processfix

Welcome

Processfix has been proud to work with a wide range of Higher Education institutions and an even wider range of people and processes, to help them achieve efficient and effective operational practices.

Some institutions have a collegiate structure. The University of Birmingham is structured into five colleges, each of which is divided into a number of schools and departments. We hear from Charlotte Jarvis, from the College of Arts and Law, who tells us how the University has successfully developed a new process for moving from exam paper to script, whilst keeping staff across the five colleges informed of activities and progress.

Others, such as Anglia Ruskin University, operate on a centralised basis. Lana Coburn, from Anglia Ruskin, shares with us how they have completely changed their room allocation process, minimising any potential student disappointment with a novel self-selection system.

Finally, our spotlight for this edition falls on Mike Crump, from Birmingham City University. He reminds us that it's not only students and existing staff who are important; new recruits deserve effective processes too.

If you would like to find out more about Processfix's work across the Higher Education sector, please contact jules.cross@processfix.com.

NEWSFLASH!

Melbourne, Australia — September 2015
RMIT, the global university of technology and design, pilot Processfix approach on timetabling

University of Birmingham transform exams process

Charlotte Jarvis is the Director of Operations at the College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham. She is part of the Student Transactions Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, a university-wide body looking at how to improve student transaction processes. As part of this Group, she has led a project to reduce the number of steps in the 'Exam Paper to Script' process in time for the summer exams of 2015.

We asked Charlotte for some background to the project and she explained some of the University's recent history: "Prior to 2008, the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Birmingham had 19 Heads of School reporting directly into him. Recognised as an unwieldy approach, a re-organisation transformed this structure into five colleges, each with a permanent Pro-Vice Chancellor, Head of College."

"The result was a much simplified structure, but one which still had challenges, in that while each of the five colleges had reviewed local processes, we had not reviewed processes end-to-end across the organisation. The Student Transactions Group aims to look at student transaction processes across the University as a whole: the colleges and central services. We met with Processfix whilst we were setting up the Group and decided that we would use their workshop approach to help us get started."

Charlotte went on to describe how she worked with a number of Operations Managers, from across the colleges, to identify the priority process for improvement in the area of education support: "It was important to find a process that would enable us to provide a working model, demonstrating to our academic colleagues that this approach would work and would deliver benefits to them without requiring them to provide significant input. We decided on a specific part of the exam process: from when an academic sets an exam question, through to the exam scripts being ready for marking."

So having identified the process to work on, the next steps were to identify the people involved. "The key" explained Charlotte, "was to find a way of bringing together a small group of staff who could represent all five colleges plus two areas of central services and then to have the right mix of staff at different levels of seniority.

Having managed to do that, we were really pleased that everyone found the three days of the workshop enjoyable and were really keen to see the benefit of an improved process. No-one tried to hold on to their own process; people were empowered to leave their past behind them."

"people were empowered to leave their past behind them."

To maintain this positive momentum, Charlotte set up a project board and implementation group, which enabled more people to be involved and helped to keep all areas of the University on board. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor's encouragement and support for the project has been key to communicating the changes to senior academic colleagues.

Eliminated

25%

of steps from exam paper to script process

"We have been able to keep staff at all levels across the colleges informed of activities and progress. Middle managers have played a key role in working with IT to develop a SharePoint solution for the development of exam papers. We also made sure that we had sufficient junior staff involved to make sure that things would work at a local level."

"This has been particularly important as we have a broad

Anglia Ruskin University revolutionise the halls allocation process

Lana Coburn is Business Systems Manager at Anglia Ruskin University, where they have revolutionised their approach to their student accommodation processes.

Lana first came across Processfix through attending one of their Masterclasses. This was then followed up by a series of rapid improvement workshops to explore changes to the student accommodation process.

"We were already in the process of buying a new software system for the accommodation package and wanted to implement it in a clever way: giving our students the facility to reserve their own room. The existing process was quite cumbersome from the accommodation team's perspective. The old system was a glorified spreadsheet. Students would fill in a form, then there was a lot of legwork in the background involving: printing, quality checks and then the manual allocation of a room. The students didn't weren't really interested; all they wanted to do was book a room."

"it all clicked into place, enabling us to have an external perspective of an internal process."

The first workshop focused on the application process. Lana pointed out how valuable it was to get everyone together so that they could talk about what they actually did. "Everyone does their bit and local decisions are made, but you never actually see the whole thing end to end and quite often you don't know why a certain process or activity was introduced. And of course, we have the added complication of two campuses: Cambridge and Chelmsford."

Lana told us how there were no expectations at the beginning of the workshop: attendees didn't really know what it was about. "When it started, they were looking at someone else's process and people initially found it difficult to enthuse. But then everyone started using this way of thinking to start talking about what they were actually doing and it all clicked into place, enabling us to have an external perspective of an internal process."

The workshop team put together an action plan and the implementation has gone really well. "It has progressed much better than we expected. We've gone further with the process than we thought possible and every single student now reserves their accommodation online."

"Our Accommodation Team was used to managing a student's expectations when discussing room allocations; there was always some disappointment when their first choice was not available. Using the new process, students are confident in choosing for themselves. If their first choice is not available, they are immediately able to see what is and then make their choice without any further delay or disappointment."

As with all processes, you expect a few teething problems, but Lana was pleased to tell us that only one out of 700 students was unsure whether or not they had been successful in booking their room! "It's so immediate for the students, they know at the point of application whether or not they have got their choice. We have also been able to make payments a part of the process,

"It's so immediate for the students, they know at the point of application whether or not they have got their choice."

so that students only need make one online application. We have made it as simple as possible: choose your building, your floor, your room, then reserve and pay."

Lana concluded by telling us: "It's a challenge to get everyone together for a rapid improvement workshop, but it is so worth it. You will never have ground breaking ideas like this outside of this kind of environment. And as an additional bonus, change management is next to zero, because people are on board right from the start through the workshop."

If you would like to talk to Lana about this new approach, please email her at lana.coburn@anglia.ac.uk

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range of disciplines. We had to make sure that our process took into account the differing needs of, for example, the question style for engineering versus history exam papers, or the requirements of professional bodies."

There is a significant risk associated with making a change to exam processes for an educational institution, so to manage this, the project board set out key milestones along the way:

— September 2014: in the supplementary exams, which have a much smaller cohort, successfully tested the delivery of exam papers from the exam room back to the academics.

— January 2015: successful testing of a SharePoint solution for the development of papers in two colleges across two limited areas.

— The SharePoint system is now rolled out to all the colleges and in use for the development of the Summer 2015 exam papers.

Charlotte concluded by saying: "The key thing you want if you're trying to build experience of a new approach, is the confidence that comes from a quick win. We have managed to reach a point where there is one process, one approach (albeit with a few nuances to accommodate the wide range of disciplines). The key has been in identifying the right process, setting a realistic target, then getting the right people together to buy into the new approach."

In the spotlight: Mike Crump, Deputy Director of Human Resources at Birmingham City University

Mike Crump's career started in the local government. He then travelled through the NHS, onto Birmingham Airport and back to local government. Now in Higher Education (HE), Mike told us he enjoys the challenge of his role because: "In HE, with academic freedom there are always plenty of bright people around to question you! So that makes it all the more interesting if you want things to change."

In this quarter's spotlight, Mike shares with us how the HR department worked with Processfix on their New Starter process and how their interaction with a new recruit is now really positive, right from the start.

Why did you decide to work with Processfix on the New Starter process?

Back in September 2014, it was thought that HR could benefit from the Processfix approach that had been experienced in other areas of the University. We chose the New Starter process as this is something which touches every area. At some point, every area will recruit, so this was a logical choice.

What did you find most interesting about the approach?

Honestly, the idea of spending a few days talking about processes filled me with dread. But actually it was really interesting. We got a lot out of learning about the processes of other organisations and everybody seemed enthused as the approach took away any preconceived ideas we might have come with about our own. It got us all thinking as one, which was very valuable.

What key elements do you think made the most difference?

We were looking from the point at which the new recruit was selected, to the point at which they walked through the door. As a large organisation, the process itself was long and complex.

However, at the workshop, some really interesting questions were asked about why we were doing certain things. As a result, we removed quite a lot of elements and the outcome hasn't changed at all, as we still end up with good appointments!

"the approach took away any preconceived ideas"

A simple example: we were photocopying people's qualification certificates and placing a copy with the application form. The question "Why?" was asked. All we needed to do was to have someone check they hold the qualification and record that fact. This didn't reduce the integrity of the process at all. The photocopying had got built in to the process over time for some reason, perhaps to address an issue that arose maybe once.

What feedback have you had?

We've had quite a lot of positive feedback. Of course, new starters don't have any previous experience with us, so they can't comment, but we are certainly getting positive comments from across the University.

The refreshed process coincided with other initiatives, such as our new recruitment system, which streamlined a lot of the activities. There's now a proper flow of activities and any points of contention have been removed.

Has the experience made you address anything in your day-to-day approach?

I would say that it has really given me a fresh perspective and now I'm far less reactive. For example, if an issue arises with a process, previously I might have looked to build in some checks which could have been a disproportionate reaction. Now, I look at the overall circumstances, reflect on whether or not this issue was the exception or the rule and am confident not to rush to fix something that really isn't broken.

"it has really given me a fresh perspective and now I'm far less reactive."

As I mentioned, initially I thought three days was a lot of time to give to the workshop. But it has really brought benefits, not least my boss noticing that I'd come back really enthused!

If you would like to chat with Mike about this project, please contact him on Mike.crump@bcu.ac.uk

"It got us all thinking as one, which was very valuable."

About us

Organisations rely on processes to get things done. Often these simply evolve over time and become inefficient ways of working. Processfix bring powerful, proven and behaviour–changing techniques to bear in a professionally facilitated environment.

We focus on engaging your teams in their own improvement, empowering them to re–evaluate the way they do things and to develop new and improved ways of working that transform performance and deliver immediate results.

Whether you require Rapid Improvement Workshop facilitation, training, project leadership or an organisational wide process improvement programme. Processfix specialise in facilitating your team, delivering immediate benefits and instilling continuous improvement across your organisation.

If you would like to find out how Processfix can benefit your organisation, please contact us at:

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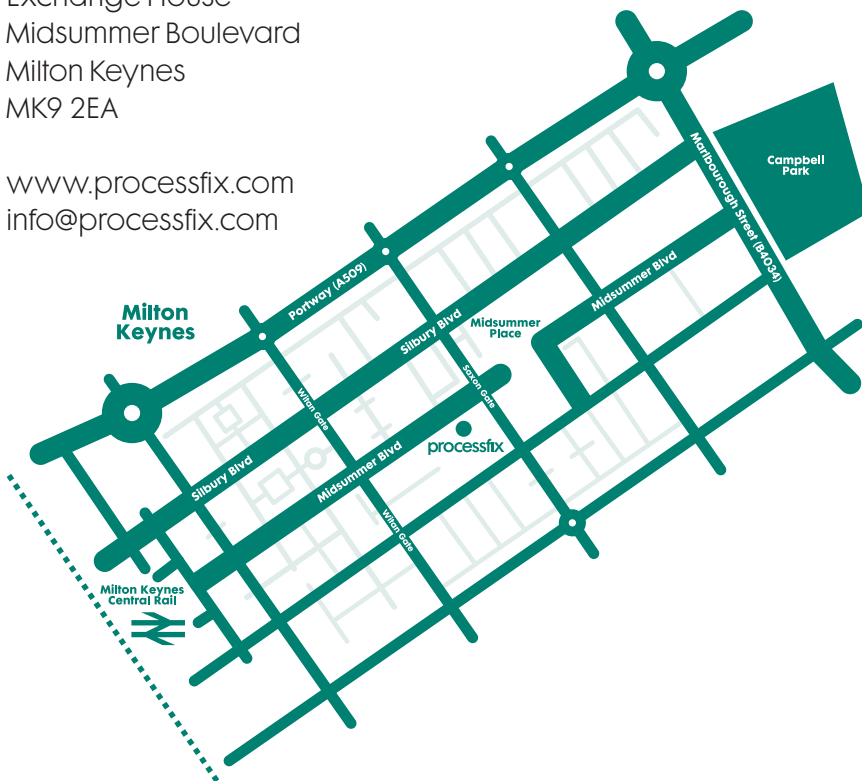
And Finally...

The Bucks New University enrolment process featured in our spring 2014 goes from strength to strength.

To: jules.cross@processfix.com
From: ruth.gunstone@bucks.ac.uk

Dear Jules,

I wanted to share with you that we put forward our Bucks Welcome development and implementation for the Times Higher Outstanding Student Services Team Award and have been shortlisted! We will know whether we won later on in June but this is an achievement in itself. We are now coming up to our third year of this new process and it has gone from strength to strength with the real success being the cross institution collaboration which is excellent. Thanks for helping us to make it happen.

Best wishes,
Ruth Gunstone
Director of Student Services
Buckinghamshire New University

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