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— PROJECT TEAM MEMBER,
Imperial College London

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Using the Starfish Platform to Enhance Student and Tutor Engagement

Higher education institutions face rising pressure to deliver exceptional student experiences and successful student outcomes. A common approach to providing personalised welfare support includes investment in personal and academic tutoring programmes. Unfortunately, student engagement in these programmes can be hindered by cumbersome appointment scheduling, inefficient processes, unmonitored participation, and limited access to centralised data.

Imperial College London is one of the top ranked universities in the world and has the greatest concentration of high-impact research of any major UK university. It enrolls over 14,000 students and is committed to fostering a culture where students are engaged in their own success. When the University started an initiative with the student union to improve student and tutor engagement, Imperial turned to Starfish by Hobsons to help scale their student support initiatives and enable students and tutors to engage more efficiently and effectively.

Imperial decided to implement a pilot programme in two undergraduate and one post-graduate department. Because of the success of the pilot and the positive feedback from students, Starfish will be more widely implemented.

Providing a Structure for Engagement

One of the challenges with Imperial's tutoring programme was the lack of consistent ways for students and tutors to schedule appointments. The Starfish platform's online scheduling tool with Outlook integration has made it easier to schedule tutoring appointments, and as a result, students are making more appointments.

"Students really like that tutors can post their available times and they can go into the system and easily book an appointment with their tutor," commented a member of Imperial's project team.

In addition, because of the visibility into student progress via the automated flags feature, Starfish helped Imperial identify fifteen disengaged or at-risk students during the pilot programme. Tutors were able to contact the students, discuss their mitigating circumstances, and eliminate challenges that were preventing the students from progressing in their journey.

Placing Students at the Centre

Imperial has student data in multiple systems, making it hard for tutors to get a holistic picture of the students they

were trying to serve. Starfish allows tutors and students to access a single view of grades, flags and alerts, to-dos, and tutoring session notes. Meanwhile Starfish's sophisticated permissions ensure that tutors only get access to the information they need to support the students in their classes.

Better Communication and Collaboration

Not only has Starfish been helpful in monitoring student issues, it has also increased engagement among the academic and personal tutors. Starfish enables tutors to quickly and easily share notes and put the right information in the hands of the right people at the right time. This helps academic tutors, personal tutors, and other members of student's 'circle of care' to coordinate and plan solutions for students who need assistance and guidance, providing departments greater resilience on student pastoral and academic concerns.

Moving information out of people's heads and into a system where the right people are informed and can take control of the situation is critical for managing these types of issues and tracking the effectiveness of the intervention.

A year in, the Starfish pilot at Imperial has been a success. The University is planning to roll it out across further departments in coming months.

