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Higher Education's Guide to Curriculum Management Software

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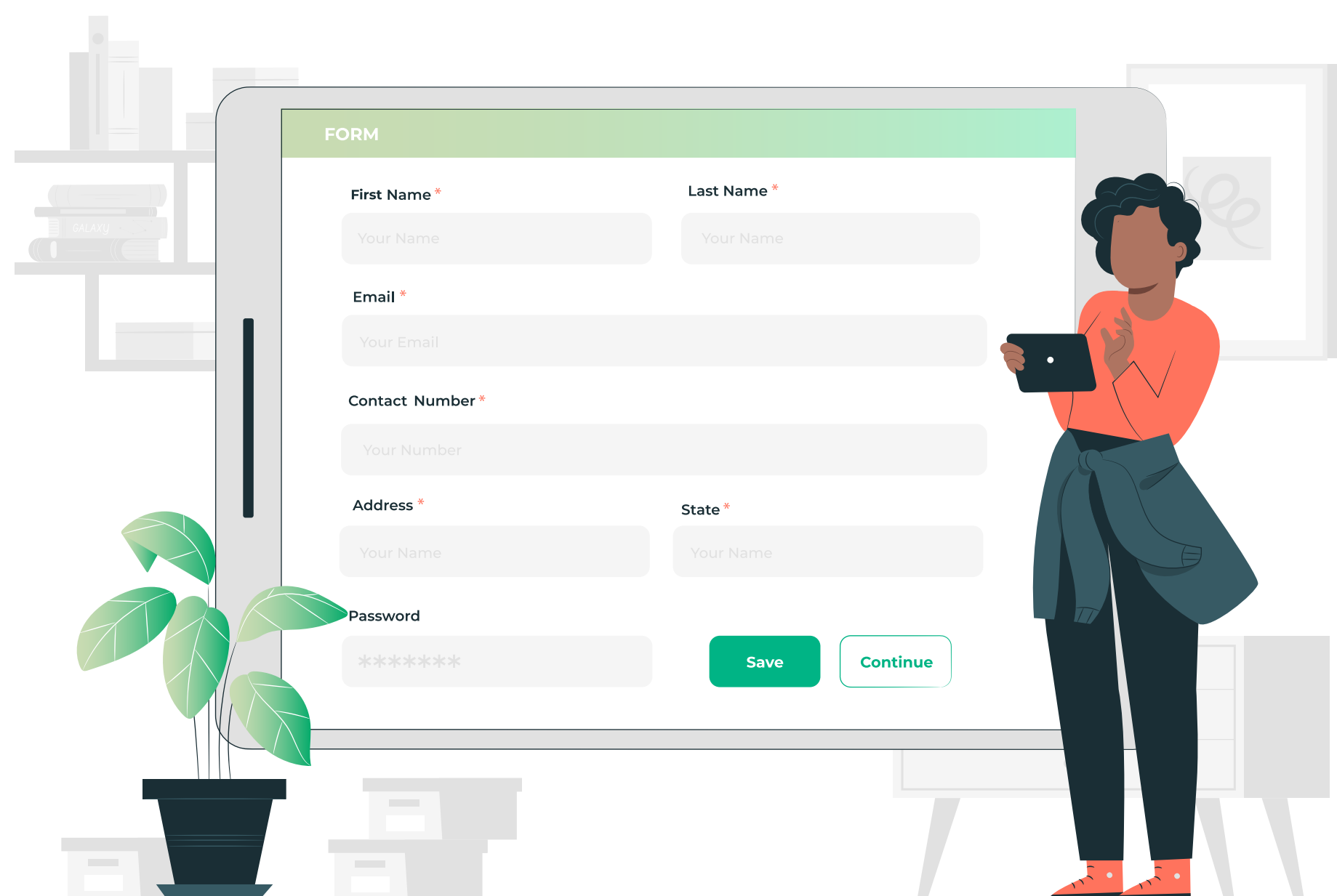
Due to the global pandemic and dramatic fluctuations in enrollment and funding, higher education institutions are searching for ways to ramp up innovation, lower costs, and increase student success.

According to a study by the American Council for Education, 55% of higher ed institution presidents are changing their post-pandemic plans to expand online learning offerings and 42% plan to revise policies on remote work and flexible work arrangements.

These initiatives, in addition to trends such as guided pathways, micro-credentialing and badging, multi-lingual course offerings, competency-based education, improving experiences for non-traditional students, supporting student mental health services, and the need for data heavily affect the registrar's office and those who manage the institution's curriculum.

Administrators have historically managed curriculum through manual processes or homegrown systems, and with the administrative burden of recent trends, it's nearly impossible to keep up without slowing the institution down.

Under different circumstances, institutions could hire more administrators. But higher education leaders are cutting budgets everywhere they can. In a recent EDUCAUSE poll, **2/3** of institutions reported budget cuts to their IT units for the 2020–21 academic year. Additionally, economies around the world are struggling due to the pandemic and many question the cost and value of higher education.

Use this guide to understand how a curriculum management software solution can help institutions streamline processes, allocate resources effectively, and give staff the ability to focus on work that will advance the mission of the institution.

How a Curriculum Management Software Impacts Accreditation

If you've spent time working in the registrar's office, you understand how brutal the accreditation process can be. Accreditation organizations regularly review curriculum processes to ensure institutions are maintaining high standards.

These accreditation standards are meant to be rigorous—oftentimes they monopolize resources for folks working on curriculum management.

In a recent Kuali study of over 150 curriculum managers,

75% of institutions ranked accreditation reviews as at least somewhat challenging.
Those reviews are likely challenging because so much of the curriculum management process is done on paper, PDFs, and emails.

80% of respondents said proposers must supply all information for new proposals or use a previously saved (Word or PDF) document.
If proposers are re-creating or manually gathering information for new proposals, then surely administrators are doing the same for accreditation requirements.

A curriculum management system can act as documentation as well as store versions, approvals, and more for you.

After a curriculum audit at the University of Utah, accreditors advised the institution to invest resources in better managing their learning outcomes. Today, they have robust tracking around their learning outcomes using Kuali's Curriculum Management solution.

Accreditation is just one of the many challenges of curriculum management. What about the others?

Challenges of Higher Education Curriculum Management

While each institution has its own unique challenges, many persist across higher education.

MANUAL PROCESSES

Manual processes persist across higher education curriculum management. From curriculum proposals to formatting and publishing the catalog, curriculum and catalog management can take thousands of hours of admin time, which is not only frustrating but also costly.

The average cost to manually process PDF is $2.84 per PDF according to a study by AIIM.

SILOED DEPARTMENTS

Silos between higher education is nothing new for curriculum administrators, but when trends in curriculum, and the market at large, require more interdisciplinary collaboration, silos become particularly problematic.

While some believe the marketing department is responsible for breaking down silos, technology can play a significant role.

If an institution processes 200 proposals in one month, all housed in PDF format, the institution will spend nearly

$7000 /month

on processing curriculum proposals alone, which doesn't take into account the time it takes to meet about those proposals, or transfer them to the catalog.

Before Murray State University implemented a curriculum management solution, faculty members and administrators spent dozens of hours in meetings to stay aligned on curriculum projects. As the complexity and scope of their curriculum increased, so did the meetings. Without these face-to-face meetings, departmental silos would slow processes down.

Adopting a curriculum management system gave Murray State the ability to communicate within a software solution, not email or in person, about curriculum proposals. Software opened cross-departmental communication pathways and allowed the team to significantly cut down on meeting time.

Murray State administrators estimate saving 200 hours per curriculum cycle in repurposed time, while getting more work done and reducing the prevalence of silos.

LACK OF INTEGRATED SOFTWARE

Decades ago, higher education institutions invested in student information systems (SIS) to serve a wide range of needs across the student lifecycle. Institutions adopted additional solutions, such as a learning management system or scheduling software, to meet specific goals or needs that were not met by the SIS. According to AACRAO, these additional solutions "were designed to address specific needs but were not designed to communicate with each other or share data with the student information system."

Data integration challenges have significantly limited the ability to produce real-time data.

Integrations across curriculum management, the SIS, the LMS, and other solutions can be more than bulk pushes and pulls.

**You can expect more from modern, cloud-based solutions.**

These tools push and pull data automatically at regular intervals, such as nightly, so your systems are always up to date.

Modern technology may be the answer.

What to Look for in a Curriculum Management Software Solution

When searching for a curriculum management software solution, it is critical to find a solution that meets your institution's current and future needs.
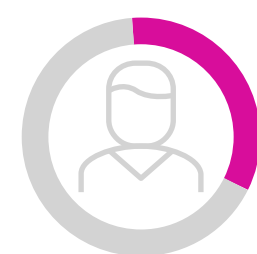
32% of institutions say their curriculum management solution doesn't have the necessary functionality to support their needs.

Let's dive into the functionality your software solution should have.

INTEGRATION CAPABILITIES WITH THE STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Seek out a solution that integrates with the student information system, and ideally, other campus systems. This is a critical step in reducing the manual data entry required in curriculum management processes.

AN ACCURATE HISTORICAL RECORD

A system that stores a reliable historical record of your processes will significantly reduce the strain on administrative resources when accreditation comes around.

Additionally, with a historical record of previous proposals, faculty and staff can use other proposals as a template to start with rather than starting from scratch on each proposal.

Finally, a historical record of proposals and associated proposers, approvers, and the approval process will give the institution dozens of reporting opportunities. Discovery through upgraded reports will help administrators streamline inefficiencies.
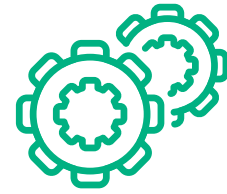
THE ABILITY TO CONFIGURE TO YOUR UNIQUE PROCESSES

Curricular approval processes are complex—75% of institutions' processes require several approvals that are subject to change, or have several approval steps and require approvers across different groups.

If your institution implemented a curriculum management solution with no configurable capabilities, it's very likely that all of your curriculum processes would have to change to fit the new tool. Avoid this issue by seeking out a software solution that offers configurability to your processes.

A configurable curriculum management solution might allow you to configure the following items:

Forms	Field types	Workflow steps	Notifications

This kind of configurability will allow you to maintain the foundational elements of your processes while simultaneously upgrading them to be more efficient.

BONUS: CURRICULUM FIRST

Historically, the catalog has guided the curriculum process. While it makes sense to focus on the legally binding document, a catalog-first approach often leads to complex curricular processes and missed opportunities in the final outcome of both the curriculum and the catalog.

What if the catalog was a by-product of the curriculum management process?

By focusing first on the pillar of curriculum management, you can produce the most organized and polished curriculum as well as the best catalog possible. And with the right software, you can streamline curriculum processes and reduce the manual labor it usually takes to translate data to the catalog.

Case Study: Southern New Hampshire University

Before Southern New Hampshire University implemented curriculum and catalog management solutions, the institution spent weeks of manual effort on curriculum and catalog processes. Additionally, the lack of transparency across departments led to a number of mistakes such as not notifying marketing and admissions of curriculum releases or discrepancies between the catalog and curriculum.

3 weeks
per year

Bringing a modern, integrated curriculum management system into their environment has reduced manual efforts by an average of 3 weeks per year and improved collaboration across departments through advance notice of offerings and alignment of course catalogs.

Southern New Hampshire University, Engineering Building

"Our planned 2022 projects will lead to business process improvement across the entire university. We wouldn't have the resources to do these kinds of projects, at least on the curriculum side, if we were managing everything manually and doing all the communication that Kuali does,"

MIKE O'CONNOR
Director of System Analytics in the Office of the University Registrar at SNHU.

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The Kuali Student Suite is a modular, advanced curriculum and catalog management solution that saves your institution time and minimizes risk, while maintaining accreditation and driving student success.

KUALI CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT
provides the ability to transparently manage curriculum through easy-to-use workflows. Curriculum makes it easy to locate dependencies, use groups to manage proposals, and configure the tool to your unique processes.

KUALI SYLLABUS
enables institutions to provide comprehensive compliant section-level syllabi while streamlining accreditation related work.

KUALI CATALOG MANAGEMENT
allows institutions to produce an accurate student-facing catalog that is always up to date.

KUALI BUILD
is a no-code forms and approvals solution, built exclusively for Higher Education. Build is secure, easy to use, and is an invaluable tool to any department looking to modernize and streamline processes.

Get Started Today!