

The Mobile-First Digital Campus Buyer's Checklist

How to Evaluate a Unified Digital Experience Platform vs Portal-First Tools

Use this checklist to compare portal-first tools with a unified digital experience platform and determine whether a solution is truly built to drive student and campus engagement and mobile-first campus services.

1. Platform Strategy

- Is this a **unified digital experience platform** on both mobile and desktop, or a collection of portal links?
- Is the experience designed to **orchestrate actions**, not just organize information?

2. Mobile-First Experience

- Is the **mobile app for campus services** truly native (not just a responsive website or iFrame)?
- Does your mobile experience deliver full-screen, immersive, native experiences—not miniaturized web pages framed inside a browser shell.
- Is the UI optimized for one-handed, on-the-go use?
- Does it deliver a high-fidelity experience across both mobile and desktop?

3. From Information to Action

- Can users complete end-to-end workflows inside the platform?
- Are key tasks (access, check-ins, wayfinding, forms, requests) handled in context?
- Does the platform reduce system-hopping and repeated logins?

4. Student & Campus Engagement

- Does this function as a true student or campus engagement platform, meaning personalized content for different audiences?
- Does it support engagement from a unified experience layer, meaning consistent UI/UX across mobile and desktop?
- Are experiences personalized by role, status, and context (not just different links)?

5. Use of Real-Time Context

- Does the platform adapt based on role, location, time, and status?
- Can it surface next-best actions instead of static content?
- Are journeys dynamic, not just page-based navigation?

6. Mobile OS Capabilities

- Does the mobile app support push notifications natively?
- Does the mobile app offer location services for context-aware experiences?
- Does the mobile app integrate with wallets, maps, Bluetooth/NFC, or device features?
- Are these capabilities used in real workflows, not just demos?

7. Integration Depth

- Does the platform surface real-time data contextually, not just link out to systems?
- Are integrations read/write, not just read-only?
- Can users take action across systems without leaving the experience?
- Are workflows automated, not dependent on flat files or manual syncs?

8. Experience Design & Usability

- Is the platform designed around real campus journeys, not just dashboards?
- Can users complete their most common tasks in seconds, not minutes?

9. Flexibility & Future-Proofing

- Does the platform support granular roles and personas, e.g., student + employee + athlete?
- Does it include content governance so teams can contribute without breaking the experience?
- Can your team update screens, workflows, and journeys without long dev cycles?
- Does it support low-code / no-code configuration?
- Is it built to evolve as quickly as campus needs change?
- Does the platform offer developer toolkit to easily create custom modules and experiences?
- Does the platform offer AI-assisting code generation tools to create more quickly and efficiently?

10. Extending the Experience Beyond Login

- Does the platform support unauthenticated experiences for prospects, parents, alumni, and visitors?
- Can it power tours, admissions checklists, events, and navigation without forcing login?
- Does it extend your brand experience beyond just enrolled students?

11. AI That Drives Action

- Does AI complete tasks, not just answer questions?
- Can it trigger workflows, reduce tickets, or automate routine actions?
- Is AI embedded in real journeys—not just bolted on as a chatbot?

The Final Test

- Does this platform mainly help users find things?
- Or does it help them get things done—in the moment, in context, and across devices?

If you're checking the second box more often, you're looking at a true unified digital experience platform—not just a portal with a desktop-responsive app