is the organisational improvement realised (capability improvement, savings, service improvement, efficiencies, business growth)

Significant contribution to the implementation of processes to improve cross-unit co-operation and communication

- PAMS is user friendly and intuitive to use
 - The technology supports compliance with University policy governance process
 - The policy workflow process must be followed – steps can't be 'missed'
 - Once staff have been trained there is minimal requirement for support or technical assistance
- The central policy repository has enhanced information access
 - All University policies, procedures, guidelines and forms can be sourced from the one website
 - The search facility enables documents to be easily located (A-Z list, via category, scope, document type, topic, or frequency of use)
 - Formatting of documents is consistent
 - Documents are tracked (responsibilities, history of changes, stage of development, etc)
- Tasks that were previously ad-hoc or managed manually are now systemised
 - All users can access information about the status of documents
 - A five-year review schedule allows users to plan their scheduled reviews well in advance

- University-wide comment allows any staff member to submit feedback about document content
- Notification of documents 'under review' or 'recently approved' allows users to be aware of documents being reviewed, or peruse recently approved documents and keep up-to-date with changes to policy or procedure.

Significant improvement in systems, procedures and practices

- Multiple areas of the University and key staff were actively engaged throughout all project planning and implementation stages.
- Strong support and assistance was provided by IT Services to PQR and CeCC.
- PAMS has increased the University's capacity to achieve effective governance and management practices.
- The systems which have been deployed are enabling staff to work in new ways. Responsibilities for policy development and maintenance are being more effectively distributed across the organisation.
- Staff are being supported in using best-practice technologies.
- External stakeholders are frequently complimenting the University on its approach to policy administration and management.
- In the coming period PAMS will be extended to include School or Section specific guidelines.

Development of efficient and effective work practices

- Policy administration now forms only one small aspect of the PQR Quality Officer's role. Through the PAMS project there have been opportunities for personal development, enhanced job satisfaction, increased role variety and greater capacity to contribute more broadly to PQR priorities
- Efficiency gains have been generated for staff across the organisation. Less time is required to locate the most current and up-to-date version of policies, procedures and forms, to style documents consistently, etc.
- The PAMS system is being utilised as a training tool (e.g. when training staff in regulatory requirements, they can be directed to the documents which they need to access and reference. If a School has not followed procedure, staff can be directed to the PAMS site and shown the exact documents which outline the required procedure).
- University staff are now pro-active in asking how a policy or procedure can be reviewed. They are confident in the validity of the documents in PAMS and the efficiency of the review system.
- In preparing for audits, staff can ensure the related policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and published to maintain currency.
- The PAMS system facilitates more rapid responses to changes which occur through the introduction of the new University-wide systems or procedures.
- Of particular note is the ESOS Compliance Framework as available within PAMS. Under the category of ESOS (Educational Services for Overseas Students), all policies, procedures, guidelines, manuals and forms are displayed against the regulatory compliance requirement. This enables staff to understand the context of the policy and/or procedure, as well as find all ESOS-related documents in one area. In addition, the display of documents in such a manner makes it extremely easy for regulatory authorities to see and ensure the required documents are in place and are easily available for staff and/or student reference.
- Having all policy-related documents in one place ensures ease of searchability.
- Review of documents can occur as often or as quickly as the editor requires. A typical turnaround time can be as little as one week, and some ESOS documents have been updated eight times in as many months.

- Responsibility for the progress or progression of each document is allocated to a particular person within the organisation. It is the responsibility of this person to progress the document.
- Significantly enhanced ability to maintain the currency and comprehensiveness of University policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Reporting functions have been established to assist PQR in University Wide, Higher Education, and TAFE monitoring.

Effective and efficient use of available technology

- PAMS services were established by utilising a customised version of the CeCC Docbook Manager.
- Being fully online the system minimises the need for printing, doing away with extensive hard-copy folders of hard copy documents (e.g. multiple versions of the ESOS compliance folder were previously collated, printed, and disseminated. Amendments to documents would be manually circulated, with no guarantee the new document would be correctly placed in the folder, thus rendering the folder obsolete as soon as it had been distributed).
- The system-based review process ensures documents are regularly reviewed, with input from the University community, and authorisation of the final document to ensure the most accurate and up to date document is listed on the site.
- Automation of PDF production with features such page layout, heading and font styles, and headers and footer content controlled through the PAMS system achieves high levels of consistency across the repository.
- University-wide restructures or terminology changes can be simply and easily incorporated into all documents (e.g. position titles as a result of a recent organisational restructure were changed globally rather than having to manually make updates to several hundred individual documents).
- Documents relating to a particular audit can be sorted and viewed within the audit framework (e.g. AUQA [Australian Universities Quality Agency], ESOS [Educational Services for Overseas Students], AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework], VRQA [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority], VET [Vocational Education and Training], VCAL [Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning], TEQSA [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency] and ISO9000 requirements).
- An editor and sub-editor can work online on the same document, enabling each one to see the other's changes, doing away with the need to print, manually review, and send and resend a document back and forth.

Criteria 4 - What were the risk and challenges and how were they managed

A range of potential risks and challenges were identified at the project outset. These included:

- Potential of project taking longer than estimated to develop and implement
- Potential for costs to exceed those estimated
- Take up of the new system by University staff may not occur, or could occur too slowly for the PAMS system to be effective
- The system may not generate the efficiencies anticipated

Comprehensive planning, rapid prototype deployment, co-location of the Quality Officer with the CeCC development team and regular communication with stakeholders were all key factors in managing these potential risks and challenges.

Ultimately the project was completed on-time and on-budget. The delivered functionality exceeded the expectations of PQR and senior UB management. Broad organisational wide adoption of the system has also been achieved much more rapidly than anticipated.

Criteria 5 - What is the extent of stakeholder satisfaction (internal and external, customers, partners, etc.)

PAMS supports all members of the University community involved in the development, authorisation, implementation and review of policies, procedures and associated documents that have University-wide or Higher Education/TAFE Portfolio application.

Since its launch on 1 April 2009 to 30 September 2010, the PAMS site had 98,397 visits and 271,849 page views.

Around 250 documents were initially uploaded into PAMS. Since 1 April 2009, 120 new documents have been published.

PAMS currently holds 90 policies, 165 procedures, 79 guidelines, and 318 forms.

The system has been taken up by all University schools and sections which have involvement in creating, researching or requiring policies, procedures, guidelines and forms, including Human Resources, Finance, TAFE, Higher Education, Information Technology, UB Tec, and Research.

A sample of external feedback of the PAMS system follows, and demonstrates the degree of excellence the system is delivering:

Comments from ISO Audit Sept 2009

- A new documentation management system PAMS (Policy Administration Management System) is being developed and implemented to provide improved control over policy and procedural updates for UB.
- The program is expected to be completed by the end of 2009. Once completed specific guidelines for editors will be implemented.
- Existing processes for updating QMS documentation continued to apply at the time of the audit.
- Based on the demonstration of PAMS provided during the audit it appears to be an excellent system for managing review and distribution of management system documentation. Of particular interest was the opportunity of stakeholders to be included in the consultation process and having a set number of days to provide feedback on new or amended documentation.
- Document review is exceptionally well done with PAMS flagging the status of review status of all documents loaded into it, eg; green for current, blue for > 3 months until the document is due for review, orange for < 3 months overdue and red for over 12 months.
- PAMS provides excellent traceability and records for changes to policies and procedures, and includes records of collaboration and document status.

External feedback on PAMS

"I have been looking at your website and was wondering with your policies and procedures etc. are you housing them in SharePoint? I am rather impressed with the layout and ease of access."

Craig Hall, Team Leader, Teaching Learning & Quality, Bendigo TAFE

"I am currently studying Human Resources and part of my assessment is to find out how organisations review their policies and procedures.

So I came across the University of Ballarat website through Google and found the 5 year review link very helpful! and has been the only website so far I have been able to make any notes."

Gery

"I have been taking a peak at your web site. How fantastic!

I am currently in the process of updating a number of our corporate document templates (policy, procedure, guideline, protocols etc) and was wondering if you could provide me with templates of what the University has developed?

I have tried the Australian Govt and they are currently in the process of developing their own so they were unable to assist. Your assistance is greatly appreciated."

*Erin Dodge, Policy and Information Resources Officer, Strategic Portfolio Projects,
Strategic and Portfolio Services, Department of Health and Human Services*