

Infrastructure Upgrades & Business Process Review for National College of Ireland

Education Success Story



Overview

Today's education institutions face unique challenges when it comes to data connectivity and accessibility. To keep students, educators, and administrators connected and productive, campuses must rely on increasingly complex systems. Making these systems functional based on the unique needs of the institution is a challenging task.

In the modern, digital age of education, real-time data flow is more important than ever. However, education institutions often find themselves relying on systems that lack integration, use layers of complex customisations, and other modifications that impact the flow and usability of this data. Education institutions are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the necessary support required to maintain the infrastructure running these legacy systems.

National College of Ireland have always been at the forefront of best practices, and have been early adopters of highly automated administrative systems. Despite this tradition of excellence, the college recognised the need to pursue a strategy of continuous improvement.

Find out how Amos leveraged their IT expertise to assist NCI in their transition to their private cloud, identify critical system upgrades, and obtain the necessary support and monitoring they required to reduce risk with their Student Administration system.

About National College of Ireland

National College of Ireland is a third-level education institution in Dublin. Established in 1951, the institution is now responsible for the higher education of more than 5,500 students and has formed partnerships with global leaders in education, including universities such as Stanford, Berkeley, and Cornell.



The Challenges

Quick Summary:

- 1 NCI sought a technology partner that could transition them to a supportable cloud-based infrastructure for their Student Information System.
- 2 The college needed to reduce compliance risks and the cost of IT, while maintaining control over their data.
- 3 Wanted to improve the reliability of their core Student Administration system by finding an IT partner that understood their infrastructure and support needs.
- 4 NCI were unsure if their existing Quercus system could meet their needs. They wanted to explore Quercus in depth to verify its suitability over the long-term.



Going From On-Premises to the Cloud

National College of Ireland (NCI) rely on a Student Administration system powered by Oracle. The on-premises system had become unsupported due to complications faced when upgrading their Oracle infrastructure. Their existing on-premises hardware was nearing its end of life and the college wanted to use this opportunity to migrate to their private cloud as part of their cloud-first strategy.

NCI were finding it increasingly challenging to support their existing Oracle-based solution. However, hiring a full-time Oracle DBA was not feasible for the college since these projects were occasional in nature.

NCI's cloud-first policy made migrating to NCI's private Azure cloud a top priority. However, the college's data access requirements meant they couldn't adopt Quercus's SaaS.

NCI's student administration processes are dependent on Quercus. The IT department wanted to implement proactive monitoring processes to pre-empt outages. However, the on-premises solution lacked monitoring capabilities and they didn't have the required Oracle DBA to support it.

Identifying the “Why” Behind User Dissatisfaction

NCI recognised the ongoing challenges they faced due to their legacy student system. The college was experiencing general dissatisfaction with their student management system, but lacked the clarity to pinpoint the source of the issues. They were uncertain if this dissatisfaction was directly related to functionality or a result of a legacy implementation.

NCI were increasing the number of non-traditional courses they offered to meet market needs, but they knew there were significant issues supporting non-traditional courses. They were aware that the vendor had released new functionality that may address this issue.

The Solution

NCI partnered with Amos to gain additional insight into their systems. This allowed them to improve both their infrastructure and how the college accessed support and monitoring services.

NCI chose Amos because of their decades of experience working alongside leading colleges and universities throughout Europe, the UK, and North America. The college knew Amos understood the essential systems that education institutions rely on, the challenges these institutions face, and the specific needs of the industry.

Quick Summary:

- Upgraded NCI's Oracle infrastructure and student management system
- Seamlessly migrated NCI's infrastructure from on-premises to Azure
- Implemented a system to improve overall support and monitoring capabilities
- Identified and addressed weaknesses in existing systems using a thorough business process review
- Highlighted discreet initiatives to help the college drive more value out of their systems
- Reduced department fragmentation through active project management



NCI engaged Amos to provide the following services:

- System health check
- Migration from on-premises to Azure
- Oracle upgrades
- Quercus upgrades
- Quercus infrastructure monitoring and support
- Business process review
- GDPR evaluation
- Functionality evaluation to support non-traditional courses

A system health check was completed to assess the overall health of the college's technical systems. This solution intended to highlight any severe health problems the college's system had.

NCI needed a solution that would allow them to realise their cloud-first policy, while providing them with access to the support and monitoring services needed to reduce risk and minimise system downtime. The college's infrastructure was migrated to Azure, while both Oracle and the student management system were upgraded to supported versions. A monitoring solution and a support agreement were implemented to improve issue detection and response rates.

A thorough business process review was undertaken to generate greater insights into how the system was being used, and whether it could support the college—with particular attention to non-traditional courses. The business process review led to the recommendation of six initiatives, which revolved around assessing new functionality, reporting and integration, and institutional awareness surrounding the student management system.

Amos provided active project management throughout the entire project lifecycle, ensuring that the entire NCI team had clearly defined goals, deliverables, and clarity on the intended outcome.

The Outcomes

Quick Summary:

- NCI now have a supportable Oracle infrastructure and student management system on their own Azure cloud, allowing them to maintain control over their data in a secure and reliable system
- User confidence has significantly improved due to having a trusted partner. The system is more stable and capable of meeting the college's future technology needs
- They now have a roadmap towards implementing functionality towards meeting the needs of administering non-traditional courses and improving business processes in other departments
- NCI now have the confidence to implement best practices for data management to maintain GDPR compliance

Amos worked closely with the NCI team to deliver a range of specialised consulting and technical services in data management, process optimisation, and system upgrades. The team's objective was to solve the major challenges NCI had been facing for some time.

While NCI found it difficult to drive value from their legacy systems, Amos was able to diagnose system health problems, improve core processes, initiate the institution's cloud migration, and perform essential functionality evaluations.

NCI now use an enhanced infrastructure that greatly improves their access to support, as well as a continued technical partnership with Amos, who can provide upgrade services.

The business process review has provided clarity on how the processes are performing and where the issues are. This service yielded six initiatives to address these underlying problems.

The Amos team saw the value of implementing new functionality to support non-traditional courses and performed a detailed analysis to determine the suitability of implementing the Flexible Curriculum module. By testing several use cases over the course of a month, Amos identified which issues needed to be addressed before the module could go live.

The thorough testing process with Flexible Curriculum also identified the possibility of significant improvements in other processes. These issues likely would not have been discovered had NCI not engaged Amos to perform a functionality evaluation.

NCI are leveraging their partnership with Amos to help them implement Flexible Curriculum as soon as possible.



"Amos is very knowledgeable about the education space. They understand the product, the industry, and their whole approach to the project is excellent. The steps they proposed are very clear, roles and responsibilities clearly defined, and the project management model used is structured and visible. Working with Amos ensured the entire NCI team had clearly defined goals and were accountable for their deliverables."

- Geraldine Minogue

IT Manager at National College of Ireland

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+353 (0)1 824 1633

hello@amos.ie

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