



Transforming Education:

Using a First-party Data strategy to Power the Next Generation of Student Experience

APAC Report



How higher education has changed under the pandemic

Before the pandemic, the idea of widespread virtual learning would have seemed far-fetched. Yet education institutions around the world switched to it in a matter of weeks, compelling students and educators to adapt to an entirely new way of life.

By the end of March 2020, university closures had affected over 1.5 billion students (87% of the world's student population) across 165 countries.

Now, universities must come to terms with a hybrid future that balances academic rigour with the flexibility to evolve with student needs. For modern employees in a digital world, the constant need for new knowledge and skills points to a future where lifelong learning becomes standard.

The increased use of technology has opened the doors to a number of exciting opportunities. Interest in online education programmes has increased substantially during the pandemic, with [a third](#) of the world's e-learning market growth coming from APAC. Online learning will also be critical for institutions in countries like Australia, where the flow of international students, a major part of the economy, all but dried up last year. It will help recoup lost revenue and re-enter the game from a new angle, with the option for students to transfer from remote to in-person coursework over time.

To capitalise on the opportunity in front of them, educational institutions must evolve with their customers to ensure relevance and accessibility as well as quality. As they branch out from the traditional in-person model, customer data platforms (CDPs) will be increasingly important to help unify fragmented sources and engage students at the various stages of their journey. Meaningful communication will depend on the ability to generate insights and personalise the experience.



1.5 billion

Students affected by university closures



The rise of data-led student acquisition

Top education institutions might seem to have a never-ending stream of applicants, but most will need to put in work to keep their enrollment numbers up.

This is where data is key. By using it to create [personalised content](#), tertiary institutions can position themselves as the best choice for a student based on their academic, extracurricular and career aspirations. For example, based on their page views of different majors, a student may receive a prompt to discuss their interests and options with a relevant counsellor.

For any student considering different universities, campus visits play a big part in their decision. By meeting academic staff, other students and exploring the campus, they get a taste of what life there would be like. Social distancing upended this routine process, but universities that were able to transmute the experience online strengthened their position.

SMU, a top Asian university that attracts thousands of international students each year, took its annual open house [completely online](#) in 2020. Prospective students could join live webinars and talk to admissions counsellors

using a chat function. They could even join live classes online and talk with future classmates and educators. A fun addition was the 'Find Your Major' generator that spins out degree combinations when students share their academic interests.

Monash University, a leading Australian institution, meanwhile benefited from orchestrating historical and real-time data from [multiple touchpoints](#). University staff were able to provide more relevant and specific information through actively using data to build a comprehensive student persona. Targeted messaging in turn provided more positive experiences during the student's selection process and open day, generating 19% more quality leads.



19%
more leads

Building a comprehensive view of the student helped provide relevant educational information and a positive experience

Source: Monash University



Personalisation for effective targeting

As learning goes online, the student experience has come to the fore as universities realise they need to address the needs of students as rounded human beings, not just learners.

The journey begins long before the student sets foot on campus. The vast majority of students' first encounter with an educational organisation is through its website or other digital channels.

The experience during this initial information-seeking stage can make or break their intention to apply. Gemma Anderson, the former Head of Performance and Growth at [Deakin University](#), has noted that students don't come for a piece of paper. They come for the experience, whether it's online or face-to-face learning, and it begins the moment they start evaluating their options.

Each of the key touchpoints, ranging from application to library records, tutorial logins and face-to-face experiences with administration staff, is an opportunity for universities to deliver interactions that are efficient but also personalised and meaningful. Learning partnerships are replacing degrees as a university's core product. In this context, students become customers with high expectations that the institution must keep up with. In a world geared around continuous learning, they must think in terms of retention as in any other industry.

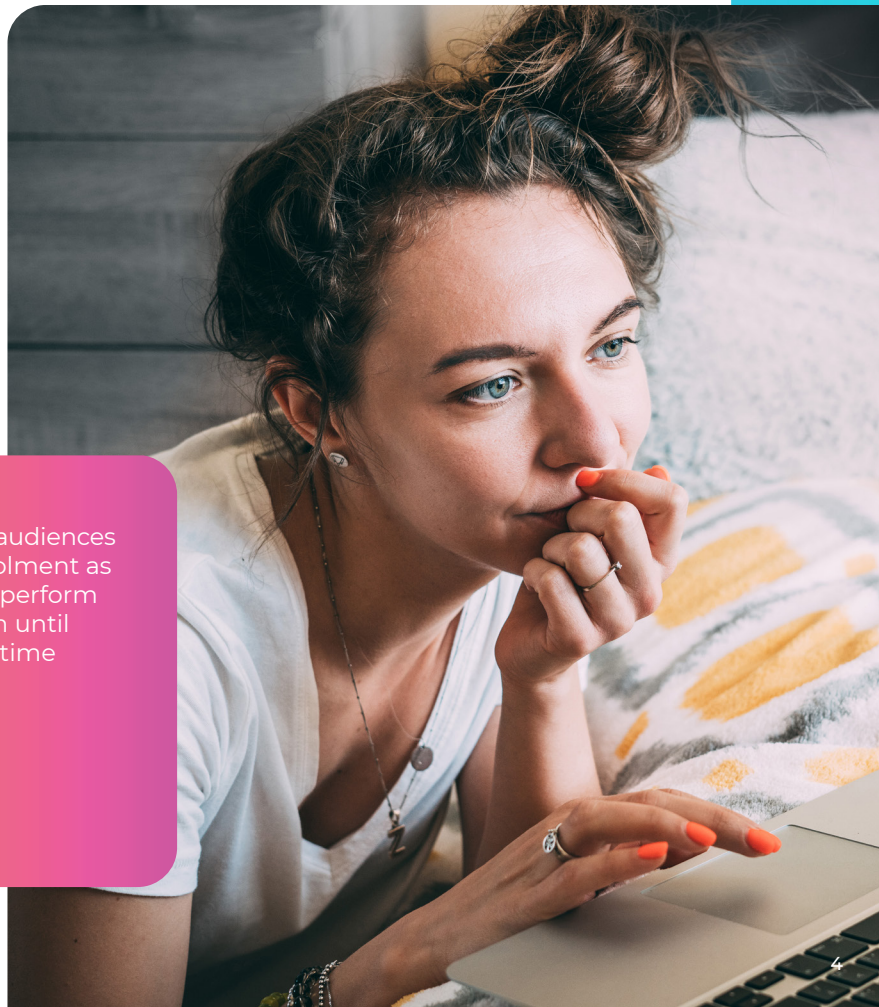
[Griffith University](#) is an institution thriving in overall educational experience, with a five-star rating from the Good Universities Guide. Leanne Towerzey, Head of Digital Marketing, was instrumental in ensuring students have a seamless journey and one of the key outcomes has been Griffith University's myOrientation app. Designed to help students obtain the support they need throughout their studies, it also gauges how they have progressed through the journey.

Griffith University also operates a personalised Student Portal, which acts as a one-stop shop for students by pulling in data relating to their enrolment, timetable and other points of engagement. By capturing these data points, the university can jump in early to assist someone if they are struggling, which also more likely guarantees their success and graduation from the institution.

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Tealium's CDP has helped us better define audiences to provide a good user experience pre-enrolment as well as post enrolment. It helped students perform better academically but also retained them until graduation by being informed at the right time with the right message.

Jonathan Carroll
Director Learner Insights and Opportunity at
Arizona State University





Data usage is set to surge as the digitalisation of education gathers pace. Last year saw the biggest deals in [EdTech venture capital](#) history and Asia was at the centre. Over the past five years, the region has captured 67% of the aggregate deal values transacted globally.

How student data is collected, stored, analysed and acted on will be central to making personalised learning a reality. A [customer data platform \(CDP\)](#) like Tealium can streamline all data generated by university information portals, learning tools, student information systems, and assessment platforms to connect data silos and stitch together entire student journeys. With all teaching and learning data in one place, education institutions can then create a holistic view of each student.

In a recent example, Tealium helped Monash University establish a Business Intelligence Enablement project by combining all university data sources in one hub and integrating online and offline data together for machine learning projects. With so much engagement data, machine learning helped Monash University understand where they should focus their marketing resources on individuals more likely to convert.

Acting on data insights does not stop at acquisition. Once students are enrolled and studying, tertiary institutions can continue to collect first-party data that students generate while using online portals, completing assessments and responding to surveys. Equipped with [information](#) on students' learning styles, abilities and progress, educators can customise their teaching methods to the level of learning the class is showing. In this way, educational institutions can help students reach their full potential.

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There is a vast opportunity ahead for online education. The real game changers in the industry are those who are leveraging a first-party data strategy — enabling them to create first-rate CX which goes far beyond the initial enrolment of the student.

—
Marie Dalton
 Vice President Marketing, Asia-Pacific & Japan at Tealium

Cultivating a lifetime of learning

Universities' repositioning efforts come amid changing attitudes towards education. Where this was once an activity confined to the earlier stages of life, continuous technological change and the prospect of staging more than one career are leading people to pursue a path of lifelong learning and self-fulfilment. RMIT Online has worked with Tealium to identify these potential learners and provide them with customised course suggestions. By using first-party data and omnichannel tracking, RMIT Online identifies the best direction for an individual based on their learning stage and reaches out to them at the appropriate time.

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For our particular audience, they are working professionals and it takes them a long time to consider what to study.

The consideration cycle could take between six to 12 months or even longer. Our job is to be there as a guide to help them along the journey. It requires a lot of listening [and attention to] what they are doing on the website to give them the right recommendations.

Ilinka Armiento
Head of Digital Acquisition at
RMIT Online



How a **first-party data** strategy can build meaningful relationships with students

Student needs are clearly changing and becoming more sophisticated. As universities and schools become more digital, not only will students learn better with courses catered to their performance, we will see more individuals become learners. Online courses are making it possible for students in the remotest corners of the world to access first-class education. Those who graduated years ago can quickly upskill and keep up with changing needs of the modern workforce.

All this calls for a simultaneous shift in how educational institutions approach marketing and the student experience, with CDPs becoming a key enabler in delivering insights into this highly motivated audience.

Here is a practical framework for the education sector at the entry-level stage to better engage with students:

1

Engage stakeholders across tertiary institutions and shift towards a data-focused marketing strategy.

2

Determine what first-party data is most valuable to engage current and potential students in a hyper-personalised manner.

3

Develop a first-party data strategy and collect relevant data by engaging students through learning platforms, assessments and surveys.

4

Invest in consent management and data encryption to ensure student privacy.

5

Onboard a CDP to integrate existing data platforms and make data available across all channels used to communicate with students, allowing insights gained to drive relevance.

Ultimately for marketers in education, the end goal of effective data usage should come down to helping students learn better and make the most of their experience.





Tealium connects customer data across web, mobile, offline, and IoT so businesses can better connect with their customers. Tealium's turnkey integration ecosystem supports more than 1,300 built-in connections, empowering brands to create a complete, real-time customer data infrastructure. Tealium's solutions include a customer data platform with machine learning, tag management, an API hub and data management solutions that make customer data more valuable, actionable, privacy-compliant and secure. More than 850 leading businesses throughout the world trust Tealium to power their customer data strategies.

For more information, visit
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