



# Developing a Truly Connected Environment at the Education University of Hong Kong

**An ambitious and far-reaching multiphased programme drives efficiencies and improvements at The Education University of Hong Kong.**

Founded in 1994, The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) is firmly established specializing in teacher education to lead educational innovation and prepare outstanding professionals. By connecting constituents, processes and technology, Ellucian's Banner platform has been supporting this commitment since 2003. In 2017, the university began a major digital transformation to drive further enhancements and improvements, with Banner again at the core.

## Connected and inspirational

Committed to creating a truly connected and engaging environment, EdUHK was an early adopter of Banner, seeing its potential to modernise and streamline the entire student lifecycle from admissions to graduation. Today Banner is embedded deep within the university and is also fully integrated with other critical systems such as LMS, finance and HR.

“Banner is a key component in our commitment to supporting our students to become the best they can be,” says John Hui, CIO.

“It has allowed us to create a complete and totally integrated environment that meets their needs and encourages their growth and development. It has become our system of record and the backbone of the university.”



## Case Study

### Main Challenge

Upgrade Banner to reduce administration, deliver more benefits and enhance user satisfaction

### Solutions

Ellucian Banner Student Degree Works  
Ethos SSO  
Ellucian Mobile Platform

### Results

Improved process efficiencies, reduced administrative burden and enhanced student experience

Having enjoyed the benefits for well over a decade, EdUHK decided to review functionality and take it to the next level.

Says John Hui, CIO: “We wanted to achieve this through upgrades and added features, and also by reducing time-consuming administrative functions for our staff, giving them more time to spend on added value initiatives for students.”

EdUHK assembled a digital transformation team and worked closely with Ellucian to review activity and establish a strategy for change.

“Our partnership with Ellucian was absolutely key to the success of this project,” says John Hui, CIO. “This began very early and continued throughout, ensuring consistency and continuity. It was a complex project, and Ellucian was instrumental in shaping its success.”

The central idea was to extend Banner baseline functionalities and to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to undertake certain tasks more efficiently, while also ensuring the accuracy, integrity, and security of data. Ultimately, this far-reaching project would see EdUHK become the first university in the region to embrace Banner’s next generation technologies including Degree Works, Ethos SSO and the Ellucian Mobile Platform for a completely connected Banner experience.

Because of the size of the challenge, the project was undertaken in stages.

### **Upgrading the user experience**

Taking place between 2018 and the beginning of 2020, the first stage involved upgrading Banner Student to version 9, a totally web-based platform. As well as a fresher and more contemporary interface, it incorporates added features including self-service functions. To ensure smooth and seamless transition, both versions ran in parallel mode while training and testing on the new platform took place.

EdUHK also took the opportunity to upgrade Degree Works to version 5 to leverage a faster and more responsive application.

To help facilitate these developments, the university also took the first steps towards adopting Ethos SSO.





## Introducing automation and mobile platforms

Beginning late 2018 and running through until the end of 2020, this stage focused on using AI and RPA to improve process efficiency and remove the burden of certain repetitive and time-consuming administrative functions.

Among other project streams, this included providing a single point of truth within Banner for all student fees and billing. “We have 80 fee-charging programmes, 30 of which are credit based,” says Ricardo Wong. “By creating a rules-based fees calculation, we’ve been able to accelerate and simplify the process while also significantly improving reconciliation.” The new solution automated 99% of all calculations, saving an estimated 80 days of individual labour.

Similarly, RPA was applied to the creation of CRNs and course catalogues. As Carson Mok explains: “Every year, the university creates in excess of 5,500 CRNs, as well as over 155 course catalogues. This is a laborious task which takes up to 4 weeks to complete manually. By being able to automate key aspects, we took this away from our team.” The new solution reduced the time taken for a user to create a CRN from an average of 2 minutes to just 10 seconds, saving approximately 21 days of data input. It also reduced the time to update a course catalogue from 3 minutes to just 16 seconds.

Finally in this phase, the Ellucian mobile app was introduced, providing easy ‘on the go’ access to all major functions including personal timetables, student account balance and campus navigation. This aspect of the project will remain ongoing, with new features added to enhance the user experience.

## Technology refreshment and consolidation

As part of the project, Ellucian carried out a detailed analysis of data fields and input, and how teams at EdUHK were using them. This also included a review of legacy applications. Explains Carson Mok: “Over the years, the university had developed a number of bespoke supplementary Banner systems to meet specific academic policies and regulations. Many of these use obsolete technologies.

“As a result of the review, we were able to use Banner Extensibility to make changes and improvements across our supplementary systems, ensuring they were up to date, fully integrated and able to deliver a best practice solution.”



## Taking stock – and taking the next steps

Like any digital transformation project, the process is on-going. Even as the work was nearing completion, future plans were already being made. Among these is the adoption of Ellucian's Workflow and Document Management System which will introduce automation to other key Registry processes including application of change of programme and of credit transfer. This is currently at the feasibility stage, and EdUHK and Ellucian continue to collaborate.

John Hui is happy with the outcome.

“We began 2021 with a powerful mobile user interface which reduced administration, increased efficiencies and improved interaction. It's meant we're able to support our students and staff better, while also realising significant time and cost benefit. This smarter use of next generation Banner is at the heart of our digital transformation, and to our commitment to creating world-class educators.”



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