Using management-level insights on student engagement data to generate business change

Case Study
March 2023

Introduction

With 8 campuses in the UK, and 1 in Hong Kong, **The University of Law** (ULaw) is a specialist provider of legal and associated business, criminology and policing education. With an overall 5-star rating from QS in the World University Rankings, 5 stars in Teaching, Employability and Online Learning, and ranked first amongst English universities for teaching in the 2021 National Student Survey, this is a University that is making visible impacts on student learning and outcomes.

A key contributor to their success is how ULaw is using student engagement data to initiate, drive and embed improvements to learning, teaching and the provision of student support. The University use the **StREAM** student engagement analytics platform, to gather data on how students are participating in educationally purposeful activities and then use that data to generate insights about student behaviours. In turn, those insights are informing executive and management decision-making processes around the allocation and effectiveness of student support initiatives and the extent of use and adoption of StREAM.

Through a series of case studies, we will explore how ULaw are using student engagement data to drive strategic transformation agendas around student support, how they are supporting student engagement through investment in a team of Student Journey Advisers, and enabling academic staff to better coach and mentor their students to academic success.

This first case study looks specifically at how student engagement data is supporting strategic change through a simple use of intelligent reporting that takes student engagement data from within StREAM and transforms it into management level insights through use of another readily available data-reporting tool - Power BI.

ULaw and StREAM: A partnership approach

ULaw joined the StREAM community in 2019 and together have quickly and proactively built a high-level partnership based on key principles of openness, trust and honesty, and on an agreed set of shared goals and values. Since their initial adoption of StREAM, the University have rethought their vision for analytics, refocusing their strategic adoption plans around enhancing the student journey and improving the student experience with the ultimate aim of impacting student outcomes. With 94% of their postgraduate students in highly skilled occupations 15 months after graduating (2019/20 **Graduate Outcomes data**), their success of their approach is evident.

Data and engagement information is just the starting point

Data on the frequency with which students at ULaw engage in academically purposeful activities (as determined by the University) is ingested into StREAM and used to provide a categorisation of engagement. Ranging from None and Very Low through to Very High, these engagement categories are used to support students who are under-engaging, and therefore potentially under-achieving, to re-engage with their studies or to nudge students to aim higher.

The engagement data and categories are, however, only the starting point to achieving the types of success detailed above. Critical to ULaw's success are the actions that they have subsequently taken to adapt, redefine and refocus attention around supporting the student journey and how they use management-level insights to support strategic decision-making.

Andy Ramsden is the University's Director of Technology Enhanced Learning, Teaching & Learning Analytics. One of his responsibilities is to strategically drive the effective use of data across the different campus locations. A crucial component of this activity is to provide decision-makers and stakeholders with data insights on the adoption and use by their constituents on StREAM. With these insights, they can more effectively plan implementation and adoption strategies, as well as monitor the service's use and impact.

Andy Ramsden
Director of Technology Enhanced
Learning & Teaching and Learning
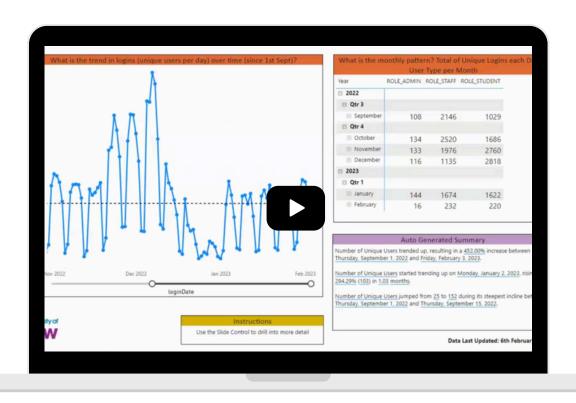Analytics,
The University of Law

How management information is generating insights and value

Management information presented by Andy to the Steering Group is routinely used to focus and inform decision-making around the wider use and adoption of StREAM. Conversations on the use and adoption of StREAM explore value for money and ROI considerations, as well as determine what is working and what 'good' looks like when it comes to student support and success. Underpinning all these conversations is data from StREAM.

The StREAM data, plus some other organisational structure information is combined within PowerBI to produce 3 data sets. A general dashboard is used to provide an overview of how StREAM is being adopted and used across the institution. A series of different data presentations summarise StREAM logins (staff and student), the number of interaction notes created (following meetings with students) and the frequency and number of notifications automatically generated from within StREAM based on University-determined criteria and thresholds.

How management information is generating insights and value

In this video, Andy showcases the dashboard used to support ongoing monitoring around the use and adoption of StREAM. He explains the different data visualisations and shares how the data is being used to provide increased insight and value to the university. Patterns within the data are identified and discussed by the Steering Group to shape future team and strategic directions.

You can watch the video by clicking on the image, alternatively click **here**

Understanding the effort required to generate these insights

Andy is keen to share how he is using this data with other institutions and to dispel the myths around management insights from student engagement data being hard to create and comprehend. Using a simple relational data-model based on unique identifiers, he is using data insights from StREAM to present the various insights in a more visual and digestible way. The dashboards are updated weekly, and take Andy less than an hour to update over a cup of coffee!

Future Developments

Looking ahead, Andy can see the potential value to be gained from undertaking some more in-depth analysis, particularly around the impact of automated notifications and alerts. Through more rigorous statistical analysis, he is determined to generate a deeper understanding of 'what works' in terms of the impact on student engagement following either a notification or an intervention, identify patterns of behaviour when it comes to signposting or referring students to relevant support teams and then feeding this back into academic and professional services staff development activity in a virtuous feedback loop. Future automation of the PowerBI integration will make these insights available on demand.

Conclusions

Andy is keen to stress the simplicity of what he is doing, alongside the value and effectiveness of the resulting insights. He emphasises the fact that 90% of the data he is using data is already available within StREAM (only ULaw-specific information on the SJA team structure and about the individual campuses, is added in), and that the tools he uses are readily available, standard HE technologies.

Taking ownership of the data and the insights that are generated by this data has enabled him and his colleagues to begin to derive maximum benefit for relatively little effort and without placing onerous reporting demands on other teams.

> *'The outcome of this desired piece of incredibly transformational transit programme is the student … and the tool to enable these conversations for those two key use cases - students at risk … and the academic development and enhancement activity is StREAM. '*
>
> **Andy Ramsden**
> Director of Technology Enhanced Learning & Teaching and Learning Analytics,
> The University of Law

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