

SunGard Higher Education Lays Foundations for a 'Future Proofed' Unified Digital Campus at Royal Holloway

Royal Holloway, University of London, enjoys an international reputation for the highest quality teaching and research across the sciences, arts, and humanities. It is among the top ten research-led university institutions in the country and is often recognized for its Founder's Building, one of the most spectacular university buildings in the world. Officially opened by Queen Victoria in 1886, Royal Holloway has continued to grow in size and status. Home to a vibrant community of 7,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students from more than 120 countries, its spacious 135 acre campus provides an impressive range of modern academic and social facilities in Surrey, close to London.

Growth and fierce competition for students have presented Royal Holloway with administrative and communications challenges. However, as an institution at the forefront of innovation, Royal Holloway has planned carefully for future growth by investing in software solutions aimed at improving the efficiency of its administrative and communications systems throughout the campus.

In late 2003, Royal Holloway decided to review its system for electronic student record keeping, which had previously been handled by the Capita 'HEMIS' Student Record System. HEMIS had only been in place for eight years but support for this system was to be withdrawn by Capita and this prompted the institution to look for an alternative solution. As a result, a project board was formed with Dr. Phil McGeevor, the academic registrar at Royal Holloway, as the senior business user. A tendering process produced ten expressions of interest and seven complete tenders. After an extensive selection process, SunGard Higher Education's Banner administrative suite emerged as the preferred solution.

Results with SunGard Higher Education Solutions:

- Improved distribution of materials across the university
- The tools to support efficient, cost effective administration
- Improved data on applicants and ease of communicating with prospects

Dr. McGeevor explained, "Our main strategic goal was to select a system that would serve our needs in the short, medium, and long term. We wanted to form a working relationship with a company that had the vision and resources to innovate in line with our own ambitions and plans for growth. We were already changing our communication with students through the use of uPortal and our technical team believed Luminis would give a secure foundation for such communication in the future. Banner's workflow would give us the tools to support efficient, cost effective administration. Finally, a site visit to another SunGard Higher Education customer located in Wales made an extremely favourable impression because it showed how Banner worked in an institution comparably sized with our own. The success at Bangor proved to be a crucial deciding factor for us."

Having selected SunGard Higher Education, the project team planned the implementation around two fixed deadlines: to run student admissions from September 2004, and to run enrolment and full student administration from September 2005. The first of these deadlines was only eight months away.

Royal Holloway
Egham, Surrey, England
Enrolment: 7,000
<http://www.rhul.ac.uk>

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"We had an ambitious target to meet and decided to put a small in-house team in place to execute the first phase," Dr. McGeevor noted. "Before long, the team had really gained an in-depth understanding of the technology behind Banner and its capabilities. This technical knowledge, combined with a thorough understanding of our administrative processes, ensured that phase one was delivered in time for the start of term in autumn 2004. The benefits were immediately apparent in the handling of admissions, the improved data on applicants and the ease of communicating with prospects.

The success in meeting this first deadline boosted confidence for the later project objectives. In the next 12 months the handling of enquiries and the distribution of booklets and materials to students was automated, the full student record created (with links to all other campus wide systems) and online enrolment introduced.

Dr. McGeevor said, "The improved distribution of materials was a real benefit that reduced the administrative burden associated with this resource intensive task. This was a 'quick win', completed by December 2004, but we didn't let this distract us from our core objective of introducing online enrolment. Online enrolment was seen as crucial to managing the continued growth of our institution and we were determined to build it into our new system. Implementation was technically complex and challenging, and once more we had an ambitious deadline of autumn 2005. However with additional consultancy and technical services help from SunGard Higher Education we again achieved our goal."

Since September 2005 the full data migration and creation of academic history has taken place together with the creation of procedures for day-to-day student administration. The most recent objective is to create the statutory return to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and this is to be followed in November 2006 by the use of the financial aid module to administer Royal Holloway's fees and bursaries programme.

In the longer term, Dr. McGeevor anticipates that the system will undergo continual improvements and concluded, "For our next exam period we will run Banner alongside our bespoke exam board system with a view to conducting the whole operation in Banner in the future. In addition, we're already planning a migration to the next version of Banner and will keep a close watch on the new features and modules available. Royal Holloway's development and the exciting possibilities that SunGard Higher Education's solutions offer, mean that we are likely to have one or two projects in progress every year. In this way, we aim to provide a first-class administration to match our academic ambitions and in doing so increase our students' satisfaction and enhance our competitive position."