



CASE STUDY

Performance 
through technology

MICROSOFT APPLICATION SOLUTIONS

Microsoft Office SharePoint



New College Durham

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Originally founded in 1957, Durham Technical College merged with Neville's Cross Teacher Training College in 1977 to become New College Durham. New College Durham became a corporation in 1993 and the continued growth saw the regeneration of a new £35 million campus at Framwellgate Moor, which was declared officially open in November 2005.

New College Durham is now the largest provider of vocational and higher education in County Durham, achieving 'outstanding' status by Ofsted in June 2009. The college's academic performance and success rates in further education place it in the top 10% of all colleges nationally.

A review of the college's higher education provision by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in 2006/7 judged the academic standards of learning to be 'commendable', the highest rating available.

Functionally rich website to reach key audience

"From the outset Waterstons have been professional and, most importantly to us, customer focussed. They took time to understand our product and our business...the end result is a website that we are proud of."

Beth Etherington, Marketing Manager, New College Durham

CHALLENGE

As part of the route to improve its status as a leading educational facility, New College Durham required an updated and more relevant web presence that would reflect their brand image and provide added online functionality to target key audiences.

The college's existing website was not fit for purpose and didn't allow for delegation of responsibility. Content, design and functionality was outdated.

New College Durham required a new website incorporating an easy to use content management system that would provide their marketing staff with:

- The ability to fully update and manage content.
- Intuitive navigation; ensuring all new users are able to use the system with minimum training.
- A consistent design, in line with the college's branding.
- The facility to communicate effectively with their diverse audience.
- Course finder facility.
- Online enquiry form.

SOLUTION

Waterstons worked closely with the college's Marketing and IT departments, and a third party graphic design agency, to create the new website around a series of 'portals', each addressing the needs of:

- School Leavers
- Adults and Higher Education students
- Business partners

The solution was built using Microsoft Office

SharePoint Server 2007 and was successfully project managed and implemented by Waterstons.

The project comprised of the following:

- Creation of web server infrastructure and security.
- Configuration of SharePoint as a web content management system.
- Design and implementation of web page templates.
- Creation of the website structure.
- Creation of a course finder facility and enquiry administration system.
- Search Engine Optimisation: Waterstons used their skills to establish the website with search engines such as Google.
- Finally, Waterstons provided training based on the 'Train the Trainer' approach, giving key members of staff the ability to use the system with confidence and to ensure that additional users could be trained as and when required.

BENEFITS

New College Durham now has a functionally-rich website which can be easily managed, updated and developed.

The content management system allows departments within the college to take ownership of content; providing an easy way for non-technical users to update the website quickly and efficiently.

The website (www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk) now reflects the institute's branding and provides visitors with the appropriate tools they need to:

- Find an appropriate course
- Make an online enquiry
- Obtain a prospectus



More Information

PLATFORM

MOSS 2007 combines two of Microsoft's existing products, SharePoint Portal Server 2003 and Content Management Server (MCMS) 2002, into one highly flexible and customisable product that can be used both for document management and collaboration, in an intranet or extranet scenario, as well as web content management for a public-facing website.

"As a college we needed a content management system (CMS) designed to suit the needs of our business. From a marketing perspective we needed a CMS that enabled us to tailor content to individual market sectors and this was achieved through the use of different portals from our home page. SharePoint 2007 has provided a fantastic user friendly system that will enable other staff to take ownership of their area and update content as required, all through a quality controlled process."

Beth Etherington, Marketing Manager,
New College Durham.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

MOSS 2007 was selected as the most suitable system for the college, based on their requirements for both website content management and supporting administrative functions. It is highly extensible and customisable, built on the ASP.NET framework, and offers a rich publishing experience out of the box. Waterstons has considerable experience in developing solutions on the SharePoint platform and was therefore able to take advantage of the base functionality provided to build a system tailored to the college's business needs.

Two core requirements of the system were to include an easy-to-use course finder for prospective and current students and to provide an enquiry management system for staff within the college.

Course Finder facility

The course finder utilises SharePoint's powerful search facility to only display course pages relevant to the portal the visitor has chosen to browse, for example: courses for adult and higher education and businesses are not displayed in the school leavers portal. This was achieved through use of custom content types in conjunction with mapped properties and search scopes.

Online Enquiry form

The driving factors behind creating the online enquiry form, were to ease the burden on administrative staff dealing with telephone calls, and to provide a centralised location to store and track enquiries. The system provides reminder functionality, an action history and a search facility that all contribute towards staff efficiency in dealing with enquiries.

The image displays two screenshots of the New College Durham website. The left screenshot shows the 'Your portal' area, which is password-protected for staff and students. It features a navigation menu with links to 'Apply now', 'Courses and programmes', 'Sixth Form Centre', 'Apprenticeships', 'Student services', 'Fees and how to pay', 'Downloads', 'Contact us', 'Learning support', 'Campus facilities', 'IT & resources', 'About us', 'Events', and 'International Students'. Below the menu are sections for 'Web Mail', 'NCD Online', 'Remote Access', and 'Electronic Library'. The right screenshot shows the 'Course Finder' facility, which includes a search bar, a 'Go' button, and a 'Course Search' form with filters for 'Keywords', 'Type of Study', and 'Level of Study'. A 'Course Search' button and a link to 'see an A-Z list of all our courses' are also visible.

The Course Finder facility provides users with comprehensive course information

The user-specific portal provides access to relevant applications