

The benefits of a good start: Kings Oxford induction and e-Reception

Marcus Gray is the Site and Facilities manager at Kings Colleges in Oxford. Kings Colleges is a top chain of EFL and Academic schools in the UK and the US providing an exceptional experience to their students. Kings has integrated the Guided e-Learning system into their program and call it Classmate. They have some of the highest usage levels of any of our schools.

Kings has a broad online reception system. Students can access information, take care of routine administrative tasks such as letter requests, or book appointments to see staff members. Marcus introduces Classmate to new students when they arrive and is responsible for the online reception. We spoke with Marcus to try to find out more about online reception and his induction program.

BENEFITS

In Marcus's view the system benefits everyone: students and staff. "Typically students hit the reception desk at break times or lunch. Before Classmate we would be incredibly busy during those times. A compressed time period within which we can work with students means a lower level of service. Now, with Classmate e-Reception, students can submit their requests during free times and we can process them while they are in class. It allows us to spread the work over the day. There is less waiting, less rush, and greater satisfaction."

"In addition, the Classmate e-Reception reduces the load on reception staff for routine requests such as attendance checks or letters, and lets us focus on students with more complicated problems. Students feel we are more responsive and that it is easier to get help."

Marcus also points out that a paperless system makes administration faster and more reliable. "Paper gets lost. It gets filed incorrectly or thrown away by mistake. With a paperless system you simply press a button and it's there. It makes reception easier and faster with fewer mistakes."

"All of these mean that we can provide a better, more caring and more responsive service to our students."

BENEFITS

Marcus says he makes it a priority on the first day to make sure students get on the site. "The first day is very important. Students are keen and paying attention. I always try to get them online. Sometimes this isn't possible due to the size of the intake, but if it is, I do it. My second priority is to make sure that they know that they can ask me or other reception staff for help if they need it. After that, I tend to go over the information and reception functions, and then go through the academic options. We don't have time to do lessons, but I tell students that after they complete their placement tests, they can register their level on Classmate to start their personal study plan." Marcus reckons that he gets about 60% of the students logging in on the first day.

Asked whether it was easy or difficult to roll out, Marcus said, "It was fairly easy. We had to be a little firm initially telling students that things were now done online. To an individual student at the time it might have been less convenient to have to make a request on the computer when they were accustomed to asking at reception, but ultimately computers help us provide a better service to everyone. We gave students a sheet to explain how to access the system and offered personal help. 9 out of 10 were fine without extra help."



CONCLUSION

Kings Oxford has an excellent online learning system with high levels of academic and non-academic usage. We believe that their success, to a large extent, is thanks to Marcus giving students a good start. He is keenly aware that for students to get the most from Guided e-Learning:

1. The system has to work reliably
2. Students need to start using the system right away
3. Students have to know how to use Guided e-Learning, what they use it for, and how to get help

By putting the effort in up front, the whole school realises the benefits.

One important thing to point out is that Marcus believes he gets about 60% of his students logging in on the first day. Obviously the more the better, but in Guided e-Learning's experience a sustained effort pays off. Jon Vile, who handles implementations for Guided e-Learning says, "There seems to be a tipping point at schools when knowledge and usage of Guided e-Learning reach a level within the student population where it becomes part of the normal way to do things. It becomes general knowledge. That is when everyone really sees the benefits." Marcus acknowledges that he can't help everyone get on the site, but because he does whenever he can, he's reached the tipping point.

About Guided e-Learning

Guided e-Learning Ltd was founded in June 2006 and provides a privately branded internet-based learning service and school community for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools. We work with many of the top schools around the world. Clients include schools with the most British Council points of excellence, Language Travel Magazine Star award winners, and schools who have won English UK's prestigious ELTon award for innovation in teaching.

About Kings Colleges



Kings Colleges is a leading group of international colleges in the UK and US, and has been operating since 1957. Kings specialise in university preparation courses, which prepare students for the UK's leading universities. Kings also deliver some of the best English language training courses available to international students.

