Australian uni's Linux masterclass a first

By Louisa Heam
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Australia's Charles Sturt University will next month kick off the world's first certified masters degree in Linux, the open source computer operating system.

Martin Hale, adjunct senior lecturer at the university, said the course had been launched in Australia first because Charles Sturt was already successfully running a number of distance education IT masters courses.

The degree course is being run in partnership with enterprise IT company Novell, which also runs its own training certifications schemes.

The university said it had decided to establish the course based on the level of interest in the marketplace and the growing maturity of Linux.

Mr Hale said after just two weeks, the online course outline had received 763 visitors and with 128 registrations of interest and had just accepted its first application. "There is a lot of interest in Linux out there," he said.

Graduates of the two-year course will become certified Linux engineers and Mr Hale said it was most suited to those wanting to move into senior technical or engineering roles.

The course will comprise a mixture of distance education coupled and practical training courses with Novell's IT training provider Excom Education and was designed for professionals wanting to continue full time employment while studying.

Candidates must have completed an undergraduate degree and have at least two years in a technical role, or spent four years in a senior technical role.

Only Australian candidates will be accepted onto the course during its first trimester which begins in March, but will open to international students later in the year, Mr Hale said.

There are six scholarships on offer. Three are for Novell employees, one for an employee at a Novell partner company, one for the top female applicant and the last is based on merit and open to all candidates.

Based on demographics associated with students in other technical masters degrees, Mr Hale said he expected 94 per cent of applicants to be male, with an average age of 34 and 9-1/2 years of industry experience.

News of the course was generally well received on Novell's blog, but some wanted to know why it had only been introduced in Australia.

"Why on earth in Australia, this shud be all over the world. how can they expect this to be good news if its stuck to Australia," wrote one.
Another wrote: "Why Australia? this should be rolled out in the US and Europe first... or somehow globally via the Internet?"

Paul Koukounaras, managing director of Exom said the course would help to encourage further uptake of Linux certification.

"In the past 12 months, we have experienced unprecedented demand for Novell's SUSE Linux training courses and certifications, from both Linux and traditional Novell IT professionals."

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