Higher Education: Digital solutions for the student lifecycle
Higher education institutions are part of a fast-changing, digital world. They are having to adapt to rapid advancements in technology and modern digital platforms that are transforming the teaching and learning experience.

Student expectations have risen, while face-to-face interaction is restricted and remote learning is the norm. Institutions are dealing with other COVID-related impacts, such as a fall in overseas student numbers and the associated financial hit.

Universities need to adopt new technologies and ways of working, all whilst attracting and retaining the best staff to do the job. They are also having to factor in pressures around a lack of funding, rising operating costs and cancelled events.

But whatever the changes and however hard the pressure is being felt, institutions still need to be at the top of their game. Competition is fierce, and universities must stand out from the crowd.

The question is – how?

In these extraordinary times, every industry and organization has been affected by the pandemic. Even the most mature companies have not encountered this level of turmoil before. Higher education institutions are no different and can never be this unprepared again.

It’s time to rethink.
Making a difference throughout the student lifecycle

In tackling current challenges, we know that the realities of the student lifecycle can fall down the list of priorities.

Yet managing the student experience before, during and after their time at university is a vital ingredient for great learning outcomes and overall success.

Fortunately, challenge brings opportunity. Rethinking gives us the chance to work better, together. And at Avanade, we’re focused on helping you navigate, lead and manage the student relationship in a digital world.
From first contact to lasting legacies: stages of the student lifecycle

1: Recruitment and Enrolment
The modern student journey begins here. From the very first moment they encounter your learning institution through to the start of their studies, you should have the resources in place to ensure you don’t miss a prospective student.

2: Life on Campus
The student experience is about more than just learning. It gives you the chance to support students on an individual level, from managing their accommodation to taking care of their welfare.

3: Graduation and Alumni
When students become alumni, there’s no reason why their relationship with your institution should end. And from graduation to the longer-term future, there is significant value in nurturing connections that can last a lifetime.

“Our biggest challenge is siloed working, which is having a big impact on the student experience.”
The power of data

Each stage of the student lifecycle has its own impact on the student experience, the perception of your institution and how successful you are.

These impacts range from a student’s decision to apply for your university, to their needs on campus and the how they are willing to engage with the alumni experience.

The power of data and insight can transform all stages of the lifecycle, from individual processes to entire student journeys.

Avanade can use data and insight to transform recruitment and enrolment, working with you to make sure the process is personal, engaging and successful.

The data will give you a 360-degree view of the student and help you understand how you can best meet their needs during their life on campus.

And whether it’s ensuring graduation ceremonies run smoothly or increasing alumni engagement, we’re also able to work with you to ensure a world of opportunity beyond your students’ studies.

Avanade
Visualizing the student lifecycle

The three stages of the student lifecycle contain different elements. These touchpoints can all influence the overall student experience and how you manage it.
Higher Education: Digital solutions for the student lifecycle

1: Recruitment and Enrolment

There from the start: recruitment and enrolment solutions

Attracting students
To attract the finest students and remain competitive, higher education institutions must adapt to the modern student journey.
That means being there at the very start. When a student has an initial touchpoint with your institution, it’s time to begin offering the best experience you can.

“The challenges around leveraging data to feed user-led design”

The path to enrolment
Your prospective students may have many questions to ask, or wish to make changes to courses or modules. They may be foreign students. Perhaps they need support with Visa applications or other paperwork.
The fact is, wherever a student comes from, and whether they are studying on campus or distance learning, you need to provide a consolidated, consistent approach to recruitment and enrolment. And that’s exactly where we come in.

“Student registration isn’t fully integrated”

Making a difference
With Avanade supporting you in putting the right technology, systems and processes in place, the recruitment and enrolment phase should conclude with students successfully starting their lives at your place of learning.
We’re here to enable you to maximize the use of data and insight, delivering hyper-personalized experiences that increase engagement and conversion.

“Important to prioritize student experience over all else”

Avanade
Case study: Attracting students to OUA

Open Universities Australia (OUA) wanted to grow student numbers in the face of an increasingly competitive global online market. Its aim was to personalize the experience for prospective students, with associated improvements in lead generation, lead nurturing and conversion rates.

OUA worked with Avanade to design and implement a solution to power personalized experiences across the web and other channels, nurturing a diverse range of student journeys.

A robust, fit to scale platform enables students to explore, choose and enrol in programs, while data visualization tools allow visibility of conversion rates throughout the entire sales funnel.

Key benefits include:
- A substantial increase in lead capture from the OUA website
- Significant growth in undergraduate degree applications and new student enrolment
- Personalized student experience delivered via the website and other channels

OUA now plans to employ machine learning and data analytics capabilities to further personalize the student journey.
Meeting academic needs

Consumer experiences are being shaped by digital – and the modern-day student is a consumer too.

Universities therefore need to provide their students with a learning experience that maximizes their engagement, particularly as many will now be learning remotely. A 360-degree view of students as individuals will enable you to know how their learning needs can be met and allow you to proactively offer support when it’s needed.

“Student engagement is an issue and lacks a personalized touch”

Beyond the lecture theatre

There is also the requirement to offer support to students and to help them through specific services, counselors or pastoral care. Data will give you a rounded view that allows you to proactively offer support when it’s needed and solve problems before they arise – to spot the patterns and identify any requirement for access to specific services, counselors or pastoral care.

What’s more, additional insight means life on campus can be improved through consistent, consolidated processes that positively impact facilities, security, events management and more.

“Tackling loneliness and belonging is a challenge and a focus”

Making a difference

At Avanade, we can harness the power of digital for your organization. Work with us and benefit from a consolidated student engagement strategy and systems that can be run centrally, federated, or as a blend of both.

We offer holistic end-to-end capabilities for every aspect of a digital life on campus. Integration, data aggregation, and digital insights give you that 360-degree view of each student, all while providing consistency of process.

“Looking to cutting edge tech for differentiation”
Case study:
Portal offers personalized experiences

A Russell Group university in the North of England was looking for a technology solution to complement its vision to be a world-leading research institution.

It intended to use the solution to address rising costs and competition, but also to enhance service quality and efficiencies.

While this involved replacing outdated and disconnected tech, it was also designed to simplify the move to higher education and make it more relevant and less daunting for students.

Working alongside Avanade, the university has introduced a portal to address the varying needs of both students and staff during their time there.

The portal serves the right content at the right time, including learning, housing, finance and foreign student support.

A single view of users and insight into student and staff interactions has contributed to the creation of new, personalized and optimized experiences and a fresh new look.

And together with streamlined creation and approvals processes for portal content, it’s meant the university, its students and its staff can look forward to using a stable, scalable digital platform for years to come.
Lasting engagement: graduation and alumni solutions

Graduation day
The traditional graduation ceremony is considered to be a celebration of successful academic achievement. It’s a collection of many proud moments that requires careful planning. Today, although the ceremony is no less important, it can be less traditional due to a combination of distance learning and social distancing.

But no matter whether it’s in person or delivered via technology, the event must be inclusive – and organized to take safety measures and regulations into account.

"Every faculty has different methods of comms and engagement"

Staying in touch
Higher education institutions also need to be prepared to foster longer-term relationships once the graduation ceremony is over. Maintaining connections with alumni – especially in times of employment fluidity and with the average tenure of an employee falling – is challenging but essential.

When nurtured, alumni connections can influence where research projects and funding is directed and the destinations of scholarships and even donations left in wills.

"Delayed graduation dates"

Making a difference
Avanade’s solutions range from event management capabilities that bring physical and digital graduation experiences together safely, to engagement strategies and systems for improving alumni relationships.

The technology that underpins these solutions helps to ensure that nobody misses out on graduation memories, that meaningful relationships are maintained and lifelong bonds are built.

"Student engagement an issue – lack of personalized touch"
Insight guide: What top universities told us

In November 2020, we spoke to a group of leaders driving digital strategy in higher education about the challenges they face, and how universities in the UK are responding to them.

The round-table discussion delivered some valuable insight. When asked about changes that would endure after COVID, answers varied, from virtual open days, which have shown a higher conversion rate than physical ones, to how often staff work on campus, with some suggesting that 40% of off-campus work can be done remotely.

How people act online was also a topic of debate, with the majority agreeing that changes had to be made, as what worked traditionally might not work online. Content needed to be broken into smaller chunks to give students frequent breaks, and ways found to re-engage them after each segment.

There was also agreement that digital innovation had effectively made over a decade of progress in the space of six months. And while this is a positive, it’s unclear how sustainable it is. While it remains an opportunity to innovate and experiment, when the world returns to something more recognizable it’ll be important to stop, reflect and look at the data.

Please visit our website to explore more about higher education. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact us.
Why Avanade?

At Avanade, our vision is to be the leading digital innovator, creating great experiences as we realize results for our clients and their customers through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem.

Through many different projects, we’ve helped higher education providers to rethink in a digital world. We’ve helped them to create compelling experiences for their students and employees. We’ve reduced costs, enabled more personalized communication, collaboration and enhanced service quality.