Waterstons
we're with you

+44 345 094 0945
www.waterstons.com

Case study



Sector Education
Service Business Consulting

Sep 2025

Future-focused digital strategy

The University of Bedfordshire is an award-winning institution with a heritage of quality education dating back more than 100 years. The university leads the way in expanding educational opportunity, with more than 40% of students coming from families with no history of participation in higher education. Around 70% are mature returners to education, and over half are from ethnically diverse backgrounds, under-represented in higher education. This creates a vibrant and cosmopolitan student population that includes around 20,000 students from over 70 countries.

Results at a glance

Following our engagement, the University of Bedfordshire now has a future-focused digital strategy that:

- Aligns with institutional goals and long-term aspirations
- Prioritises digital initiatives and governance enhancements
- Provides actionable plans for cyber and data strategy development
- Communicates the vision clearly through a concise 'strategy on a page'
- Engaged stakeholders and secured leadership commitment.

Minesh Tailor, Chief Information Officer at the University of Bedfordshire emphasised the importance and success of the partnership, stating:

"By partnering with Waterstons, we were able to develop a clear, future-focused digital strategy that not only aligns with our institutional priorities, but enforces our commitment to delivering an outstanding experience for students and staff. Waterstons continuing expertise and support is invaluable to us as we continue to deliver our digital priorities."

Objective

Following the successful review of university's enquiry management system and processes, we were re-engaged to support the development of a new digital strategy.

With the existing ICT Strategy (2020–2025) nearing its end, the university sought expert guidance to shape a forward-looking digital strategy, cyber strategy, and data action plan that would align with its broader organisational ambitions, including the wider organisational strategy and the emerging estates masterplan.

Project approach

To deliver this strategy, the project was structured into four key stages:

Stage 1: Discovery and benchmarking

The project began with a comprehensive review of existing documentation, including the ICT Strategy, in-train projects, and governance structures. We also assessed digital activities undertaken to date, and conducted an operational appraisal to identify how digital initiatives could best support the university's strategic goals. This desk-based review informed the development of a stakeholder engagement plan and a tailored workshop framework.

Stage 2: Stakeholder engagement

Bringing senior stakeholders from across the university together, we facilitated 12 workshops to explore current challenges, future aspirations, and the role of digital in enabling strategic priorities. Participants reflected on the existing ICT Strategy and contributed insights aligned with the university's values and principles.

Stage 3: Strategy drafting and specialist input

Using insights from the workshops and documentation review, a gap analysis was completed to benchmark the university against the UCISA Higher Education Business Capability Model. This helped identify strengths, gaps, risks, opportunities, investment areas, and priority timelines.

Specialist consultants led targeted workshops with the university's cyber and data teams, with the results informing the development of a high-level cyber security strategy and a bespoke action plan for a future data strategy.

Stage 4: Final strategy development

Following the completion of the initial three stages, we developed a comprehensive digital strategy that was fully aligned with the University of Bedfordshire's organisational vision and goals. This strategy was underpinned by a high-level cyber strategy and a targeted data action plan, ensuring a cohesive and future-ready approach to digital transformation.

Throughout the development process, we worked in close partnership with the University's CIO and wider leadership team, incorporating feedback at key milestones. Governance committees were regularly updated, enabling iterative refinement and securing leadership buy-in and approval.