STAR Courses:
An Effective Marketing Tool, or a Community Service?

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Introduction

The Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintec) Marketing and Student Recruitment unit manages STAR programmes on behalf of the institute. Their main role, in this context, is to assist secondary schools in smoothly transitioning their students from school into tertiary education.

They are also responsible for helping establish and manage the STAR funded taster courses with the Wintec schools participating in the programme.

The Wintec School of IT has been offering two taster courses, interactive multimedia technologies and games programming, since 2009 and 2010, respectively.

A recent Wintec statistical marketing report provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the STAR funded programme and the role it fulfils in engaging with secondary schools.

Content

STAR funded programmes were offered by ITPs, following a 1996 ministerial reference group recommendation. They posited that additional funding for secondary schools could provide relevant and beneficial programmes in non-national curriculum courses for their senior students. This included the provision of short introductory courses that would give students a taste of a tertiary education, or work experience.

According to the MoE STAR has now become one of the most widely used secondary school resources for addressing the issues of engagement and relevance in the senior schooling years. But is it fulfilling its objectives in terms of student progression onto full time programmes?

Figure 1 illustrates the number of School of IT STAR enrolments for each of the four years that the taster courses have been offered.

A total of 425 STAR enrolments have occurred over this period with just 12, or 3% of the STAR students, progressing onto School of IT full time programmes.

Other Wintec STAR funded programmes, from 2007 to 2011, have contributed a total of 36 progressions onto full time ICT programmes. Conversely, 3 progressions onto full time programmes in other Wintec schools; i.e. Media Arts and the School of Business, have resulted from School of IT STAR enrolments.

Conclusion

Given the 120% growth in STAR enrolments between 2009 and 2012, one could successfully argue that the School of IT is helping strengthen Wintec's relationship with secondary schools.

This is meeting one of the key objectives of the MoE STAR funding initiative by assisting secondary school students make an informed decision about pathways to tertiary education and/or work.

Therefore, it could be argued that the relatively low progression rates from STAR enrolments to full time programmes, including those in the School of IT, are largely irrelevant.

References

Ministry of Education http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/Schools/Initiatives/STAR/AboutSTAR.aspx (Accessed April 2012)

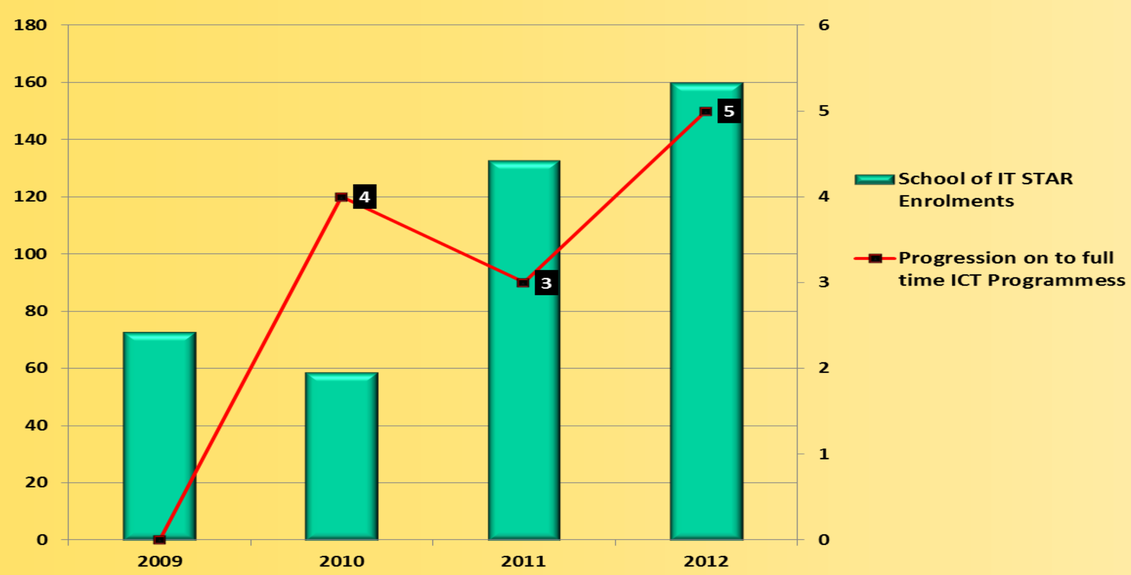
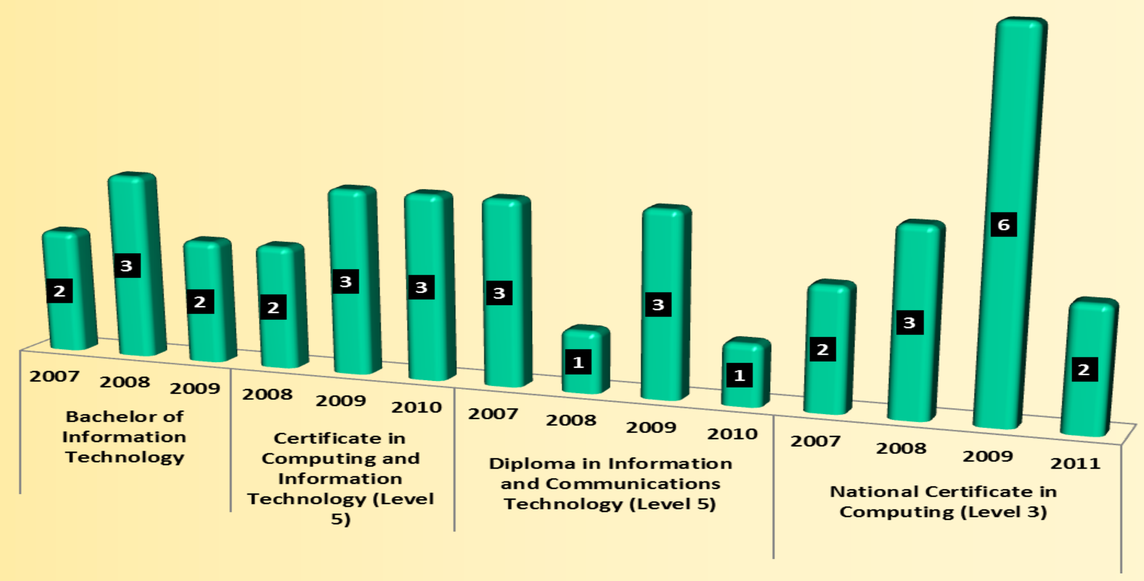
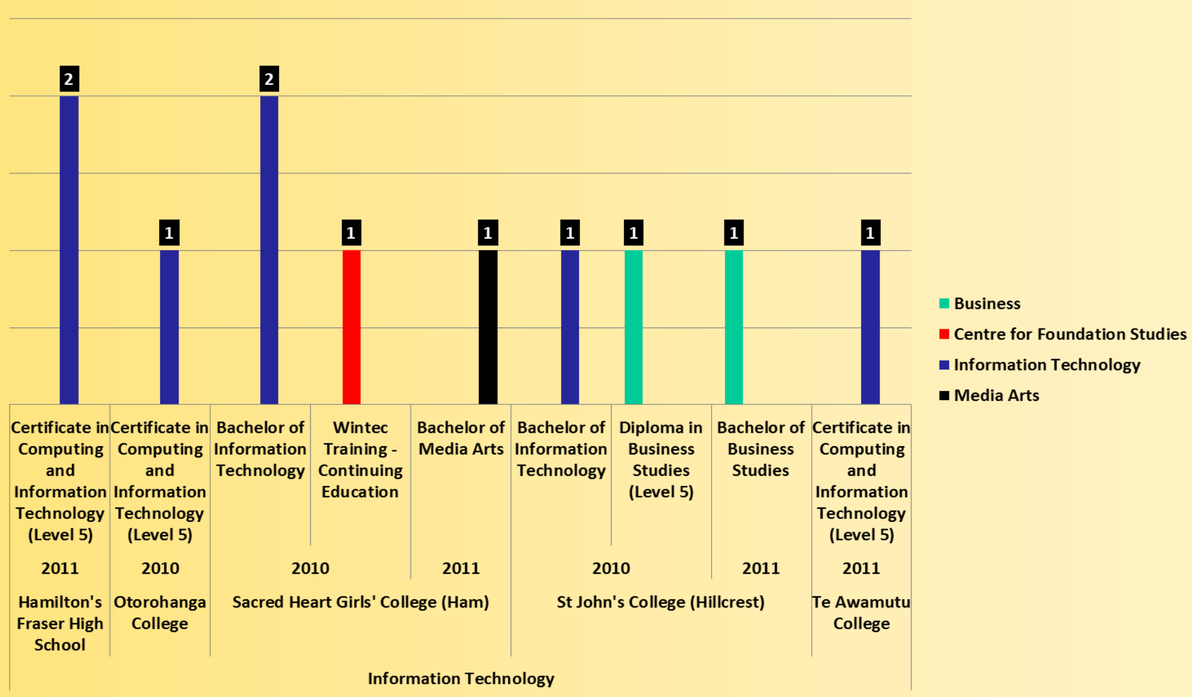


Figure 1 STAR Enrolments & Progressions

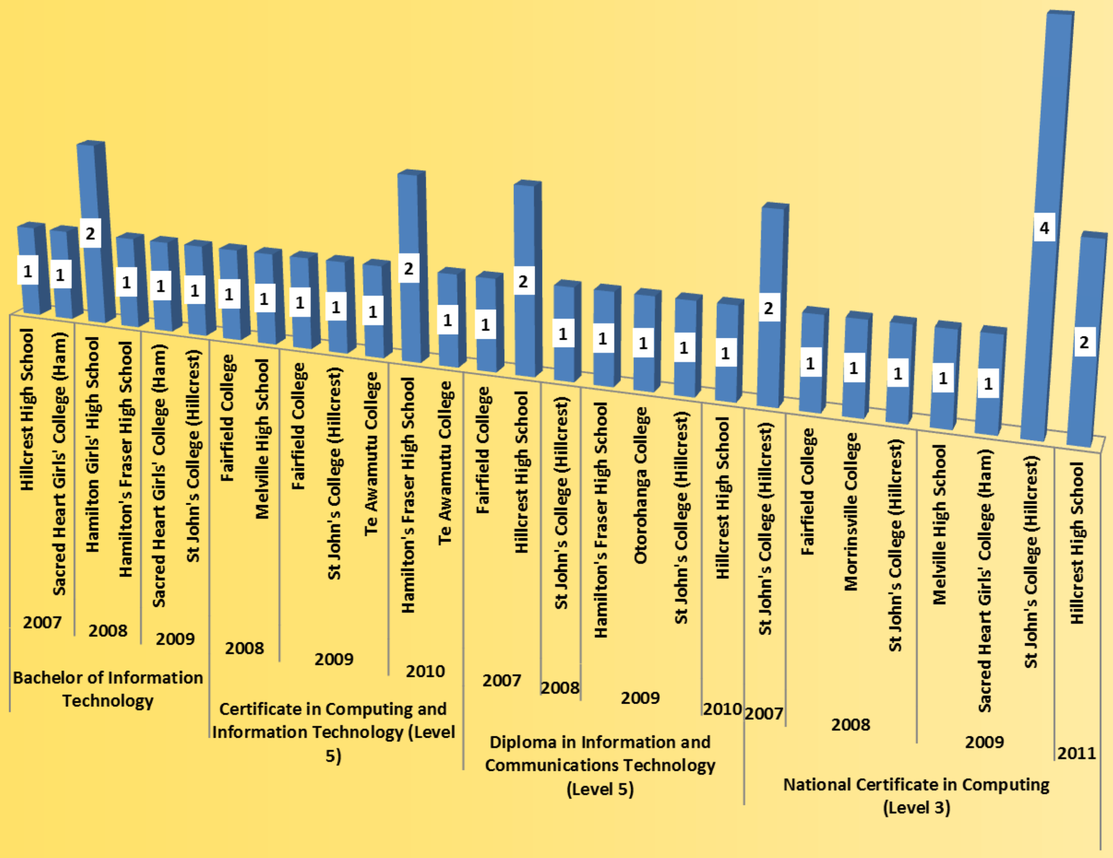
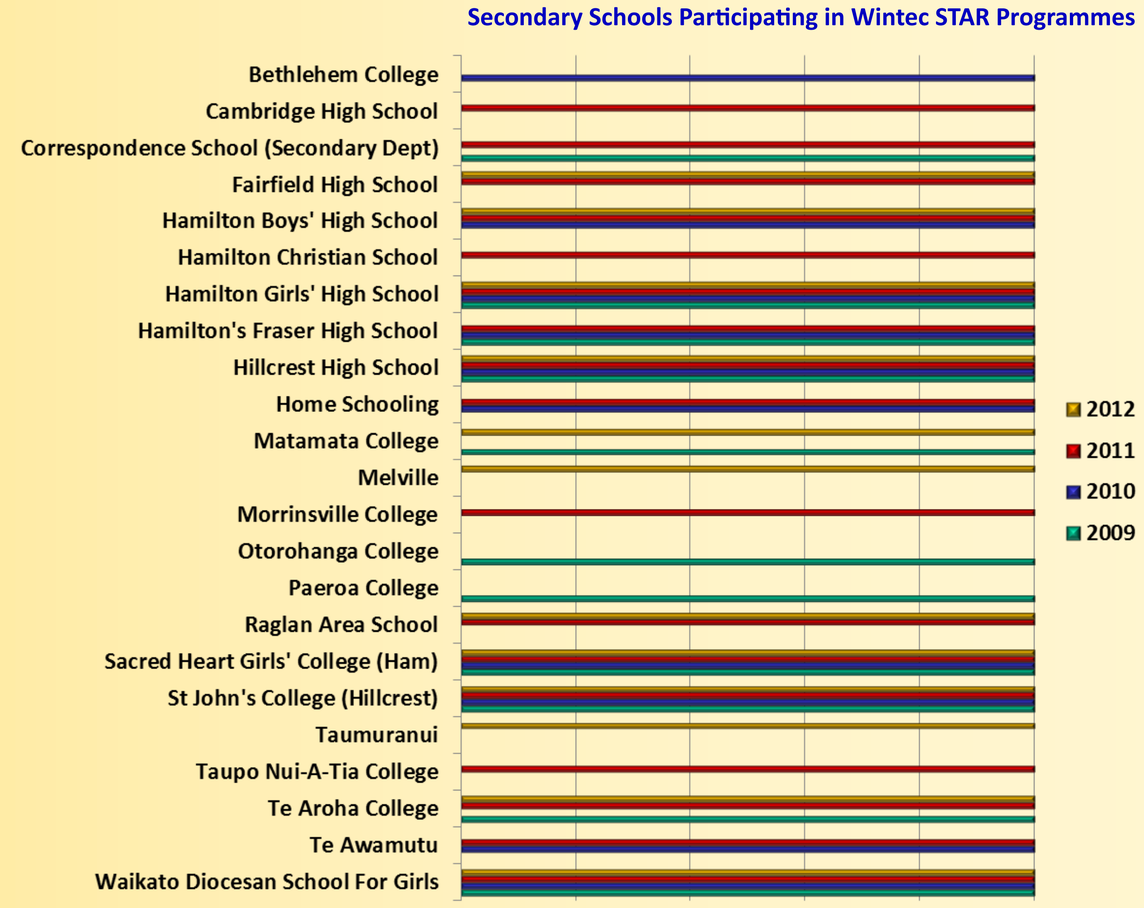


School of IT STAR Enrolments -Progression into Full Time Programmes @ Wintec

STAR Progressions (All Programmes) into School of IT Programmes



STAR Progressions to Wintec School of IT Career Pathways by Secondary School & Year



Secondary Schools Participating in Wintec STAR Programmes