



THE UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD CASE STUDY

Crimson provide Microsoft solutions to the University of Salford to transform student attraction, recruitment and admissions.

ABOUT CRIMSON

Crimson is a technology and recruitment company with extensive expertise in Microsoft cloud technology and IT consultancy. Crimson is part of the £1B global Harvey Nash Group and has a reputation built on delivering service solutions that support and meet customer needs.

As sector specialists, Crimson understands the complex challenges that Universities are facing and our flexible digital solutions enable institutions to improve student attraction, engagement and retention.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD

The University of Salford was founded in 1896 and gained University title in 1967. Based in Salford, Greater Manchester, the University placed 91st in The Guardian's University league 2021. With nearly 24,000 students, the University has increased its undergraduate intake by 31% in five years against a sector increase of circa 9%.



THE PROBLEM

BACKGROUND

The University of Salford attempted to implement a CRM system a number of times within seven years, with the aim to provide a hyper-personalised applicant journey which integrates with previous systems and data. With seven other different systems in operation, both on and off premise, it was vital to introduce effective integration to establish a complete view of the student journey.

KEY REQUIREMENTS

The University wanted to drive efficiency across the attraction, recruitment and admissions processes, as the number of siloed systems they had in use were negatively affecting efficiency. For attraction, which is the primary stage of the student journey, the University didn't have access to systems that would provide the digital, tailored experience it was aiming for, which in turn impacts the retention rate.

As the University was going through a digital transformation initiative, it was vital that the CRM product would help the University to develop, implement, deploy and support a solution that delivered both the technical capability and associated

business processes to improve the management of relationships with their customers, as well as supporting more efficient ways of working.

Another key requirement was to introduce a single way of working for all applications, including degree apprenticeships and international students. The University had a number of challenges when dealing with international agents, and the onboarding of international students, and so this was an area it was seeking to improve.

The University of Salford needed an agile platform that would support growth and change and could be easily updated or altered depending on requirements. By joining up the disconnected data across the organisation, the University of Salford would improve staff efficiency while supporting students throughout their higher education journey.

Self-sufficiency was key, so the University was keen to work with a partner who would be able to support them in a collaborative way, while offering technical and business expertise. By treating Crimson as part of the University of Salford team, it offered a degree of transparency which allowed for improved project efficiency and collaboration.

THE SOLUTION

Microsoft's Dynamics 365 and Power Platform products were implemented, which support digital experiences outside of the student lifecycle, and assist the University in becoming more self-sufficient. Crimson's sprint team provided tech knowledge whilst collaboratively shaping and delivering the solution and the Evergreen Management service from Crimson ensured the latest updates and capabilities are understood and are able to add value to existing and future processes.



FIRST STEPS

Implementation commenced with the attraction, recruitment and admissions processes, as these were the areas with the largest potential return on investment. Furthermore, by attracting the right student by providing the right experience, overall retention rates will also see improvement. The platform can then expand across the whole student lifecycle, driving the right behaviour across teams within the University.

The Crimson team built outward facing portals using the Microsoft Power Platform and Microsoft Dynamics 365 technologies, which allowed applicants to come in from around the globe, including international agents that are applying on behalf of their applicants. These portals are able to collect evidence documents such as qualifications or personal document details such as passports and other evidence that is required to process the application being uploaded into the portal. Other services such as interview bookings, the application journey, decisions made, and offer letters are also accessed through the system, providing a single, applicant friendly management system throughout the journey.

The portals are able to integrate student information systems such as Banner, marketing software such as Adobe Campaign, and other third-party software systems such as Gecko. The portals are micro applications that are targeted for different users, such as students, agents, and academics for feedback.

All solutions provided by Crimson used Microsoft technologies, enabling most of the project to be low-code/no-code – as only a small amount of coding was required in specialist areas. The project focused on solving key business problems, mainly a single application process irrespective of the course the applicant was applying for.

THE OUTCOME

The first release in November 2019 included an applicant portal for degree apprenticeships, international foundation year and pre-sessional English Language programme. This was followed by an Alpha release in January 2020, where the portal underwent significant refinement to its look and feel, as well as improved functionality. This enabled a period of designing, building, and refining, as well as feedback from colleagues.

This was the University of Salford's fifth attempt at implementing a CRM system, and by adding a small number of key University employees to the project team, Crimson has been able to work alongside the University to drive and deliver the project by utilising a delivery model based on an agile operation. By working closely with the University's key stakeholders, Crimson has understood all of the roles and process they require, while also providing continuous improvements.



The University of Salford have already derived value from the new solution as it has streamlined the recruitment and admissions process achieving an efficiency gain in processing applications. This reduction was due to the transition from paper-based to cloud-based data, which has streamlined processes. A further benefit to cloud-based data is that employees were able to work remotely during the coronavirus pandemic, which would have otherwise been difficult due to local data storage.



Not only have the application processes been quickened, the amount of quality applications has also increased. Through the web portal Crimson built, applications have increased for the 2021 academic year. Emphasis has been put on obtaining the right data from the start of the applications processes, to reduce further delays.

WHAT THEY SAID

"Crimson have brought a combination of practical advice that has supported the successful implementation of the Dynamics solution as well as a broader perspective that is supporting our goal of offering a sector leading experience.

We now have a really, tight team approach with focus on user journeys and stories. These are then being translated into specific project deliverables.

The agile development and implementation methodology has allowed the team to maintain momentum and focus. It has also kept motivation and focus high. "

**– John McCarthy,
Executive Director, Marketing,
Recruitment & External Relations
at the University of Salford.**



PROGRESSION

The attraction, recruitment and admissions implementations have been successful, and have improved confidence within the University of Salford's teams. The systems will be rolled out across the rest of the student lifecycle, and throughout the University.

GET RESULTS QUICKLY

Crimson's combination of a configurable, cloud-based Higher Education industry solution and a results-based implementation methodology ensures you can realise value fast. We take an agile and iterative approach to ensure we can provide rapid prototype solutions that work for you and give you the confidence to move forward.



TAKE THE CRIMSON CHALLENGE

It only takes half a day for Crimson to identify quick wins hiding inside your business development engine. We invite you to take a complimentary on-site review where we will help you identify and quantify practical opportunities to improve productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction. To learn more and to book your free review, call **Crimson's Solution team today on 01675 466 477**