

University of East Anglia saves 30+ finance hours every week with Unit4 ERP



Complete financial control and visibility are helping the University of East Anglia (UEA) stay ahead of higher education budget pressures. This top 25 UK university is using Unit4 ERP to become more resilient and responsive to change, improve research effectiveness, and free finance teams to focus on being agile business partners.

Established in 1963 and located in the East of England, the university provides both teaching and research, and it is consistently ranked among the top 30 universities in the UK. UEA are a future focused institution with a defined strategy for 2030 that benefits not only their digital transformation but the university as a whole.

UEA has been using Unit4 ERP on-premise for more than 10 years, staying up to date with developments and releases within the solution. They have always relied on a single source of truth, that supported the university in its drive for financial management, control and visibility, including core finance, expenses and source to contract.

Moving forwards UEA recognized that to achieve their strategy they needed the flexibility and scalability that only a cloud-based ERP solution can deliver. Jason Bird, Finance System Business Partner at UEA, picks up the story: “More of our people are working remotely, and it didn’t make sense to have them connecting via a complex VPN. The cloud model would give us significant flexibility in terms of user experience and how the university adapts to change.”

The cloud migration was fast and smooth. Jason explains, “Thanks to the Unit4 Professional Services team, our move to the cloud really was ‘business as usual’. Their skills, understanding of our environment, and commitment to the program defined its success.”

Key metrics

30+

Hours saved each week in financial management processes

Collaborative, trusted, agile

Self-service budget management - expenses, procurement and contracts

Saving 10+ hrs per week

End-to-end procurement process is fast and accurate

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Everybody is responsible for their own finances now, not just the finance team, we are all on the same page, speaking the same language, and studying the same data – the trusted version of the truth.

Jason Bird

Finance System Business Partner, University of East Anglia

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Industry

Higher Education
Research

Location

Norwich, U.K.

Size

4,000 staff
17,000 students

Product

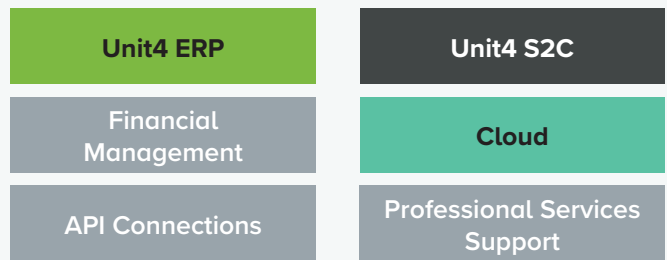
Unit4 ERP
Source to Contract
ERP integration with:
Proactis
Grantsnow

The challenge

Budget pressures and growing demand for research funding requires agile, change-ready financial management. The existing on-premises Unit4 ERP platform lacked the ease of use and extensibility to support a dynamic higher education institution.

How did Unit4 help?

- Modern, flexible higher education cloud platform is secure, adaptive, and agile
- Allows UEA to enhance procurement and contract management processes
- Automation and standardized workflows accelerate finance management and saving hours per week
- Unit4 team’s knowledge of UEA’s financial pressures and transformation strategy recommended modern ways to maximize our capabilities and investment



He adds, “The Unit4 people I engage with almost every day are incredibly supportive and helpful. They haven’t just left us with a cloud product. They’ve been with us every step of our cloud journey; understanding the pressure we’re under and suggesting innovative new ways we can maximize the potential of the platform.”

Fast, risk-free integrations

The cloud brings flexibility and control to UEA’s operations. All updates are managed transparently by Unit4, so everyone is on the latest release and confident in the resilience and security of the ERP platform.

Pre-built API connections, for example, allow Jason and his team to integrate finance with far more systems, including non-staff expenses, grant applications and other online forms previously managed manually using Excel.

Jason comments, “Automated invoice capture is saving our

accounts payable team about 16 hours a week. And we anticipate the automation of non-staff expenses will save another 15 hours a week of processing. That’s more than 30 hours per week that we can refocus on strategic finance tasks.”

Source-to-contract has also been reimagined using Unit4 ERP. Jason continues, “Our procurement team can now follow the new frameworks and legislations, all via the templates, instead of having someone updating them in an Excel spreadsheet, and all reporting is automated. This saves tens of hours per week.”

Enhancing efficiency and optimizing revenue streams

This move to the cloud has transformed how the university operates: agile finance has enhanced efficiency, optimized revenue streams, and improved spend management. “Everybody is responsible for their own finances

now, not just the finance team,” says Jason. “We are all on the same page, speaking the same language, and studying the same data – the trusted version of the truth.”

For example, department managers are now fully involved with their budgets. They can raise their own orders, claim expenses, and have full visibility into every stage of the buying process—and also see the spend allocated to their budget. “They aren’t just being told by somebody; they can actually see it themselves,” says Jason.

What does this all mean to a globally respected higher education institution like UEA? “We are a research-driven university, and our research projects are financed via Unit4. Accurate, timely financial data—shared between stakeholders—allows us to monitor this research, navigate the financial challenges in higher education, and deliver a better service for our students, academia, and society.”