

## Designing the Student Journey and building a student-centric organisation

We have supported Universities globally and in the Middle East to understand and redesign their Student Journeys. When a University embarks on reimagining the Student Journey, five steps can help to transform their organisations to deliver a truly distinctive experience.



### 1. Understand your customer

Start with a customer 'segmentation analysis' – using institutional data to understand the makeup of the student body and break down groups of students into key demographics. Then, develop 'personas' – archetypes of representative University students that act as a point of reference for the journey design.



### 2. Map the current journey

Carry out workshops with staff, faculty and students to understand the current student journey in detail. Identify each of the key student 'touch points' throughout the journey and understand which parts of the University are involved in their delivery.



### 3. Identify areas for improvement and map the future journey

Work with students and other stakeholders to identify the 'pain' and 'love' points – what's working well and where there are areas for improvement. Identify solutions to enhance the student experience and to improve the efficiency of service delivery. Map the 'to-be' Student Journey and create a shared vision around achieving it.



### 4. Configure the organisation around the Student Journey

Consider how the University's Operating Model needs to change in order to deliver the Student Journey in the most efficient way. What new tools, processes, systems, and people capabilities are required to deliver the optimal student experience? Revise the University organisation structure and re-engineer back-office processes.



### 5. Build digital solutions to enhance the journey

Identify digital solutions that enable students to interact with the University online, 24/7, on a self-service basis. Consider using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track all student interactions and generate rich data on student behaviour. Integrate systems and consolidate data to drive decision making.

## Case Studies

Leading Universities worldwide have already used a Student Journey approach to transform their organisations, and Middle East HEIs look set to follow suit.

### Australia: Deakin University

In 2015, Deakin underwent a Digital Transformation to significantly enhance the student experience, developing a digitally-enabled student journey that includes innovative mobile apps and cloud-based learning. The University has been recognised for this work by being awarded with the prestigious 'Global Digital Leader' award two years running from Digital Edge.



### UK: Leading University

PwC was engaged by a leading UK University to support it through an organisation-wide transformation based on the student journey. This included, 1) understanding and mapping the student journey, 2) reorganising the back-office around the student journey, 3) Implementing a CRM, and 4) building a suite of digital solutions to enhance the end-to-end student experience.



### UAE: Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)

HCT, the UAE's largest multi-campus University underwent a transformation of its Operating Model designed around its customers. As part of the transformation, PwC supported HCT to map the future Student Journey, down to operational policies and procedures, and designed a Student Journey web portal to access key services. This led to an enhanced organisational focus on students and their experience.



## Overview

This publication is the first in a series that examines the key themes influencing one of the world's most dynamic regions in Higher Education – the Middle East.

Our first paper looks at how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the region can apply a Student Journey management approach to help build efficient, customer-centric organisations that are agile enough to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

We look at the main issues facing Higher Education in our region and how Student Journey design and management can help Universities to meet these challenges. Then, we offer a series of practical suggestions for Universities based on our own experience in the region and globally.

### Student Journey – A definition:

"The end-to-end sequence of all the interactions that a student experiences throughout their relationship with a University – from the first time they hear about it at high-school, to completing their studies, graduating, continuing their learning, and keeping in touch as an alumnus."

## For more information...

PwC is one of the leading providers of professional advisory services to the higher education sector globally. Our Middle East Education and Skills Team is made up of a group of dedicated sector specialists who offer deep strategic and operational expertise across the key sectors, from early learning through to secondary, vocational and higher education. The team is led by Sally Jeffery, PwC's Global Education & Skills Network Leader, bringing together the full range of our network's global expertise for our clients. Please get in touch with one of our team for further information.



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## Reimagining the Student Journey

*Creating efficient, student-focused Universities in the Middle East*

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## The challenge

### The global picture

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide are facing a common set of challenges that are fundamentally disrupting the way in which Higher Education is delivered in the 21st Century. There has been significant discussion in the sector as to how providers can respond to the following major trends:

1	Continued global rise in student numbers	
2	Increased competition for the best students between the best Universities, including from non-traditional online learning platforms	
3	Rising expectations among increasingly tech-savvy students	
4	Decreasing budgets forcing a drive towards operational efficiency	

Many HEIs in established markets such as the UK, US and Australia have begun to think about how they can respond to these challenges by understanding, redesigning, and managing 'Student Journeys' that cater to the needs of today's students. By designing their organisations around the ideal-state Student Journey, Universities aim to attract and retain new cohorts of 'digital-natives', build efficient, customer-centric organisations, and improve student outcomes and alumni loyalty post-graduation.

### The specific Middle East context

With a growing Higher Education sector driven by a bulging youth population, increasing participation in Higher Education, and the need to respond to critical labour market needs, should Middle Eastern Universities be worried?

We believe that alongside the global headwinds in Higher Education, there are a number of specific challenges facing Universities in our region that are building the case for transformational change.

1	Tightening public sector budgets	
2	Increasing local competition	
3	Rising Customer Expectations	
4	High Dropout Rates	

While oil prices have risen since the lows of 2016, 'lower for longer' oil prices and economic diversification have led to fiscal tightening and increasing pressure on HEIs to become more efficient.

**65-95%** proportion of GCC government revenue from oil and gas<sup>1</sup>

The UAE and Qatar have established themselves as global education hubs. Saudi Arabia has plans to allow foreign Universities to set up in the Kingdom, leading to increased competition for students.

**62** HEIs in the UAE, including 34 International Branch Campuses<sup>2</sup>

58% of UAE students saying that 'campus life' is a key factor in their satisfaction<sup>3</sup>

80% UAE smartphone penetration<sup>4</sup>

Dropout rates at GCC Universities are higher than in leading global systems.

% of students who fail to complete their degree: 10.5% UK<sup>5</sup>, 14% UAE (Federal)<sup>6</sup>, c. 30% KSA<sup>7</sup>

This leads to reduced per-student revenue, inefficiency and ultimately, a poorly educated workforce.

#### Sources:

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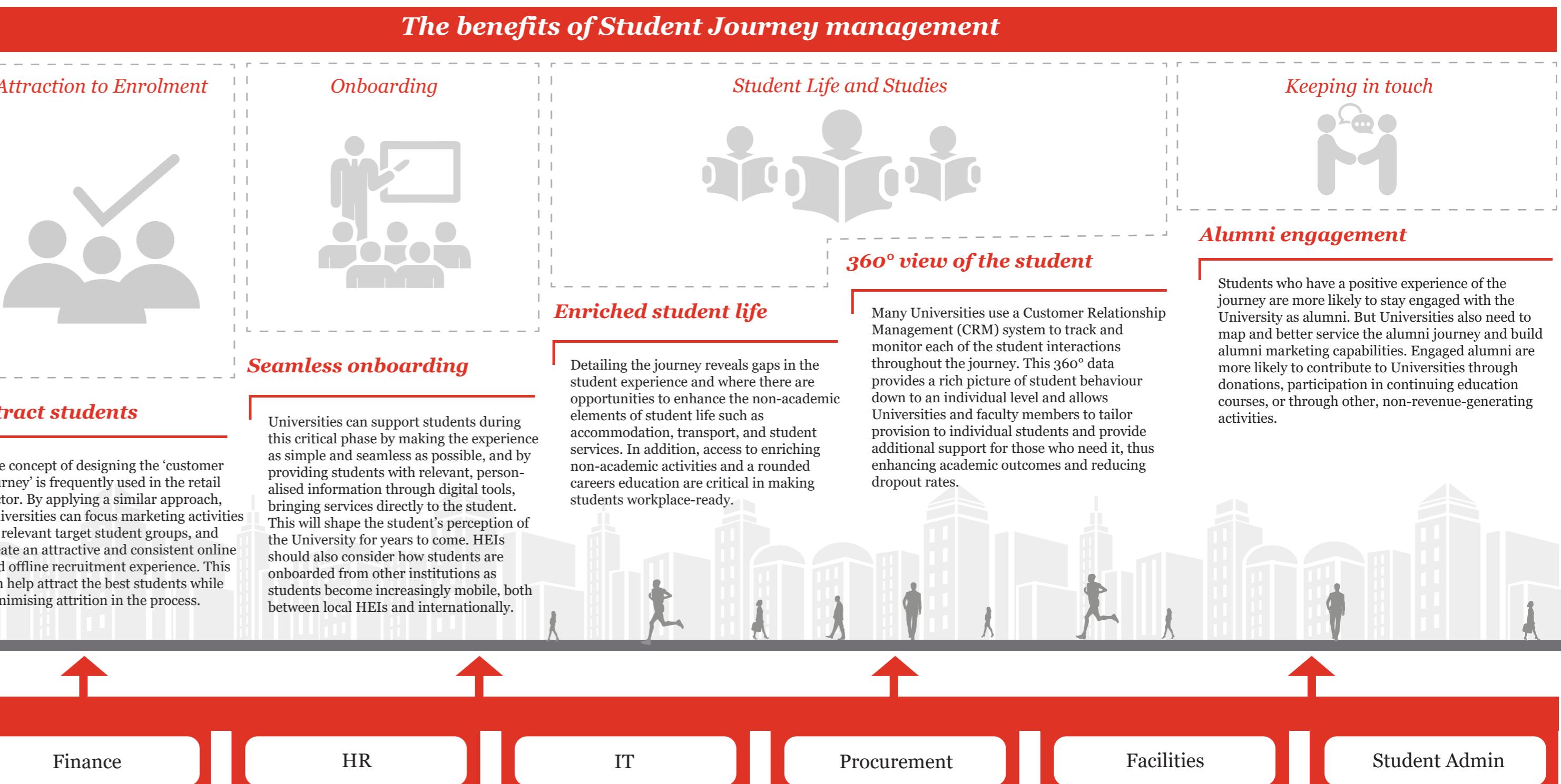
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## How can the Student Journey help to address the challenge?

HEIs that take a proactive approach to designing and managing the Student Journey can not only improve their ability to attract, retain and ensure the success of the students, but also create lean, efficient organisations that are built around their core customers. Efficient, student-centric Universities are better able to generate and retain revenue, invest in improvements, and compete for ranking positions.



### Process improvement

Aligning back-office functions around the student journey can help to drive efficiency savings by removing duplication and focusing on activities that enhance the student journey. It can also break down silos between departments to support a consistent student experience.

### Data-driven decision making

Once the student journey is designed, it should be managed by the University in its entirety, with a clear set of Key Performance Indicators and reporting lines. Institutional data can be consolidated around the student journey, allowing for powerful Business Intelligence and improving the ability to adapt as required. For example, significant investments in technology or physical infrastructure can be supported by a solid evidence base.