



CASE STUDY:

Empowering leaders. Shaping the future.

The Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government utilises Quercus by Ellucian to cultivate a world-class educational environment for tomorrow's public servants.

A rapid expansion

The Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG) is located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The institution was launched in 2005 as the first research and teaching institution focusing on governance and public policy in the Arab world. MBRSG aims to support good governance in the UAE and the Arab world to create future leaders through an integrated system of education, research and training programmes.

The institution primarily caters to public sector professionals through post-graduate and executive education. Most recently, MBRSG has been accredited to offer a wider range of master's degree programmes taught in English and Arabic. The suite of post-graduate programmes is aligned with the UAE National Agenda, Future Government objectives, and the National Innovation Strategy.

With this expansion of its master's programmes, new academic initiatives and an impressive growth in enrolment, MBRSG determined that its current processes and technology would need to be revamped to keep up with demand.



كلية محمد بن راشد
للإدارة الحكومية
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Objective

Provide students with a more modern, robust experience while also increasing efficiency for the institution

Solution

Quercus by Ellucian

Business benefits

Improved efficiency, enhanced experience for students and staff, real-time data available for improved decision-making

IT improvements

Simplified maintenance; optimised for small IT staff

"We were using a student information system which reached its capacity and did not contain the whole student record, nor did it have any self-service capability," says Professor Raed Awamleh, Dean of MBRSG. "There was no ability to efficiently report from that system. We required a system that would allow for the auto-generation of reports and the ability to make real-time, data informed decisions. That was key."

Perhaps most importantly, MBRSG was eager to improve the student experience by utilising a modern system that would support the entire student lifecycle and also provide a fully functional and robust experience for students. "Most of our students previously have been to universities with online application processes, enrolment, and so on," says Kieran Ross, Registrar. "Therefore, they come to MBRSG with the expectation that we can deliver a modern experience. In addition, many of our students already hold significant positions in the government, so they expect to find technology at MBRSG that matches or exceeds what they might use in the workplace, too."

"Since we emphasise innovation in public sector, we needed to deliver that concept to our students through the school's technology while providing a modern learning environment," says Professor Awamleh.

Seeking a system to support a high-quality experience

MBRSG began to look for a student information system that would not only provide a superior experience for its

students—granting them the ability to amend their own data and have a single source of information—but would also help the institution to operate more efficiently. "With the old system, there was a lot of duplication of processes, which was not an effective use of time," says Professor Awamleh. "We have a small administrative team to support the school and therefore, we need to be as efficient as possible."

"We also wanted to improve data integrity," says Ross. "We were looking for a robustness in record keeping and to ensure the integrity of data and disaster recovery."

In addition, MBRSG was looking for a cloud-based solution. "The cloud was key," says Ross. "We didn't have the resources to deploy an on-premise system as the IT department here is quite small. The system also needed to be configurable by the business users."

"Internally, there was a common consensus that we needed a new system," says Professor Awamleh. "However, that decision still needed to be signed off by the top management team. Once we had engaged with Ellucian, we worked with XpertLearning, Ellucian's strategic alliance partner, to ascertain the best system to meet our institution's needs. Collaborating with XpertLearning, we jointly developed a business case to underpin the justification and rationale for a new system."

"We were able to meet with other Quercus users to get their feedback as well," says Ross. "Then we presented a business case internally to reach agreement. That collaborative way of working was very beneficial for us to reach a desired action."

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PROFESSOR RAED AWAMLEH, Dean of Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government

MBRSG began implementing Quercus by Ellucian in March 2017. The implementation was phased in gradually to avoid major disruptions. "It's been a bit like changing the engine whilst still driving the car," says Ross.

"The project has been aligned to the academic year to ensure that key milestones are met across the academic cycle and software is live when needed," says Ross. "For instance, it was important for us that the online application process could go-live first in May 2017, in time for recruiting students for the Autumn 2017 intake, followed by online enrolment launching for all students for October 2017. This involved good collaboration with XpertLearning, Ellucian and MBRSG to ensure we could go-live when required."

"Quercus is the foundation for us to build a seamless student experience through integration with our other systems, such as online payment and our learning management system," says Ross.

Positive reviews from students and staff

Quercus has already proven to be a valuable asset for MBRSG, particularly in managing online applications and enrolment. "The real-time ability to see where applications are in the process has been really beneficial," says Professor Awamleh. "For instance, we can see how many applications are awaiting interviews or how many have been offered acceptance. We can see potential interest in the program for those who start applications, but don't complete them and we can develop conversations with those individuals. We collect rich information at an earlier point, and that increases the potential applications and conversion to the programmes."

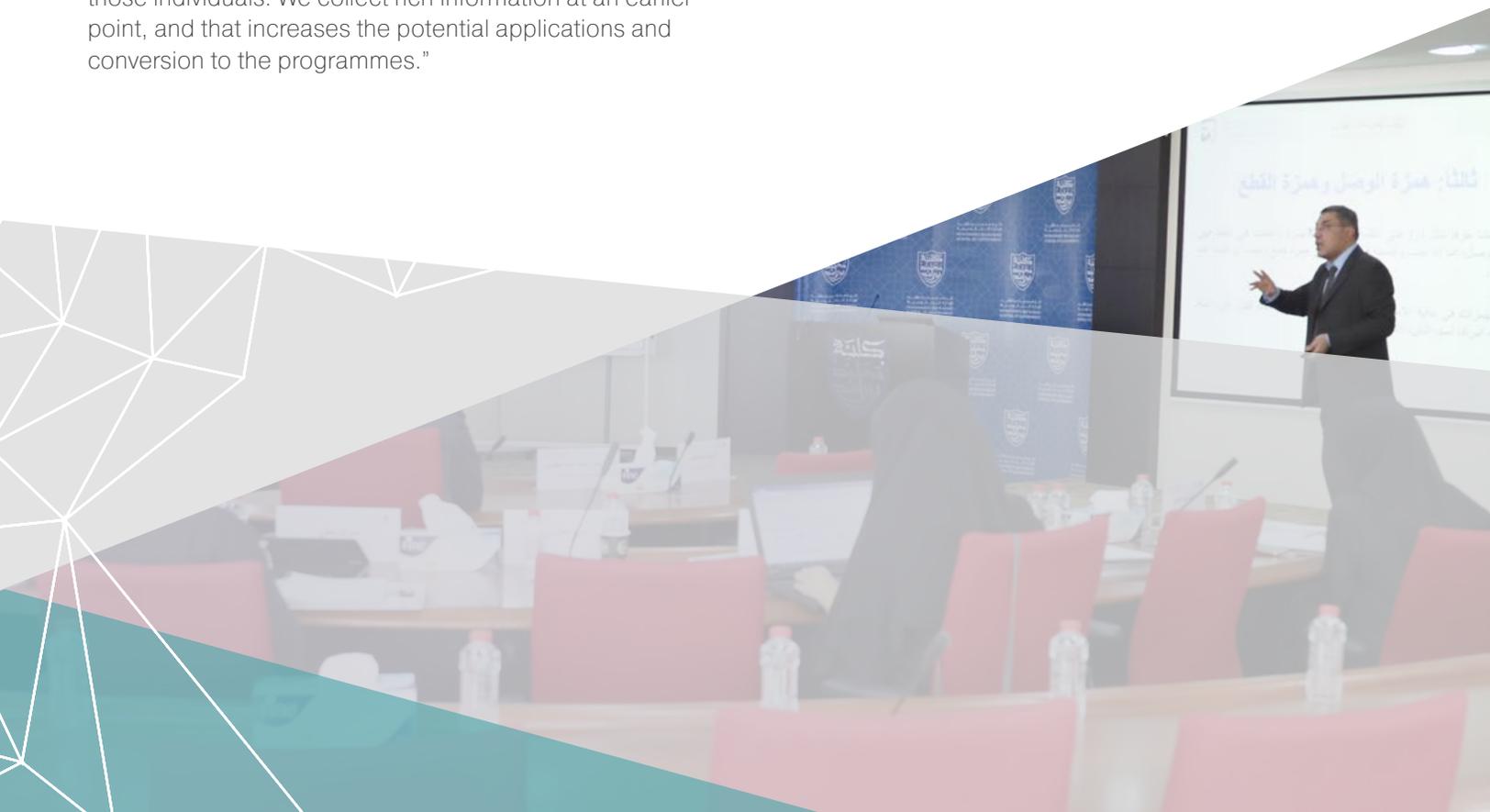
Ross agrees. "We have more complete data at our disposal, and that's also important for government reporting," he says. "We have much wider access to the data we need, and it's accessible by authorised staff. We don't have to go manually looking for applications anymore."

Quercus has also helped to reduce the amount of telephone enquiries that used to bombard the administrative teams. With program, degree, enrolment and institution information available through Quercus, potential students no longer have to call the admissions office or drop by.

The new SIS has also helped to streamline operations by putting much more information in the hands of the students. "They can see their latest information at any time," says Professor Awamleh. "From the school's end, using templated and automated emails at various stages of the process ensures consistent information is going out to applicants and students."

The feedback from students has also been positive. "With Quercus, the students have better access to their information, and that's what they've come to expect from institutions in this day and age," says Ross.

MBRSG fully expects that Quercus will continue to provide dynamic support for the institution by increasing applications, improving conversions, providing a more streamlined experience for students and staff, and reducing manual processes. "Perhaps most importantly," says Ross, "the data we can glean through the system will provide real-time



decision making and a solid audit trail, which underpins our QA processes and helps us achieve key school KPIs.”

Building upon a foundation of trust

For MBRSB, working closely with Ellucian and XpertLearning paved the way toward a successful implementation. “The first part of the process—the discovery phase with XpertLearning and Ellucian to assess whether Quercus would be a good fit—gave us the reassurance that that it was the correct decision for the school,” says Professor Awamleh. “And for us, the ability to have had XpertLearning on-site during the implementation has been particularly supportive. We’ve had regular project calls with the Ellucian team in Dublin too, which has really helped keep a close working relationship as the project progressed.”

Ross also offers a few pieces of advice for other institutions considering Quercus: “First, the institution needs to have a good understanding of what they need to achieve and it needs to know what it requires from an SIS,” he says. “Then engage in the discovery session. This is hugely beneficial and helps with institutional buy-in as to the reasons and the expectations for the new system—and it’s equally important to manage those expectations.”

Professor Awamleh agrees. “It’s also important to be open minded to adjusting your way of working. For instance, adjusting processes and procedures to improve efficiency to get the best experience for your system’s users.”

“As to our partnership with XpertLearning and Ellucian,” Professor Awamleh says, “it has been highly rewarding and beneficial. I can speak on behalf of the whole team in the school when I say that that this project is a successful example of how these partnerships can be made effective for all sides. We thank both XpertLearning and Ellucian for this very positive experience.”



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KIERAN ROSS, Registrar, Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government



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