'Moments of truth': measuring how the library and student support service impacts upon the student experience

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Introduction

The initiative covered in this paper sets out to identify key 'moments of truth' or interactions between a 'super-converged' service area and the students of the university. The student experience is at the heart of this quality assurance initiative, with particular emphasis on measuring and responding to the impact that a service has on students in order to affect student retention and achievement.

Super-convergence involves merging or converging academic support departments which would previously have been run as discrete service areas within the university.[1]

Super-convergence at Liverpool John Moores University

At Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) super-convergence meant bringing together the library, IT support, student administration services and programme administration support, along with access to careers, employability and welfare services to create a super department to be known as 'Library and Student Support' (L&SS) which would operate from the already existing learning resource centres (LRCs). As part of the development, the LRCs were refurbished in order to deliver the new service model. This massive organisational change took place during 2009, and the new service area has been in existence since September of that year. [2]

Bringing together such diverse areas of a university meant that an appropriate change management programme was required. In the first instance this addressed the impact on individual staff and focused on '*managing yourself through change*' and '*managing others through change*'. [3] The change management programme then focused on developing common service standards across the new service and involved a large piece of work in developing common professional behaviours and values for staff working in the service.

Next steps in the process

Staff training and development was seen as an essential part of the change management programme, and routine training needs were incorporated into the programme, whilst being aligned to the changes taking place. Examples of this include:

- IT skills training
- student records system training
- awareness training for careers, employability and student advice and welfare services
- enquiry-handling skills

After the initial convergence, there were subsequent developments in the change management process, which resulted in further staff consultation and discussion. This took place during the first year of operation as we looked at ways in which some of the new service's operational processes would develop. These included:

- further development of the customer service model in which all library and computing staff and student administration staff work together within the customer service areas known as the Student Zones
- a hybrid weekend service model in which all staff would carry out library, computing and student administration duties
- development of core customer service duties which all staff working in customer services are expected to carry out
- centralised telephone enquiry point

Quality assurance

With so many operational changes, time had to be allowed for the new practices to become established, which is why the issue of quality assurance was left until the second year of operation. At this point in the change management programme, the service was able to address the consistency of quality assurance and the measurement of student satisfaction across this new and diverse service.

The newly formed department already had a portfolio of several different quality assurance tools and user satisfaction measurement instruments in place. These were being used with some effect within the constituent parts of the service (i.e. LibQUAL, SCONUL benchmarking exercises, enrolment surveys, etc.). Where possible, the service had also consistently responded appropriately to the results of the annual National Student Survey (NSS). However, it became very apparent that the service now needed a way of joining all these measures up and further complementing them, so that L&SS managers would have a quality assurance instrument that would allow them to approach customer satisfaction and quality from a holistic, service-wide point of view. Key to this framework would be the development of a consistent approach to measuring satisfaction across the whole service and providing a platform from which responsive decisions could be made.

Developing the quality assurance framework

In order to inform the development of the quality assurance framework, L&SS managers initially tried to look at how an existing performance measurement or quality tool might be applied to the new L&SS service (e.g. SCONUL benchmarking) but this proved difficult in that L&SS could no longer benchmark with 'like for like' academic libraries. Therefore two of the university's external corporate partners were consulted in order to try to draw some 'good practice' comparisons with other service providers from different sectors. The first was *Merseytravel*,[4] Merseyside's public transport network, which had recently gained huge increases in their customer satisfaction. This was in part due to a leadership-behaviours approach to assuring quality. As L&SS had similarly developed service-wide values and behaviours and leadership behaviours, there were clearly some comparisons to be drawn from consulting with Merseytravel in this area. The second was ShopDirect,[5] a national online shopping retailer, which had been named as a very high-profile local success story with a track record in

measuring and responding to perceived customer satisfaction. The company focuses on 'moments of truth' where a customer is either satisfied or dissatisfied; the impact of these 'moments of truth' influences the retention or loss of customers. Examples included the quality and choice when browsing products on the company's website (in effect, their shop front) and the interaction between the customer and the person making the actual delivery of the product to the customer's home. Methods of capturing perceived customer satisfaction at these 'moments of truth' included online surveys and telephone calls (e. g. immediately after delivery of a product).

Approach

The task in hand was to develop a quality assurance framework for the service, to allow L&SS to measure customer satisfaction (in particular among students), seek feedback and have a 'joined up' departmental approach to improving services and assuring quality. Some of the methodologies used by Merseytravel and ShopDirect could be applied to the new Library and Student Support environment, and these have subsequently influenced the development of the department's quality assurance framework.

The focus of this piece of work therefore became the development of a framework by which existing quality tools could effectively be utilised for the constituent parts of the service (e.g. SCONUL benchmarking, enrolment surveys, etc.), while also ensuring consistent practice and carrying out a gap analysis where no measure was currently in place.

How does the quality assurance framework operate?

The quality assurance framework is based around measuring student satisfaction at key 'moments of truth' in their student journey / lifecycle. The six key 'moments of truth' for L&SS are:

- enrolment
- induction
- information skills training
- study support (e.g. access to resources)
- staff support (e.g. advice, help, guidance, customer service)
- assessment (e.g. coursework submission)

Much of the activity required in order to obtain the information for the framework was already in place in L&SS. However, in looking at all the existing measures it was also possible to iden-

tify and address the gaps. The resulting quality assurance framework was developed and allowed for a single framework to be applied across all six 'moments of truth'. The framework therefore requires that statistics and relevant metrics be habitually obtained for each 'moment of truth' and then converted into meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs). This then allows for the setting of targets against which each 'moment of truth' can be measured. The framework also allows for the various benchmarking, anecdotal and qualitative feedback channels against each 'moment of truth' to be used for further validation.

- collating and responding to feedback as it is received
- informing all customers of the improvements and actions undertaken as a result of feedback
- setting realistic targets for Key Performance Indicators for 2012–13

Activity	Numbers / Comparison	Key Performance Indicators	Benchmark Data	Feedback
Enrolment	24,628 enrolments 138,569 re-registrations (2009/10) 25,596 (2008/9) -3.9%	Time taken to enrol students against L&SS service standard - % satisfaction 2009/10 98% completed on same day within set time (2 – 5 minutes) 95% postgrads completed on same day within set time (10 – 15 minutes)	Compare with previous year's survey: Enrolment Survey, LibQUAL, Comments, NSS -data currently unavailable-	"Keep the queue short" (enrolment survey) "It was great" (enrolment survey) "Less than 5 minutes queuing" (enrolment survey) "Need more directions/ signposts" (enrolment survey) "Enrolment was awful. Haven't felt I can approach staff since" (LibQUAL)
Induction	2009/10 Avril – 108 Aldham/Marsh - 84	Correlation with LMS/e-resource usage?	SCONUL Benchmark data for no. of sessions and no. of hours delivered	"Good induction to services" (LibQUAL)

Quality assurance measures for Enrolment/induction

WHAT NEXT?

Implementing the quality assurance framework is a priority objective for L&SS for 2011–12. All areas of the service had previously demonstrated the good practice of responding to student feedback and this will continue to be the case whilst the quality assurance framework takes shape. In the first instance, the framework will allow for a holistic approach to this responsiveness. The next steps for L&SS will indeed be joining up the feedback received in the first year of operation and ensuring that the following takes place:

- systematic reporting on the results of the information and data collected through the quality assurance framework
- joining up feedback received though the variety of instruments which the quality assurance framework makes use of

NOTES

1 R. Heseltine, 'Super-convergence: SCONUL shared experience meeting', 16 February 2009, in SCONUL *Focus*, 46 (2009), pp. 121–124

2 L. Appleton, 'Living through super-convergence: creating library and student support at Liverpool John Moores University', SCONUL *Focus*, 49 (2010), pp. 67–70

3 J. Trantom and W. Reid, 'Managing change at LJMU', *Engage* (*In Practice* Supplement, 26), Spring 2011, pp. 1–3.

4 http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/

5 http://www.shopdirect.com/