



The University of Leeds needed a unified approach to IT project management, in order to support its growing project portfolio. Project Online with PS+ delivered the fast, easy solution they needed.

Founded in 1904, The University of Leeds is one of the UK's leading academic institutions and a member of the prestigious Russell Group. It is home to over 31,000 students from 146 countries, including 28,752 full-time students, and is one of only 19 UK universities to appear in the top 100 of the QS world rankings in 2014. With 7,517 staff it's also the third-largest employer in Leeds.

Ultimately, it's a big organisation comprising many different functions, from academic faculties to corporate services with their own complex IT needs, all supported by IT teams coordinated by the IT Programme Management Office (PMO). The PMO looks across all projects that use IT resources, and can be involved in over 30 in-flight projects and up to 100 event activities using the project management approach at any one time. Maintaining an overview of projects and resources is a major undertaking.



The Issue

Three years ago IT spearheaded a wide-scale programme of change, bringing the different IT teams from each faculty together, with a view to standardising IT services and project management approach. Previously, different faculties and departments had managed projects independently with their own tools and processes, but this caused problems in terms of transparency, visibility and project members' ability to move from project to project.

“The experience of working on a project could be very different” says Alex Rist, IT Programme Manager. “The governance would be different, the documentation would be different and the whole approach would be different, depending on where you were working and what you were used to. What’s more, because different teams were working independently and receiving funding from different sources, there was little to no centralised reporting. It was difficult to get a whole picture and see what IT teams were working on across the university.”

Lack of visibility and centralisation meant that some projects and the IT resources they used were not visible to the University, leading to reduced confidence in overall project success rate.

The IT teams and the IT PMO decided to work together on a new stage-gate project management framework, which could pull everything together, tracking project progress from one key stage to the next, with an automated system of checks that were mandatory before the project could move on. However, the new framework needed a new project management solution. A solution that would enable consistency of approach across all teams, allowing for increased visibility into individual projects and the portfolio. Most of all, the implementation needed to be quick and the adoption painless, so that teams could move smoothly from their localised practices to the new streamlined process – a challenge across so many different areas.



The Solution

Alex and the PMO team spoke to Microsoft, who suggested talking to CPS. A specialist in project management solutions, using Project Server and Project Online, CPS set up exploratory workshops, demonstrating what Project Online could do and how its features aligned with the University's requirements. CPS then put together a proposal based on PS+, its award-winning, out-of-the-box solution for Project Online.

With its tender accepted, CPS helped the team fine-tune the new process before implementing, configuring and customising PS+ to support it. Finally, CPS designed and delivered end-user and administrator training, and still continue to providing ongoing support. The finished solution was delivered on-time and under budget, as Alex Rist explained that,

“From [their] point of view, it was really rather quick”.

With ease-of-adoption being a core requirement, CPS focused on delivering a solution that covered all the University's basic IT project management needs, whilst leaving scope for future enhancements. CPS used the advanced customisation features of PS+ to develop reports, logs and project sites to fit the University's exact requirements. Alex was impressed by the customised changes stating that,

“The risk logs, for example, match the risk logs used by the University. They adapted the highlight report for us so that it matches how our highlight report looked beforehand, and there were lots of views, fields and custom fields put in place to make it all work.”

These adjustments extended to customised navigation, making it easier for busy Project Managers to shift attention rapidly from one project to another.



The Benefits

Alex Rist has already noticed the clear benefits, explaining how:

“It's the visibility and transparency that's the best thing. We now have a screen up in the Programme Management Office where anyone can walk in and see the dashboards updating and the information changing in real-time.”

Ultimately, whilst these dashboards give an instant overview of the whole portfolio, reports are now as a result much easier to produce. A management report that might have taken days to prepare and nearly half a day to run, now happens at a press of a button. *“It's the same for portfolio risks and portfolio issues”* says Alex, *“I press a button and it just pops out.”* What's more, the PMO can be

confident that he's working with the latest, most up-to-date data.

The new consistent approach has been a big improvement to the end-users. All the plans, templates and reports now look and work in the same way, making it much easier for all stakeholders to understand what's going on and for staff to move from one project to the next: *“They know what to expect, they know it won't be completely different, and they know what's expected of them in a certain role”* says Alex. What's more, with all the data available from PS+, there's no need to trawl through individual SharePoint sites or ask for access to ad-hoc shared folders; the information is all in Project Online right where they need it.

Other key PS+ strengths include long-term support and updates and an ongoing deployment stream of additional apps and templates, all providing even more functionality. Alex singles out the Dependency app, which tracks and updates dependencies that affect more than one project. Furthermore, the Risk Log app that escalates a risk to an issue at the touch of a button, with all the relevant information transferred.

Throughout, Alex Rist and team have been impressed with CPS's attitude, professionalism

and expertise: *"It's been absolutely brilliant"* says Alex, noting CPS's responsive approach, wealth of knowledge and experience.

User-response has been extremely positive, with some users now researching additional Project Online features and asking when they can be added. Best of all, PS+ isn't imposing a way of working but supports the process that works for the University. In Alex's words, *"The system is supporting the process we wanted to apply."*



About PS+

PS+ is the leading preconfigured best practice solution for Project Server and Project Online. PS+ takes the unknowns away from implementation enabling organisations to be up and running in less than fifteen days using a tried and tested solution utilised by thousands of users across the globe. PS+ adds significant value by providing pre-configured views, reports, access control and templates such as Prince2 and Agile, as well as award winning Apps from the authors.

About CPS

Corporate Project Solutions (CPS) specialise in the design and implementation of real solutions built on Microsoft® technology that transform businesses and deliver recognisable benefits. The organisation combines unparalleled technical expertise and deep understanding in solving business challenges. CPS is the UK's leading provider of Project Server and Project Online implementations and is an accredited management consultancy, Microsoft gold competency and cloud accelerate partner.

PS+ delivers tangible business results FAST.

Get in touch with us today, and make your projects easier tomorrow.

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