

About Canterbury Christ Church University

Canterbury Christ Church University is the largest centre of higher education in Kent for the public services – notably teacher training, nursing, policing, health and social care – and a significant provider of programmes in a wide range of academic and professional areas. In total, the University offers over one thousand academic and professional study programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and is renowned for academic excellence.



1 | BACKGROUND

Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) implemented Unit4's Agresso HR back in 2003 as part of a fully integrated Payroll and HR solution. Since this time, the University had been unable to extend its Agresso implementation beyond the core Personnel Records and Payroll modules and it was also facing a number of significant challenges relating to:

- The level of data quality,
- Issues with user accessibility and a poor user experience,
- The consistency, effectiveness and efficiency of key business processes,
- A proliferation of manual workarounds to address perceived system constraints,
- Issues with the complexity, quality and accuracy of HR management reporting.

Key Facts:

20,000 Students
2,750 Staff (1,650 FTE)

Over 1,000 academic and professional study programmes at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels.

2 | STRATEGIC REVIEW

In May 2010, CCCU commissioned Watt Works Consulting Ltd to undertake a strategic review to explore and highlight key issues surrounding the University's existing and planned use of the Agresso HR system and in order to identify any underlying, systemic issues or concerns that were impeding the University's intention to maximise the return on investment following the implementation of the Agresso HR system.

A key requirement for the review was to enable the organisation to better understand whether the various issues it was experiencing were as a result of system constraints, business processes or the way in which the system had been implemented. The review itself involved interviews with a wide range of staff across HR, Finance, Payroll and IT. Importantly, the review revealed that, in fact, many of the key issues were closely related and interconnected to each other in numerous ways.

The resultant report provided greater clarity and a wide range of recommendations for action that related to areas such as governance, management of change, business processes, position management, training and education, system processes and validation, data quality and housekeeping, organisational hierarchy modelling, and management reporting. It also outlined a suggested roadmap with a clear set of potential next steps designed to show how the University might more easily move towards its desired future of a fully integrated system.

A short period of internal validation and review followed, and a presentation to key stakeholders helped create a shared understanding of a range of underlying issues as well as build commitment to addressing them.

“ From our early involvement with Watt Works Consulting, it was clear that their consultants were able to very quickly **understand and appreciate** the complexities of our existing environment. They were able to **pinpoint, articulate and evidence** a web of underlying and inter-related **systemic issues** that were all contributing to create a number of significant challenges. Rather than attempting to deal with a range of peripheral concerns, Watt Works were critical in helping us **get to the heart of the issues** we were experiencing so we could **begin to address their root causes.** ”

Philippa Spratt
Head of Corporate Information Systems



3 | ARTICULATING THE VISION

Following the dissemination of the final report, Watt Works Consulting Ltd were asked to help the organisation define and agree a clear 2-year Vision for the Agresso System for the future. A 2-day Visioning facilitated workshop was designed and delivered to achieve this, bringing together key stakeholders from across the organisation.

“ We were **extremely impressed** with the way in which Watt Works were able to fully understand our current context and design a clear and **well-structured workshop process** that allowed us to quickly **gain consensus** on the way forward and **create a real sense of enthusiasm and commitment**. Their **facilitator was excellent** and kept us on track whilst giving us sufficient space to discuss the important issues concerning our future vision. ”

Andrew Ironside
Strategic Director (Resources)

Commitment and buy-in was established very early on in the process and this included support from the Senior Management including Strategic Director (Resources), Director of Finance, Director of HR and the Head of Corporate Information Systems and this also helped to facilitate a truly inter-departmental approach to resolving the issues raised. A series of follow-up workshops with key stakeholders was subsequently delivered to help the organisation define potential detailed activities across a number of candidate work streams.

4 | PROGRAMME DEFINITION AND LAUNCH

In October 2010, Watt Works Consulting Ltd were engaged to undertake the Programme Management of the resultant HR/Payroll Process and Systems Improvement Programme.

David Kerr, Consulting Director of Watt Works Consulting Ltd commented, “A critical success factor during the initial definition of the programme was the need for us to be very clear about the full scope of the programme and understand in sufficient detail the dependencies inherent within - and across - each major delivery component and work stream.”

“We were also keen to explore best practice across the HE sector, and to this end undertook site visits to other key customers of Agresso who were already using the new modules we were hoping to implement. We also wanted to develop a more strategic relationship with Unit4 (the suppliers of Agresso), in order to ensure that we could more clearly understand Unit4’s own view of best practice in system usage and also gain a better understanding of forthcoming developments and enhancements so we could factor this into our programme planning activities.”, he added.

The initial programme plan brought together a total of 11 separate works streams that would focus on:

- Improving integration and reporting capabilities across HR, Finance and Payroll along with the ability to extract useful, high-quality information from existing data on a timely basis at an institutional level and address external reporting requirements,
- Reducing manual effort in the entry of data (particularly in the HR system), checking of data, creation and maintenance of reports and the ongoing support of key business processes,
- Improving the quality of data held in the system, and reducing the amount of data duplication,
- Improving the organisation’s ability to more clearly understand and separate business process issues from system-based issues,
- Implementing remaining Agresso modules and areas of functionality such as the HESA Jane Systems module to manage the University’s statutory annual HESA Staff Return.



“ The **professional consultancy support** provided by Watt Works Consulting has been essential in enabling the University to progress this large and complicated programme which has required **engagement from a large number of staff in different University professional service areas**. This included HR, Finance, Payroll, Agresso Systems Support, Corporate Information Systems and Computing Services. The **high quality of programme management** and **effective reporting to the Board**, including work stream progress reports, issues logs, business risk logs and benefits assessment has been a **tremendous asset** to me as Chair of the group in ensuring that the **programme delivered its objectives to timescale**. ”

“ The way in which the programme has been structured and managed is **now regarded as an exemplar** of a successfully managed and run programme **across the University**. ”

David Leah
Director of Finance

5 | ACHIEVEMENTS

To date, the programme has remained on track despite a number of challenges, and has delivered a large number of additional improvements. These include:

- The completion of a business process reengineering work stream for all key HR business processes, and resulting in agreed business process maps and definitions for both 'As Is' and 'To Be' business processes.
- The design and implementation of a new organisation hierarchy model within Agresso that meets the needs of both HR and Finance and provides significant improvements in the accuracy and consistency of information and reporting capabilities at an institutional level.
- Significant improvements in the management of positions across the institution, as well as clearer processes that define under what circumstances new positions should be created or amended at an establishment level.
- Implementation of a set of defined processes ensuring that changes in organisational structure can be highlighted, approved and implemented at a system level in a timely and efficient way.
- Creation of a pragmatic benefits management framework that allows the University to clearly understand any potential investments from a benefits perspective, so that these may be more clearly identified and tracked in order to ensure institutional payback.
- Implementation of the Jane Systems HESA module to create and manage the University's HESA Statutory Staff Return.

Commenting on the business process reengineering aspects of the programme, David Leah (Director of Finance) stated,

“ I have appreciated the **clarity of thought** that Watt Works Consulting has provided in structuring and managing a range of **Business Process Improvement initiatives throughout the programme**, and this has enabled us to **reconsider existing business processes** and to **implement more efficient ways of working**. As a result, a number of **key business processes have now been redesigned and improved** to take advantage of enhanced systems functionality delivered by the programme. ”

David Leah
Director of Finance



“ The **HR/Payroll Process and Improvement Programme** has been a **significant undertaking** for the University, and Watt Works Consulting have been instrumental in the **programme's success**. We have been very pleased at how we have been able to work to a **clearly defined and agreed roadmap** that is helping us **deliver improvements** across the organisation in line with our agreed 2-year programme vision. ”

“ We have been able to make **significant improvements** in data quality, HR business processes, working practices, reporting, operational controls as well as create an enhanced user experience and reduce our data entry requirements. We are now confident that we have a **solid foundation** for the ongoing development of our HR processes and systems, and will be able to deliver higher quality management and institutional information reports as a result of these improvements ”

Sarah Johns
Director of Human Resources and Organisation Development

“ Watt Works Consulting's involvement and guidance in the ongoing programme of change over the past 18 months has meant that **we now have a collective, shared understanding of the way in which our systems and processes interact**. We have been able to **eradicate silo-working, radically improve inter-departmental communication** and are now able to ensure that any potential improvements or changes are clearly documented and agreed prior to implementation. ”

“ Importantly a number of **key deliverables** from the HR/Payroll Process and Systems Improvement Programme have enabled to us to successfully implement and rollout a large automated account and service provisioning system for staff across the organisation. ”

“ We've been **extremely impressed** with the **quality of consultants** and the **value-for-money** that Watt Works Consulting have provided throughout their engagement. ”

Philippa Spratt
Head of Corporate Information Systems

6 | CONTACT

Would you like to know more about any of the Strategic Review, Change Management, Programme Management, Project Management, Business Analysis, Process Improvement, Business Process Reengineering or Facilitation services outlined in this case study?

For more information, email David Kerr (Consulting Director) at david@watt-works.com or call us at our Head Office on +44 (0) 1565 759893.

