Dimensional INSIGHT

Diver Underpins University Policy and Budgets

Case: Ghent University relies on BI platform Diver

Quick Facts

Organization: Ghent University (UGent)

Size: 41,000 students, 9,000 employees

Challenge: Insight into policy and quality of education, research and distribution of personnel budgets

Solution: Diver business intelligence

"The low learning curve, the ease of use and the great access to useful information are the aspects that particularly stand out with Diver. The fact that people keep requesting new information demonstrates the added value for the users, thus also the added value for the organization." - Philippe Depoorter, Head of ICT Applications Office with UGent

University relies on the Diver BI platform for policy evaluation and budget allocation

Ghent University (UGent) is a leading knowledge institution with more than 41,000 students and 9,000 employees. The organization has been using the Diver business intelligence platform from Dimensional Insight since 2015. The system supports education, research and valorization policy as well as personnel budget allocation.

'Our decision to go with Diver was based purely on our selection criteria,' says Philippe Depoorter, founder of the UGent Geïntegreerd Informatiesysteem (UGI - UGent Integrated Information Systems) team. His organization had a stringent set of requirements. The platform had to be flexible enough and provide the capability to make adjustments quickly in case of a change to policy within the university. The software also had to be easily accessible to the end user, despite complete end-to-end integration of sources with the user interface. For a favorable cost of ownership it was also important that a small team could develop and maintain the system. UGent wants to gain knowledge as quickly as possible and take the lead in further development.

A brave decision

Diver emerged as the best system from the selection procedure, says Depoorter. UGent opted for a relatively unknown platform instead of one of the other well-known platforms. 'SAP, Microsoft and IBM Cognos have state-of-the-art BI products, but Diver ranked the highest. All things considered, we took a brave decision and we have no regrets at all.'

UGent uses the Diver business intelligence platform for three applications.

- P-Sleutel (P Key), for allocation of personnel budget
- Onderwijsbeleid (OWB - higher education policy), for providing visibility into education policy information
- One Office Technology Transfer, to provide visibility into research partnerships with the private sector

Budget Allocation

For a justified distribution of personnel budgets throughout the university, UGent and Dimensional Insight built the P-Sleutel (P Key) application. The Diver platform pulls a variety of historical data from many sources. Information includes the number of students, the number of publications, study results and income from research projects and patents per faculty, professional group and course of study.

Education Policy

The team also developed a program to evaluate policy in higher education (OWB - onderwijsbeleid). The system provides visibility into policy information, which gives the organization a basis to make adjustments where necessary. The system supplies information about the number of students and teachers, their level, dropout rate and the degree of internationalization. This tool is one of the components that replaces the educational program review held every six years under the auspices of the Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO - Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) and is an important requirement for exemption. The NVAO remains responsible for the accreditation of the knowledge institution.

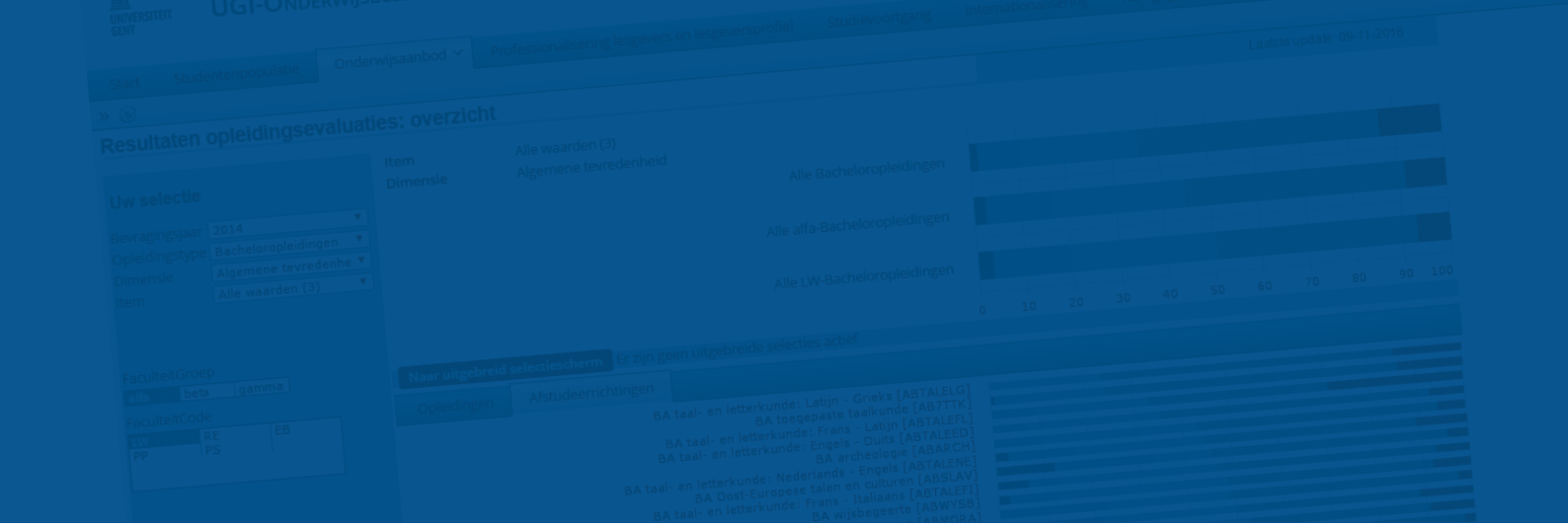
One Office Technology Transfer

Just like many other universities, UGent has research programs in close partnership with the private sector. The organization uses One Office Technology Transfer to evaluate the different programs. It provides insight via the Diver platform into how much income, the number of patents and contracts that are a result of the partnership.

A team of three UGent employees and three experts from Dimensional Insight developed the three programs for the Diver platform. Depoorter: 'From the very beginning we rolled up our sleeves together and worked side-by-side to develop and implement the tools. We still work as equal partners, as if there were no customer-supplier relationship. The consultants have an excellent understanding of our world and help us identify best practices. It is the source of a lot of positive energy.'

The six member team was in regular contact with the internal customer during the development process, Depoorter reports. 'The colleague who built the functional analysis was able to create prototypes in Diver that he shared with the end users. We relied on visualization for demonstrating new functionality, in which case a prototype worked better than a Powerpoint slide. Every three months we delivered a component that end users could test.'

"Contributing ideas and providing input is part of the DNA of Dimensional Insight. They are truly hands-on people."



Results: more insights in less time

Hundreds of university employees use one or more tools from the Diver platform. They are people who work with policy in one of the organizational layers of the university, such as administration and governance, policy departments, professional groups, faculties and graduate studies. Obviously the access rights differ per organizational layer and position.

Employees mainly use the business intelligence tools to evaluate policy. 'In the past, they regularly asked different colleagues for pieces of information about the service,' explains Depoorter. 'That took up a lot of time. Diver enables a much higher degree of self service. Now, employees can find the answers on their own. The tool gives them more insight.'

Users positive about Diver

The university employees are positive about the Diver platform, according to Depoorter, who currently heads the Office of ICT Applications with UGent. 'The low learning curve, the ease of use and the great access the system provides to useful information are the aspects that particularly stand out with Diver. The fact that people keep requesting new information demonstrates the added value for the users, thus also the added value for the organization. What's more, the Diver methodologies force the user organization to take ownership. That was also a wonderful discovery.'

However, the job is not finished yet. Depoorter: 'It is never done. There is always demand for additional releases and that will not diminish any time soon. The more visibility you give to users, the more information they ask for. Besides, policy information topics are constantly changing. These tools allow us to adapt to those changes. We also mutually decide what we will finish every three months.'

Diver is the key to resolving our problems, Depoorter summarizes. 'However, we could have never done it without the efforts of the UGent team and the team from Dimensional Insight', he concludes.

About Dimensional Insight

Dimensional Insight is the leading provider of integrated business intelligence and performance management solutions. Our mission is to make organizational data accessible and usable so everyone from analysts to line of business users can get the information they need to make an informed, data-driven decision.

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