

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES BRIEFING: RAPID IMPROVEMENT EVENT (RIE 1) – STUDENT ADMISSIONS

Event Focus & Method:

- Student Admissions – Direct and RPA applications (these applications include all non-UCAS applications, namely: postgraduate, undergraduate part-time, some undergraduate full-time, the majority of international).
- A multi-level, and multi-area team of 18 people operated as representatives of colleagues across the University with some responsibility for student admissions. Feedback was sought from colleagues across the University during the one week event.
- The event utilised Lean principles to examine the current situation, identify improvements, get feedback & acceptance, and develop an action plan. Implementation effort follows on directly.

Key Issues with current situation:

- The average time to process a direct application decision is 42 days. Student Charter states applicants will receive a decision within 14 days.
- 0% of the decisions are made in Student Affairs for direct applications
- On average an application travels 18.9 miles once it arrives at the University and is handled by 11 people as part of the decision making process.
- Failure demand - Admissions mailbox alone has 15,000 emails per year (sample=Feb.09). 46% of sample taken were failure demand emails. It is expected this is replicated in phone calls.
- 60% of applicants do not receive an acknowledgement (based on a sample analysis)
- 50% of applicants do not receive a Get Ready pack (based on a sample analysis)
- 17% of applicants do not get a Welcome pack (based on a sample analysis)

Outcomes – new situation:

Main Improvements	Key Benefits	£ ↓	Time ↓	Quality ↑
Decisions made within 14 days	better conversion rates; improved customer satisfaction; fewer FTEs handling failure demand	☑	☑	☑
100% of Direct & RPA applications will be handled through the Admissions office	consistency & transparency; remove variation in service single system - SITS; reduce delay; reduce errors		☑	☑
Decisions will now be made on 80% of applications within the Admissions Office	remove variation in service; use a single system - SITS; reduce delay; reduce errors; fewer FTEs involved in admissions	☑	☑	☑
80% of Application journeys reduced from 18.9 to 4 miles	reduce delay		☑	

Number of initiatives to get right information first time on the form from applicant and improve	decisions made on forms without going back to applicant for more information, reduce turnaround, better customer service		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Number of initiatives to improve delivery of applications and internal mail/email processing.	Reduce delay		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Only 2 people (instead of 11) will touch an application in 80% of cases	single system; reduce delay; reduce errors; fewer FTEs involved in admissions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Communication managed by Admissions - 100% of applicants will get all an acknowledgement, a Get Ready pack, and Welcome pack.	improved customer satisfaction; improved conversion rates reduce errors; reduce FTEs involved handling failure demand; better communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online applications to be actively encouraged via web & marketing materials	reduce delay; reduce errors		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Work ongoing to reduce failure demand to zero calls/emails from applicants 'chasing' their application	reduce FTEs involved handling failure demand;	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Embed culture of continuous improvement for the Admissions process	As above	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Considerable work is now ongoing to embed these changes, and your co-operation with this work where required will be much appreciated.

Regular progress checkpoints are planned, and updates on the improvements will be communicated in due course.

Dr. Keith Horton
Sustainable Futures,
May 2009