

They are great. It's a personal approach at all levels and they bring a really good energy to UWL



With the help of the JS Group, The University of West London (UWL) has now significantly transformed the way that it delivers its payments to students.

The JS Group has worked closely with UWL to create a much more integrated, student-centric, and high-speed ecosystem for all payments of bursaries, scholarships, hardship funds and case-by-case special payments (covering, for example, graduation gown hire, job interview expenses and course field trips).

Almost all of the University's undergraduate students (including those undertaking foundation stages), now benefit from an annual funding investment by UWL that is delivered through the JS Group's Aspire service – delivering the appropriate funding type (in the form of cash or credit) depending on the particular student needs – and via a joined-up single system and process.

"I think it has impacted very positively with the students, giving them this new system of support in cash and through credits. They have been able to use the money more productively and access it far better than the old system we had in place before," says **Sara Raybould, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of UWL**.

"When we saw what the JS Group could do to help us then this appealed instantly. We could see how much easier it would make life for both our student payments team and for our students," adds **Alan Shannon-Smith**, who leads the student money service at UWL as its Head of Student Money and Immigration Advice in Student Services.

"It makes it a lot easier for us because, before the JS Group, we were using a very complicated payment document. With cash funds: we paid via traditional bank transfer and so, usually, it took a week or more to reach the students."

"When it comes to providing immediate financial support to our students, the two main benefits of the JS Group and from Aspire Cash for us are: it vastly speeds up the funding operational process for my own team and it significantly speeds up the time taken for students to access the funds."

The funding that UWL makes available to its undergraduate students can be applied to cover many different needs and circumstances. Aspire Cash (from the JS Group in partnership with NatWest Payit technology) is a rapid payment service for getting much-needed cash into students who need urgent help with their living and day-to-day costs. Aspire Credit (from the JS Group) helps to direct students to course-specific resources that they can purchase with the help of a dedicated annual UWL investment.



TO FIND OUT MORE

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

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*"Essentially we are promoting good studentship," says **Sara Raybould**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of UWL. "As a university we have always had the student experience very much at the heart of what we do. The vast majority of our students are classed as mature, drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds, or come from low participation neighbourhoods."*

With regard to the resource-based Aspire Credit funds that are delivered, Sara says: *"When we looked at the financial support that we offer at UWL, we identified that you can give students money but they don't necessarily spend it on the most appropriate things that strengthen their engagement in higher education and their learning."*

"By working with the JS Group, we are able to say to them: 'we are giving you this money in order to benefit your university experience through the targeted purchase of books, learning materials, specialist course equipment, laptops, and so on'."

"By actually ring-fencing this investment for academic purposes then we can make sure that we advantage our students a little bit better."

In addition, UWL undergraduates have access to the Aspire Bursary which is split up into a Free

Books scheme in their first year and Aspire Credit in the following years.

The Free Book scheme means *"from a Library perspective, that we know that all of the students have those particular core textbooks – especially for their first year of study. It also means that the lecturers also know that students will have guaranteed access to these books,"* says **Davina Omar**, Director of Library Services at UWL.

Aspire Credit is to provide students with funds to obtain, for example, the latest textbooks or specialist equipment and materials tailored to their subject matter.

"The idea behind it is for the student to use that fund to help them to buy anything that they need for the course," says **Davina**.

A particular benefit of the JS Group's partnership is the ability to track how students are spending their specialist financial support from UWL – via both cash and credit systems.

The JS Group data team's tracking allows UWL to *"really understand what the financial needs and challenges of our students are,"* according to **Sara Raybould**. *"The reporting and the insights provides a powerful tool for us to assess why students really do require certain help in aspects of their UWL experience,"* adds **Alan**.

With regard to the JS Group's overall partnership, **Sara** says *"They are great. It's a personal approach at all levels and they bring a really good energy to UWL. They come up with suggestions constantly and are always willing to assess what we're doing and explore how we can continue to adapt for an even better student experience."*

Davina Omar adds: *"They are an excellent team to work with. They are very accommodating, responsive, and very student-orientated. The model of the JS group providing UWL with our own Engagement Partner, as a specific student advisory resource, is excellent – we have somebody who understands the institution, understands our students, and is regularly working here on campus alongside us."*



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