

# Chartwells Universities signs Swansea deal with revolutionary new model

3 years ago



The Chartwells Universities team has introduced a bold new operating model, focused on Ultimate Convenience, which has fundamentally improved the experience of students and helped secure a 10-year agreement with Swansea University, valued at £58m.

The contract, which was awarded following an extensive competitive dialogue process, represents a fundamental step change in university catering, driven by our desire to innovate our offer to meet the ever-changing wants and needs of students.

The new operating model, which was informed by an extensive research project to understand how the behaviours of Gen Z consumers have evolved through the pandemic, is the culmination of a significant period of development.

The findings of the research revealed, amongst several other findings, that Gen Z had four key motivating factors when making food and drink purchases: taste, speed, convenience, and choice; all of which formed the basic principles behind the offer.

The agreement with Swansea University, which started in January 2022, provides a blend of Chartwells' own brands, such as Hollo Pollo, Bamboo, and Liberty Grill, alongside a number of high street favourites, including Subway, Greggs, and Tortilla, which will operate under franchise agreements.

The extensive development plan will see the University's Refectory space on Singleton Campus converted into a new social hub by the end of 2022, which will be renamed the Swansea Social Hideaway. A second social hub will be created on Bay Campus in place of the current Core catering outlet. These will be multifunctional, tech-enabled social spaces, offering students and staff alike space to meet, work,

socialise, eat, drink and dwell in a number of settings.

The format, which replicates progressive working spaces in cities across the UK, gives students the flexibility to adapt areas, either for study, socialising, or down-time. The areas have the dexterity to drive a range of functionalities, including the hosting of pop-up events, the broadcasting of live sports matches via big-screens, and the introduction of a low and no alcohol bar.

Chartwells' research also revealed that Gen Z spend on average, four hours, and 15 minutes on the phone each day. Furthermore, with the takeaway market experiencing a 46% increase throughout the pandemic, the ultimate convenience model taps into these macro trends with an omni-channel consumer experience, enabling students to benefit from multiple functionalities through our leading Uni Food Hub app.

The app allows students and staff to place food and drink orders for collection or delivery at locations across campus, as well as offering loyalty points and a parent wallet top up option. In a move beyond the core provision of catering, students will also be able to access educational nutritional content, book in for cooking classes, give back to their local community via volunteering opportunities, and book tickets for events across campus. Further brand partnerships mean students can also order cook-at-home food boxes to be delivered to their halls or accommodation, through partnerships with Pizza Pilgrims and Hello Fresh.

In addition, Chartwells' relationship with external delivery platforms also means that, in serviceable locations, the offer will also be available for delivery within the local area, providing a service to the local community, as well as students living off-campus.

Kerry Ford, Managing Director, Chartwells Universities said: "This tender submission was the culmination of a significant period of development that we believe will fundamentally change the way students view and engage with the food and beverage offer across Universities. Every element of the offer is deep-rooted in insight and has been specifically moulded around the wants and needs of students.

"We truly believe this is a significant evolution in University catering, moving away from trying to compete with the high street, and bringing in leading technology, brands and trends to create an attractive offer that meets the needs of today's students.

"We're passionate about providing a fantastic experience to support students' time at university, but also investing in the communities we operate. This model allows us to provide employment and career opportunities, while also enriching the delivery options available to the surrounding community around campus."

Ben Lucas, Associate Director of Commercial Services at Swansea University, said: "The bid from Chartwells Universities really stood out due to its truly innovative format. Clearly, a lot of thinking has gone into understanding what trends are shaping consumer behaviours amongst Gen Z customers, before pulling together disparate trends and pieces of technology into one coherent operating model.

"Convenience, quality and value are clearly incredibly important to our students, but what really stood out in the approach was the additional added value, educational and CSR initiatives, such as the digital cookery classes, regional procurement and cook-at-home delivery boxes, which will enrich the overall student experience and provide guidance and support during their time in Swansea."

*Photo credit: Chartwells Universities*