



## CASE STUDY:

# New student recruitment system supports postgraduate programme growth

NUI Galway streamlines the application process with Ellucian CRM Recruit, delivering an improved experience for staff and students

The National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway), is one of the top four institutions in the country and ranks amongst the top 1% of universities in the world.

NUI Galway receives a regular stream of undergraduate applications. However, the university's plans for future growth are focused on its postgraduate student population. With ambitions to recruit students from the European Union and those further afield, NUI Galway's 2020 vision is to increase postgraduate intake by over 10%.

The higher education sector in Ireland is generally experiencing increases in its international intake, with a growing number of students applying from outside the European Union from countries including China, India, North America and, to some degree, Brazil.

For North American students, universities in Ireland can offer significant cost savings on increasing tuition fees back home, even when the added cost of relocating across the Atlantic is considered. For students from China and India,



### NUI Galway

Founded in 1845, the National University of Ireland, Galway is a public research university with over 18,747 students.

### Enrolment

18,747 students

### Challenge

To implement a new application system to support the growing number of postgraduate applications

### Solution

Ellucian CRM Recruit

### Result

Speedier and more efficient application processing: the review time for each application has been reduced by about a third, and no longer takes an average of five minutes per application.

the availability of courses that qualify them for sought-after careers back home, such as data analysis, plays a major deciding factor.

Institutions aside, Ireland itself is becoming well known as a home for tech industries, with both Google and Facebook setting up headquarters there. Alongside the Irish government's decision in 2017 to increase the "stay-back option" for international postgraduates to two years, the country has become an attractive location from which to launch a student's tech career. All these factors will be key in helping NUI Galway to attract more students and grow.

## The right choice

For NUI Galway, bringing its full postgraduate recruitment process in-house while streamlining the way it is handled by the admissions office was an important step towards achieving the university's ambitions.

"The appetite for introducing efficiencies through technology is changing. In order to be a world-class university, we have to be able to provide world-class services, and in order to deliver this we need to have the right systems to support those services," says Stephen O'Dea, NUI Galway's Admissions Officer.

This ambition to provide a world-class experience led NUI Galway to consider a new student recruitment system that would streamline the recruiting and admission processes and support its postgraduate intake.

In June 2018, NUI Galway embarked on a journey to be the first institution in Ireland to implement Ellucian CRM Recruit. The project took a little over four months to complete—a very swift implementation turnaround—to bring CRM Recruit online in time for the university's November intake.

NUI Galway chose CRM Recruit to help the university consolidate its postgraduate application process by bringing together EU and non-EU applications and taking direct payment for the application fee, as is typical for institutions in Ireland. CRM Recruit also gave NUI Galway flexibility, since the solution can either be used as a standalone system or can integrate with other solutions.

"The flexibility of Ellucian CRM Recruit was key because we knew that one size was not going to fit all. We knew there were different ways of doing things. We also wanted to have more control over the way we managed our recruitment processes at NUI Galway," says O'Dea.

"The fact that Ellucian CRM Recruit was a tried and tested system used by well-established institutions made it an even easier decision," concludes O'Dea.

"We knew that whatever student recruitment system we had, it had to be configurable and we wanted to be able to do that ourselves. We wanted it to be a distributed system with flexibility of reporting. Fundamentally there weren't that many vendors out there that could say they could do all these things, and Ellucian was the one that ticked the boxes.

**STEPHEN O'DEA**, Admissions Officer, The National University of Ireland, Galway



## A committed relationship

NUI Galway demonstrated their commitment to the project from the very beginning, allocating the necessary resources to ensure that the project ran as seamlessly as possible to deliver the project on time for the November intake. Their commitment, together with collaboration from the Ellucian team, ensured that it was a successful implementation.

For NUI Galway, Ellucian stood out in the market for its dedicated approach to higher education, which was a key contributing factor in the overall decision-making process when selecting a student recruitment system. "It would have been a risk to go to another vendor that perhaps didn't really understand the sector or the specific requirements of a university," says O'Dea. "Ellucian's expertise and knowledge of higher education, and ability to think creatively, gave us a considerable amount of comfort and reassurance. We wouldn't have got to where we wanted to be today without the support from the team at Ellucian."

## Lessons learned

Being the first institution in Ireland to install CRM Recruit was a pioneering move for NUI Galway.

When sharing their key takeaways from the experience, the team at NUI Galway emphasised that when going into a project, "Know what you want to do first and your end goal." Knowing where you want to get to certainly makes the journey there easier, and it is beneficial to map out the expectations of all stakeholders.

O'Dea also adds, "Engage, engage and engage would be my top three takeaways." During the project, the NUI Galway team consulted widely with all stakeholders, so at the time of the system go-live everybody knew what was happening and what changes were coming into play. Equally as important, NUI Galway encourages institutions looking to implement a student recruitment system to speak to other universities who are using the system. "While we are all different," says O'Dea, "we are fundamentally the same, so reach out to other users and understand how they are using the system."

The team also encourages new users to "be present" and invest in the training sessions. "There is a lot to take in, so try to really get to grips with the new system early on as this will certainly pay dividends later," says O'Dea. "CRM Recruit is such a flexible, powerful system; we've just scratched the surface in terms of what we're able to do."



## Speeding things up

NUI Galway's application portal is the first port of call for international students, and with a more personalised approach, it now presents a more modern, positive impression of the university and delivers a better student experience for applicants from their very first engagement and beyond.

Reflecting on the implementation of CRM Recruit, O'Dea recalls that "we really needed a solution that was modern, flexible, and would eliminate a lot of our processing inefficiencies in order for us to grow our activity within the postgraduate admissions function without having to grow the postgraduate admissions office."

Having now used the system for a number of months, O'Dea says, "With CRM Recruit, we've certainly been able to eliminate a considerable amount of manual workarounds that we were required to do because of the previous system's shortfalls. What this has led to is an improved turnaround time in processing applications."

The admissions team at NUI Galway estimates that just by fully automating the process of checking forms for completion, review time for each application has been reduced by about a third, and no longer takes an average of five minutes per application. Considering that the university's applications number in the thousands, this new efficiency delivers a significant reduction in workload and offers a far more efficient way of working for the team including the reviewers.

Another important feature that CRM Recruit provides for NUI Galway is the ability to take payments for application fees. This capability was achieved through an integration between CRM Recruit and TouchNet's Payment Client and has created a funding stream for the institution that it never previously had. CRM Recruit has become a self-funding investment, helping to deliver a more sustainable funding model.



The implementation of CRM Recruit has resulted in many efficiencies for NUI Galway with a far more streamlined application process for postgraduate applications. O'Dea concludes: "We've already started to identify ways in which we can enhance our student recruitment and marketing efforts with CRM Recruit—for example, target our own undergraduate students before they have graduated. Working together with Ellucian, we have shown that we are able to deliver a large-scale systems implementation project, on budget and in time, and do it well. Looking ahead, this has really set the stage for new, exciting initiatives at NUI Galway, and we are excited about the future."



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