

Case Study: Unblocking a Strategic Analytics Project at Imperial College London

Client: Imperial College London

Project: Diagnosing and resolving delivery failures in the strategic Learning Analytics project.

Date: 2025

The Challenge

Imperial College London's ICT department engaged Gamma DnA to determine why their high-priority Learning Analytics project was stalled and failing to deliver its targeted outcomes. Despite having the technology, the project was plagued by delays, conflicting priorities, and an inability to get new data pipelines and dashboards into production.

My Approach: The Work Performed

To uncover the root cause of these issues, I conducted a comprehensive diagnostic review. This involved a series of structured interviews with key stakeholders across the institution, including:

- ICT Data Teams
- Data Governance Staff
- The Learning Analytics Team
- Student Registry Staff

This analysis revealed that the failure was not due to a single issue, but a complex web of interconnected procedural, technical, and cultural challenges.

Key Problems Identified:

- **Access & Permission Bottlenecks:** A slow, uncodified process for data access, with unclear ownership for key datasets.
- **Unclear Accountability:** A critical lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, leading to a diffusion of responsibility where no team owned the end-to-end delivery.
- **Conflicting Priorities:** Multiple governance boards (Student Lifecycle Board and Teaching & Learning Board) operated with separate, unconsolidated backlogs, constantly de-prioritizing analytics work in favour of operational tasks.
- **Skills & Resource Gaps:** A scarcity of subject matter experts and a misalignment of skills, with specialist teams lacking the authority or data engineering skills to build the necessary data pipelines.

The Solution: Value Delivered

I delivered a comprehensive report that went beyond diagnosis to provide a clear, actionable blueprint for success. My recommendations were designed to break the deadlock by aligning people, processes, and technology.

The core of my solution focused on three areas:

1. **A New, Clarified Operating Model:** I proposed a clear re-definition of roles and responsibilities. This framework designated clear owners for data pipeline creation, platform management, and analytics requirements, empowering the Learning Analytics team to build their own pipelines while giving ICT central teams oversight of patterns and architecture.
2. **A New Collaborative "Way of Working":** I designed a new delivery process to break down silos. This included:
 - A temporary, focused "**Squad-Based Model**" to clear the immediate backlog.
 - A monthly **Prioritization Forum** to align all stakeholders on a single, shared backlog.
 - Regular "**Fix-it Sessions**" to rapidly unblock technical and procedural issues.
3. **A Strategic & Actionable Roadmap:** I identified the critical missing roles required for long-term success—namely a **Cross-Cutting Delivery Manager** to align priorities and a **Senior Data Architect** to set institutional strategy. Finally, I provided a set of immediate, 2-month resource actions to build momentum and achieve quick wins.

This project is a prime example of my ability to rapidly integrate into a complex university environment, diagnose deep-seated organizational and technical challenges, and deliver a practical, strategic roadmap that enables teams to deliver high-value data projects.