



University of Essex

Data driven research and analysis to model the effective use of current and future timetabling and resources for an improved delivery of curriculum.

Essex University is relatively new university founded in 1964 by Sir Albert Sloman and delivers education across Essex via three campuses in Colchester, Loughton and Southend. The University of the Year at the Times Higher Education Awards in 2018 for their determination to do things differently and put student success at the centre of everything they do. In 2019 they were in the top 15 for the seventh year running in the National Student Survey for overall student satisfaction (English mainstream universities).

The Challenge

University of Essex commissioned a study that examined the health of their existing timetabling and space planning mechanics and sought to establish whether their operation was “fit-for-purpose”. In this case a timetabling and planning function was made more complex by a larger-than-average number of multidisciplinary degree offerings. This impacted not just the timetable itself but the optimised use of the physical room assets on the campus.



The Solution

EventMAP concentrated efforts in providing analysis that would prove useful in informing decisions on the university's student choice model, with the information being used to inform the process of building a practical and useful model in the future, supported by an effective timetabling and scheduling solution enabled by the effective use of the fixed estate.

This was achieved by an analysis of the course/module choice and the establishment (through trial and error ranking and scenario modelling) of a balance (for each course) between those modules which could (theoretically) be kept clash free, and those which may clash. This provided an overview and guidance in helping to decide how to reduce the amount of module choice provided with minimal impact on perceived student choice.

The Benefits

The results obtained from EventMAP's analysis provided scientific reliability measures for each course on achieving clash-free timetables based on levels of ranking of the modules within the courses, as well as providing additional information on the level of reduction required to optimise the module choices on offer to students. This was not intended to suggest a precise model to present to students in making choices during enrolment, but to provide valuable information to inform that model which is deemed appropriate based on the overall institutional educational delivery requirements and specific departmental and course-based characteristics.

Whilst there was room for improvement, Essex generally used their space efficiently and, unless there was a significant growth in student numbers, space was not going to be a major problem. However, the key issues related to complexity in the curriculum resulting from the University's emphasis on the multidisciplinary academic offering and the need for the institution to manage through the implementation of timetabling policy, and software to support the delivery of first class research and teaching excellence.

“Barry and the EventMAP team have helped us to draw together and articulate the issues we face in managing our timetabling function within a complex environment. We will now use his independent analysis as a springboard to review our policy with a view to building on our record of and commitment to ongoing continuous improvement.”

Richard Stock

Deputy Academic Registrar, University of Essex

If you'd like to find out more about what EventMAP can do for you, if you'd like to request a demo, or to chat through your needs with one of our people, please get in touch – we'd be happy to help.

Click here to enter your contact details and we'll be in touch with you shortly.

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