Ali Rana

Technology Evangelist | Head of IT | AI Strategy & Architecture | Digital Transformation Leader

Global mobility | Open to roles in US, Australia, or Asia-Pacific (remote/hybrid)

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PROFILE

I'm a senior technology leader who thrives at the intersection of people, strategy, and systems. With 20+ years of experience across EdTech, telco, and consulting, I translate complexity into elegant, scalable solutions that enable meaningful outcomes.

Currently Head of IT for Navitas' Careers & Industry division, I lead enterprise strategy, IT operations, and technology innovation across Australia, the US, and beyond. My recent work includes AI enablement (e.g., Cogniti.ai deployment), enterprise architecture (One Navitas Blueprint), privacy and security transformation (ROPA, ISO27001), and oversight of strategic platforms such as Navigate, Salesforce, Moodle, and Google Workspace—ensuring they meet evolving business needs, support integration efforts, and are continuously improved in partnership with Corporate IT and key stakeholders.

I've established an IT Projects Office and restructured the team to improve agility, adding specialist roles and a stronger cross-functional operating model. I lead data and digital communities of practice, embed design-thinking across projects, and actively drive cultural change through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and trust.

Whether solving business problems through automation, integrating AI into education, or standardising campus-wide IT strategy—I bring clarity, velocity, and strategic foresight to every initiative.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Restructured the IT function** to be leaner and more responsive, reducing headcount while increasing delivery capacity. Introduced new roles and cultural frameworks across 21 staff in 4 countries.
- **Contributed to privacy and security uplift** by supporting delivery of the ROPA (Record of Processing Activity) initiative and leading divisional IT remediation for ISO27001 certification.
- **Architected and delivered IT strategy for CSU Managed Campuses**, leading system design, stakeholder alignment, vendor engagement, and on-the-ground delivery for Sydney and Melbourne.
- **Enabled Generative AI in Education** by initiating and championing the trial rollout of Cogniti.ai—a context-aware teaching assistant AI—at SAE and ACAP. Built internal engagement, governance alignment, and strategic partnerships to inform Navitas' AI direction.
- **Established an IT Projects Operating Framework**, creating a unified model linking the divisional PMO with a newly established IT Projects Office. This model now governs the planning, prioritisation, and transparent execution of 40+ projects across the Careers & Industry division.
- **Led the decommissioning of Campaign Enterprise**, a legacy digital marketing tool, overcoming vendor disengagement and system risk. Personally re-established vendor connections, enabled in-house system takeover, and led the successful migration to a modern solution (HubSpot).
- **Influenced system simplification via the One Navitas Blueprint**, co-developing key architecture principles now guiding ongoing platform and CRM decisions. While not formally adopted, the framework has shaped CRM, student systems, and data integration planning, balancing standardisation with brand-specific needs.
- **Drove cost-conscious IT decision-making**, securing savings in enterprise renewals across Adobe, Canvas, Front, and Slack through contract strategy, supplier negotiations, and internal usage reviews.
- **Improved technology procurement and asset lifecycle management**, leading initiatives to standardise purchasing processes, automate asset tracking, and collaborate with Finance to eliminate manual reconciliation through serial-matching workflows.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Head of IT – Careers & Industry Division

Navitas Pty Ltd | Melbourne, Australia (Global Role – Hybrid) | Nov 2022 – Present

As Head of IT, I lead strategy, operations, and digital transformation for Navitas' Careers & Industry division, overseeing a 21-member team spanning architecture, project delivery, support, and vendor management, with a global footprint across Australia, the US, and New Zealand.

I designed and implemented a leaner, more responsive IT operating model—restructuring the team, introducing specialist roles, and creating an IT Projects Office to partner with the divisional PMO. This framework has improved stakeholder engagement, deeper collaboration between IT support teams and enabled holistic prioritisation across 40+ strategic initiatives.

A core focus of my role has been **technology enablement**, including:

- Championing the introduction of Generative AI in education via Cogniti.ai in partnership with the University of Sydney, aligning innovation with Navitas' academic and business priorities.
- Leading architecture and delivery for new managed campuses (CSU Sydney & Melbourne), working closely with Corporate IT, CSU leadership, and Navitas executives to replace legacy models with fit-for-purpose solutions.
- Supporting the organisation's ISO27001 certification by leading remediation of IT compliance gaps across C&I and facilitating alignment with group-wide InfoSec practices.
- Driving system simplification and future-facing design through co-development of the **One Navitas Blueprint**, which now informs CRM, platform, and data integration decisions.
- Guiding critical system transitions such as the **decommissioning of Campaign Enterprise** and enabling its replacement with a more sustainable, cloud-based digital marketing solution.

I've also played a key role in modernising **technology procurement and asset lifecycle management**, reducing administrative overhead and increasing visibility in collaboration with Finance.

Under my leadership, IT has become a proactive partner in strategic planning—empowering staff with the tools, platforms, and support they need to innovate and succeed. My current remit spans multiple time zones and regions, preparing me for leadership roles based in or connected to the US, Asia-Pacific, or global markets.

Digital Program Manager – Careers & Industry Division

Navitas Pty Ltd | Melbourne, Australia | Hybrid | Jan 2022 – Oct 2022

As Digital Program Manager, I established the divisional Digital Program Office (DPO), introducing governance models, project workflows, and reporting frameworks to enable strategic delivery across a portfolio of 40+ projects.

I partnered closely with executive leadership to develop and maintain a transparent prioritisation process, linking business needs with capacity and execution. This included standing up standardised tools and templates (Smartsheets, Atlassian Roadmaps, Jira), enabling better visibility across initiatives such as system upgrades, digital innovation pilots, compliance implementations, and student experience improvements.

Key contributions included:

- Designing and operationalising a portfolio governance framework, aligning stakeholders around business value, delivery timelines, and interdependencies.
- Leading cross-functional collaboration workshops using design thinking methods (Miro, Figma) to engage teams and align digital delivery with divisional priorities.
- Supporting architectural alignment by contributing to a simplified tech stack model, ensuring future systems deliver seamless experience, fit-for-purpose capabilities, and platform-based innovation.
- Adapting and applying agile methods (SAFe, DSDM) to better suit divisional operations, improving cadence and responsiveness of delivery.

This role laid the foundation for my subsequent appointment as Head of IT, where I was tasked with evolving and scaling the DPO model across a broader strategic agenda.

Manager, Analytics & Innovation – Cloud Learning

Deakin University | Melbourne, Australia | Hybrid | Mar 2020 – Dec 2021

In this role, I led the design and delivery of data-driven innovations in learning and teaching—working closely with academic leadership to translate business needs into scalable, tech-enabled solutions.

I directed cross-functional, agile teams to prototype and deliver digital tools that improved student experience, operational efficiency, and academic insight. This included building trust in analytics among educators and helping position Deakin as a leader in learning analytics.

Key highlights:

- Designed and launched Deakin's flagship Learning Analytics app, co-developed with educators, powered by Angular and MongoDB, and backed by Spark-based ETL pipelines. This became the university's most successful data-driven learning tool, widely adopted across faculties.
- Delivered a cloud-based timetabling platform serving 15K+ students, built on a full-stack architecture (Angular, NestJS, MySQL) hosted on AWS. The solution was trialled across 300 units and received university-wide interest for expansion.
- Led privacy and security initiatives, including OWASP Top Ten evaluation and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), ensuring ethical and secure handling of learner data.
- Facilitated a growing community of academic "data champions," building internal capability and buy-in around the use of analytics in teaching.
- Provided strategic consulting to university executives, identifying opportunities through rapid prototyping, lean innovation, and evidence-based decision-making.

This role combined systems thinking with innovation delivery—bridging academic strategy and technology execution to create lasting value.

Program & Information Manager – Cloud Campus

Deakin University | Melbourne, Australia | Onsite | Mar 2018 – Mar 2020

In this role, I led program governance and data strategy for Deakin's Cloud Campus—overseeing delivery across 40+ initiatives that shaped the university's premium online learning experience.

I was responsible for developing lightweight, agile governance structures to ensure programs stayed aligned to student needs and organisational goals. I also drove improvements in data management, reporting, and stakeholder engagement to support evidence-based decision-making.

Key contributions:

- **Established the delivery framework** for Cloud Campus programs—introducing lean governance tools (Project on a Page, RAG status tracking, skills matrixing) and enabling a line-of-sight from vision to execution.
- **Streamlined information architecture and data governance** for cloud students, including MDM (Master Data Management), data quality, and compliance reporting across faculties.
- Supported the team through **COVID-readiness pivots**, leading rapid stand-up of a resource-rich student support portal and contributing to digital continuity planning.
- Served as **(Acting) Director of Cloud Campus**, managing a team of 17 subject matter experts, and coordinating service design, delivery assurance, and stakeholder communication across the portfolio.
- Launched analytics advisory services for faculties, enabling timely, custom insights during Deakin's transition to fully online operations.

This role deepened my ability to lead in complex, distributed environments—connecting data, governance, and people to deliver cohesive digital experiences at scale.

Consultant Project Manager – Deakin University Client

IMA Management & Technology | Melbourne, Australia | Onsite | Mar 2016 – Feb 2018

As a senior consultant, I led multiple high-impact digital transformation initiatives at Deakin University—modernising systems, solving complex integration challenges, and introducing new capabilities in automation, AI, and student experience.

This role allowed me to influence digital strategy while delivering hands-on solutions across web platforms, machine learning systems, and service design.

Key achievements:

- Redesigned Deakin's Cloud Campus portal (DeakinSync) to deliver a more intuitive and relevant experience for online learners. This became the core student-facing digital hub for years to follow.
- Led the refresh and transition of IBM Watson, Deakin's cognitive AI assistant, during a major website overhaul. Directed re-ingestion of training data, system retraining, and vendor coordination—all while maintaining 15K+ daily conversations without disruption.
- Delivered a university-wide Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) system with end-to-end automation—integrating new databases, security controls, and compliance workflows via ServiceNow.
- Conducted system-wide analysis to address low response rates in student evaluation surveys—designing a roadmap of interventions and presenting findings to executive stakeholders.
- Bridged business and IT teams through targeted workshops and delivery frameworks, helping drive user adoption and long-term success of each project.

This role cemented my ability to work across product, policy, and platform—delivering smart, user-centred solutions within a large and complex university environment.

Project & Service Delivery Leadership

Huawei Technologies, Bahrain | Onsite | Dec 2011 – Dec 2015

At Huawei, I led large-scale technology integration, service delivery, and solution architecture for national telecommunications infrastructure—supporting mission-critical systems across network rollout, operations, and customer engagement.

Operating at the interface of engineering, business, and executive leadership, I managed programs with budgets exceeding USD 25M and directly supported C-level stakeholders across major clients.

Key highlights:

- Led end-to-end integration of a national LTE network, achieving gold-medal recognition for outperforming delivery targets and exceeding financial KPIs.
- Recovered a 480-site LTE rollout project under critical risk—launching a war-room delivery model that brought the program ahead of schedule and earned personal recognition from the client CEO.
- Oversaw Lead-to-Cash service delivery for a USD 200M operator, increasing customer satisfaction through process transformation and continuous service improvement.
- Influenced strategic wins such as Huawei's national LTE tender award, contributing to technical bid design and architecture.
- Managed solution design and program governance across wireless, core, and IP domains—delivering scalable, high-availability infrastructure across multiple markets.

This role sharpened my delivery focus, stakeholder engagement skills, and ability to manage complex systems at scale—foundational to my later leadership in digital transformation.

Technical & Integration Leadership – Wireless Networks

Motorola & Nokia Siemens Networks | Pakistan & Bahrain | Dec 2004 – Nov 2011

In these early career roles, I delivered high-availability mobile infrastructure and technical support across multiple international markets—building a strong foundation in enterprise systems, network reliability, and operational leadership.

I led cross-functional teams in deploying, integrating, and supporting hundreds of radio, core, and transmission sites as part of nationwide telco rollouts, while introducing automation, improving vendor collaboration, and ensuring strict SLAs.

Key contributions:

- Achieved 99.999% network availability through the design and implementation of resilient 24/7 technical support models—both onsite and remote.
- Delivered multi-country wireless infrastructure rollouts, from hardware integration to post-launch optimisation, supporting millions of subscribers.
- Negotiated vendor contracts across 20+ suppliers, securing cost savings exceeding USD 2.5M while maintaining service levels and quality targets.
- Conducted disaster recovery planning and drills, ensuring operational continuity for mission-critical telecom systems.
- Introduced process improvements that streamlined technical support, integration timelines, and cross-domain team coordination.

This period established my credibility in delivering complex, large-scale technology systems—laying the groundwork for my later focus on enterprise IT, architecture, and digital innovation.

SKILLS & TOOLS

Technology Strategy & Leadership

- IT Strategy & Operating Models
- Digital Transformation & Innovation
- Enterprise Architecture (TOGAF-inspired, One Navitas Blueprint)
- AI & Gen AI Enablement (Cogniti, Prompt Flow)
- Program & Portfolio Governance
- Team Restructuring & Capability Building
- Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

Architecture & Integration

- Solution Architecture (CRM, SIS/SMS, Timetabling, Study Plans, Reporting Systems)
- Platform Consolidation & System Simplification
- Event-Driven Design (Kafka, API-first strategies)
- Salesforce Lightning, Navigate, StudyLink
- Architecture Governance & Blueprinting
- SSO, Authentication & Identity Strategy

Project & Delivery Tools

- Atlassian Suite (Jira, Confluence, Roadmaps)
- Smartsheets (Portfolio & Reporting Dashboards)
- Miro, Figma (Workshop Facilitation & Co-design)
- Agile & Scaled Agile (SAFe, DSDM)
- Pipefy (Workflow Automation & Onboarding Forms)
- ServiceNow (Workflow, ITSM)

Data, AI & Analytics

- Generative AI (Cogniti.ai, Prompt Flow – Azure)
- Machine Learning PoCs (Splunk, anomaly detection)
- Data Platforms: MongoDB, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Cloudera, Hive
- ETL & Processing: NiFi, Spark, Python, SQL
- Dashboards & Reporting: Power BI, Tableau, RapidMiner
- Data Governance (MDM, ROPA, Privacy Impact Assessments)

Cloud & DevOps

- AWS (hosting, containerisation, SSO)
- Azure (Power Platform, Prompt Flow, Entra ID)
- Docker, Kubernetes (trial environments)
- GitLab CI/CD, VSCode
- Automation Tools: Selenium, Robot Framework, Power Automate

Applications & Platforms

- Salesforce (CRM, Integrations, Reporting)
- Navigate (SMS, provisioning, reporting, automation)
- Moodle, Sonia, Alma/Primo, OpenAthens
- Google Workspace (incl. Admin, storage & licensing strategy)
- Microsoft 365, Zoom, Slack, HubSpot

EDUCATION

Graduate Certificate in Cyber Security Operations (In Progress)

University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia

Manager's Advancement Program (DMAP)

Deakin University, Australia

Master of Science (MS), Telecommunications

National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST)

CGPA: 4.0/4.0 | 2002–2004

Bachelor of Science (BSc), Electrical Engineering

University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore

1998–2002

CERTIFICATIONS & TRAINING

Cybersecurity & Compliance

- ISO27001: Divisional IT Delivery for Certification (Internal Leadership)
- ROPA (Data Privacy Compliance): Division Engagement Lead
- ITIL v3 Foundation, Axelos
- Lean Six Sigma – Motorola University

AI & Machine Learning

- Building Advanced AI Apps with Prompt Flow (Microsoft | 2024)
- Prompt Flow: Hands-On (Microsoft | 2024)
- Machine Learning (Coursera/Stanford)

Agile & Project Delivery

- SAFe 4 Practitioner (Scaled Agile)
- Managing Successful Programs (MSP) Practitioner, Axelos

- PRINCE2 Foundation, Axelos
- Agile Software Development, ETH Zürich (MOOC)

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

FY24 Leadership Incentive Plan Award

Awarded under Navitas' executive leadership program in recognition of outstanding individual and divisional performance. Endorsed by the Group CEO and Board, reflecting measurable contribution to organisational success. (2024)

CEO Appreciation – LTE Network Launch

Commended by client CEO for leading the recovery and early launch of a 480-site LTE network rollout using agile delivery methods under critical timelines. (2014)

Nominee – Navitas INSPIRE Awards

Nominated twice for Navitas' prestigious internal awards program:
- 2022: Individual Excellence
- 2024: Team Collaboration (Ripple Effect Award)

Endorsed by senior leadership and executive management for cross-functional impact.

Key Contributor – ISO27001 Certification (NSF)

Led divisional IT remediation efforts supporting successful renewal of ISO27001 certification, including closure of 8 non-conformities and uplift of information security maturity. (2024)

Huawei Global Gold Medal Award

Awarded for outstanding project delivery and financial performance in a national LTE rollout program. Recognised as top 1% globally within Huawei project teams. (2013)

National Postgraduate Scholarship

Awarded by National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) for academic excellence and research potential in telecommunications. (2002–2004)

KEY PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES
- Systems thinker with strong business empathy
- Known for simplifying complexity and driving clarity
- Builds high-trust cross-functional teams