



Digital Excellence Impact Case Studies

2021/2022

Using Microsoft Power Platform to Automate
Processes

by *Samantha Gooneratne and Andrew Bingham*

Planning
Your
Module



Introducing
Your Module
to Students



Structuring
Your
Content



Design,
Collaboration
and
Construction
of Knowledge



Formative:
Putting Your
Learning into
Application

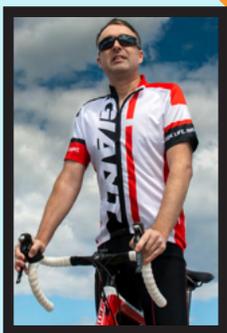


Designing Your
Summative
Assessment



Concluding
Your
Module





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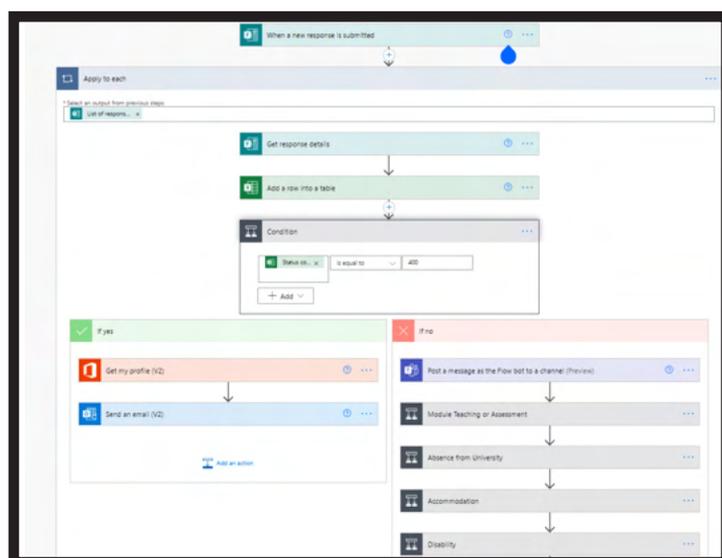
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Samantha and Andrew wanted to utilise a programme that could coincide with their school's aim of moving towards digitisation for 2025 and the university's strategy of becoming a university with Education 4.0 at the forefront. They wanted to create a more data driven culture within the university by using tools with the ability to provide insights to improve the student experience. The use of these tools also can reduce the administrative burden on staff so that they can focus more time on the student experience.

They decided to use Microsoft Power Automate. This is part of the Microsoft Power Platform and allows you to create bespoke workflows with little to no coding experience required. It connects different Microsoft services and non-Microsoft programmes together to carry out a variety of tasks such as repetitive processes, collating information from various sources and streamlining workflows. The programme starts off with a determined 'trigger', when the trigger is activated, it instructs the 'connector' or service to carry out a certain 'action'. The trigger can be instant, scheduled or automated which gives users an opportunity to really vary the ways in which they use the programme.

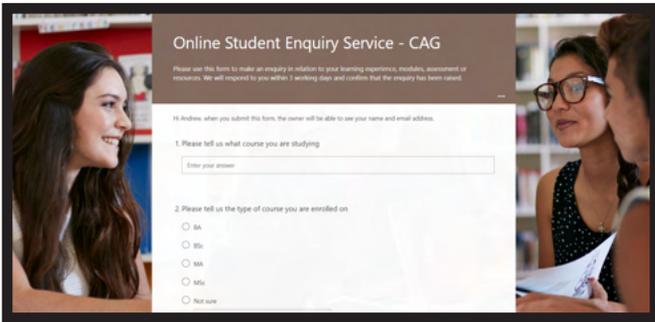
One way in which Microsoft Automate could be used is to create a workflow using Microsoft Forms, Microsoft Excel and then Twitter. The system is set up so that when a response is submitted to a form, the information from the response is then automatically placed into an Excel table. From here, the data from this table, such as the number of responses, can be composed into a tweet to be shared out on social media. This is a quick and straightforward way to share information with a wider audience without much active participation from a member of staff.

Samantha and Andrew ran a pilot project to test the efficiency of this programme. The problem that they wanted to solve was to shift student's expectations on how quickly they expected a response to urgent queries. There was also a danger of emails that went to one single inbox being lost, creating a single point of failure. And finally, the ability to be able to track problems or queries from students that are sent to one person's inbox. To solve this problem, they created a Microsoft form that students would use to log their query or problem. The responses to this form would create a new row into an excel table to keep a record of the query and Automate would also post a message into a designated Team to raise awareness of the query to the designated members of staff. Finally, an automated response would be sent back to the student based on how they answered the questions in the Microsoft Form. There are a range of benefits and some disadvantages of carrying out the process in this way. It is a great time saving exercise as well as having increased levels of accuracy and less manual work for staff to allow them to focus more on the student experience. However, the triggers and actions of the programme are determined by Microsoft, so this may restrain more advanced programmers in the way in which they can use the software. On the other hand, this may be a benefit for less experienced programmers as there are limited ways in which you can use the software, therefore avoiding any confusion.



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Samantha Gooneratne and Andrew Bingham



This early work into using this software provides the basis for further investigation into using automation and artificial intelligence in workflows throughout the university. There is a scope for this beyond student support, for example, streamlining various administrative processes for staff. Samantha and Andrew plan to create a community of practice to encourage members of staff to engage with this software and learn more about how it works.

When Sam was asked what digital excellence means to her, she said “To me, digital excellence doesn’t mean mastering every capability of the software I use. Instead it’s about learning enough about the software to make it work for me, so that I can be efficient and effective in my job.”

When Andrew was asked what digital excellence means to him, he said “Digital Excellence is an aspiration that we are working towards - and we have made some great progress. It is very much a journey that we are on and we are learning a lot as we progress. This aspect is probably the most important - it's not the digital tools as such that are important, but the knowledge and skills that students and staff will acquire on the digital excellence learning journey. This will build a firm foundation for solving problems to ensure we are 'future ready'.”

