IT Masters
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Melbourne-based Online Education Pioneer IT Masters Celebrates its 20th Anniversary.

IT Masters is celebrating 20 years as a leader in online IT higher education. Through a partnership with Charles Sturt University, they have developed courses that focus heavily on the knowledge of industry professionals and have continued to keep up with rapidly advancing technologies by staying true to their core values of being industry-led and student-focused.

These courses (including the then-emerging Cyber Security field) commenced when IT Masters' founder, Martin Hale, saw a need in the tech community to provide higher education to professionals who had maybe missed out on formal qualifications but often had many years of experience and a load of industry certifications. Martin approached Charles Sturt with a vision of a joint academic and industry-based degree structure where half of the subjects were provided by Charles Sturt and half by IT Masters using active industry professionals.

That structure endures to this day and is still highly unusual, if not unique, in post-graduate education, giving ITMasters/Charles Sturt students the best of both worlds.

Online course delivery has of course greatly improved, progressing from printed texts and static online lectures with bulletin boards for chat to highly interactive online lectures and discussion forums where a diverse range of students can learn collaboratively.

"When we started, it was much harder for the students. We had to mail out their packages each session, and most of them were on dial-up internet, so it could be slow and painful, but they persevered and succeeded: over 8,800 students have attended our masters and graduate certificate courses since 2003," says CEO Chantelle Hale.

"A key part of IT Masters' success is our free short courses, which reflect and add to the content of our degrees. Over 500,000 students have enrolled in these short courses since we started, and they give confidence and practice to our future students studying at post graduate levels," said Ms. Hale. "We were ahead of the curve in 2003, and we are still at the forefront of the current wave in online post graduate education in 2023."

"I want to pay tribute to Charles Sturt University, they took a chance on a small company with a big idea and backed us all the way. Our 20-year partnership is unparalleled, and we are always grateful for Charles Sturt's generosity and desire to innovate."

IT Masters and Charles Sturt were the first higher education providers to introduce the following into postgraduate IT degrees:

- 100% online learning for IT higher education

- Recognition of industry certification credit in our courses

- Dual academic and industry-led course structure

- Postgraduate pathways for students without undergraduate qualifications

- Free university-level short courses to allow students to try online learning risk-free

All this innovation has contributed to IT Masters/Charles Sturt being for many years the leader in the number of online post graduate students in IT, and even after the massive expansion of online education into the sandstone universities since the pandemic, IT Masters/Charles Sturt still rank in the top 3 institutions nationally.

"Of course, none of this would have been possible without our dedicated mentors, who are leading the industry subjects. They are motivated by a desire to give back to their industry and they work all day then teach until late at night," Ms. Hale said, "and our students are in a class of their own, often juggling a busy work life, families, and study at the same time. They consistently rank in the top 80% of students at Charles Sturt. Without them, we could not exist. A big thanks to every student that has started one of our courses. We like to think that our *student-first* approach improves our students' ability to thrive in their courses."

Sometimes pioneers do succeed through intensive effort and dedication to students and our mentors.

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