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| **Tertiary ICT Excellence Awards Submission Form** | |
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| **Submitter Name:** | Bryan Lee, Applications Support Senior Consultant  Iulio Iuvale, Applications Support Senior Consultant  John Lee, Senior ICT Project Manager |
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| **Abstract Title:** | Scaling Success with Bots: AUT Blueprint for University-wide RPA |
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| **Describe the technology or process that is core to your submission. Please be precise in describing exactly why this should be considered for the awards (max 500 words).** | |
| Robotic Process Automation (RPA) for the Student Admissions Team at AUT is the technology at the heart of this submission, a software-driven solution that mimics human actions to automate repetitive, rule-based business processes. AUT’s implementation began with a successful pilot bot for school leaver admissions and has since evolved into a centralised, scalable automation framework.  The core technology stack transitioned from UiPath to Microsoft Power Platform (Power Automate Desktop, Cloud Flows, and Azure) to reduce licensing costs and align with AUT’s broader digital ecosystem. This change not only retained the high-performance capabilities of the original solution but also enabled better integration, governance, and cost-effectiveness.  One of the most impactful outcomes has been the delivery of the Non-School Leaver International Admissions Bot, which went live in May 2024 and more recently the International Admissions Bot. which went live June 2025. This bot automates key processes within Student Services, running 24/7 to assess eligibility, extract data, and process applications with minimal human intervention. The bot has processed thousands of cases in 2024 alone, directly contributing to faster turnaround times, improved student experience, and enhanced operational efficiency.  We would like to be considered for the Award for Excellence in Technology for Learning, Research or Students due to its successful deployment of low-code/no-code enterprise tools to modernise core university operations, its measurable performance outcomes, and its replicable design for broader digital transformation. | |
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| **Briefly summarise how your submission supports and is valued by your organisation. Describe the customer or business benefits of the technology or process. For example, which key strategies did the enhancement meet, what business problem needed to be solved, or perhaps how does a key customer group benefit from a new or improved delivery process. (max 500 words).** | |
| This RPA initiative directly supports AUT’s strategic priorities, particularly "Theme 5: Being a Place where People Love to Work and Learn", and addresses the urgent need for increased productivity amidst finite resourcing.  By automating routine admission tasks, the bot significantly reduces manual workload—freeing up approximately 1,260 staff hours per annum per bot. This allows admissions staff to focus on value-added services, improving service delivery, staff satisfaction, and turnaround speed.  Importantly, faster issuance of offer letters gives AUT a competitive advantage in the international student recruitment market. In an increasingly competitive global education landscape, speed and responsiveness in admissions are critical differentiators.  The RPA programme also contributes to risk reduction by lowering the potential for human error and supporting consistent, traceable processing outcomes. It is valued institutionally as a flagship example of digital transformation, championed across multiple directorates including Student Services, ICT, and Business Operations.  This aligns with AUT’s Digital Strategy and Service Excellence initiatives, contributing to improved stakeholder experiences, operational resilience, and global competitiveness. | |
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| |  | | --- | | **Describe the broader applicability of the enhancement across different teams, departments, or institutions and how it might support long-term transformation and adaptability in the IT landscape.** | | **The automation framework is designed to be scalable and transferable across AUT and beyond. Already used in School Leaver, Non-School Leaver and most recently Internation student admissions processing, the RPA model is currently used in the Faculty of Business Operations in the Learning & Teaching space (setting up assessment structures in Arion Student Management System) for School of Laws courses) and has potential application in:**  **• Finance operations (e.g., invoice processing)**  **• HR onboarding workflows**  **• Library services**  **• Student record updates**  **By leveraging common process patterns, we can develop reusable automation modules, improving ROI and reducing time-to-deploy. The model is equally applicable across other areas within the Uuniversity seeking to automate processes**  **This initiative represents a long-term capability shift that enhances AUT’s ability to adapt, scale, and thrive in a rapidly evolving digital environment.**  **The integration of AI into RPA is also being explored, laying the foundation for more intelligent process automation and long-term adaptability in the university’s IT ecosystem.** |   **Describe how the project was taken from vision/idea to delivery, what challenges were met and how they were handled on the way (max 500 words).** | |
| AUT’s RPA journey began in 2020 with a UiPath-based pilot in Admissions. The successful pilot saved 1,260 hours annually and laid the foundation for scaling automation across the university.  In 2022, faced with rising UiPath licensing costs, a strategic decision was made to replatform to Microsoft Power Platform. This aligned automation tooling with AUT’s broader Microsoft ecosystem and reduced TCO while retaining functional capability.  The transition posed several challenges:  • Technical limitations with Power Automate’s interaction with Arion UI elements were mitigated through structured email report workarounds and filter enhancements.  • Outlook access issues and bot timeout problems were resolved through Group Policy updates and increased wait times.  • Arion’s ‘Period’ filter inconsistencies were fixed through working with the Arion Team  • Frequent updates to systems like Arion and Power Automate Desktop required agile response to ensure continuity.  These challenges were met through cross-functional teamwork between ICT, Applications Support, and the Student Services Admissions teams, with a commitment to iterative improvement and automation resilience, resulting in a proven and repeatable automation model to deliver meaningful time and cost savings while uplifting digital maturity across AUT. | |
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| **Please detail any technologies that were implemented to deliver your enhancement or supply any other information you think may assist your submission (max 500 words).** | |
| Key technologies supporting AUT RPA journey include:  • Microsoft Power Platform (Power Automate Desktop, Cloud Flows)  • Microsoft Azure (bot hosting and execution environment)  • Power BI (performance dashboards and bot reporting)  • Arion (Student Management System – integration point)  • Outlook & Office 365 (workflow triggers and document management)  Supported by the Digital Directions portfolio sponsor and owners, this ensures effective prioritisation, quality assurance, and alignment with university strategy.  This project demonstrates AUT’s commitment to modernising business operations, increasing productivity, and future-proofing through intelligent process automation. | |
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| **Please supply the name, title and contact details of two people whom our judges may contact as referees. Ideally the referees should have knowledge of the implementation and its benefits from a customer or Institutional management perspective.** | |
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| **Please list all technology suppliers involved in the project.** | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | |