

University of Huddersfield

The University of Huddersfield underpins strategy to triple research income with Unit4 Business World

The situation

With 23,000 students and 1,800 employees, the University of Huddersfield's vision is: "To be an inspiring, innovative University of international renown."

Making the achievement of this mission challenging, and like all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK, was the significant drop in government funding.

The needs

"To attract students and subsequently grow our streams of income, we realized that if we were to achieve our vision we needed to invest in facilities, despite the backdrop of funding cuts. Investment would also support our aim to triple research revenue to £18 million by 2018," said Andrew McConnell, Director of Finance, University of Huddersfield. "Central to all our ambitions would be financial sustainability and a technology solution that would facilitate strategy at a time of immense change."

A number of core business objectives were set out as part of a five-year strategy, including two embracing efficiency and effectiveness:

1. To improve core processes and performance
2. To increase academic time for research and innovation

The University also set a target to decrease academic administration by 20%.

The solution

"This would require new ways of working, especially when it came to core financial processes," said Yvonne Whiting, Head of Financial Systems, University of Huddersfield. "We felt confident that our existing Unit4 Business World ERP solution, which we implemented in 2001 and have since upgraded, would underpin all new finance and procurement initiatives, while also supporting change. Additionally we decided to implement Unit4 Research to reduce the complex administration associated with reporting to funders and government bodies."



The benefits

Unit4 Business World has enabled the University of Huddersfield to be more efficient, effective and to create a financially sustainable platform for success. It is helping the University to significantly grow its research and enterprise income and maintain customer services without having to increase resources. There is now a culture of financial awareness across the University, which fosters a shared commitment to meeting its agreed financial objectives. The University's financial accolades are considerable, including:

- It is debt free
- It has the highest HESA Financial Security Index
- Its finance team currently holds Customer Service Excellence and the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management award for "Outstanding finance team".

"Of course the system didn't in itself make these changes, but it did make them possible," continued Whiting. "Unit4 Business World gives the senior management team confidence in financial decision making. It provides a real-time view of our actual financial position so that executives, departmental heads and budget holders can make informed decisions on where, for instance, funds will make the greatest impact on student experience so that we can continue to build upon our burgeoning reputation."

UNIT4

The University has been pleased with its decision to rely on the flexibility of Unit4 Business World throughout this period of continual change. Even though schools have merged or changed structure, far from having to call upon expensive external consultants, it has been easy for internal staff to configure Unit4 Business World to reflect a new chart of accounts in a matter of hours.

“Unit4 Business World is also having a considerable impact on reducing administration and improving collaboration,” said Whiting. “Workflow, via employee self-service, is automatically providing the required information to the right people at the right time so that they spend less time on administration, and more time providing superb University services. Purchasing, from start to finish, is so much easier for our staff. Additionally the finance department has greater control over what is purchased and from whom, so that we get better value from suppliers.”

Unit4 Business World provides web payment facilities for students so that they can pay outstanding balances in a convenient manner. It also sends out payment reminders to students to keep the University’s cash flow healthy.



The University is already well on its way to achieving the 20% reduction in academic administration by removing much of the considerable complexity associated with research reporting. For the future, Unit4 Research will help academics at Huddersfield much more easily understand the full Economic Cost (FEC) of undertaking project in a sustainable manner. This will aid compliance in line with the need for all UK HEIs to identify direct and indirect costs for each research project. It will also help the University make decisions on which projects to bid for so that it can reach its goal of tripling research revenue by the most effective means possible.

In conclusion, Whiting said “The University is continually improving the student experience and delivering pioneering research and is well on its way to establishing an international reputation. None of this would be possible without a sound finance strategy underpinned by Unit4 Business World.”

About Unit4

Unit4 is a leading provider of enterprise applications empowering people in service organizations. With annual revenue north of 500M Euro and more than 4,000 employees world-wide, Unit4 delivers ERP, industry-focused and best-in-class applications. Thousands of organizations from sectors including professional services, education, public services, not-for-profit, real estate, wholesale, and financial services benefit from Unit4 solutions. Unit4 is in business for people.

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