

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT BRIEFING:

RAPID IMPROVEMENT EVENT (RIE) – Student Accommodation – from application to student arriving at a flat development

INTRODUCTION

Last week a Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) was held focusing upon the Student Accommodation process. A team of seven colleagues from the Student Accommodation office, Student Affairs, International College, Finance and Facilities Services focused on developing a new improved process which will improve the turnaround time to process applicants, streamline the induction and key collection process, reduce the financial risk of vacant accommodation and overall deliver a more efficient and effective University process.

- The Event focused on the initial Student Accommodation application process including key induction to a student arriving at a flat development as well as giving assistance to students who are not successful in getting accommodation or experiencing difficulties in getting their visas on time.
- The team utilised Lean principles to examine the current process, focusing on the needs of the customer to identify which activities added value. The team concentrated on stripping out the non value add activities from the current process to achieve process improvements. The team gained feedback & acceptance, and developed an action plan. Implementation effort follows on directly.

Key Issues with current situation

- Non Transparent Allocation Policy
- Unable to identify demand for accommodation
- Clunky online application process
- Confusing rent payments
- No choice of accommodation for the student
- 49% applications processed out with 5 working days
- Students required to attend induction talk before being able to collect keys
- Students were waiting on average for 1.5 hours post induction talk to sign tenancy agreement and collect keys
- The induction event had long delays, queues, overcrowding and a high volume of students with missing information
- Over the last 3 years between 2-7% of student accommodation beds have been voided resulting in the University incurring an annual cost of up to £200k for the vacant beds
- 500 emails to students were rejected last year (Hotmail attachments)
- 200 unnecessary clearance checks were carried out

OUTCOMES:

A summary of the improvements and the associated benefits of the new process are detailed below:

Main Improvements	Key Benefits	£ ▼	Time ▼	Quality ▲
Allocation Policy				
Write Allocation Policy which provides clear and transparent guidelines on the prioritisation of Student Accommodation	Provides clarity for students, Facilities, Professional Services and reduces failure demand		✓	✓
Offer Students choice of accommodation	Improved Student Experience Fairness			✓
Design and agree consistent process for Group Bookings	Manage internal customer expectations Reduce the financial risks of voids	✓	✓	✓
Offer A/A+ Service for Students that are unsuccessful in securing University accommodation	Provision of local area knowledge to assist students in finding suitable accommodation in the Edinburgh area Provision of advice and information to enable students to make informed decisions about accommodation and tenancy agreements Improved Student Experience			✓
Enquiry to Allocation				
Update Website content to be applicant focused	Applicants are able to access the information they require with ease reducing the enquiries to the Student Accommodation office Speed up turnaround time for online applications	✓	✓	✓
Improve the online application process to reduce the steps required to complete the application form, make it user friendly and streamline the email communications to applicants	Reduce the enquiries to the Student Accommodation Office Speed up the turnaround time for online applications Reduce failure demand from 60% to 20% Reduce 500 rejected emails to	✓	✓	✓

	Zero Reduce 200 clearance checks to zero Enhanced customer experience			
Introduction of £500 deposit/1 st rent payment with 7 monthly instalments	Ensures payment is received prior to allocation Clear and transparent process for staff and students	✓	✓	✓
Request postal receipt of Guarantor form within 5 working days	Reduces failure demand Reduces Financial Risk Reduces delays during key collection	✓	✓	✓
Induction & Key Collection				
Replace induction talks with E Induction	Speed up induction process for students Offers more flexibility for students to complete their induction before arrival Free up staff time Offers more flexibility for timing of key collection	✓	✓	✓
Offer fast track key collection	Reduce the post induction process from 1.5 hours to 30 minutes Improved student and parent satisfaction	✓	✓	✓
Share ID with Student Affairs	No duplication of ID required		✓	✓
Minimise paperwork on site	Streamlines process Reduces delays Speeds up key collection process	✓	✓	✓

The Project Leader, Helen Crocker, Manager, Student Accommodation will be leading the implementation of the improvements above along with support from members of the RIE team and colleagues across the University, she said: “Compiling the baseline data before the start of the RIE week was challenging but was crucial to the success of the event as the data clearly demonstrated where the problems were in our student application process and what we needed to concentrate on. The week was excellent, very focussed and structured which was essential for us to get through everything by the end of the week. The team worked very well together and the ‘buy in’ from the staff from other areas of the university will make the implementation of our action plan a reality. The action plan focuses on the student experience and will represent a significant improvement in how new students access our accommodation at the start of their studies at Edinburgh Napier.”

Vice Principal Academic Quality and Customer Service, Jenny Rees said: “The Rapid Improvement Event approach has again shown its worth in allowing the people who work directly with new students and student accommodation to develop a better approach. There is lots of work still to do to implement the plans from the event but our students arriving in September will find the process of applying, arriving and settling in to their accommodation to be much more streamlined.”

Director of Facilities Services Patrick Hughes said: “This was the first RIE I have been involved in and I was staggered by the amount of work that goes into it. I am delighted by the output and we have a good momentum now to go on and achieve the goals we have set out.”

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 via the Project Leader, Helen Crocker.

If you have any queries regarding the above, or would just like to know more, please get in contact with a member of the [Strategic Development team](#).

Dr. Keith Horton, Director of Strategic Development & Corporate Intelligence
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