



CASE STUDY

# Open Universities Australia personalizes the student experience

Demystifying complex enrollment processes drives growth in a highly competitive market

Australia's national leader for online higher education, Open Universities Australia (OUA), has transformed itself into a marketplace for online degrees. Enabling students to seamlessly explore, choose and enroll has substantively increased student conversion rates.

## Situation

### Driving the vision for transformative education

"Really great education has the power to transform the lives of people, their families and their communities." This is OUA's core belief and it lives this through its vision to be Australia's destination for anyone wanting to study higher education online. OUA now offers more than 1,400 subjects and 190 degree programs delivered by 13 leading Australian universities. It currently has more than 350,000 students enrolled from a broad range of backgrounds.

OUA wanted to personalize the student experience across the entire online education journey – from awareness to studying to re-enrollment – helping students choose the right course from the outset and prosper with their studies. An internal driver was improving lead generation, lead nurturing and conversion rates to grow student numbers in the face of headwinds of an increasingly competitive online market for education globally.

Andy Sheats, executive general manager of student experience at OUA, observed that the previous content management system could not support its ambitions. Sheats explained that "Sitecore was selected for a range of reasons: extensive features, flexibility via an open architecture, strong market credentials and a strong, committed implementation partner – Avanade – who they could trust to guide them through the challenging journey ahead."

## Solution

### Extensive integration in an aggressive timeframe

OUA's Sitecore implementation started in March 2017, as part of a complete overhaul of its marketing technology stack. The tenacious OUA and Avanade team members worked tirelessly towards the aggressive target of nine months to go-live to ensure the new web experience would be ready for OUA's all-important 2018 university enrollment peak period.

A Sitecore-Salesforce integration was designed to power personalized experiences across the web and other channels, nurturing a diverse range of student journeys. For example, a prospective student who shows intent to study an MBA would be served very relevant messaging on the best MBA courses for his or her expressed needs. Integration with other Martech and line-of-business systems was designed to facilitate conversion optimization throughout the entire sales funnel.

"We've created a huge amount of value by integrating Sitecore with our CRM, our student management system, our financial system and our course catalogue system," Sheats said. "Avanade has been great in how they've designed and delivered on the integration goals."

Data visualization tools are currently being used to provide visibility of conversion rates throughout the entire sales funnel, drawing on information from the Sitecore Experience Database. "Lead generation has doubled and we have now experienced four quarters of new student growth after five years of decline," added Sheats.

Moving forward, OUA intends to leverage machine learning and data analytics capabilities extensively to personalize the student journey even further. One example is the ability to provide better recommendations on course options for prospective students based on richer, more extensive data sets and continually improving algorithms.

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## Results

### Growing the online marketplace

OUA now has a robust platform, fit to scale. It is looking to exponentially grow the marketplace, attracting new universities who can leverage OUA's national reach to boost enrollments and revenue growth to attract new students with more choice through well executed marketing campaigns that build awareness. Sitecore has been a pivotal platform for this digital transformation. OUA's CEO, Stuart Elmslie, is energized about the future: "Right now is a brilliant time to be at OUA... so far 2018 has been a big year with ambitious goals and very encouraging results." These results include:

- Substantial increase in lead capture from website
- Significant growth in undergraduate degree applications and new student enrollment
- Personalized student experiences delivered via the website and other channels
- Highly integrated platform and DevOps model, supporting continual marketing optimization, rapid release of new features and scaling.

"We now have a platform that will enable our vision to be the destination for any Australian wanting to study higher education online. We're creating more personalized student experiences, and we can now be much smarter in how we drive and measure student engagement," said Sheats.

## About Open Universities Australia

OUA is the national leader in online higher education, offering students the ability to choose from more than 1,400 subjects and 190 degree programs across a variety of disciplines from 13 leading Australian universities. OUA brings quality education to everyone, from anywhere, regardless of previous study experience. This year OUA is celebrating 25 years of empowering more than 350,000 students to achieve their study goals and attain higher education qualifications.

[www.open.edu.au](http://www.open.edu.au)



#### About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud-enabling services, business solutions and design-led experiences, delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation and has 30,000 professionals in 24 countries. Visit us at [www.avanade.com](http://www.avanade.com)

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