

CoreMunicate Feedback

Improving Efficiency/Identifying Waste

There was a really strong response from staff to the CoreMunicate item on ways to improve efficiency and identify waste, with lots of excellent suggestions being put forward. A number of specific issues are being followed up directly with the areas that raised them but there were some recurring issues and common themes. This paper outlines those themes and explains the current position within the PSS.

Paperless Environment/Processes

There was considerable support for the concept of a paperless environment (or at least a more paperlight environment) and the wider introduction of paperless processes. The University has made some progress in this direction by moving traditionally paper-based processes online. For example, recently we have seen the introduction of an online Research Equipment booking process and a unified staff training catalogue and booking system and the delivery of the Sharepoint platform, starting with the roll-out of Team Areas for collaboration and document management and a website for authoring Research Data Management plans. Further paper to online developments are in the pipeline, including a new system to simplify the payment of fees and casuals; an online Human Resources (HR) approval form and the roll-out of document stores for HR and the Directorate for the Student Experience. The introduction of centralised printing for students has been very successful in reducing waste and extending this to staff will be considered in due course. Further associated projects, including improved training in the use of IT, are likely to emerge through the IT Services Transformation Project.

Internal Charging

Several respondents questioned whether internal charging for goods and services such as Estates or Media Services was an efficient use of resources. It was felt there was no consistency in the application of internal charging with some services being charged for, while others are not. The Director of Finance, Steve Mole, agrees that internal charging can sometimes create bureaucracy for little benefit. As a result, some internal charging such as fines for the non-usage of centrally booked rooms is no longer applied. But proposals are reviewed on their merit and internal charging will be used where there is a clear rationale. For example, it is planned to introduce internal charges for certain IT Services to raise awareness with customers of the cost of such services and to support the IT Transformation process.

Standardisation of processes

There were many excellent suggestions for processes that could be standardised. A couple of suggestions within the research arena are already underway – the requirement for hard-bound theses at the end of the Postgraduate Research (PGR) examination process has been removed and the administration of doctoral training award will be standardised. Work is already ongoing in a number of student administration areas highlighted e.g. Course Unit Selection (where a common deadline for Course Unit Selection has been agreed), and Attendance Monitoring and Timetabling. As well as the introduction of HR Shared Services (which is now showing strong performance against its Service Level Agreement Key Performance Indicators), progress is also being made on a

centralised purchasing hub. All PSS and Faculty purchasing should be centralised in one Procurement Hub by the end of 2014.

University Procurement/Value for Money

It was clear that many respondents believed that goods and services could be found cheaper outside the University-approved procurement system. In particular, the cost of booking travel through Egencia was raised. However, the Director of Finance has pointed out that procurement is about value for money, not just the cheapest price and there are a variety of factors which need to be taken into account when making a purchase – initial price, lifetime cost, sustainability, social responsibility and the University's policy of using local suppliers, whenever possible. The University is also a large organisation which needs to comply with strict EU and other rules on procurement. With Egencia, there are also a number of other benefits for the University:

- The University knows where staff are in case of emergency or other unforeseen circumstances;
- Advanced booking provides an opportunity to reduce costs,
- There is increased scope for discounts and special rates
- The ability to produce carbon reports on the impact of staff travel and its contribution to the University's carbon footprint.

Ideas under consideration

There were a number of excellent ideas for improving efficiency across the University and a number will be taken forward as potential projects. The University's Head of Environmental Sustainability, Emma Gardner will lead on a feasibility study on the introduction of a central store for supplies, thus potentially removing the need for individual units to order and store their own office supplies. Improving the management of meetings was also identified as a way of improving efficiency, so following on from the roll-out of training around the use of email, there will be investigation into how staff can be better supported in chairing and contributing to meetings. And during 2014/15, there will be a renewed focus on the range of sustainability actions that individuals can take to save energy and other resources.

What can you do?

There were a number of issues highlighted where individuals can take action to help improve efficiency and eliminate waste:

Emails: training on the use of email is currently being rolled out across the University. Better use of email will improve efficiency and save time. Please also ensure your email signature is horizontal across the page to reduce the size of emails.

Printing: think before printing out documents and print double-sided whenever possible.

Save electricity: switch off lights at the end of the day and only boil the water you need when using the kettle.

Working lunches: confirm attendance at events where lunch/refreshments are being provided and let the meeting organisers know if you don't require food or can no longer attend.

NB Packaged food waste, which is near its sell-by date is collected by a student action group twice a week and distributed to local charities.