



The University of St Andrews

ResourceLink Enables Payroll Effectiveness



ResourceLink has specific capability for supporting payroll teams in the higher education sector. One such team is found at St Andrews, where the availability of tools for workflow, data sharing and online access are particularly valued.

More than a decade of relying on ResourceLink

The University of St Andrews has used NGA ResourceLink as its HR and payroll solution since 2000. Shona Millard, Payroll and Pensions Manager, plays a leading role in the NGA ResourceLink User Group, Scottish User Group and WebView Special Interest Group. All of these are instrumental in ongoing development of the solution.

Shona is an NGA ResourceLink enthusiast, but she says that wasn't always the case: "Thinking back, I probably wasn't a great fan of NGA ResourceLink originally. I think that's because I wasn't aware of some of the functionality and our processes often prevented us from getting the most from it. When I truly embraced the solution and put in time to shape some of our processes, things changed quickly. Now I can't imagine life without it."

About St Andrews

The University of St Andrews is Scotland's first university and the third oldest in the English-speaking world, founded in 1413. Over six centuries it has established a reputation as one of Europe's leading and most distinctive centres for teaching and research.

Getting the most from workflow

A good example of the potential that Shona refers to is the workflow tool. Workflow processes have been set up for a large number of changes that affect how an individual's pay is processed. These include new starters, change of hours, maternity, promotions and secondments.

Taking new starters as an example, when someone joins the University the recruitment team put their details onto the system, scan in relevant documents, carry out any actions and then pass the process on to the payroll team. It is a paperless process throughout.

Payroll staff are then guided through all the relevant steps and have access to the information they need, both from records within NGA ResourceLink and from the scanned document storage area. The process includes steps for pensions administration and a series of quality checks.

Shona says: "All of the steps that an individual has to complete are shown on their ResourceLink dashboard, so their workload is visible on screen each day. They can also see a graphical representation of each workflow, with timescale objectives and actual time taken displayed. It's a great management tool through which actual performance can be tracked against KPIs."

“Workflow means that all of the steps that an individual has to complete are shown on their ResourceLink dashboard. Previously there was much more time and hassle involved in getting data onto the payroll system.”

Shona Millard
Payroll and Pensions Manager, The University of St Andrews

Simplifying data upload and access

Another aspect of NGA ResourceLink that Shona values is the way that information can be uploaded into it: “A good example is that each school within the University sends us a spreadsheet with details of its casual staff, including for variable-hours tutors for a given period. All we have to do is upload each spreadsheet and check the data via a report. Previously there was much more time and hassle involved in getting data onto the payroll system.”

Something else that has been a great asset is functionality that enables all employees to look at things such as their payslips online. HR and payroll staff can look at the wider staff records. Because HR staff are often working off campus they can use this to pick up the information they need via their iPads and aren't reliant on being at a network PC.

The same online access was used by payroll staff during an especially busy time where they were sometimes working from home. Shona also values the fact that when she is away at a conference she can log in and keep on top of her work and access employee records to deal with queries.

Improving efficiency for HESA submissions

One of the areas of development to which Shona has made a contribution is with the module that meets the needs of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for submitting annual returns for each member of staff.

The challenge was that universities tended to hold all of the required data in different places, so NGA HR have developed the HESA module within ResourceLink. Customers from a number of universities were asked about what they would like from the new module and Shona was part of this group.

The new module was developed and issued for beta testing across 18 of NGA HR's higher education customers. Weekly meetings were held online so that participants could give feedback on the module. NGA HR then did further development as necessary, usually fixing any issues before the next week's meeting. This continued for a few weeks and the HESA module is now in place with all of the NGA ResourceLink users in the HE sector.

Shona explains how the new module works: “Previously we had to pull data from a number of sources, create spreadsheets and put it through the module in a time-consuming process. Now, a HESA staff record report is created, validated and output in an XML format that complies with HESA requirements. The module also maintains a real-time view of HESA data at all times.

“It has transformed everyone's HESA work and can potentially save about a month of working time each year, depending on the size of the institution. NGA HR really stepped up to the plate and developed a solution that is making a huge difference for every user.”

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