

Concurrent Session D
Monday 12 September 2016
2:25pm – 3:15pm



Session 4
Comparing Academic Workload Models
Dr Stijn Dekeyser
University of Southern Queensland

Dr Stijn Dekeyser is an Associate Professor of Computing at the University of Southern Queensland and is the immediate past Head of Department of Mathematics and Computer at USQ. During his tenure as Head he focused strongly on academic staff management, with a particular interest in workload management. Since returning to regular duties he has worked on several aspects of academic workload, including working with various Australian universities on the management of allocations and benchmarking models.

The Australian higher education sector has undergone significant changes over the last two decades, and is set to be challenged by various pressures well into the future. A recent report on the higher education workforce of the future identified agility of its workforce as the foremost attribute that a university must possess to be successful going forward. Furthermore, the report singled out more flexible workload models as a critical factor. In previous research we have found that workload models vary significantly, both between universities, and between sections within a university. We have also found that models are evolving rapidly and are being consolidated at ever higher levels within the academic structure of institutions.

In this paper we report on our preliminary findings from a research project that aims to compare nineteen workload models being used in nine Australian universities. We detail the methodology used, including the use of a novel intermediate representation of workload models, the translation into a structured database, and the simulation of models in specialised workload management software. Through the introduction of a classification scheme for workload activities, we show where models offer broad agreement throughout the sector, but also where there are highly significant differences. The observed differences offer a partial indication of the range of resourcing levels existing in higher education today.

The results from this study will be of considerable value to institutions, or their sections, aiming to enhance workforce flexibility through the complex and sensitive review of existing academic workload models.

