

AUSTRALIAN FIRST FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

"We see an investment in people as a strategy for improving the performance of the library..."

Long recognised for its philosophy of quality and service excellence, the University of Wollongong Library continues to raise the bar for performance by becoming the first organisation in Australia to be recognised with the international Investors in People Standard – Silver.

University Librarian Margie Jantti says the impact on the library of this achievement and the overall approach to the application of best practice in the workplace has been significant. And the library has the figures to prove it.

"We look to client and stakeholder satisfaction as one of our key performance indicators," said Margie.

"Our satisfaction measures have improved significantly over the past decade, ranking the library in the top quartile for performance and the top five nationwide in the International Student Barometer Survey used by Australian universities, while the Library Client Survey used by most Australian university libraries positions us in the top quartile ranking across five of the six assessment categories, an outcome that has been sustained for nearly six years".

Staff satisfaction and their sense of involvement and commitment are also critical indicators of how well the principles of Investors In People (IIP) are applied, along with the capacity for change. A benchmark *Voice Project Survey* conducted in 2010 saw improved performance scores for already high benchmarks for organisational commitment and job satisfaction, along with improved service quality and efficiency gains.

"We see an investment in people as a strategy for improving the performance of the library and we saw attaining this international standard as a natural fit with our values and ethos for exceptional performance," said Margie.

"There is real value in using external reference points to challenge perceptions and to refresh our thinking of what best practice is. The Investors in People standard was also complementary to our adopted management framework based on the Principles of Business Excellence, as described in the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF)." she said.

In a climate of accelerating change, the ability of individuals to develop an array of skills and knowledge that promote flexibility, innovation and creativity will be a key determinant of an organisation's future success or failure. Measures such as these are eloquent examples of the potential returns on investment in staff.

The aim of IIP is to improve the effectiveness and productivity of an organisation and provide better services through strategic development of the workforce. The framework of the standard consists of 10 indicators, underpinned by 39 evidence requirements reflecting world's best practice. The standard focuses on business and leadership strategy, learning and development, people management, performance measurement, and continuous improvement. All 39 evidence requirements must be met to achieve certification.

Evaluation against the IIP principles provides an opportunity to specifically test the application and integration of human resource management strategies and

the success of individual and organisational change management strategies.

Assessment against the

standard can assist in determining whether a return on investment in people management and development strategies is being achieved.

University of Wollongong Library was first certified against the IIP standard in 1999 but a change in the program in 2010 offered an opportunity to celebrate further achievement beyond existing compliance requirements.

To achieve the silver standard, University of Wollongong Library presented results of a self review and a story board. The library was assessed during a two day site visit by an accredited IPP reviewer who interviewed staff, evaluated the self review and conducted a test of policy, procedure and practice integration.

The library met the additional 76 evidence requirements for recognition at silver status and became the first organisation in Australia to achieve this prestigious level of best practice.

"IIP has encouraged us to develop a range of systems and procedures to tightly align all of our people initiatives back to the vision, mission and business plan, and to think critically about evidence and success measures," said Margie.

"We are now much more strategic in identifying and supporting staff development needs.

"Recognition as a Silver status organisation acknowledges the role of the staff, their efforts, contribution, and enthusiasm in sustaining our high performance culture and ensuring high satisfaction rates with students and staff. It affirms the commitment of the library leadership team for sustaining a vision for creating a highly skilled workforce, innovative and client-centred services and being forward thinking in the management of and access to scholarly information resources."

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Margie Jantti

Investors in People Framework: The 10 Indicators

1. Business strategy
2. Learning and development strategy
3. People management strategy
4. Leadership and management strategy
5. Management effectiveness
6. Recognition and reward
7. Involvement and empowerment
8. Learning and development
9. Performance measurement
10. Continuous improvement

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