

A Lindenhouse Case Study

Nottingham Law School (Nottingham Trent University)



NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY

Part of Nottingham Trent University in the East Midlands, Nottingham Law School (NLS) is one of the biggest law schools in Britain. NLS has gained an enviable reputation for delivering high quality education and training through a wide range of academic and professional law programmes. More than 100 full-time lecturers support an undergraduate and postgraduate student population in excess of 2,000.

Well-established links with legal practice ensure that NLS keeps in touch with the education and training needs of both aspiring and qualified solicitors and barristers. Those links are also reflected in the sponsorship of professorships at NLS by several major Nottingham and London law firms as well as leading legal publishers. NLS is also noted for its legal research capabilities and produces an internationally acclaimed publication, The Nottingham Law Journal.

Administration of student records at NLS generates large quantities of correspondence and other paperwork, much of which has to be retained long after students have completed their courses. Its popularity among prospective law students means that for every 650 places on the Legal Practice Course at NLS there may be 1200 or more applicants. It is a similar picture with the Bar Vocational Course (100 places) and the Graduate Diploma in Law (180 places). Caring for and monitoring the successful applicants during their time at NLS creates yet more paperwork for eventual archiving.

Lesley Kirby has been Team Leader, Subject Administration, for Professional Legal Studies at NLS since 1993. She has a staff of 24. During her early years in the job she discovered the onerous nature of the task of storing past students' admissions and progress records in an accessible manner. The back records took up an enormous square-footage, whilst finding specific documents in response to an enquiry could be very hit-and-miss.

"In the mid-1990s we started to explore the advantages of computerised document management systems," Lesley Kirby explains. **"By 1998 we were almost ready to proceed and we made contact with Lindenhouse with a view to having them install an Invu document management system for us. Things ran very smoothly from then on. There were no major hitches during the installation process and the staff training sessions delivered by Lindenhouse ensured that we were able to benefit straight away from the operating efficiencies of the Invu system."**

"Now, after nearly seven years, I can honestly say we have had no major glitches with the system. Occasional snags have highlighted minor staff training gaps here rather than faults with the system, but really the whole set-up is very self-sufficient. Our technical people have had no difficulty accessing prompt and effective support from Lindenhouse whenever the odd query has arisen."

Whilst the Invu system supplied by Lindenhouse has transformed the document management work of Lesley and her team, there have been benefits too for NLS in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Lesley estimates that there has been a 70% saving in document storage space in her office area. Document retrieval has also been revolutionised now that specific items may be identified and retrieved in seconds at the desktop.

"Savings in staff time have been phenomenal, assisted by outsourcing of document scanning to a specialist company in Tamworth," Lesley Kirby adds. **"We may need to access only a few archive documents each week, but I still remember how long that could take in the old days. Now the process is very quick and the Invu system provides an audit trail to show which documents have been accessed when and by whom."**

Like any educational establishment, NLS is required to have a robust system of record keeping that is reliable and also offers the appropriate degree of confidentiality for students' personal records. In addition to the normal scrutiny applied to all universities, NLS is subject to monitoring by the legal profession's governing body, The Law Society. After a three-day monitoring visit to NLS in 2004 focusing on the Legal Practice Course, The Law Society reported that NLS had "an able, committed and professional teaching team and administrative and technical support staff," grading NLS as "Excellent" for overall quality of its LPC provision.

"How would I sum up my thoughts on the Invu system provided by Lindenhouse after about seven years in operation?" Lesley Kirby ponders. **"I would say that, having experienced both the old way of managing our archive records and the high-tech alternative, I am very pleased all round that NLS had the foresight to make the investment. The transition was virtually painless and now that we are reaping the benefits I would not want to go back to the system of manual access to physical records – not in a million years."**

About Lindenhouse

Lindenhouse provides quality IT products and services to a wide range of clients. The company is focused on document management solution provision and develops bespoke software to provide integration to all insurance and financial services back-office systems and to practice management systems in both the Accountancy and Legal sectors. Lindenhouse have installed 1700 document management systems to date and are rightly proud that it retains 95% of its support contracts – a testimony to the dedication and professionalism of the company's technical staff and help desk.

For more information, please contact Mark Woolley at Lindenhouse.

Telephone: 01223 492266 Email: info@lindenhouse.co.uk Or visit: www.lindenhouse.co.uk

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