



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Support Enquiry Zone

Transition(s) the practice supports: On-course transitions

Abstract: Various forms and types of student transition are often the catalyst for an increased student need to access information, help and advice. A one-stop-shop approach to meeting these requirements presents opportunities for enhancing the student journey.

Description: In 2013-2014 the university reviewed its support structures in order to improve services to students, streamline processes and free academic time from administrative duties. One initiative resulting from this review was the establishment in September 2014 of the Support Enquiry Zone (SEZ), a new service which seeks to provide access to all generic and non-academic student-facing support from a single physical location.

While 'one-stop-shops' of various flavours can be found in many universities, SEZ is a very comprehensive take on the model as all other non-academic face-to-face contact points for current students, including School offices have now been closed. A key operating principle for the service is to ensure that as many student enquiries and service requests are satisfied as the point of contact rather than simply referred elsewhere in the University. At the same time, those students who do require specialist support do need to be quickly identified and referred correctly. As such SEZ relies on close working relationships with staff and departments across the university including Advisors of Studies, Registry, Finance, Residences, Library, I.T. and Student Services.

Located on the ground floor of the University Library, in purpose-built accommodation, SEZ was launched on 1st September 2014. The key benefit for students in transition is that there is no longer a need for them to understand the organisational structure of the University in order to access the services they require (as access to the information, help and advice previously scattered across campus is now available in one place). In addition, the simplification of the support model is starting to improve staff understanding of 'who does what' thus reducing the chances of students being 'bounced' between services in an attempt to locate the right team or individual they need to talk to.

The other intended benefits of the project include a consistent and shared approach to service delivery and the student experience, provision of a more holistic view of what students are asking for and when (and on the performance of the university in meeting these



enhancement
themes

requirements) while access to help and advice is now available over a longer period and seven days a week (as SEZ is physically located in the Bernard King Library Building)

Priorities for the on-going development of the service include building staff confidence in their new roles, identification of a suitable system to facilitate cross-departmental handling of enquiries and further development of our online provision to support 'routine, standard and high volume transactions' so that staff can concentrate on supporting students with more individual requirements.

Although in its infancy, early student feedback about the service has been very encouraging so far and is proving invaluable in identifying a wide variety of business processes that would clearly benefit from further streamlining in order to facilitate the student journey.

Contact details: Jim Huntingford j.huntingford@abertay.ac.uk