



The University committed to making a massive investment in supporting our students through tough times!

The University of Salford describes the JS Group's Aspire Cash solution as a **"godsend"** – as it has allowed a rapid and effective deployment of a significant amount of payments to more than 20,000 students coping with the cost-of-living crisis.

"The University committed to making a massive investment in supporting our students through tough times – and the introduction of Aspire Cash came at exactly the right moment. Without the JS Group's cash payment system coming into play, I am really not sure how we would have been able to handle the scale and speed of this initiative," says **Andrew Crozier, Deputy Director of Finance at the University of Salford.**

"It was actually a godsend that they launched the cash scheme just as we were forming our payment plans. It enabled us to pay all of the money over quickly to the students and for them to draw the money down easily, while we also weren't facing restrictions such as sorting out processing details and checking bank account information."

Aspire Cash – delivered in conjunction with the Payit by NatWest open banking platform – allows universities to far more effectively manage, deliver and track any kind of student payments. It avoids all the usual obstacles that university finance teams tend to face when having to cope with mass payment needs. It enables instant payments, saves huge amounts of processing time, cuts back on bureaucracy, and delivers

powerful data on how students are spending specialist funds (via bursaries, scholarships, hardship funds) and expenses claims.

"We would normally have to upload a lot of detailed student information and then it would take at least a couple of days for any payments to be processed. With the JS Group service, the money's instantly available for our students to draw down."

More than 80% of students at the University of Salford are drawn from a widening participation background and the University finds the JS Group to be a "perfect partner" in understanding how to support its mission and its essential student engagement, retention and progression priorities.

The JS Group has worked with the University of Salford for six years – co-creating and co-delivering the Salford Inspire programme that ensures all students are equipped to benefit from the best possible learning – and wider university experience – as possible.

This involves the use of a dedicated platform (created by the JS Group) to allow students to find and to make relevant purchases. This is accompanied by an added-value online advice and guidance centre (known as the Student



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Engagement Portal) that provides valuable insights (from experts) on student living, studying and career preparation.

TO FIND OUT MORE

Please visit www.jsgroup.co.uk or contact **David Marshall** – david.marshall@jsgroup.co.uk

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The JS Group also provides a dedicated Engagement Partner, who is constantly guiding and supporting students on making the most of the portal and of the JS Group services.

Salford Inspire is mainly managed through the University of Salford's Student Experience and Support Division. **Helen Parker, Student Inclusion and Engagement Manager in the Student Success Team**, says: "Our role is to constantly monitor the success of students from under represented backgrounds. We look at the award gap, continuation rates, completion rates, and consider what we can do to minimise any barriers that the students might face.

"At the time when we first brought the JS Group on board, there was a sector weakness: no great tracking of how students spend their money through bursaries and specialist support funds. We felt that the best way to tackle this was to bring in the JS Group team and use their dedicated online store where students can spend their money (with their learning in mind) and which allows tracking of how that money is actually being spent.

"We got positive feedback from the students and from the lecturers, who felt that it was a really good idea for encouraging their students to obtain the materials they needed and they could help to recommend particular bundles of materials useful for a specific course."

Helen also leads on the University's Access and Participation Plan – the formal record of how the University of Salford is helping to engage and to support students from non-traditional backgrounds.

"We can actually report back to the Office for Students on how dedicated funds, intended to support these students, are being used. That is very valuable data and insight. We are evolving this and perfecting this over time to examine the closer link between student funding use and its impact on student engagement and performance."

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- Helen Parker



When asked about the working relationship with the JS Group, Helen says: "I think that they are very customer-focused. They are very genuine people and they do inspire trust. They are also innovative: if you have an issue then they will find a solution for it."

Andrew Crozier, Deputy Director of Finance, adds: "I don't find them to be a corporate "provider" at all. It feels they are all working together for the benefit of the students."



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