

# INNOVATING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

**STAFFORDSHIRE  
UNIVERSITY**



# EDUCATION MEETS DIGITAL INNOVATION

Growing student expectations for more and better services has become a key challenge for universities around the world. In addition, the traditional university experience needs to evolve to keep up with disruptive technologies which are changing the way we work and live, and the careers we fulfil.

Staffordshire University (Staffordshire) understood the need to shift their focus from traditional attraction and enrolment approaches, and to begin focusing on creating lifelong learning experiences for their students.

## THE PROJECT

When risual first engaged, Staffordshire were using a legacy student management records system to store, administer and manage all aspects of the student lifecycle from application and enrolment, through to the award of a degree. They had also developed a web front end for applicants and students to view course information as well as other components of their programme lifecycle.

The University acknowledged that their current Student portal offered limited self-service to the students who were using it, which also impacted on its usage and adoption across the university. The current portal lacked the level of functionality that more modern services offered and failed to meet the growing expectations of students in a Digital world.



When exploring the self-service functionality, Staffordshire wanted to ensure students had the ability to conduct tasks such as download confirmation of enrolment letters, upload a photo for student card replacement, own their own data, and generate bank letters. This would provide students with an enriched digital experience as well as reducing the admin placed upon the university employees.

# THE DIGITAL JOURNEY



Ultimately, Staffordshire wanted to innovate the student experience and asked risual to support the development of a new student portal which would give students the digital tools to engage with their interests, studies and wider communities that naturally become part of a student's everyday university life.

The new platform would have a lasting impact on the way students enrol in Staffordshire and manage their learning journey, with a sole focus on giving those applicants and students greater experiences, safe learning environments, and a high-quality of education.

risual worked with the great team at Staffordshire University to develop and deliver the new Student Portal, taking a user-driven design approach which ensured the student experience was always the top priority. The new portal was designed to provide more self-service options, alongside streamlining some of the existing processes which were already proving beneficial to enhance and improve the portals usage.

**"risual were integral to the success of the project, their App Dev knowledge and skills drove the project from start to finish".**

**Gareth Hall**  
**Lead Architect at Staffordshire University.**

risual took the existing Staffordshire branding and incorporated it into a .NET website enriched using JavaScript, CSS and HTML. The new Student Portal was designed to be serviced by Azure Active Directory authentication to fulfil requirements around seamless sign-in experiences, utilising the use of single sign-on technology. Azure DevOps and pipelines were used to deploy the solution in automated build and release cycles, deployed into Staffordshire University' environment as a Kubernetes hosted Docker image. Database technologies and in-house API' were also used as interactive data sources.

## THE BENEFITS

The portal was designed to empower users and provide them with all the information they require for requesting relevant letters at Staffordshire University, uploading recent photos, and modifying existing student data, allowing users to view existing data all in-line with the latest GDPR guidelines.

**"The new portal has empowered students, allowing them to access information to support their student journey and enhance their university experience".**

**Gareth Hall**  
**Lead Architect at Staffordshire University.**





Development, test, and production environments were also utilised to ensure that the University could rigorously test functionality before releasing it to students, and risual worked alongside the university to provide factory acceptance testing using DevOps methodology to verify requirements had been met and any security loopholes were recognised and mitigated early.

Since the platform has gone live, the university has seen significant benefits. Students are now adopting the new processes and taking advantage of the ability to self-serve. Within the first month of roll-out the university saw more students leveraging the platform than the previous iteration, with 53 bank letters generated, 232 confirmation of enrolment letters generated, and 65 requests for changes to students' data. Staffordshire and risual see this as a great step in the right direction for students at the university. With the momentum this new service will generate, there are significant opportunities to continue development of the new Student Portal, including additional features that augment student experiences, fostering human connections and supporting the high-quality education Staffordshire offers.

---

**This new modern Cloud service has given applicants and students a truly seamless experience, empowering them, whilst reducing manual effort for staff on administrative tasks, allowing them to repurpose their time towards improving other areas of the student experience.**