CASE STUDY:
Queensland University of Technology

Queensland University of Technology accelerates its digital transformation journey with Appian.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is one of the nation's fastest growing research universities. Its courses are in high demand, with nearly 50,000 students currently enrolled for the real-world experience it offers.

QUT is home to nearly 13,000 staff who deliver relevant teaching and applied research in close collaboration with industry professionals, adding a practical perspective to theoretical education. The university's state-of-the-art campuses in Brisbane offer high quality learning, teaching and research spaces and technologies to better meet the needs of students, academics and researchers.

TIME FOR IMPROVEMENT
As a major Australian university with a global outlook and a real-world focus, QUT is committed to providing a contemporary experience for its staff and students through continued digital transformation.

QUT's digital transformation was designed to help overcome a number of challenges, including the university's repetitive and labour-intensive business processes, which were causing inefficiencies, inaccuracies and delays.

Previously, over 1,000 manual forms were being used across various university departments. This resulted in a high risk of human error due to the fact that staff were filling out paper forms. The previous processes also provided a limited audit trail, no KPIs and compliance issues.

"The rapid growth of the university meant we had outgrown the abilities of the existing manual business processes, and they were no longer able to keep up with the workload," said Denise Toman, Associate Director of

the Business Process Improvement Office (BPIO), QUT. "It became a priority for QUT to seek business process improvement and transformation enabled by technology".

FINDING THE SOLUTION
QUT selected Appian to assist with the automation of the university's business processes on Appian's low-code cloud platform, delivering significant benefits for the organisation.

"We selected Appian to help with our digital transformation journey because the Appian platform offers fast implementation, ease of use and flexibility," said Denise.

Some key drivers for QUT in choosing its Business Process Management (BPM) platform were the need for a student and staff focused solution, reduction of bureaucracy, standardised and automated processes, compliant processes, process visibility and audit trail, monitored and reported KPIs and a reduction in operational costs.

QUT used Appian to digitise and streamline a range of business processes, providing a simple, intuitive interface for users, which also saves them time. The automated business rules in Appian's low-code platform has helped make processes more efficient and accurate, and reduced the overall effort needed for process administration.

In addition, QUT leveraged Appian for its reporting efforts, which has allowed the university to easily identify opportunities for process improvement, which ensures the university is positioned to continue its transformation of the staff and student experience into the future.

ROLL-OUT

Appian rolled-out a suite of new enterprise applications on the Appian cloud platform, which resulted in QUT being able to redesign a high number of business processes, firstly across Finance, Payroll and HR processes.

"With over 1,000 paper forms at QUT, we had to choose somewhere to begin, so we chose HR appointments as that was a process that faced many challenges," said Denise.

Once the Appian platform was selected, roll-out of the project and the first application going live took just eight weeks.

OVERHAULING HR APPOINTMENTS

QUT appoints around 3,000 permanent staff a year (replacing people who have left and new appointments to new roles), as well as 7,000 sessional academics per semester. In addition to this, they also manage around 6,500-7,000 contract extensions every year for fixed term, casual, academic and professional appointments.

Prior to the deployment of Appian's BPM platform, QUT staff dealt with 6 different paper forms with manual data entry, which involved printing, signing, scanning and emailing of forms an average 5 times per form. These manual processes often resulted in errors on forms and duplicate forms, and staff having to access

numerous systems - such as HR/Payroll/Finance - to add data to forms. Visibility of progress was also an issue as there wasn't one streamlined solution for tracking the status or progress of forms.

The manual processes associated with HR completing contract extensions alone was estimated to cost QUT $600,000 in staff resources. The 7,000 sessional academic appointments occur during a 4 week timeframe at the beginning of a Semester with over 400 forms arriving for processing each day resulting in overtime payments and the appointment of casual data entry staff for the period.

"Previously our HR appointments had an average processing time of 14 days, which was an incredibly frustrating process for both staff and appointees," said Denise. "There was also a high degree of risk for the university, as we had an unidentifiable number of staff commencing work without a contract in place due to the time that processing took."

The implementation of the Appian cloud platform meant forms could be completed by QUT HR staff online in one single system, with data automatically validated. The online forms are pre-populated with known data, which saves times, and processes are seamlessly integrated with other HR, payroll and finance systems.

Robotic processes have replaced manual data entry to payroll, as well as online contract acceptance by appointees, which has made it a much faster process. There is now no need for any forms to be printed out, signed and then sent back to HR.

"Appian's solution has allowed us to streamline the process of HR appointments, making everything more efficient for both staff and appointees, as well as ensuring we are compliant with all policies and procedures." Added Denise. "We have gained better oversight of our HR forms and now have an audit trail system in place so the progress of forms can be tracked in real time."

NUMEROUS BENEFITS FOR QUT PROCESSES

Now that the Appian platform and UOW systems — including the student system, HR and Finance — have been fully integrated, UOW is better positioned to move information to its data warehouse to provide further business analytics and to meet reporting requirements.

Beyond HR, QUT's digital transformation on Appian's low-code cloud platform has facilitated multiple benefits across many of the university's departments. The university's BPM solution has also received positive feedback from many of its staff.

By automating processes, QUT has seen a reduction in the printing of forms for the HR process alone by 200,000 pages per year.

"While previously, applications were submitted, evaluated and completed using a manual paper-based process, with Appian's enterprise low-code development platform in the cloud, QUT has switched to an online application submission, evaluation and approval process, saving a significant amount of time with the submission and approval of forms," said Denise.

"Appian's low code platform allows us to build and deploy applications up to 20 times faster," said Denise. "On the platform we achieved a 50 percent cost saving, reduction of risk by 75 percent and improved customer satisfaction by 61 percent."

Cycle time, which is the time from a form being submitted to the contract being accepted by the employee, was reduced by 86 percent. Additionally, 35 percent of contracts are now awarded and accepted the same day, and all sessional academic appointments can be entered by robots.

TECHNOLOGY TO ALLOW FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The university has a strong vision for streamlining its business processes and modernising the staff and student experience. While its digital transformation started out as a project, it became clear to QUT's sponsor and steering committee early on that this was not a project but an ongoing requirement for continuous improvement. This has led to QUT transitioning to a new Business Unit focused entirely on process improvement using technology to automate.

"Appian is excited to provide the platform to accelerate QUT's digital transformation vision and enable the university to respond to changing business needs with minimal time and effort," said Luke Thomas, Appian's Regional Vice President ANZ. "We're committed to helping our customers with their digital transformations and ensuring their technology solutions are agile enough to support them as they grow into the future."

As well as using Appian to improve existing processes, in the future QUT plans to use Appian applications to better enable the design, execution, management and optimisation of newly created business processes, which will deliver an enhanced experience for the university community.