



Systems integration improves efficiency for the University of East Anglia pension scheme



Challenge

The University's previous pensions system was an amalgam of stand-alone databases, spreadsheets, forms, letter templates and manual records. There was an increasing need for a physical link with the in-house HR and commercial payroll system, to avoid duplicate inputting of basic information and the risk of inconsistencies across systems.

Solution

NorthgateArinso's integrated ResourceLink HR, payroll and pensions solution.

Benefits

- Complete integration across HR, payroll and pensions.
- The removal of duplicate data entry and storage.
- Extra functionality for faster production of calculations and management reports.
- A solution tailored to match the precise details of the University's pensions scheme.

Organisation description

The University of East Anglia, founded in 1963, directly employs around 3,000 full-time staff and has over 14,000 students. The University's aim is to provide the highest quality environment for academic excellence, with a supportive ethos. It is consistently in the top five for student satisfaction and many of its staff are very long-serving.

Systems integration removes duplication and rekeying

"We were looking for a replacement to streamline our previous system and chose ResourceLink from the options available," says Lorna Jesty, Payroll & Pensions Manager. "What NorthgateArinso offered was a truly integrated HR, payroll and pensions solution. We looked at alternatives but we weren't aware of any other options that could give us this level of integration."

There is now one record for each member of staff, removing duplicate inputting. The record can be accessed and updated at any point in an employee's career with the University, from application and appointment, through their working life, to retirement and being paid as a pensioner.

Configurability to the University's requirements

Even though systems integration is important, there's much more to the ResourceLink pensions solution. The UEA Pension Team would recommend it as a stand-alone solution without the integration and are impressed with the extent to which NorthgateArinso understand pension scheme administration, and the way they have tailored ResourceLink to match the University's scheme.

"This cohesion between our scheme and the new solution is as a result of the tailoring that the UEA Pension Team and NorthgateArinso's consultants performed prior and during implementation," says Lorna Jesty. "The consultants asked the right questions about the scheme to get a detailed view of our various calculations, including the more complex ones, and then configured ResourceLink accordingly."

"The system can handle things that are unique to our scheme and it is configured with menus, tasks and processes that are specific to the scheme."

An issue that the Pensions Team has always faced is that a number of employees hold two or more posts on different salaries. Using ResourceLink, the team can now bring multiple posts together for calculating pensionable service correctly. Where someone has a basic salary plus additional pensionable emoluments they are brought together to create a single pensionable salary.

Where someone only works during term time things are easier to administer, as are multi-post employees where previously manual calculations had to be used. In fact, ResourceLink is effective from an overall usability point of view: the Pension Team following further training have been able to create and adapt their own parameter driven calculations, with no need to go back to NorthgateArinso to make system modifications. They also found during a period of maternity cover that the system was relatively intuitive for new users.

Faster calculations and richer reporting

The Pensions Team can now produce benefit calculations and statements much more quickly than before. This is enabling them to provide a better service to scheme members, for example through a faster turnaround of quotes.

The pensions increase process has been simplified, even where there are lots of variables, and what used to take days to implement now takes minutes. There are also better facilities for actuarial extracts, with the valuation process greatly improved.

A combination of a single source for consistent data and reporting tools means that the Pensions Team can now also produce more management information, faster than before.

Producing management information had previously entailed compiling it from different sources. Now there is better data integrity and consistency is complemented by reporting tools that provide the capability to generate a wider range of management information.

“We find it much easier to report on things that the HR team might need to know, such as benefit calculations for employees approaching retirement,” says Lorna Jesty. “We can quickly create our quarterly trustee reports with information including the numbers of starters, leavers, transfers and so on to give an accurate picture of the fluctuating membership. For both regular reports and one-off reports we are able to make maximum use of our data, rather than relying on various spreadsheets and databases.”

An easier system to use and manage

“The ResourceLink pensions solution has met our requirements in terms of ease of use,” says Lorna Jesty. “It has sensible steps for processing records and the background tables used in calculations are easy to maintain. The overall extra efficiency means there is a definite ongoing cost saving.

“We are very pleased with the support provided by NorthgateArinso. Their helpdesk provides friendly support and there’s also continual progression and enhancement of the solution. We have added a further pensions scheme to the module and the support we receive will enable us to develop some extra functionality in the future. We are for example looking at adding some self-service capability and further improvements to calculation processes.”

What our customer said

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