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CASE STUDY:

Building a digital future in the cloud

Royal Holloway, University of London builds strong foundation to drive innovation and growth while continuing to provide outstanding student experiences.

Royal Holloway, University of London, a top 20 UK institution, made the decision to move Ellucian Banner to the cloud and this transition set the wheels in motion to future-proof the institution, as part of Royal Holloway's digital transformation strategy to support the university's growth goals.

The move to the cloud took seven months and enhanced Royal Holloway's ability to adapt and meet the ever-evolving expectations of modern students. The university has been using Ellucian Banner on-premise since 2004 and during this period they've seen their student population almost double. For Royal Holloway, moving Banner to the cloud was the next logical step.

In the 12 months since taking their key systems to the cloud, benefits are already being realised as a result of better alignment of IT investments and reducing the burden on IT infrastructure and staff by redirecting them towards high-value work. It is estimated that at least £1 million (direct and indirect) of savings will be made across five years.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Enrolment
10,593 students

Primary Challenge
Adapt to the demands of modern higher education and the changing behaviours of students, while mitigating costs

Solution
Ellucian Cloud
Ellucian Banner®

Result
Better alignment of IT investments, saving time and money

Improved resiliency and efficiency through cloud technology

Reduced burden on IT infrastructure and staff with enhanced online self-service

Royal Holloway prides itself on being able to continuously evolve and adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of higher education and the changing behaviours of its learners. For instance, Royal Holloway's students now have more time pressures and many work part-time. Therefore, it was vital that Royal Holloway continue to provide their students with the ability to navigate and choose from a wide variety of learning experiences, now and in the future.

Driving efficiencies

In order to keep pace with these changes, a key part of Royal Holloway's strategy was to develop a clear cost agenda focused on process improvement and decreasing infrastructure footprint.

Before moving Banner to the cloud, Royal Holloway used on-premise data centres that were not designed for future utilisation levels. These data centres also came with associated labour costs and the institution was responsible for ensuring these systems were secured, patched and aligned with any statutory changes such as UCAS.

"There were too many uncoordinated, costly, in-house developments. This was preventing us from keeping up with needed updates", says Michael Johnson, Chief Information Officer at Royal Holloway.

However, by transitioning Banner to the cloud, Royal Holloway no longer has to shoulder the costs of these data centres and their labour support. IT staff are now able to work on high-value projects because more functions are automated, freeing up resources and time to focus on the things that really matter—providing an outstanding student experience and innovating to improve the user experience. Even though Royal Holloway only transitioned to the cloud 12 months ago, the institution has already seen improved savings and is now able to prioritise strategic investments. For instance, with enhanced self-service, the institution projects cost-savings of £170K annually through effort reduction for academic administrators.

Investing in growth and innovation

Royal Holloway's transition to the cloud has not only given them a better alignment of IT investments, but it has also provided them with an extensible platform that helps them plan for the future. Now, they can keep up with the global and market competition, while being able to offer more options for the diverse needs of both students and staff.

A driving force behind Royal Holloway's strategy was to increase student enrolment while streamlining administrative tasks, as overall university applications saw a decline of 2 percent across the higher education landscape in 2018.

"Our applicants have rising expectations and we're about to see a reduction in the number of 18- to 20-year-olds into the early 2020s", says Johnson. "In spite of these trends, Royal Holloway plans to grow student enrolment while significantly reducing administrative costs and reinvest in new curriculum, learning technology and other innovations."

Royal Holloway has invested in a cloud-first approach that can grow with the university, but more importantly, will grow proportionally to its size without being largely dependent on on-premise resources, whilst leveraging scalability and flexibility.

£1 million
estimated savings
(direct/indirect)
over 5 years

£170k
annual savings
in efforts
reduction

With a dramatic decrease of labour-intensive processes, this means that as the university grows the costs remain relatively constant, placing the university in a much better position going forwards.

Royal Holloway's got talent

By opting for a managed cloud solution, Royal Holloway's technical ecosystem was simplified. As a result, this influenced change across faculty and staff by enabling them to focus on mission-critical activities.

In the move from on-premise to the cloud, Royal Holloway reduced in-house functionalities and integrations from 1,400 to 600, thereby reducing reliance on niche internal resources.

Ellucian helped divest Royal Holloway from 'keep the lights on' activities, and they can now spend at least 10 percent of their time focusing on strategic activities—and in the next two years, this is expected to rise to 30 percent.

"Our migration to the cloud and upgrade to Banner has given us a set of crucial capabilities that help unlock our ability to truly focus on what matters to us and our core business." says Johnson.

With assurances and support from Ellucian at every step of their journey, moving to the cloud was a lot less intimidating than what the market portrayed it to be. In an interview sharing his key learnings, Johnson says "work with an established partner; work with a vendor that you trust and start with something that you understand and know well."

Reduction in-house developments

On-premises (Before)
1,400

Cloud Rationalization (Today)
600

Cloud SaaS and Ethos (Tomorrow)
**0**

A future on cloud nine

Royal Holloway has seen exceptional progress since moving to the cloud and there's still a lot to look forward to.

With solid foundations in place, the leadership team at Royal Holloway can focus on user experience and think about how to innovate for the future and better support their students and staff.

The next phase of the university's transformation will deliver a range of process automation, workflow improvement, and self-service functionality to students and staff, and it aims to:

- Reduce the costs associated with the delivery of student- and staff-facing services.

- Reduce the risk of non-compliant processes and poor data quality.

- Support Royal Holloway's change management program, including restructuring the academic administration.

- Reduce the technical debt associated with integrations and data quality and the costs associated with servicing.

By establishing a strong baseline of technology, Royal Holloway has ensured they're ready to adapt to the demands of modern higher education while continuing to provide outstanding student experiences.
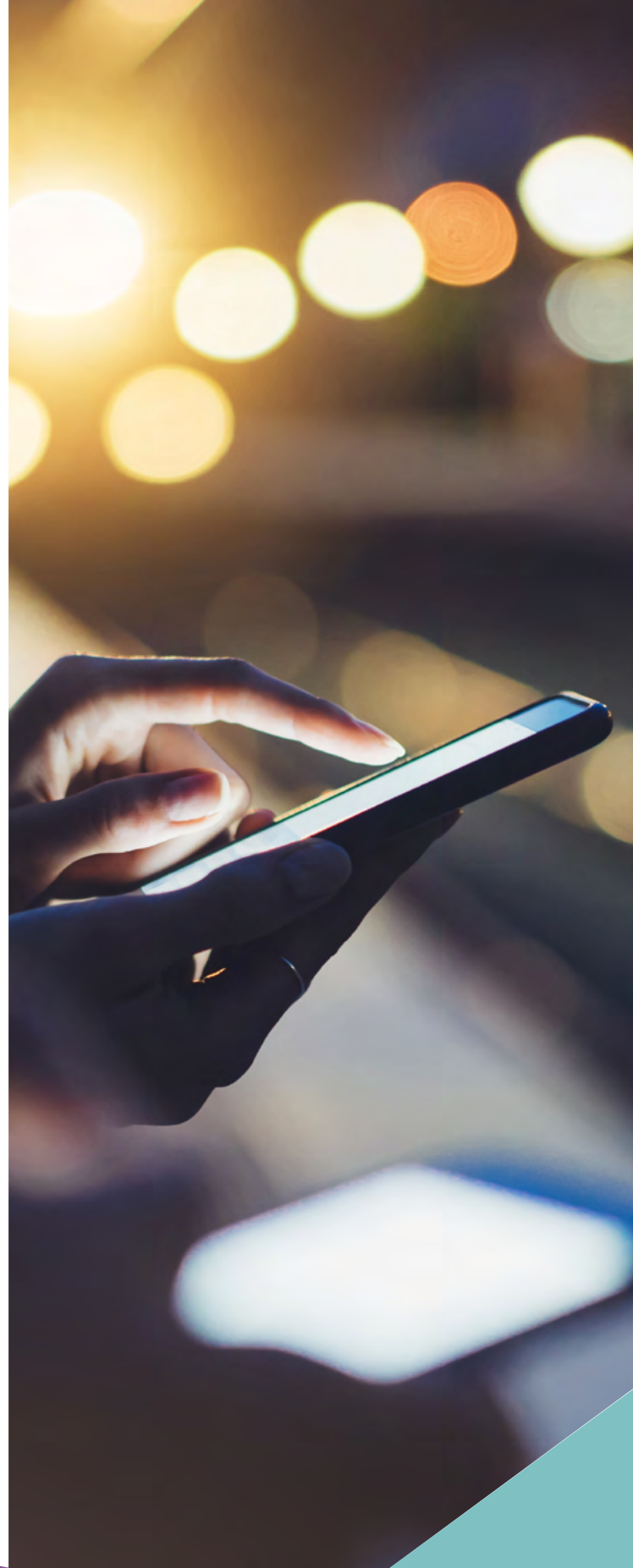
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