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PUSH THE RED BUTTON: LISTENING TO STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

Abstract:

How do I make my voice heard? The University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland covers an area the size of Belgium, with a population the size of Brussels. The 13 partner colleges and over 50 local learning centres operate in some of the most remote areas of Western Europe. There are students studying at a distance in their own homes, at large campuses with many other students, and at small learning centres where they might be the only HE student in the village. Some students have long commutes by car, train or even ferry to reach their place of study.

In such a complex and distributed federal model, it can be difficult to know who to turn to. If the UHI student services or personal and academic tutors are not down the corridor, who do you ask when you have a problem or don't know where to turn to next for an answer?

UHI staff and students were asking for some mechanism that would complement the existing support structures, allow students to feedback problems, remove blockages and lead to resolution before the student either accepted a sub-standard service or, as sometimes regrettably happened, left their programme through frustration or dissatisfaction.

The early resolution of frustrations and grievances is not only improving the student experience and supporting the retention of our students; interestingly, the Red Button has coincided with a decline in formal student complaints dealt with by the University, leading to time and cost benefits for the institution, too.

So, how do you make your voice heard in such a complex, distributed university? With the benefits of our technology and a simple idea, it's easy...just push the Red Button!

This paper will describe the history, logistics, challenges, student feedback and lessons learned through the development and implementation of this student engagement mechanism: the aim being to spread the methodology to other institutions where appropriate.

Keywords:

student, university, feedback, problem resolution, customer service.

JEL Classification: I20