Enquiry Management – towards a better way.
LTPF Funding Report

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EM SharePoint
1. Executive Summary

ipoint is UWA’s new enquiry management service for current students being trialled in Student Administration. Students are accessing faster and more consistent quality responses to their enquiries. The service is consistently achieving a self service response rate of 97%; far in excess of our target of 80%.

The volume of student email and walk-in (counter) enquiries has been significantly reduced. Staff time has been freed up to concentrate on other services and their working conditions improved.

The pilot has proven extremely successful and gained much interest from other service providers within the University. A single integrated system administered by a central specialised team is recommended. An inclusive approach provides a consistent, quality service for students whilst significant savings in licensing and staff costs are also achievable.

Future expansion phases are planned or under consideration as follows:
- Expand knowledge base content to include all Student Services – in progress
- New ipoint interface for prospective students - planned
- Library service (for students and public) – approved in principle
- Human Resources (for UWA staff members) – under consideration

2. Introduction

In December 2006 Student Services received a grant ($130,000) from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund to pilot the RightNow Technologies (RNT) Service module within Student Administration. The funds were allocated in accordance with a RIF funding proposal that was redirected by the Registrar to the Learning & Teaching Performance Fund ‘Enquiry Management – towards a better way (August 2006)’

This report summarises the project to date with emphasis on the progress against the key performance indicators as determined in the funding proposal.

3. Budget

The project has been implemented within budget. The grant was allocated exclusively towards salaries and software. Limited funds for incidental expenses, consumables and staff travel were provided separately by Student Services.

4. Project Implementation

After initial research at four Australian higher education institutions that all utilise RightNow Service a project plan was drafted. The Project was split into 14 distinct phases. In summary the project has been implemented as follows:
- Project Identification – Aug 2006 to Mar 2007
- Project Planning – Feb 2007 to Mar 2007
- Implementation – Mar 2007 to Aug 2007
- Project Completion – Aug 2007 to Oct 2007

An interdepartmental collaborative approach was adopted utilising the skills and resources of Student Services, Faculty, Archives and Records and ITS staff.

After a short trial period, ipoint was publicly launched on the 9 July and officially launched by the Vice Chancellor Prof Alan Robson on the 3 August 2007.

The ipoint knowledge base is freely accessible to the general public at www.ipoint.uwa.edu.au whilst only current students can access the full service. Students who have an active pheme password can submit an enquiry (incident) for resolution after completing ‘pass through
authentication’. This means the student enquirer is identified immediately and staff can be confident in the appropriateness of their response.

5. **ipoint Performance Summary**

ipoint has been highly effective in managing student enquiries

To date\(^1\) ipoint has delivered:
- 9143 answer views across its 10 categories
- 97.3% self service rate – sessions that do not result in a submitted enquiry
- 203 submitted enquiries
  - 72% were resolved within 24hrs of receipt
  - 79% were resolved without reference to specialist staff
  - 92% were resolved within 2 UWA working days Service Level Agreement.

The service was launched to coincide with the release of exam results (see Figure 1). 2728 examinations answers were viewed in July. Students submitted 30 exam related enquiries; the small ratio of submitted enquiries to answer views is consistent with our overall self service rate. Answer views from other key service categories are: Fees and Charges (2054); Enrolments (1184) and Graduations (939).

6. **Performance against Key Indicators**

Project performance is reported against the key indicators as determined in the original funding proposal.

6.1. **Encourage student interaction on-line and away from traditional routes**

Students have repeatedly shown their preference for online services. ipoint is accessible 24/7 and meets this demand with ‘Answers Online Anytime’. A number of links have been posted on key UWA internet pages to redirect current on-line traffic towards ipoint. Publicity (see Annex A) has also been used to encourage interaction on-line and away from traditional methods such as phone, email and walk in.

Student Administration staff have collected Enquiry Statistics (see Figure 2) when submitted via telephone, letter, email and counter (walk in) service channels. They clearly show a decline in the number of enquiries submitted between June and August and notably in counter enquiries. The ability for students to ‘self-serve’ off campus is of clear advantage to those students who cannot access the Crawley campus during working hours. Historical figures are unavailable to make a comparison with pervious years but anecdotal evidence suggests that July is traditionally a busier period than June due to the commencement of Semester Two. Statistics will continue to be collected for further analysis.

Student Administration ceased servicing five generic email addresses and this traffic has been redirected towards ipoint. Students have submitted 203 enquiries to ipoint since go live whilst 225 emails were received by just one of the generic email addresses in the same period last year.

Student Administration implemented a new phone system in mid August to compliment ipoint. The single number provides students with easy to follow steps to access available services and staff. Analysis of telephone calls received to date (see Figure 3) shows July and August 2007 are broadly comparable with 2004-2006. Longer term monitoring of the service is expected to demonstrate a reduction in calls received at Student Administration.

6.2. **Deliver a high quality and more timely service to students**

A style guide was produced in conjunction with the Learning, Language and Research Skills Team to ensure knowledge base answers were presented in a consistent and quality manner. Student Administration staff then used this guide to draft their content. The guide has subsequently gained significant interest from RNT and has been cited as a best practice

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\(^1\) ipoint Statistics are taken from the 19\(^{th}\) June to the 13\(^{th}\) September 2007.
exemplar for other higher education users of the RightNow Service. Analysis of ipoint has shown that only 2.7% of user sessions result in a submitted enquiry and feedback shows overwhelmingly that students find the published answers useful.

Prior to ipoint student expectations were unmanaged as there was no advertised service level throughout the directorate. Although staff worked as fast as possible students would frequently enquire on the progress of their original question and create further delays. ipoint consistently delivers a service level of resolving enquiries within two UWA working days. Of the 203 incidents submitted 72% were resolved within 24hrs and 82% within 48hrs of receipt (including weekends). Anecdotal staff evidence suggests that this level of service (in both response time and quality) in previous peak service periods was rarely achievable.

6.3. Improve the working conditions of staff by:

6.3.1. Reducing the number of telephone enquiries and emails that are directed to front line customer service staff

Feedback from front line staff has been that they were surprised about the relatively small number of enquiries they manage using ipoint. The 97% self service rate illustrates that the knowledge base satisfies the vast majority of online enquiries not only providing quality and consistent responses but acting like a shield to ultimately reduce the volume of enquiries managed by front line customer staff.

As students self serve, an increased flow of enquiry traffic through ipoint will result in a reduced number of telephone calls handled by front line staff.

6.3.2. Reduce the number of enquiries that front line customer service staff need to refer to a specialist for response

Only 9% of submitted enquiries were referred to specialist staff for resolution (see Figure 4). The knowledge base acts like a filter to remove the most commonly asked and simple questions and frees up front line customer service staff time so that they can handle the majority (80%) of submitted incidents. The knowledge base is also used as a reference tool for staff to assist them in providing consistent quality responses.

The enrolment specialist experienced a 99% reduction in emails. In July and August 2006 one of the five generic email addresses (enrolhelp@admin.uwa.edu.au) received 225 enquiries whilst ipoint received just 69 enrolment related questions in the same period in 2007. Of these submitted questions only two needed to be referred to specialist staff members for resolution.

6.3.3. Facilitating the development and sharing of authoritative enquiry responses

The knowledge base can be utilised by all UWA staff as a reference tool on policies, practices and procedures. It's easy to use search functionality saves searching the UWA website and provides the user with a customer driven response.

If customer service staff identify content gaps (where students repeatedly submit enquiries about a topic not adequately covered in the knowledge base) they can use the inbuilt ‘propose’ functionality to suggest a response for publication.

Staff can also access different levels of information as appropriate to their allocated level when using the system. The limited number of licences used in this pilot has meant that we have not been able to utilise this system functionality.

6.3.4. Providing a state of the art system for managing telephone, voice and email enquiries.

Staff can use ipoint to monitor, manage, and reduce the overall volume of submitted enquiries to Student Administration. It has proven to be particularly effective in reducing email and in-

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2 Answer Feedback is requested but is not mandatory for end-users. How well did this answer your question? Count of Submitted Answers: 6 - 0%, 1 - 25%, 1 - 50%, 1 - 75%, 42 - 100%
person (counter) queries. The functionality not only reduces the overall volume of enquires but promotes a faster and more consistent quality response to the student.

7. Conclusion

The pilot project has conclusively proven that the RNT service provides a quality customer service for students whilst also delivering improved working conditions for staff by freeing up their time spent on dealing with mundane enquires. There is huge scope for expanding this service across other UWA service providers including staff. An expanded system with more licences will utilise the full potential of the service and deliver faster and higher quality service for our students and staff.

All four WA (Table A) institutions are utilising RNT as part of their enquiry management solution. We have taken initiative and implemented a service that meets our students’ expectations. In the process we have gained valuable experience and expertise, we are seen as a best practice exemplar and have been asked to present at the RNT APAC conference in October 2007. This project has allowed UWA to make their first step in implementing a student focused ‘one stop shop’. You are thanked for providing this opportunity.

Figure 1 - Knowledge Base Answer Views by Category
Figure 2 - Enquiries Submitted to Student Administration by Source.

Figure 3 - Incoming Telephone Calls at Student Administration (Jun/Jul/Aug 2004 – 2007)

Figure 4 – Resolution of Submitted ipoint incidents (July-Sep 2007)
Examples of ipoint Publicity

**Got a question?**
Find the answer.

**When you’ve asked one question but you need to ask another five...**

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