

Exploring your options for positive and long-lasting transformation

If you want to know what challenges the HE sector faces right now, you won't be short of material. Articles, podcasts and social media commentary abound. The storm which the sector needs to navigate shouldn't ever have come to pass - an argument for another day - but it is here and it requires a response.

Balancing tensions

Universities need to balance the tensions of bills to pay and services to provide. Some services are business or mission-critical, some aren't. Not all universities have a full, accurate and costed picture of all the activities they deliver. The bottom line is that once critical services have been resourced, there's a finite pot of money left. Difficult choices must be made.

Institutions have a raft of measures open to them. The common strand is the need for clear, bold but sensitive leadership. Some universities have no choice but to plan a complete overhaul of how they do business. This involves a fundamental change in how the academic mission and its supporting professional services operate. An entirely different model to remain viable whilst protecting quality.

Exploring options

There's increasing recognition that academic size and shape is often a driver of inefficiency. So universities are starting to explore their options. Some of these are obvious:

- driving more value out of non-pay
- reducing layers of management hierarchy
- cashing in capacity through leaner processes

But some solutions are more adventurous. The merger of UMIST and the University of Manchester may have left scars on the sector's collective memory but that was twenty years ago. Within the last year we've seen the creation of City St George's, and Writtle University College merged with Anglia Ruskin University to form ARU Writtle.

Other, less common methods of delivery exist too. The London South Bank University Group has taken over local FE colleges to offer students a genuine choice between learning styles. King's College London has agreed to run a medical school at the University of Portsmouth using academic expertise from both institutions. This meets King's College London's long-held ambition to deliver service to society whilst helping the region unblock issues like scarcity of GP services.

David Becker,
Chief Operating Officer,
SUMS Group



Beyond the UK

It can help to turn our attention beyond the UK too. In the US the University of Georgia developed a Shared Services Centre which delivers functional and transactional support across 26 institutions in line with their principle to be more efficient.

And let's not forget the need to drive value out of non-pay expenditure too. The University of California leverages its vast purchasing power to offer strategic sourcing to all its 10 campuses and 5 medical centres. The Procurement Value Assessment delivered by SUMS identifies opportunities to squeeze every penny of value out of non-pay spend before tackling weightier and more complex projects.

Our view is that universities can take control of their own destinies and do much more than simply survive in this new era. By shaking up traditional models, learning from other sectors, opening their doors to innovation and making data-informed decisions, positive and lasting change is possible.

[Speak to our team to see how SUMS Consulting can enhance your University's performance](#)