



## Using Teams and Power Platform to transform education


Hugh Baird College is one of the largest providers of education and training in the Merseyside area, delivering over 300 courses. So it is perhaps not surprising that the college takes an exceptionally forward-thinking approach to IT.

Hugh Baird College's relationship with Chess, as a provider of IT support and services, goes back nearly a decade. In 2021, Chess delivered a hybrid hardware/cloud-based solution based on Azure and Power BI, providing the college with a user-friendly way to manage and report student data.

### The Business Challenge:

Hugh Baird College's existing student record system stored data in various databases linked to the same product suite. The main issue was that generating meaningful reports from these disparate databases involved manual, time-consuming, and repetitive data exports, alignment, and collation.

 Sector **Education**

 People **50+**

Solutions  
**Microsoft 365, Teams,  
Power Platform**

**“Before we could do any reporting, we had to export data manually from our systems and adjust it to align correctly with the main core system...We were spending significant time collating the data, which meant delays in reporting metrics and occasional human errors being introduced to the process. ”**

John Billington - Director of Facilities & Technical Services

On top of this, the record system's configuration also meant data would be regularly overwritten, meaning the entire process had to be repeated for each reporting request. For the college to monitor and meet its targets reliably it needed a new system which would: Store all the data in one place Provide a dashboard that staff could easily access Generate meaningful reports Save staff time Reduce the likelihood of human error As a first step, Hugh Baird College produced a requirements specification that envisaged the solution as fully cloud-based. Chess then helped to develop this strategy into a hybrid solution that could lower initial budgetary costs and which allowed for a transition to a full cloud system in the future.

## About Hugh Baird

Chess first worked with Hugh Baird College in 2012 to provide all students with access to Microsoft Office 365 along with a set of online learning resources. With over 7,000 students and a large faculty, the college positions itself as an innovation leader in the education sector. Fast forward to 2021 and Chess has been working with the college again to deliver an accurate and reliable way to manage and report data.



## The Solution

Chess delivered a single data core solution that could take the data from various siloed databases and deliver them into a single SQL database. The data was then transformed to align with the requirements provided by the college's stakeholders. This transformed data was then placed into an Azure database and overlaid with a suite of Power BI dashboards, allowing staff to easily access the metrics required.

John Billington and the team at Hugh Baird College were very pleased with the results: *"In the current climate, it is difficult to imagine how we would operate without the Microsoft 365 eco-system Chess deployed for us in 2012."* Hugh Baird College now has a reliable way to manage student data, and, with the help of Power BI, can report in an understandable and easily communicable way.

Of his experience working with Chess, John Billington says: *"During the development of the solution, Chess provided a huge amount of guidance and support, not only assisting with our understanding of the capabilities of Power BI but also allowing us to get the most out of our internal data solutions."* *"Since completing the project, Chess has continued to provide invaluable guidance."*

## The Outcome

From the outset, Chess worked collaboratively with the team at Hugh Baird College, involving them fully in the process so that their views were heard throughout. John Billington summarises Chess's approach *"The process was not without challenges, but by embarking from the start with a collaborative approach we were made to feel part of both the challenges and the solutions and not just the recipient of a paid-for solution."*

## Plans For The Future

With the help of Chess, Power BI has transformed how Hugh Baird College stores, processes and reports on its data, deriving key insights on which to base strategic and operational decisions. From here, there are plans to both widen the scope of what has been built and to allow deeper analysis of student metrics.

As John says *"We plan to continue evolving our data and technology management innovation and are currently in the process of building additional dashboards to reflect better how our staff and students are leveraging Teams. This would not have been possible six months ago."*

**“Leveraging Power BI alongside Teams helps us fulfil our goal to be at the leading edge of systems technology and innovation in education. Furthermore, we have greatly increased the college's operational capabilities, improved the user experience for staff and students, and delivered a safe environment to both teach and learn.”**

John Billington - Director of Facilities & Technical Services



Chess is one of the UK's leading independent and trusted technology service providers, employing 260 skilled people across the UK, supporting over 25,000 organisations.

By leveraging world-class technology, Chess helps you to connect your people, protect your data, grow your business, reduce your costs and work better together, which means your business, your people and your customers can thrive. At Chess, we're passionate about our unique culture and our continuous investment in our people to be industry experts.

We're extremely proud that our people voted us No.1 in 'The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work for' list 2018, and we continue to celebrate more than ten years in the top 100.



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