

The Further Education sector is a complex business environment. It has always been so, but it has become more complex as a result of the increased diversity within the sector in recent years, largely as a result of government agenda. The scope of the FE remit has expanded to include more adult and part time learners from all social groups and to provide a broader range of support services.

A few recent examples will serve to underline this claim: -

- ◆ Multiple funding streams and grants – FE, HE, WBL, ACL, ESF
- ◆ EMA, additional learning support, learner support funds
- ◆ Widening participation agenda
- ◆ Commercial training expansion
- ◆ Increase in hourly paid lecturers and associated administration
- ◆ Provision of Continuing Professional Development for staff



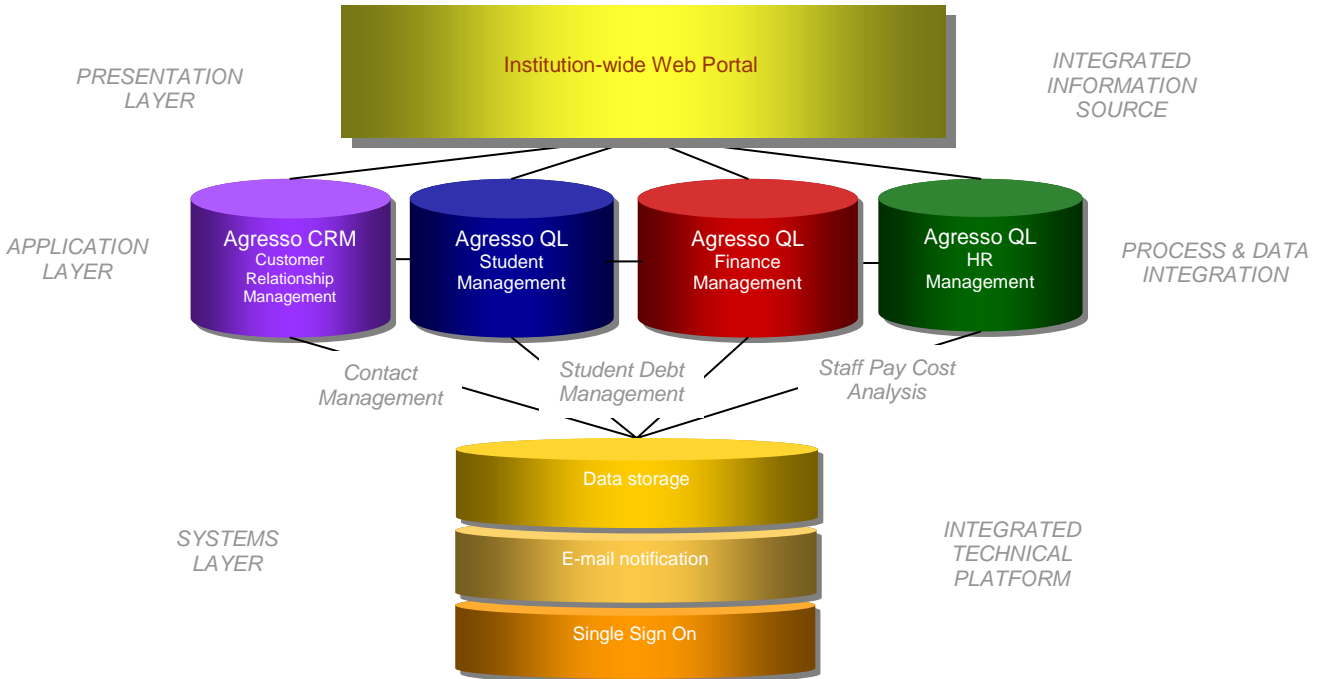
The result is that the administrative burden has increased substantially and colleges have rightly addressed this by implementing the latest IT systems available to supplement the limited staff resources. For the most part, this involved “best of breed” systems being implemented for each functional area with little attention being given to how common processes would be addressed. The resultant proliferation of separate systems has produced islands of data and poor efficiency through the multiple handling of common data. In how many separate places does your college record a student address?

As senior managers review their administrative processes, most are looking for synchronisation and automation and this can only be achieved with the integration of underlying systems and data.

Agresso (formerly known as Distinction) has an impressive track record of developing and supporting management information systems within the FE sector. Since 1990, Agresso has provided systems for the three key areas of College activity – student, personnel and financial management. A new system for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has recently been launched.

Integrated Solutions

In all this time, a consistent feature of the software has been the high degree of integration provided within and across these systems. Agresso QL Students, Agresso QL Financials and Agresso QL Personnel & Payroll all integrate to each other so that common data is only entered once, but is available to all parts of the software that require it. The new Agresso CRM not only integrates dynamically to Agresso QL Students for efficient enquiry handling, but to any third party student record system.



E-Business

In addition to this application-level integration, the continuing investment in evolving technology has provided a level of technical integration to ensure that access to the information held in these systems can be made available to the broadest range of users in the most appropriate way. The result is that both expert practitioners and occasional users, including senior managers, can achieve more with less manual effort and meet the continued challenges within this dynamic business environment.

Agresso has set as its commercial mission the delivery of key information management solutions to its customers on an ongoing basis. This involves enhancements to core functionality in addition to the provision of new technology to allow colleges to respond confidently to the challenges and opportunities that continue to emerge.