# CASE STUDY: QUALI-R

## QUALITY TRACKING AT RAVENSBOURNE


## SUMMARY

The Quali-R project demonstrated how emergent technologies can help make the institutional processes of quality assurance (QA) and quality enhancement (QE) more efficient, engaging and effective. This was achieved by implementing a system that automatically created time-delimited actions from narrative documentation and exposed them via standards-based syndication technologies. This allowed improved management of actions in both institutional and user-owned systems.


## THE CHALLENGE

QA and QE is an enterprise process dealing with data from both inside the institution (committees and course monitoring reports) and outside the institution (external examiners). Typically, such processes are managed centrally with the results being shared with stakeholders only at critical points. Stakeholders may therefore be unaware of ongoing progress, which can lead to an undercurrent of dissatisfaction.

The Quali-R project investigated whether emergent web technologies could make quality processes more visible, so that stakeholders can see and engage with them in an ongoing way. The project also investigated whether providing such opportunities was sufficient to actually stimulate increased participation in institutional processes.

## THE SOLUTION

A small-scale platform was implemented to track and manage QA & QE actions through standards-based syndication and aggregation. A web-service client was developed to extract actionable items from the narrative documents used in quality processes and convert them into time-delimited actions and tasks. The extracted items were made available as RSS feeds (for status) and iCalendar feeds (for deadlines), allowing syndication and aggregation, maximising the potential for consumption and reuse, by both institutional systems such as a VLE and user-owned technologies.

To help embed this new system in the normal administrative practice of the institution, staff engaging with the revised processes were supported through workshops and individual support as well as documentation.

## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The stakeholders in the institutional processes of QA/QE became better informed and more involved through consultation, discussion, reflection and ownership. The processes themselves became more transparent and efficient through the elimination of duplicated activities, the improved structuring of information and the simplification and streamlining of progress monitoring.

Overall, there was a positive impact on the understanding of and attitudes to the application of emergent technologies to enhance existing institutional processes.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project identified significant issues relating to innovation and institutional change. For example, while fostering a culture of openness and reflective practice through emergent technologies are received positively as principles, in practice they can be problematic and uncomfortable for both the institution and individuals.

Emergent technology can be a powerful driver for change in such well-established routines and procedures that may otherwise be resistant to change. For example, moving from processes that traditionally emphasise quality assurance to those that focus on enhancement can require considerable shifts in perception.

Technology needs to be implemented in a way that balances the needs of the enterprise with those of the people who serve it. For example, staff did not routinely describe aims for change in an actionable way in narrative documents. The project therefore had to balance the need for automated machine processing with the narrative richness of human communication.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further Quali-R project reports, documentation and outputs are available from:
**http://confluence.rave.ac.uk/confluence/display/SCIRCQUALIR/Home**

JISC IRET programme
**http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/emergetech.aspx**

JISC IRET supporting studies and synthesis project
**http://jisciret.jiscinvolve.org/**

JISC
**http:// www.jisc.ac.uk/**