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## Overview

### **Business Challenge**

To deliver on its value proposition of flexible, quality courses in an open environment, Open Universities Australia needed an in-depth understanding of its students. With a business growth rate over 20 percent per annum, the range and volume of data collected exceeded capabilities of existing reporting and analysis tools.

### **Solution**

IBM® Business Partner\* Certus Solutions designed and implemented a new analysis and reporting solution based on IBM Cognos® Business Intelligence and IBM Cognos TM1 to enable better, faster decision-making and enhance productivity and work quality.

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# Open Universities Australia meets needs of growth through Business Intelligence

*Leading online learning organisation enhances data analysis and reporting with IBM Cognos Business Intelligence*

Since 1993, Open Universities Australia (OUA) has helped over 200,000 students achieve their educational and career goals. The national leader in online learning, OUA offers students a flexible way to access higher education and enhance professional development. By recognising students' needs for a learning option that fits into their lives, OUA is offering people the choice to study online anytime, anywhere and at a pace that suits them.

OUA provides opportunities for anyone, no matter their age, location or previous education to study towards the same qualifications as on-campus students. Helping students undertaking online higher education or professional development to transform their lives, OUA offers over 1,400 units and 170 qualifications online, all taught by more than 20 leading universities and other tertiary education providers around Australia.



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## Business Benefits

- Better and faster decision making
  - Greater productivity and business efficiency
  - Managers can answer queries on the spot
  - Reports produced in minutes rather than weeks
  - Users self-manage customised reporting from high-level to detailed 'drill-down'
  - Hourly data available to the Sales call centre
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## Growing demands on analysis and reporting

OUA's value proposition is to provide flexible, quality courses in an open environment. In order to deliver on that value proposition, OUA needs an in-depth understanding of the needs of students seeking courses. As the business grew, it created ever-increasing demands for reporting analysis in areas such as Marketing, Academic Products and Operations. However, with a growth rate of over 20 per cent a year, the range and volume of data being collected was exceeding the capabilities of its existing reporting and analysis tools.

Geoff Edlund, OUA's Analytics Director, determined that the business needed a system which could allow for quick analysis using 'data cubes', and reduce the time being taken to develop and produce reports. "We wanted a quick and easy way of performing data mining and conduct the analysis to support rapid decision-making and identification of value opportunities," he says.

As a result, OUA issued a tender seeking both an effective reporting system and a highly-experienced partner with the business and technology skills to deliver it.

## A scalable solution for competitive advantage

Having evaluated a range of options, OUA selected IBM Cognos BI as it demonstrated key benefits over other systems offered. Geoff Edlund says that he saw IBM Cognos BI as "highly scalable – with the ability to be incorporated with a set of other IBM products to cover reporting, business analysis, modelling and financials."

"We could see IBM Cognos would give us a competitive advantage, through improved reporting on our students, courses and business channels," he says.

OUA chose IBM Business Partner Certus Solutions to implement its new Business Analysis system, based on its capabilities and experience in similar projects with other customers.



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## Solutions Components

### Software

- IBM Cognos BI:
  - Cognos Framework Manager
  - Cognos Transformer
  - Cognos Report Studio
  - Cognos Analysis Studio
- IBM Cognos TM1

### IBM Business Partner

- Certus Solutions
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## Communication is key to project success

Certus conducted the project in ten phases and a standard System Development Lifecycle (SDLC) was used to craft a solution that closely met OUA's business needs. The deliverables included:

- Materialised views
- Metadata Model using Framework Manager
- A data cube created through Cognos Transformer
- Reports and dashboards using Cognos Report Studio
- Ad Hoc reporting and analysis capabilities through Cognos Analysis Studio
- A financial modelling system developed in Cognos TM

To ensure effective testing, testing strategies, plans and scripts were developed. It was essential for the right OUA business partners and users were involved in User Acceptance Testing (UAT) sessions to ensure constructive feedback. Certus developers worked on site with OUA's own team – enabling 'shadowing' and knowledge transfer to develop in-house skills that would assist future extension and support of the solution.

Certus delivered strong and deft project management throughout to ensure the solution was delivered on budget. Based on previous experience, it knew that a key factor in successful projects is consistent communication with relevant stakeholders. In the OUA project this started with cementing buy-in from senior management. Throughout the engagement process, weekly status meetings supported by status reports ensured plans were adhered to as the project progressed.



### Better, faster decision-making

The analysis and reporting system implemented delivered clear benefits to OUA's Academic Products, Sales and Marketing teams. New levels of granularity of reporting now support better and faster decision making. Managers can answer queries about students, courses, and business channels on the spot – and faster reporting has resulted in greater productivity and business efficiency. For example, reports that once took weeks to produce now take just minutes.

Importantly, users can self-manage the system now it has been implemented – with the knowledge transfer Certus effected contributing to the on-going success of the initiative. Users can create their own customised reporting – from high-level overviews to detailed drill-down reports.

The system has had a major impact on OUA's student services effort – with regular data and reports available to student advisors. Plus, increased visibility and the implementation of student advisor and business channel metrics have resulted in improved productivity and work quality.

With initial delivery of the business analytics and reporting system to OUA's Product, Sales and Marketing departments deemed a success, the solution is being implemented enterprise-wide across other operational and strategic areas.

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*“We could see IBM Cognos would give us a competitive advantage, through improved reporting on our students, courses and business channels.”*

— Geoff Edlund, Analytics Director,  
Open Universities Australia

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## About Certus Solutions

Certus Solutions Business Analytics and Information Management practice is trusted by its clients to deliver end-to-end solutions incorporating enterprise reporting, analytics, budgeting and forecasting, data warehousing, master data management, and information governance solutions. As the largest dedicated IBM software and services partner in Australia, it brings process, people and technology together.

Certus has a reputation for excellence, the highest quality staff, and the delivery of true business value to more than 500 clients; its rapid growth has been predominantly supported by repeat engagements and word-of-mouth referrals. Clients appreciate its track record in delivering rapid ROI on the widest range of IBM-based solutions from collaboration, information and assets, infrastructure and web-based solutions alongside managing complex licensing issues.

Certus' business analytics and information management experts assist clients to strategically govern information, empowering them to monitor, report, analyse, forecast and predict in order to make the right decisions quickly.

## About IBM Business Analytics

IBM Business Analytics software delivers actionable insights decision-makers need to achieve better business performance. IBM offers a comprehensive, unified portfolio of business intelligence, predictive and advanced analytics, financial performance and strategy management, governance, risk and compliance and analytic applications.

IBM software assists companies to spot trends, patterns and anomalies, compare "what if" scenarios, predict potential threats and opportunities, identify and manage key business risks and plan, budget and forecast resources. With these analytic capabilities our customers around the world can better understand, anticipate and shape business outcomes.

## For more information

For further information or to reach an IBM representative please visit [ibm.com/analytics](http://ibm.com/analytics)

Contact Certus Solutions on 1300 658 720 (Australia) or 0800 CERTUS (New Zealand)

## Request a call

To request a call or to ask a question, go to [ibm.com/business-analytics/contactus](http://ibm.com/business-analytics/contactus)

An IBM representative will respond to your enquiry within two business days.



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