Good Things Come in Threes: How UWA Combined Blackboard, Milestone, and Adopt to Boost Employability

A digital transformation at the University of Western Australia has revamped the student experience and enhanced skill development.

Millenia Dedicated to the Pursuit of Wisdom

For tens of thousands of years, the Whadjuk Noongar people have gathered on the banks of the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) to share and advance kaartdijin (knowledge). Since 1911, this idyllic location has been home for the **University of Western Australia (UWA)**, where learners from all of the world's cultures are now inspired to "Seek Wisdom", honouring and expanding the timeless traditions of the area. More than 28,000 students from over 115 nations attend UWA currently, reflecting the institution's growing international reputation and top **100 global ranking**.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC

LOCATION:
CRAWLEY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA

POPULATION:
28,000+

ANTHOLOGY SOLUTIONS:
BLACKBOARD
ANTHOLOGY MILESTONE
ANTHOLOGY ADOPT

▶❙❙

Alyce-Maree McGillivray, Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia on Blackboard, Milestone, and Adopt

Anthology®

The Challenge

Supporting the Workforce Pipeline and the Skills Economy

As the first quarter of the 21st century nears completion, seeking wisdom now takes on a very different complexion. With the economy changing rapidly and the skills that employers desire also fluctuating, higher education must shift its focus to support learners to quickly attain skills that correlate with workforce opportunities.

Western Australia is no exception. While economic growth in the state **continues to exceed the national average**, global financial challenges and subsequent pressure on the resource sector saw **job advertisements in WA drop by 20.4% in 2024**. As industries such as health care and social assistance and education and training demonstrate strong year-on-year employment growth, higher education needs to reorientate around these and other areas of opportunity for graduates.

The team at UWA understood that learning technology forms a crucial part of this equation. In recent years, they have embarked on a digital transformation to allow for a more flexible and skills-oriented pedagogical approach.

"We have a strong roadmap around digital transformation and capability uplift. And we also very much have a dedication to improving the employability outcomes and building up skills for our students."

Alyce McGillivray
Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia

The Solution

Blackboard, Badging, and Better Insights

In partnership with Anthology, UWA implemented a three-pronged strategy to better align their offering with the workforce pipeline.

Firstly, they modernised their **Blackboard®** instance to Ultra. To realise the opportunity of micro-credentials, UWA planned a series of programmes via UWA Online, and knew that this required an intuitive, modern interface to support remote learners. Ultra also comes with **Blackboard's suite of AI capabilities**, making it faster for instructors to develop tailored materials for these courses.

"We knew that the cohort for micro-credentials are in a position where they can pick anything worldwide. So it has to be a digital-first modern interface that's highly accessible. Ultra delivered that."

Alyce McGillivray
Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia

Secondly, they expanded their badging offering via **Anthology® Milestone**. They had previously had a manual approach to badging, but this lacked scale, efficiency, and utility for learners. Taking a digital approach with Milestone gives a more professional and consistent output in a fraction of the time, and makes it easier for instructors to apply them in their courses on Blackboard and recognise skill attainment. For learners, they have a digital record of the competencies they've developed which can be easily packaged and shared with prospective employers.

"We liked the Milestone platform because it was quick to set up. It was really easy for staff. You create the badge, it looks beautiful, and then you can roll that out quickly without having to redo it every time. And students really like it because they can then share their badges. They can share them with industry, they can put them on their resume, they can share them on their LinkedIn."

Alyce McGillivray
Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia

The third and final part of UWA's strategy was to leverage **Anthology® Adopt** to access more granular insights about the learning experience. Adopt provides a detailed, real-time view of how students and instructors use Blackboard, illuminating opportunities to connect them with content and additional features that can further enrich their learning. Contextual messages in the LMS can then be deployed at scale to alert users to these opportunities, or to communicate important updates from across campus.

Insights Delivered

A New, Digitised Experience for Students

Student response to the new Blackboard interface has been overwhelmingly positive. Modern learners expect a learning platform as intuitive, accessible, and attractive as the digital tools they use in other aspects of their lives, and feedback suggests that UWA's students have found that in Blackboard.

"The experience that we provide our students has to compete with all of the other digital experiences that they get. They can shop online, they can do their banking online, social media, all of those things. Learning experiences need to compete with that and students have a level of digital convenience that they just expect now. We've been able to achieve that with Blackboard."

Alyce McGillivray
Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia
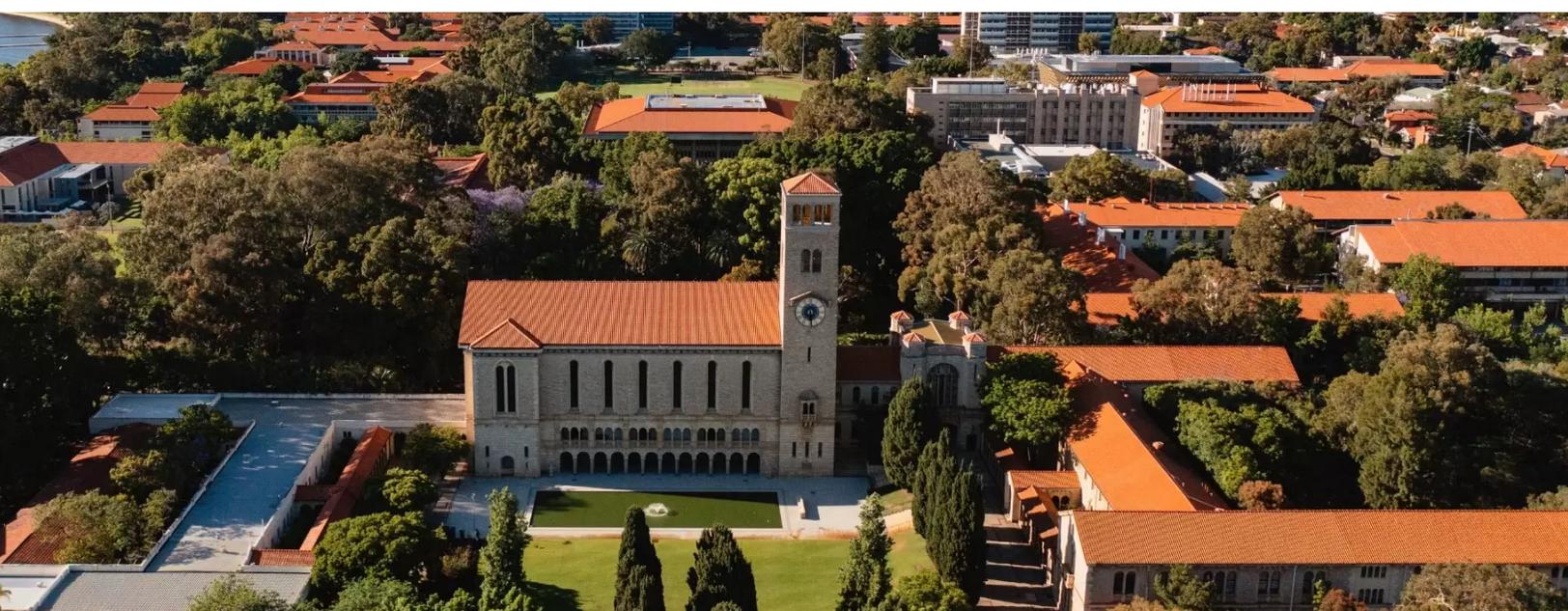
Adopt has highlighted key opportunities to further tailor the learning experience at UWA. Based off usage data and student feedback solicited natively within the LMS, new course and content templates have been developed, which means less scrolling and more engaging activities.

With Milestone included as the third pillar, partnership with Anthology has allowed UWA to take significant strides towards their goal of advancing the workforce pipeline. By leveraging the breadth of the Blackboard platform, they're developing a modern, intuitive online learning environment, supported by badging, micro-credentials, and user insights.

"Every university wants to provide an excellent digital student experience and every university wants their students to be employable and build skills. This trio of products—Blackboard, Milestone, and Adopt—have built a nice foundation for us to be able to do that."

Alyce McGillivray
Associate Director, Digital Development & Enhancement, University of Western Australia

Epilogue

Anthology thanks Alyce MacGillivray and the team at the University of Western Australia for their partnership, which now spans more than a decade. UWA hosted one of our recent **Ethical AI in Action** events, reflecting our shared commitment to innovation in higher education.

> **Ready to learn more about how Anthology solutions can drive positive change at your institution? <u>Discover all we have to offer today</u>.**

Product highlighted in this customer case study:
Blackboard, **Anthology Milestone**, **Anthology Adopt**

Anthology