CASE STUDY

University of Southampton and Higher Digital Create Roadmap of Top Priority Customisations to Simplify Student Information System

University of Southampton

THE SUCCESS STORY:

Prioritising a roadmap

The University of Southampton (UoS) is a world-class research-intensive university and a founding member of the Russell Group. There are currently in excess of 22,000 students on campus. Using conventional business metrics, the University is a large enterprise with an annual turnover of £500m and a staff establishment in excess of 5,000 FTE. Its successes are acknowledged in international and UK league table rankings which place the University consistently within the top 20 in the UK and top 80 in the world.

Recently, the university commissioned the seasoned Higher Digital team to undertake a project to identify and analyse customisations made to the Ellucian Banner Student Information System and to define the strategies to de-customise the university's Banner System.

Andrew Sherwood, Senior Project Manager at the University of Southampton stated: "The core of any university is its Student Information System. This contains almost all the data associated with the student's journey towards achieving a qualification from the University. The University procured Ellucian Banner over 15 years ago and customised it over the years to address our business needs. This is no longer a sustainable strategy, so we looked to Higher Digital to help understand the customisations, to define a transformation path and to prioritise this path meaningfully through a roadmap."

CUSTOMER

The University of Southampton

CHALLENGES

The university recognized its Ellucian Banner Student Information Systems, as it had evolved with heavy customisations (500+) over 15 years, was not sustainable. They needed to modernise the SIS to simplify processes, gain operational benefits, improve security and better serve students.

RESULTS

✓ Higher Digital created a prioritisation tool based on a set of criteria scoring customisations developed with UoS and from there, developed a roadmap for the way forward, allowing for potential rescoring and course correction over time to best serve the entire enterprise.

✓ Based on the roadmap, UoS is transforming previous customisations and moving away from obsolete technologies to be ready for whatever the future brings.

The project was broken into three stages:

- **Discovery:** reviewing and scoping the reach and scale of all Banner customisations
- **Current State Report:** grouping the 500+ Banner customisations into 40 areas, including integrations linked to their support of operational processes and impact statements for their removal.
- **Production of the Delivery Roadmap:** containing strategy options required for transforming each customisation with estimated cost, time and complexity identified.

To tackle the transformation of customisations, the Higher Digital team followed proven best practices to inventory, analyse, and ascertain the retiral path to bring the next steps that would deliver the greatest benefit to the university into focus. The transformation paths identified were:

- Retire, no longer needed.
- Retire in favour of baseline functionality.
- Modify business processes to utilise baseline functionality.
- Retire in favour of using new or expanded third-party application functionality.
- Redevelop the customisation to be capable of being hosted or, better still, SaaS compliant.

The university asked for a means to design a roadmap to track the project progress over time. After consideration, Higher Digital concluded that an innovative tool was needed to assemble and present the roadmap and set about developing this capability. The team defined a set of evaluation criteria for each customisation, grouped into three categories:

- Value to student experience and/or administrative process.
- Urgency with which transformation of the customisation is required.
- Effort required to transform the customisation.

Better serving the students through transforming the customisations

The goal ultimately is to simplify the student information system and its digital processes and to move to a new, more robust, better supported platform, whereby the university can better serve its students. The main benefits with this platform are much lower IT and business costs, improved security, and a more future-proof system as options for cloud hosting and SaaS become available.

Cloud-first, SaaS-compliant where possible

The recommendation for customisations that must be retained, as there is no alternative currently available or in the pipeline, is to re-programme them to ideally be SaaS-compliant or at a minimum able to be accommodated by Ellucian's cloud hosting service. In a similar vein, Higher Digital consultants recommended integrations to take advantage of new APIs and emerging no-code/low-code integration technologies from Ellucian and other vendors.

As a result of these recommendations, the University of Southampton expects within the next few years to be able to adopt new cloud-based infrastructure and be on a journey to SaaS for its Student Information System in line with the strategies for other vital ERP systems.

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