

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Welcome to our occasional newsletter about customer service within Higher Education where we review topical issues of interest to the sector.

- ‘More for less’**
 - **extended teaching hours**
 - **in-sourcing**
 - **commercialising services**
 - **using business and marketing schools**
 - **jobs and work experience for students**
- Feast to famine**
 - **swamped with applications**
 - **graduates on the dole**
- Need to show more metrics**
- Missing out on good students**
- Exam technique**

‘More for less’

The ‘More for Less’ mantra is being chanted around campuses and we are hearing of a number of initiatives being considered to facilitate it:

- extended teaching hours

To achieve better room utilisation, classes might be held between 8 in the morning and 8 in the evening. With libraries open 24/7 and customer service desks staffed till 10pm, this could be a possibility and particularly attractive to part time students. It would have an impact on catering services, though.

- in-sourcing

Bringing back under the HEI’s central management, those services that were previously outsourced like accommodation, catering, cleaning and security could give greater control and flexibility.

- commercialising services

Many universities rent out student accommodation over vacations and some make a healthy profit from managing conferences and events. This could be expanded to opening up sports facilities to local users and

a delivery catering service to local businesses.

All inclusive packages could be offered for national sports events, concerts and royal weddings.

- working with the business and marketing faculties

Those universities that have business and marketing schools could tap into the expertise on site to exploit the services on offer, providing ready made learning opportunities for the students.

- jobs and work experience for students

Commercialising services also creates more work experience and job opportunities for students.

Feast to famine:

- swamped with applications

This year is seeing a deluge of applications for undergraduate places in the UK as students try to enrol before the proposed £9,000 a year fees apply from 2012 entry. Thousands of students who do not make their grades will miss out and there will be few places left at the clearing stage.

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- graduates on the dole

However, Britain's graduates are coming out in droves straight on to the dole and blaming their universities for not preparing them for the harsh realities of the current job market. A quarter of graduates recently surveyed even stated that university education is simply not worth the trouble anymore.

More than one third of graduates (38%) have claimed jobseekers' allowance since leaving university and, of these, 37% have done so for longer than six months, according to new research from totaljobs.com.

The survey of recent graduates revealed that many have a distinct lack of confidence in their education, with almost half (44%) stating that they did not believe their university education had equipped them for the world of work, and with a similar percentage (43%) stating that they would not have chosen the same course, knowing what they know now. As a result of this graduate dissatisfaction and the position they find themselves in after finishing their studies, a quarter (24%) would not recommend Higher Education to those currently studying for their A-Levels.

Attracting and retaining students will become even more important in the years to come.

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Need to show more metrics

It looks like, in future, universities will be required to provide more detailed statistics about their performance to enable potential students to make better informed choices about courses of study.

They will also be expected to support claims made in their advertising material. Major metrics will be related to employability.

Missing out on good students

Prospective undergraduates for Oxbridge had to submit their UCAS applications before 15 October 2010 and would also have listed their back up universities on the same form.

They will have heard if they were in the successful 20% by January 2011 and those who weren't would then be looking for the next best place. HEIs on the ball, would have their offers out already so that those students who already have their exam results are in a position to commit. Universities waiting till after the 15 March UCAS deadline could be missing out.

Exam technique

A student is suing her law college in the High Court for £100,000 for failure to provide coaching in the techniques required to pass her bar exams.