

SAP Customer Success Story Higher Education and Research



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AT A GLANCE

Summary

The University of Westminster replaced overburdened legacy HR and payroll systems with human capital management (HCM) software from the SAP for Higher Education & Research solution portfolio to enable streamlined and automated processes.

Web Site

www.wmin.ac.uk

Key Challenges

- Improve efficiency of payroll and HR operations
- Reduce the cost of HR and payroll activities
- Improve management control and reporting capabilities
- Enhance visibility and decision making
- Eliminate duplicate data entry and improve data accuracy

Project Objectives

- Automate manual HR and payroll operations and provide employee and manager self-service functionality
- Implement an integrated and scalable solution to consolidate data entry and enhance reporting

Solutions and Services

mySAP™ ERP HCM solution, including the SAP® Employee Self-Service application

Why SAP Solution

- Powerful HCM, payroll, and employee self-service functionality
- Strong track record at numerous universities
- Support for future expansion, thanks to software's scalable, flexible architecture

Implementation Highlights

- Implemented solution in 9 months
- Involved 450 users, with more to come
- Eliminated multiple legacy systems
- Deployed a variety of customer interfaces for other applications, including a homegrown online recruitment tool
- Created numerous customized reports

Key Benefits

- Enhanced speed and accuracy of payroll processing and increased flexibility
- Reduced HR and payroll costs
- Provided online access to HR data through SAP Employee Self-Service
- Improved management reporting and access to information
- Reduced data entry and data errors

Implementation Partner

Pecaso

Existing Environment

Discrete, nonintegrated legacy systems

Database

Microsoft SQL Server Enterprise 2000

Hardware

Dell PowerEdge 2650

Operating System

Microsoft Windows

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Supporting Innovation with the Power of Automated Human Capital Management and Payroll Solutions from SAP

A widely respected educational institution, the University of Westminster was formerly Britain's oldest polytechnic and is now a leading university. With a history of developing new technologies, the university is closely aligned with the business, professional, and academic life of London. This vibrant institution is also dedicated to recognizing the needs of its diverse population of over 23,000 students and creating imaginative educational offerings to serve its target markets.

Yet when it came to processing payroll and managing human capital, the University of Westminster struggled to introduce innovative business approaches. Using its legacy business systems, the university was unable to automate routine processes or to get the information it needed in reports. “We had an integrated HR and payroll system, but it was limited in its capabilities and completely static,” says Fiona Sinclair, project manager at the University of Westminster. “We could not get any management information from it, and it could not support our employee self-service plans. We had to run recruitment separately and administer training manually.”

Seeking a powerful business system that could support its payroll and HR operations, as well as innovative plans for employee self-service (ESS) applications, the university selected software from the SAP for Higher Education & Research solution portfolio.

New Business Requirements – Demand for Enhanced Capabilities

The university's labor-intensive COBOL-based business systems, in service for several years, could no longer meet the requirements of an innovative institution of higher learning. "Many calculations needed for payroll, for example, had to be done manually," says Sinclair. "The systems we were using simply could not handle them." This added significantly to the cost and time required to process payroll and to perform other HR activities.

At the same time, the university faced a rapidly expanding list of reporting requirements. Statutory reporting to meet governmental mandates was growing annually, and funding regulations also demanded additional data and reports that the old HR and payroll systems could not generate.

It was also becoming increasingly difficult to locate IT professionals who were willing or able to work with the outmoded technology of the university's systems. "Finding staff with the

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necessary skills like COBOL or people willing to work with something so old was a challenge," says Sinclair. "SAP expertise is easy to find, whether we're looking for an employee or a consultant."

Finding the Right Technology Fit

The university then formed a small team to investigate IT solutions. The team asked vendors with appropriate solutions to send information packages, and then selected 10 vendors from those that responded to submit formal proposals. "We evaluated the proposals against the criteria that we had established – cost, functionality, and so on," says Sinclair. "We also wanted a vendor who had experience working with universities, because we know our requirements are very different from those of organizations in the private sector."

After reviewing the proposals, the university's team invited four vendors to deliver full presentations. Following an intensive period of vendor demos and site visits, the university chose the SAP® human resources solution, which is now available as the mySAP™ ERP Human Capital Management (mySAP ERP HCM) solution. "SAP software best met our functionality requirements by a long shot," says Sinclair. "SAP's people had the most professional presentations, their demonstrations always worked, they were there on time, and they answered all of our questions better than any other vendor."

Other critical factors: the SAP solution could run with the university's existing Microsoft SQL Server database, and it could produce the customized reports that the university required to meet mandates from both the government and funding sources. The SAP solution was also capable of handling UK public-sector-specific payroll requirements. The ready availability of SAP knowledge and SAP-experienced IT professionals and consultants also contributed to the decision.

The university considered SAP's reputation for innovation as well. "We implemented SAP software because we thought it would be future proof, and because we thought that SAP would always be developing ahead of our requirements," says Sinclair. "We did not want to be saddled with yet another legacy system in five years, which would force us to go through this whole process again. We felt that SAP would protect us from that."

Rapid Implementation, Comprehensive Training

Having selected SAP software, the university assembled a small internal implementation team. Lacking SAP implementation experience, the team elected to bring in a consulting partner to streamline the installation and go-live processes. "Prior to this project, the team had limited implementation experience so we knew we'd need a lot of help," says Sinclair. "We picked Pecaso because it was SAP's preferred implementation partner for HR and payroll in the United Kingdom, and because it had previous experience in the higher education sector."

In addition to assisting with the implementation, Pecaso spent a great deal of time transferring the necessary knowledge to the university's team and training them to train university personnel on how to effectively operate the HCM software. "We wanted

to learn as much as possible so that we did not have to call in a consultant every time we wanted to do something simple,” says Sinclair. “Instead of doing everything for us, Pecaso showed us how to do it. This made implementation easier, because we were not waiting for consultants to do everything. And when the implementation was complete, we were better prepared to operate the system.” With Pecaso’s assistance, the university was able to implement the HCM software, including payroll, recruitment, and training and events, in about nine months.

Enhanced Productivity and Reporting Accuracy

The payroll-related calculations that were performed manually under the legacy system are now handled automatically by the SAP software for human capital management. This improvement has reduced the amount of time and effort the university spends preparing payroll and has increased accuracy.

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Using the SAP Employee Self-Service application, university employees can now update much of their own personnel information. Once all employees are using the self-service software, HR staff will be able to concentrate on activities that offer more value to the university, such as recruitment and employee relations.

With more flexible and HR-specific reporting capabilities, the university has experienced a dramatic improvement in the quality and accuracy of its reporting. Administrators can now generate timely, accurate, and more detailed reports – resulting in improved planning, budgeting, and decision making. “The SAP software gives us greater reporting potential and better access to management information,” says Sinclair.

Because the SAP software implementation consolidated multiple discrete applications, the university now enters data only once; this change has reduced data entry errors. A simpler, uniform interface has made the system easier to use and has reduced user error rates further. Data cross-checking capabilities and audit reports help users quickly identify any inaccurate information so that it can be corrected before being disseminated.

A Centralized System Resource

Taking advantage of the role-based security capabilities of the SAP solution, the university has granted wider access to the system while establishing more clearly defined responsibilities among the HR and payroll staffs.

The university has also created interfaces between the SAP solution and a number of its non-SAP applications. “Our online recruitment Web site and our financial system are two examples,” says Sinclair. “The interface to the recruitment site allows us to create vacancy descriptions using the HCM software. Then we can export them onto the Web site and import information that applicants submit back into the SAP solution.”

The university also built interfaces to its card access system for staff, an online staff directory, and e-mail and user account creation programs. This allows the university to integrate data from a wide variety of applications into the SAP solution. “The SAP system has basically become a central source for providing information to other systems,” says Sinclair. “We even have an interface between our library systems and the SAP system.”

Building on Immediate Success

As a result of its success with the employee self-service functionality – including the positive employee response and the time savings in the HR department – the university is thinking about expanding its use of SAP technology. For example, it is considering using the SAP NetWeaver™ Portal component with the SAP NetWeaver Application Server component to support its ESS initiatives and to deliver further value to its employees.

“Our initial ESS implementation was limited,” says Sinclair. “Although people can view pay slips, update their personal data, and book training, for example, where we think we’ll get our real benefit from the HCM software is with online submission of time sheets, sick days, annual leave, and expenses. And we really

want to push out more on the training and development side, offering capabilities such as online employee appraisal and personnel development plans. We see a lot of opportunities to use SAP software to make life easier for both our employees and our HR staff.”

Having deployed the manager’s desktop capabilities, the university plans to eventually upgrade to the SAP Manager Self-Service application. “The response to the manager’s desktop has been positive, but we are not doing anything sophisticated with it right now,” says Sinclair. “We fully expect to introduce workflows, so that the managers can use automated processes to do approvals and reporting. We see a real benefit there.”

After only a few months of using the new solution, the University of Westminster considered the implementation a success. “Our experience with SAP and its implementation partner Pecos has been positive,” says Sinclair. “We have some tight budget constraints, but we expect to continue to expand our SAP implementation and add more functionality in the near future.”