Paperless admissions at UWE

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Overview

- Business context
- Paperless processes
  - Application routes
  - Application processing
  - Applicant communications
- Interview task
- Benefits and issues
- Aspirations
- Demo and questions

Admissions at UWE

- Approximately 35,000 applications
- In the top ten largest universities in the country
- Central Contact Centre and Processing Team
- Separate home and international applications teams
- Faculty support for value-added activities e.g. interviews, data capture
- Central team: 3.5 FTE Admissions Officers; 7 FTE Admissions Advisers
- 1 FTE SITS Operations Officer – data quality, business process improvements
- 0.5 FTE SITS Communications Officer – role groups, scheduling, reporting

SITS at UWE

- SITS site since September 2007
- SITS for courses, enquiries management and applications; in house system for student records
- UWE Welcome applicant portal
- Additional components include Document Manager, IPP Data Import Tool, Points Based Immigration
- SITS virtual team includes DBAs, web developers and systems developers
- SITS Systems Developers (1.5 FTE) located in Admissions alongside SITS operations team
- Ambitious development plan: scheduled, tactical and transformational changes

The paperless vision

- To achieve efficiencies in the application process *and* improve the UWE experience for the applicant

For the application process

- To improve turnaround times for internal decision making across central and faculty teams

- To gain cost and time efficiencies in automating routine processes

- To improve data quality by using electronic data capture processes for the initial application and throughout the application process

- To provide better and faster operational information about the number of applications, interview responses and uploaded documentation

- To develop best practice for central and faculty users with the flexibility to support specific business needs

The paperless vision

For the applicant

- To create a faster and more efficient process for submitting a PG application to the University

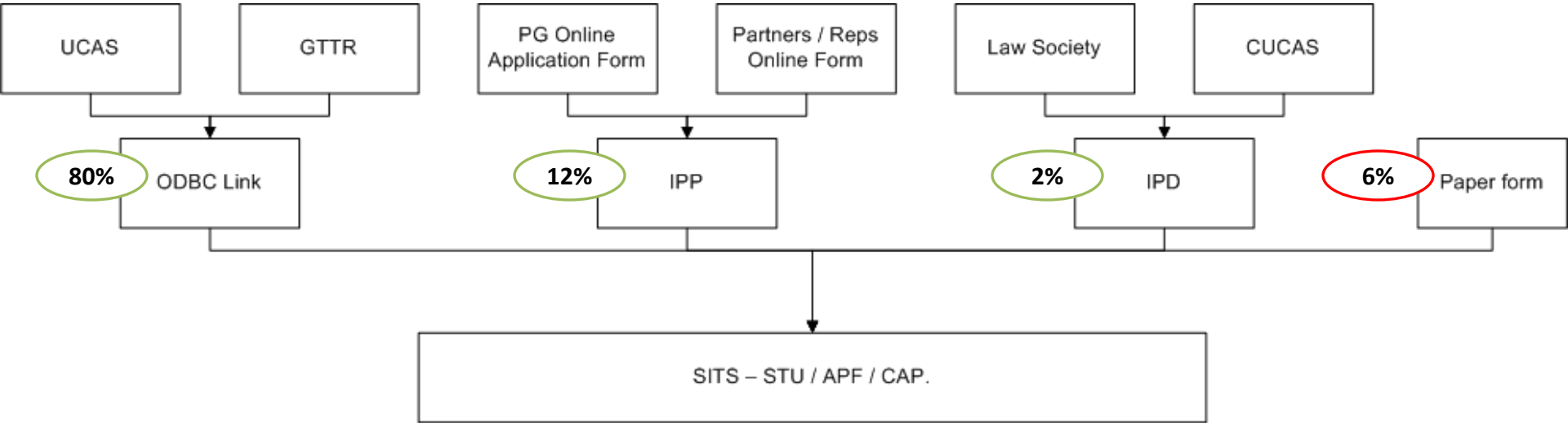
- To improve turnaround times for applicants by sending communications triggered by an event

- To improve the admissions experience by alerting the applicant where additional information is required to progress an application

- To provide secure anywhere/anytime online access for applicants wishing to submit an application, view their application status or provide more information

- To encourage conversion by sending the right information, at the right time, to the right applicant

UWE application routes



- > 30,000 paperless applications
- UCAS paper forms only used for interviewing courses
- Paper PG applications input to QAS and then follow paperless process

Online applications at UWE

- Course specific link available for most PG FT and PT programmes (206: 94 FT, 112 PT)
- Accessed via How to Apply on UWE course search
- UWE branded; available 24/7
- Features
  - Step by step form, can be paused and revisited
  - Clearly marked mandatory questions
  - Drop down menus where possible to improve on data quality
  - Error messages if answers don’t match input requirements
  - Document upload facility
  - Follow up e-mail to applicant about next steps
  - References requested directly (where referee e-mail addresses supplied)
  - Single SRL of form to print off for applicant and UWE

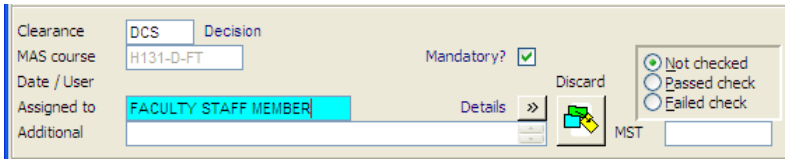
The paperless process

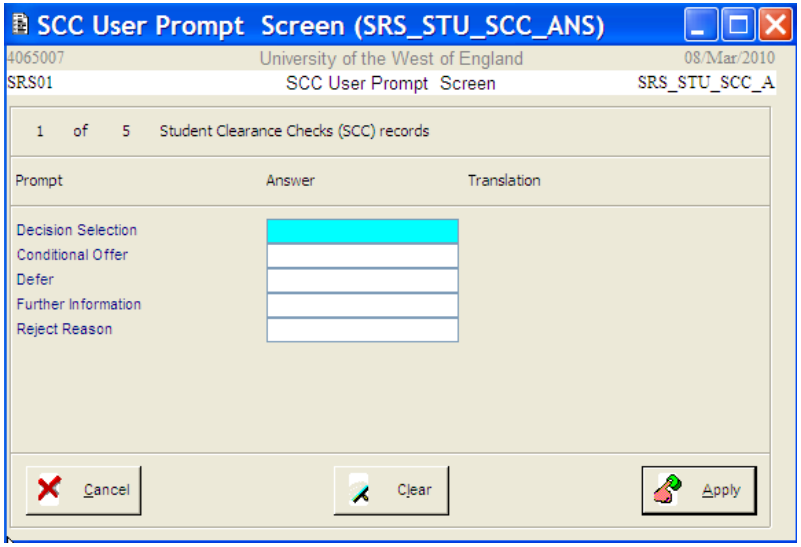
Clearance Checks:

- automatically assign clearance checks to CAP when received
- retrieve on SCC specific checks assigned to faculty member
- checks reassigned when actioned

SRLs:

- preview applicant data
- scrutiny sheets
- interview forms





The paperless applicant

UWE Welcome website

- UWE Welcome created for all applicants on receipt of application
- Print and e-mail communications to advise login credentials
- Introductory intray message to explain features of WW
- Weekly reminder e-mails about important messages

Messages through UWE Welcome

- Essential, call to action communications

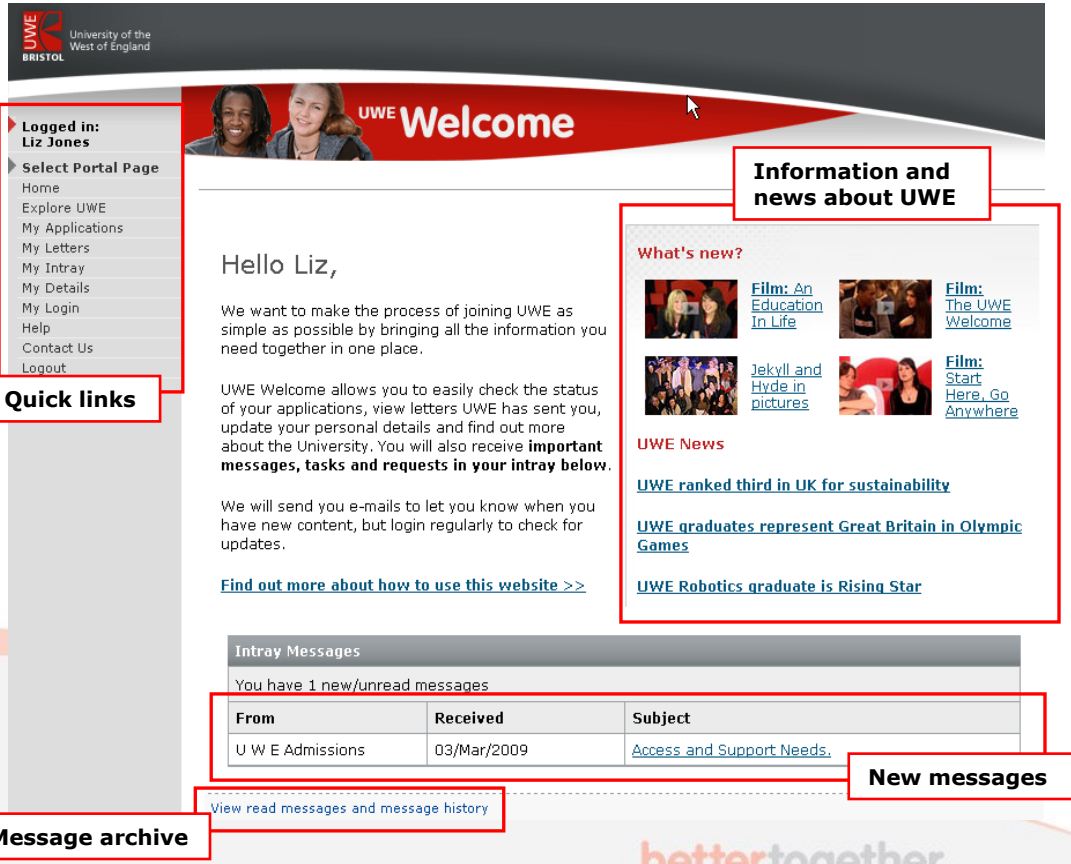
Status specific (application received, interview, offer)
Timed (accommodation)
Advisory (fees and finance)
Data capture (access and support needs, fee status)
Document capture (qualifications)

- UWE Welcome communications complemented by

Added-value (applicant guide, e-news)
Insights (accepter/decliner surveys)

Facts and figures

- 108,182 messages sent
- 60-80% messages are read
- most popular themes
    - deadlines
    - further information needed
    - accommodation
    - registration
    - interview/ taster day invites



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Applicant tasks

Table Updates: applicant updates relevant fields in specific tables

- Interview/ Open day invites
- Passport/ Visa details
- Undeclared disability/ criminal convictions

Questionnaires: information submitted and stored on the Student Personal Details (SPD) table

- Fee status
- Access and support needs
- Biographical questionnaire

Uploads: document manager

- Qualification evidence
- Fee status evidence
- Referee documents

Interview task: key features

Pilot for Creative Arts courses

- Task to UWE Welcome offers applicant a scheduled interview slot

- Specific information about interview preparation

- Sent in batches or individually

- Applicants can
    - accept date
    - request an alternative date
    - withdraw application

- Applicants can provide support needs requirements

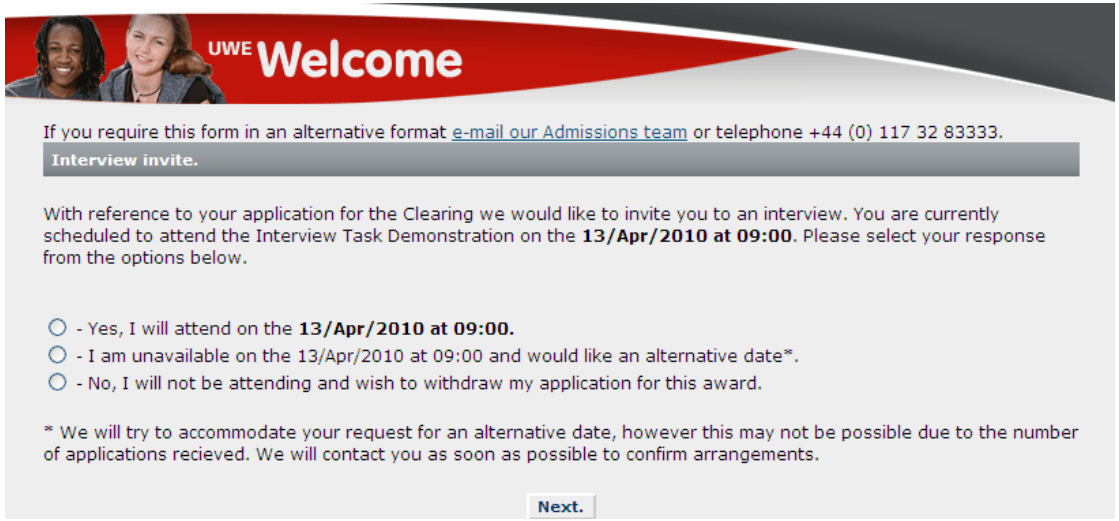
- Standard reporting for interview management

- Faculties can print Interview Scrutiny sheets in bulk

Interview task in action

The applicant experience

- Applicant is presented with 3 standard options
- Alternative date option is via date range
- Applicant is given the option of requesting any support
- Final page advises that the interview has been successfully confirmed and directs applicant back to message history to review interview details



The UWE experience

- Option 1 – Updates the IOI acceptance flag to "Yes"
- Option 2 – Creates an SCC with alternative data
- Option 3 – Creates an SCC with withdrawal details

Benefits of using the interview task

At 5th March 2010

- 2683 invitations sent
- completed = 1913 (71%)
- not completed = 770 (29%)
- read but not completed = 452 (17%)

Of those completed

- 1776 acceptances (93%)
- 86 requests for alternative dates (4%)
- 51 withdrawals (3%)

- Turnaround time reduced from, on average, three weeks to one

- Can identify who has not responded to the task and send reminder messages

- Cost and time efficiencies from the elimination of printing, packing, posting, data capture, etc

- Dynamic reports about attendees available through SRL

- All information about the interview in one place so no lost letters

Room for improvement

- Initial development time
  business needs to be clear about requirements and the entire process
  i.e. initial communication, task, follow-up, downstream processes

- Faculty buy-in and training
  understand impact on Faculty processes e.g. scheduling, reporting, scrutiny sheets

- Numerous SLPs containing specific interview details
  - coding conventions
  - need annual updating

- Applicant non engagement
  - with UWE Welcome
  - with task element
  - with in-tray history

- Check how pages print for the applicant

- Incomplete information submitted
  need to be clear about mandatory information and trapping errors in submitted responses

Managing UWE Welcome communications

1) Batch Standard Letters (BSL)

Advantages

- Quick processing times
- Ability to group letters to send multiple letters in one batch

Disadvantages

- Can only reference one table i.e. STU
- Have to generate the letter first and then a second job to print the letter

2) Generate Role Group Letters (GRL) & Role Groups (RGD)

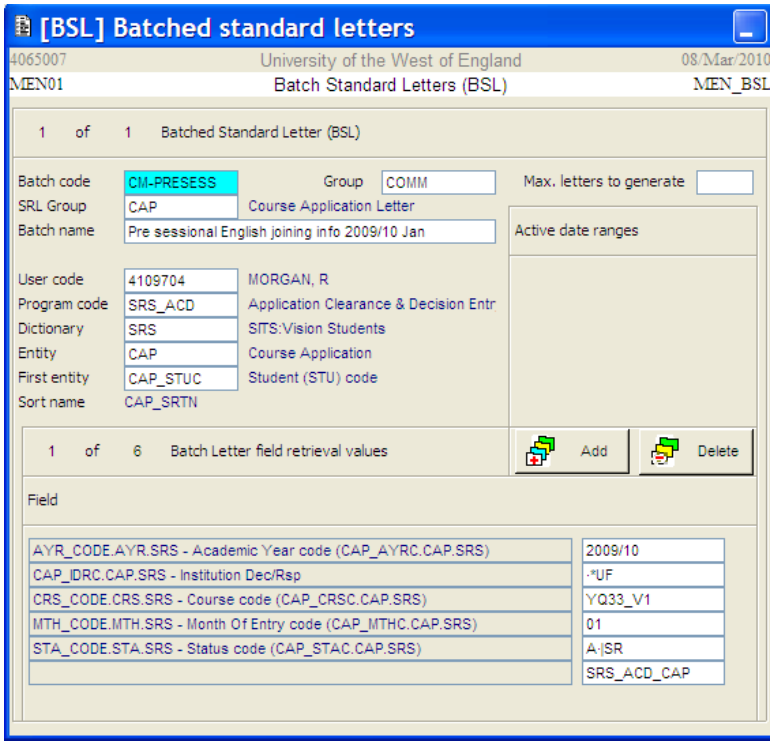
Advantages

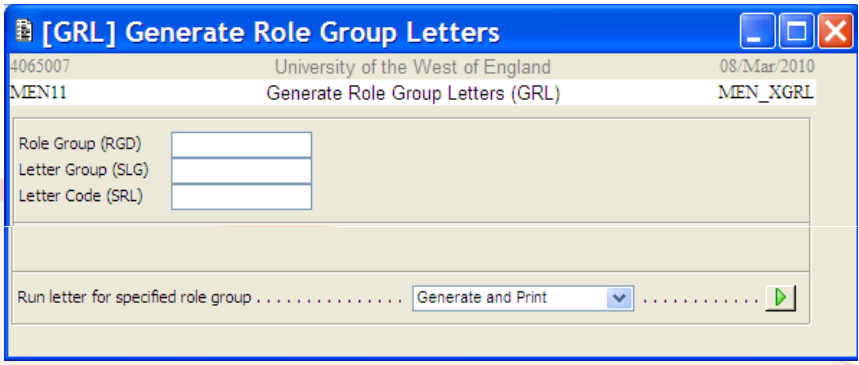
- Ability to reference more than one table.
- One job generates & prints letter/message

Disadvantages

- Adverse effect on system performance

3) Use UDFs for high level splits in communications e.g. do/don't send, home/international





Managing paperless processes

Paperless processes
- Develop a shared understanding of business and technical speak
- Invest in big screens
- Start small, pilot ideas, celebrate success
- Consider set-up time versus volume: no segments of 1!
- Think creatively and work around SITS limitations
- Use start and end dates so communications and tasks can be set up in advance
- Communicate internally – ensure Contact Centre and Faculties know what is sent to applicants
- Develop reporting
    - understand facts and figures about benefits of paperless
    - monitor communications usage statistics and respond immediately
- Know where the portal off switch is

The paperless applicant
- Create communications suite – get foundations right and plan ahead
- Send regular timelines so applicants know what to expect and when
- Send reminders about genuinely important communications
- Respond to barriers to engagement by combining print, e-mail and web
- Consider other influencers
- Train Contact Centre in password resets

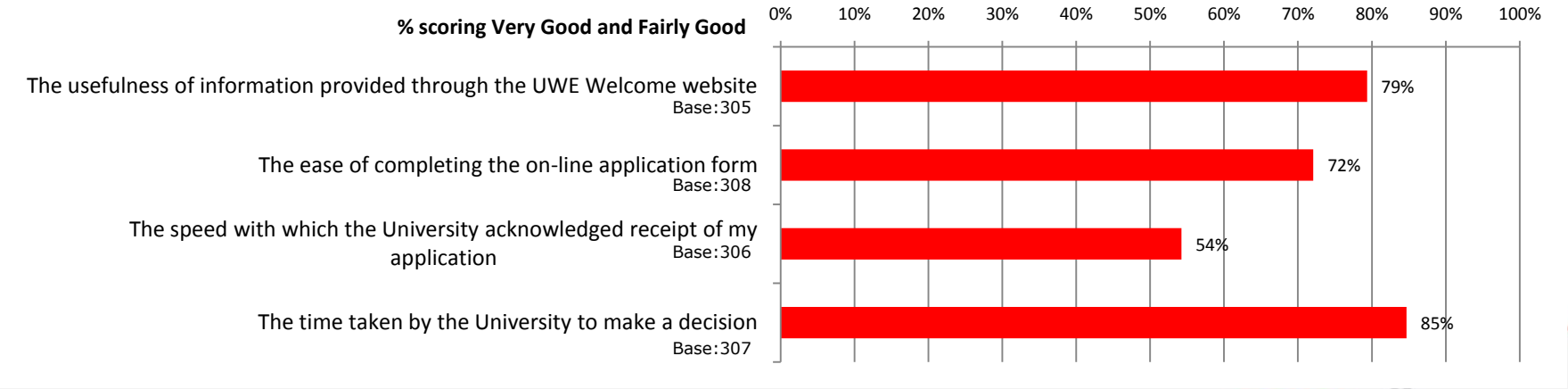
What applicants think

What's missing from UWE Welcome?
- more / updated information about UWE
- information relevant to point in cycle
- link to SU website
- meet other people / applicant hub
- photos of UWE
- information about being a UWE student
- passwords are too complicated

What did you get from other HEIS?
- Open Day invitation
- directed to a website
- not a Welcome website

What's missing from communications?
- timeline of communications
- paper/ something tangible
- explanation of different communications strands
- reminder e-mails to log in to site
- clarification of changeover from UWE Welcome to myUWE

Comments on applying to UWE?
- simple and easy
- eco-friendly
- liked being able to pause application
- good that UWE contacted referees
- application process a bit long
- very student centric



Base: PG accepter survey 2009

Enhancing paperless admissions

Processes

- Develop additional tasks to cover all information gathering needs
- Develop the staff portal
- Enhance reporting suite
- Offer self selecting interview dates

UWE Welcome

- Develop page views tailored to UG, PG and International applicants
- Create 'information upload' page rather than relying on regular task sends
- Rotate content and links in response to current FAQs
- Dynamically switch page content off for processing embargoes

Communications

- Better understanding of barriers to engagement with UWE Welcome
- Improve on management information about messages sent and read
- Develop specific content for audience segments

Demo and Questions