

STREAM

by Kortext

Using Student Engagement Analytics to deliver a personalised experience and impact future continuation

Case Study



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, the University of the West of England (UWE) began to take a cross-institutional approach to gathering and using student engagement data to help students reach their full potential during their time at university. UWE implemented student engagement platform StREAM to support their engagement and retention goals and more specifically actively support student's wellbeing.

Over the past four years, the StREAM platform (named by UWE as MyEngagement), has enabled them to track undergraduate engagement levels and accurately identify early indicators of students at risk of withdrawing from their course and those who may be in most need of additional support. In 2021, the Student Advice Team explored new methodologies to make outreach to those students with low engagement, including a phone calling campaign and the use of online forms.

Institution: University of the West of England, Bristol

Student population: 20,000+ undergraduates

StREAM/MyEngagement was introduced as a pilot in 2018/2019

Rollout in 2019/2020

OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In 2018/19, UWE implemented StREAM to take a cross institutional, more holistic approach to using data and began a year-long pilot study using the StREAM platform. The platform gathered data on different interactions which included access to online learning tools, reading lists, library resources, and coursework submissions. Every time there was a student interaction, MyEngagement calculated an engagement rating. These scores gave early indicators as to whether students were at risk so that relevant support could be put in place to help them.

In 2019/20, following the initial pilot, UWE rolled out MyEngagement for Level 0 (Foundation students) and Level 1 students. Finally, in 2020/21, the platform rolled out fully to calculate engagement for all 20,000+ undergraduates. Today, engagement activity is carried out centrally by a 15 FTE Student Advice team, in close liaison with academics across the university.



INTERVENTION CHANGES DURING THE 2020–21 ACADEMIC YEAR

During the early rollout, students in the low engagement category received a phone call to find out whether they needed further support, more information or just advice. However, once MyEngagement was rolled out to all undergraduates, a more manageable process that optimised the resource they had was required.

With only 30% of students picking up the phone, the team opted to move text messaging to earlier in the escalation process to make initial contact with them. Those students who did not engage with the text were followed up by a phone call to their guardian or parent.

The team had established directorate level buy-in to call emergency contacts of students, in order to confirm their wellbeing and re-engage them. As Eleanor Clark-Webster, Head of Student Administration and Advice, University of the West of England explains, "Within our messaging to the student, we were quite firm about, 'We haven't heard from you, and if we don't hear from you within the next 48 hours, we may contact a parent or caregiver to check on you.' It was imperative that we had the buy in from the directorate so that we could make use of phoning emergency contacts."

To meet the demands of supporting increased numbers, the team became more selective about the criteria used to decide who to contact. Apart from focusing on those students with no, or very low engagement, they decided to contact students who had dropped their engagement levels significantly over a 10-day period and who hadn't reached the thresholds of low, very low or no engagement.

Coming into the 20/21 academic year, in the midst of COVID-19, UWE used their learnings from the preceding few months when they were in the first lockdown. New data sources were identified and fed into MyEngagement to capture interactions which became more prevalent during the pandemic. These included interactions such as accessing an online taught session on Blackboard Collaborate, viewing a previously recorded taught session on Panopto, and accessing Library e-resources and journals.

Finally, Student Advisors received external training which helped them to change their way of communicating with students to a more pro active coaching style to get students to take ownership and responsibility of their situation, enabling empowerment.

"It was amazing the number of students who did contact us within 48 hours. By the end of 2020/21 academic year, we'd only phoned a dozen parents or guardians to have 'that' conversation. The vast majority of those students had already left. They just hadn't told us and hadn't engaged. We were able to confirm there were no worrying situations."

Eleanor Clark-Webster

Head of Student Admin &
Advice

PROACTIVE PHONE CALLING CAMPAIGN

During the first semester of 2020/21, the Student Advice team launched a proactive call campaign to support Year 0 and Year 1 students who had arrived in university accommodation. Clark-Webster says, "We have a very large number of international students who needed to self-isolate or quarantine depending on where they were travelling from. We needed to understand if they were self-isolating or quarantining and, to check that they were okay."

The lack of resources made it difficult to cope with extra call volumes, therefore, UWE turned to an external supplier UniQuest, to work on a proactive phone calling campaign.

After the initial target audience was agreed and they had got sign off from the academic community for the call script, three weeks later they went live with the calls. Clark-Webster says, "We were able to develop a mechanism that academics were happy with. We ensured that UniQuest understood what they needed to do in terms of signposting depending on the student's answer."

"We've got students where they're struggling to study online, they are coming to the university for the first time, and they have got a very different experience to what they might have been expecting. We were very concerned about their engagement and the retention of these students and how we might best support them. We had data in MyEngagement that we could leverage to think about how we could focus our attention on supporting those students."

Eleanor Clark-Webster

Head of Student Admin & Advice

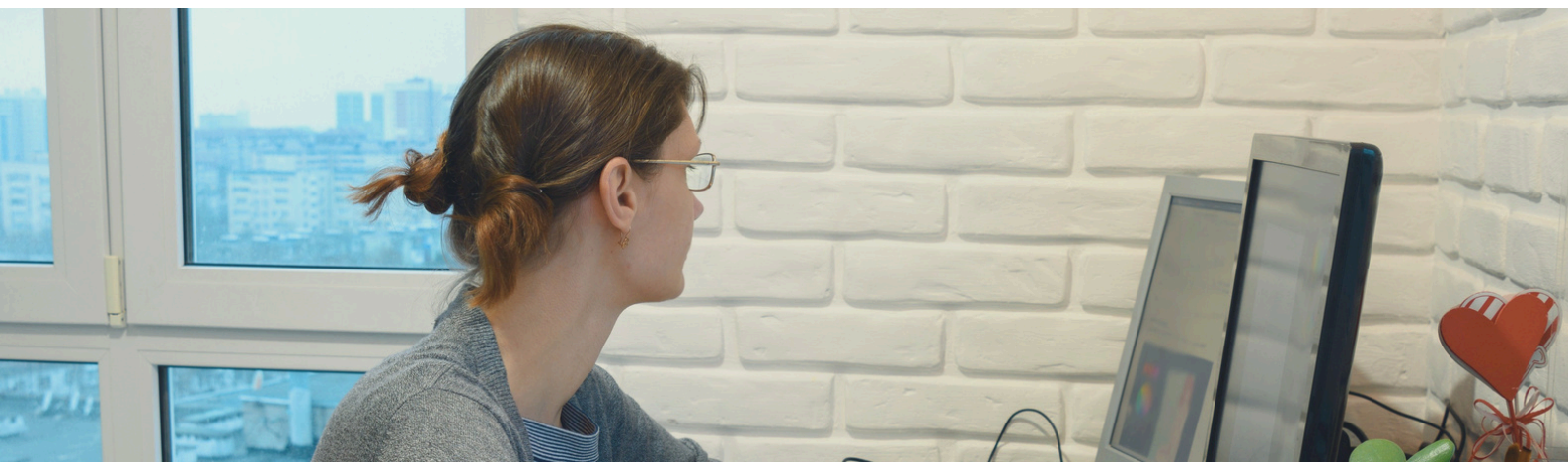
KEY OUTCOMES

- In total, **8,100** students were proactively contacted through the phone calling campaign
- **75%** of Level 0 and Level 1 students were contacted at least once between September and December.

"We've had students signposted to support where it's appropriate and we've had food parcels delivered to students where they've needed it. UniQuest enabled us to instruct UWE academics and advice services to reach out to students who had been identified as most at risk or concern. That's been invaluable. It's also enabled the Student Advice team to focus on those students who are most at risk of disengagement, to contact them and provide that support for them."

Eleanor Clark-Webster

Head of Student Admin & Advice



USING ONLINE FORMS TO ACCESS SUPPORT

As part of UWE's ongoing outreach for Level 2, 3 and Final Year undergraduate students, they developed an online form, to encourage those students who had been identified in low engaging categories to contact the institution. This mechanism was another way for students to let the university know if they needed support, as some students could find it difficult to make a phone call.

Louise Carey, Student Advice Coordinator, University of the West of England explains, "The student is having issues, having concerns, and wants to make contact. Some students might feel more comfortable making a phone call, and we would support them, but other students find making that initial call incredibly difficult. The form is an alternative way that students can contact us. The more communication channels that we can make available for a student to ask for help can only really be a benefit."

HOW IT WORKS



Where students spent 10 days in low engagement categories, they would receive an email from the MyEngagement system, prompting them that their engagement had changed or was lower than expected.



The email would provide information on how to access some of the support UWE Bristol had available to them with a link to a form where they could very easily ask for help, if they needed it.



Once the student submits, it creates a form on our customer record system, which is automatically emailed to our MyEngagement email address. That email address is checked on a daily basis to contact students that need support. The type of contact can include; a call from a Faculty Specialist Student Support Adviser, an e-mail with the information requested or even a referral to the University Serious Concerns process where contact will be made by Safeguarding and Wellbeing Teams.



If in a 20-day period, students keep the same low engagement, they would receive a second automatic email from the MyEngagement system. If after the two alerts, the student still hasn't engaged, a text message is sent. If there is still no response, the Student Advice team would manually check the student records to identify what might be happening, or if the student may or may not need contact.



If the student's engagement rises at any of these touchpoints, the student wouldn't be followed up until engagement dropped again.

244

Students submitted forms that said they didn't require any support

299

Students said they did need some support

"If a student has gone to the effort of requesting help, that is potentially a difficult step. We don't want them to get delayed in the system for a week or so, and feel that 'I've asked for help, and no one's come back to me,'"

Louise Carey
Student Advice Coordinator

BENEFITS

A key benefit to the team has been their ability to respond more quickly, as form submissions are routed to a specific engagement email address rather than to our Information Point or another e-mail address, to then be forwarded on to MyEngagement or the Student Support Advisers. It has enabled Student Advisors to prioritise students who have asked for help.

In addition, the team can identify when students don't need any support and to make a note on the system. Carey says, "We can quickly check and eliminate them from receiving text messages and phone calls. What's more, it allows us to focus more time on those students that do want that help."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR UWE

Moving into 2021/22, UWE recognises the importance of understanding engagement and using data to inform their support strategies.

"We have discovered that the work that we're doing with our academic teams has really grown through what we've done with UniQuest. We are in a much more positive place in terms of how we work together. Sharing the data has definitely provided confidence in what we're doing as a service. We'll continue to refine our processes around how we use text messages, when we phone an emergency contact, and when we send a letter."

They also recognise the importance of continuing to work closely with the Student Comms and the Student's Union as key partners in the process. Students get to see and hear a lot of information but getting them to engage in that is a challenge.

"It's crucial for us to engage students in the importance of understanding engagement and attendance, and this will be a focus next year."

Louise Carey
Student Advice Coordinator

FIND OUT MORE:

Learning Analytics at UWE Bristol: UWE Bristol Learner Analytics – YouTube

Watch their sessions at StREAM Community Conference 2021:

Creating a Working Methodology for Proactive Student Engagement. University of the West of England – YouTube

▶ Implementing Online Forms via Alerts. University of the West of England, Bristol – YouTube



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