

## University Of Greenwich Ushers In 'Single Sign-On' Portal With Help From SunGard Higher Education

The University of Greenwich is a leading modern UK University with three attractive campuses extending from the heart of historic Maritime Greenwich along the Thames Gateway to the rapidly regenerating area of Medway. Its Greenwich campus is home to the majority of its students and is based around important historic naval buildings designed by the famous architect Sir Christopher Wren.

Proud of its diverse student body and committed to widening participation in education, Greenwich boasts a student community of more than 20,000 students, including some 3,500 international students from more than 80 countries. Its disability and dyslexia team supports more than 700 students, and many students participate in a pioneering mentoring program.

Greenwich generates £17.5 million in research, consultancy and other commercial income every year. Two hundred and fifty-two Greenwich staff won increased average grades in the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and its research community also includes a substantial cohort of research students. Its work in the field of research has won the University two Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher & Further Education; these national awards recognise outstanding achievement, which benefits the wider community.

The university blends strong regional links and a mission for access and lifelong learning with research excellence and an international role. The establishment of a strong and consistent infrastructure is viewed as an essential part of this strategy. With this in mind, Greenwich has invested carefully in a long-term information strategy with integration and ease of use at its core. The process began in 1994 when the university undertook a strategic review of its disparate information systems. Following this exercise, Greenwich began a relationship with SunGard Higher Education to start the first phase of a process aimed at building a tightly integrated infrastructure for its student, finance, and other administrative systems, with Banner at its core.

### Results with SunGard Higher Education Solutions:

- Improved information access and reduced administrative overhead
- Round the clock visibility of staff and student resources
- Better collaboration within the institution
- A more scaleable and function-rich systems approach

Paul Butler, head of corporate information systems, University of Greenwich said, "The first phase was very much concerned with building a solid foundation of back office integrated systems that would ultimately serve the entire university and reduce administrative overhead. In addition to meeting this requirement, we had begun to realise the need to address other important issues that we share in common with institutions all over the world."

Some key challenges faced by Greenwich included:

- The increasing complexity of web-based services
- The need to simplify and improve access to information
- The increasing demands from students and staff for better provision of University services round the clock
- Expectations to create learning communities supported by an integrated means of communication and study

Mr. Butler continued, "To meet these challenges, we began to use Banner's functionality and interoperability to implement further phases, beginning with 'self service' functionality that allowed staff and students to update information in the Banner environment independently. A further phase saw the implementation of online registration the student population to register for courses and pay their fees online. When this was

University of Greenwich  
Greenwich, England  
Enrolment: 20,000  
[www.gre.ac.uk](http://www.gre.ac.uk)

ECS-255 (12/06)

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completed in August 2005, the reduced queues at registration time were clear evidence that we had succeeded in simplifying the process."

Greenwich's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and other systems used in teaching and learning were also earmarked for integration. Mr. Butler commented, "We wanted to further the university's strategy for a blended approach to learning. Up until this point, students had disparate access to a number of teaching- and learning-oriented systems, for example WebCT, our online course management; Talis, our library system; Athens, the online database of journals; and some other school-based resources. However, because the systems were not linked, separate passwords and awareness of different locations were needed, making these valuable resources less visible and accessible. Once these systems had been integrated, positive feedback on the visibility and access from staff and students regarding these resources increased markedly."

Having achieved significant progress toward integration, the commitment to the development of a university-wide portal was formally made in Greenwich's 2005-2006 Learning & Teaching strategy, which is a University wide strategy defining all aspects of the teaching and learning process and academic student experience.

A portal solution was needed to unify the systems and Butler explains, "Luminis proved an ideal platform, offering a common interface for our users by achieving single sign on to the majority of the existing web-based systems, but also providing native integration to the core back office systems we already had in place. This enabled real time provisioning of access for students and faculty based on data relationships contained in the student records system. My overall goal was to make access to our existing resources and services simpler and easier for students and staff. In achieving that goal we now have a portal infrastructure which will enable us to quickly deploy new services and resources over time."

Mr. Butler put in place a project steering group and appointed a project manager to work in cooperation with SunGard Higher Education consultants to implement Luminis. Following a period of assessment aimed at seeking input from stakeholders, the group entered the planning and implementation stages assisted by SunGard Higher Education experts.

Once in the implementation phase, the Luminis team aimed to deliver the following functionality by autumn 2006:

- Single sign on to key web-based services
- Single point of entry to web-based services
- 24-hour access to web-based services
- Access to university-wide electronic calendar system
- Group tools for academic, administrative, and social purposes
- Tools to help make communications more personalized and relevant
- Ability for users to tailor the environment to meet their specific needs
- Face-to-face, paper-based, and web-based training materials to support implementation of the portal.

## Results

With a single username and password students can now perform the following activities easily from within an online environment:

- Register
- Access grades
- View learning materials
- Participate in group discussions
- Access their library account
- Access email and calendar
- Access Athens
- Update personal and demographic information

The benefits for academic staff are also manifold, whereby as well as the list above, they can access information online regarding:

- Student grades
- Coursework for download and marking
- Interaction and communication with students

"We've improved the ways in which students, faculty and staff communicate and share information," Mr. Butler summarised. "This has enabled our users to collaborate within the institution more effectively than was previously possible. We can also benefit from significant potential to scale and grow the functionality of the system over coming years."

In the future, Mr. Butler has ambitious plans to further improve and expand the services offered through the portal. A prospective student portal is high on his list of priorities. He continued, "We want to ensure a high degree of interaction with our prospective students."

Competition for their attention is fierce and we want to be their preferred choice. Over time, we will certainly be looking to make the facility for applicants to make enquiries about courses and the facility for direct applicants to apply for admission online much more transparent and responsive using the principles of CRM and by adopting internal workflow.”

There are also plans for a research portal. “We are probably two to three years away from an enterprise research information portal, but we have heard of the benefits that other institutions have derived and we will be keen to replicate this at Greenwich in the future,” Mr. Butler added.

Mr. Butler concluded, “SunGard Higher Education has provided the tools and expert support to help us meet the challenges of the past, and also plan for the challenges we are yet to face. We are looking forward to a long and productive working relationship.”



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