



Service Desk Institute



## UK Higher Education Service Desk Benchmarking Report 2014

This report covers a wide range of service desk issues from technology and metrics, through to training and customer engagement. It also examines best practice adoption within the higher education sector and provides indicators for the increasing business alignment of the service desk.

Published March 2014

In partnership with

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# Declaration

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# Foreword

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This is the first time a comprehensive survey has been carried out on the IT service desk function in the UK Higher Education sector. Whilst the survey confirms some trends and evidences some long held beliefs, it also highlights some areas of concern which universities and colleges would do well to address in what is a key customer facing area.

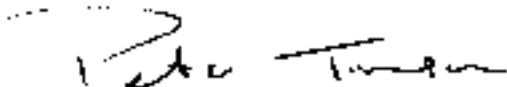
It is encouraging to see professional standards being adopted widely for service desk operation. This reflects the overall trend towards greater professionalisation of IT service departments in universities and colleges, which has seen more formal project management methods, change management, accurate recording of assets and their configuration all introduced in recent years. In addition, international standards for areas such as information security and business continuity are being applied. However, many institutions are at the start of the journey; the absence of formal service catalogues and service level agreements are key indicators that the processes that underpin those standards are some way from maturity. Whilst it is pleasing to note that there is clearly a significant investment being made in staff development, this investment is long overdue. Significantly firefighting was the activity that most respondents indicated that they had spent their time on in the past twelve months with service improvement seen as the top priority going forward. That improvement can only be delivered with continued investment – IT service departments will need to be able to demonstrate that ongoing funding is delivering a strong return on investment in terms of improved customer satisfaction (ultimately measured in the National Student Survey ratings) and greater efficiency.

The consumerisation of technology and the growth in the use of social media have both had significant impacts on the higher education sector. Students bring a plethora of devices with them to university; a recent survey noted that the average number of wireless devices students bring onto campus is three, with some bringing as many as seven. Students expect to be able to connect all their devices as seamlessly as if they were at home. The trend towards using your own device is not just restricted to students; staff now connect to university services through their smart phones, tablets and laptops. It is pleasing to note that higher education institutions have responded to the challenge with more than 90% providing full support to connect to institutional systems and services. Clearly such an increase in demand requires innovative solutions - many have provided self-help pages whilst others have employed students as first points of contact to ease the process when students first arrive at the institution. This is in marked contrast to the commercial sector where nearly 60% do not provide any support.

The use of social media is prevalent amongst the constituency of a higher education institution and so it is no surprise that Twitter and Facebook are used by many institutions to contact their service desk customers and vice versa. The challenge will be keeping up with the trends in social media; whilst both Facebook and Twitter have demonstrable longevity (in social media terms) other platforms will emerge, and decisions will need to be made as to whether or not to invest in establishing a presence on those platforms.

It is positive that the sector appears to recognise that the service desk is a key component in delivering the overall student experience, and institutions are looking to invest in developing both the staff and the processes that underpin the service desk operation. The diversity of the sector, in terms of the range of services offered, the spectrum of devices used and the demographics of the university body, will continue to present a challenge to service desks in our institutions. The implementation of standards will go some considerable way to delivering an efficient and effective service desk, which supports an ever increasing range of services. However, most institutions have only recently started down this road. In the coming years, as the processes that underpin standards are implemented, IT services should be in a position to highlight improvements and so demonstrate a strong return on the investment made.

This report is the result of a collaboration between Cherwell Software, the Service Desk Institute and UCISA. There were, of course, a number of individuals that worked on the project, producing and analysing the survey, drafting the report and carrying out interviews. I should like to thank Jennifer Carr, Emma Spear, Robert Beswick, Sally Bogg and Sue Fells for their contributions to this project.



Peter Tinson  
Executive Director  
UCISA

# Main Findings

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## Of UK higher education service desk professionals who participated in the study:

- 62% do not have formal, written SLAs with their customers.
- 12% publish a service catalogue.
- 4% provide full support for BYOD (including the device itself).
- 11% said their university has a specific BYOD policy in place for staff and students.
- 56% selected *supporting expectations* as their university's biggest challenge in regards to BYOD.
- 19% offer 24-hour support.
- 57% use Twitter to communicate with their customers.
- 14% of customers contact the service desk via instant chat.
- 50% of service desk managers said managing customer expectations is a big challenge.
- 76% selected *improving what we have* as a top service desk priority for the 2013-2014 academic year.
- 27% said their service desk spent most of its time *firefighting*.

## People

- 20% of respondents said their headcount would increase during the next 12 months compared to 32% of the wider industry.
- Help towards qualifications remains the most popular way to reward and recognise service desk staff.
- On average, the length of service for a service desk analyst in the higher education industry is 4.8 years.
- Only 7% of respondents carry out employee morale surveys specific to the service desk.

## Customer Focus

- Email and web surveys remain the most popular channel through which to survey customers.
- 76% of customers prefer to contact the service desk using the self-service web contact form route, which is typically a cheaper option than telephone or email.
- 37% of customers use social media channels to contact the service desk.

## **Key Challenges for 2014**

The top 3 challenges faced by Service Desk Managers are:

- 50% of respondents reported managing customer expectations.
- 35% of respondents reported an increasing business demand for services.
- 35% of respondents agreed that the ability to produce metrics and reports was in their top 3 list of challenges.

## **Metrics**

- 43% of respondents reported that their first contact resolution rate has increased during the past 12 months.
- Two thirds do not have formal written SLAs with their customers.
- First contact resolution is measured by 63% of respondents, compared to 78% of respondents in SDI's wider benchmarking survey.



# Introduction

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The UK Higher Education Service Desk Benchmarking Report 2014, the first of its kind in the UK, focuses specifically on IT service desks within the UK higher education (UKHE) sector.

There are roughly 140 higher education institutions in the UK with service desk professionals supporting the IT needs of more than 2.5 million students and 380,000 plus staff members. With increased tuition fees, a growing student population, more international students choosing to study in the UK and a student population born at the start of the internet era and the consumerisation of IT, this industry faces a number of tough challenges in regards to customer expectations, including IT support and services.



# Background and Methodology

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This report covers a wide range of service desk issues from technology and metrics, through to training and customer engagement. It also examines best practice adoption within the higher education sector and provides indicators for the increasing business alignment of the service desk.

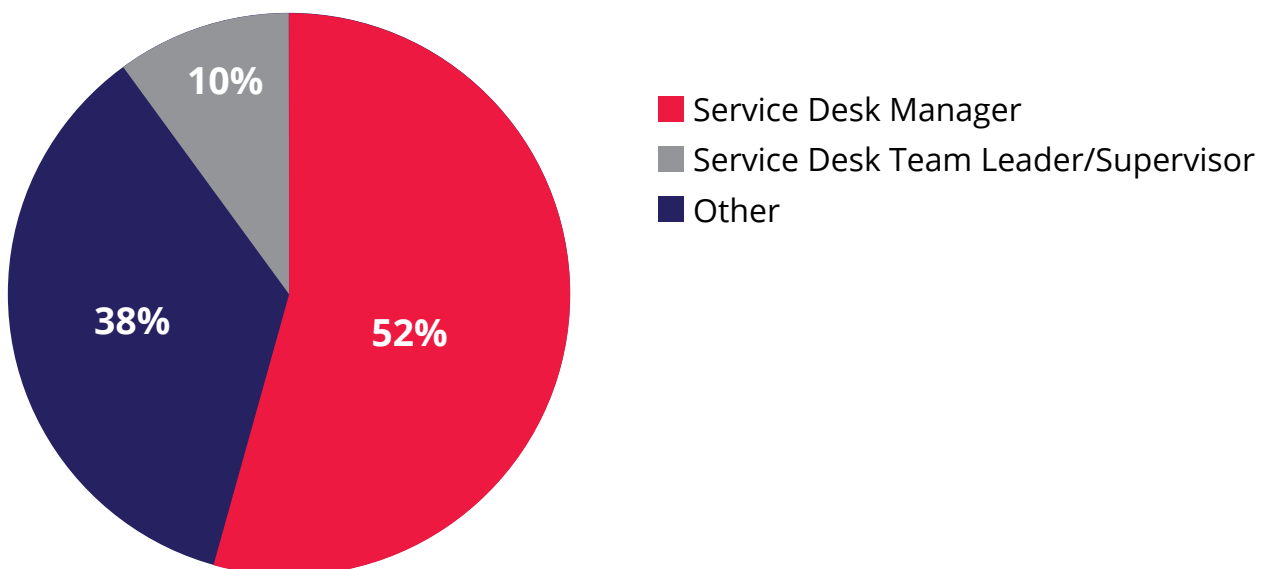
During October to December 2013, the service desk benchmarking survey was distributed to every university in the UK. The questions within the survey are largely based on SDI's wider industry bench marking survey, which is carried out every other year, along with questions specific to the higher education sector.

## 1.1 Profile of Respondents

This section reviews the demographics of our respondents, who were all from the UK higher education sector.

## 1.2 Job Title

More than 50% of respondents were Service Desk Managers, which is helpful as they have the greatest insight into and visibility of the issues and challenges faced by their service desks.



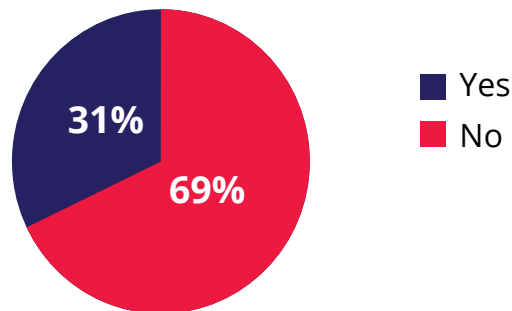
The *other* group of respondents mostly comprises Head of IT, Service Delivery Managers and Customer Service Managers.

### 1.3 Overall Support Provided

What are your opening hours/hours of service?

| Higher Education              |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Office hours 9am-5pm          | 37% |
| Extended office hours 8am-8pm | 35% |
| 24 hours                      | 19% |

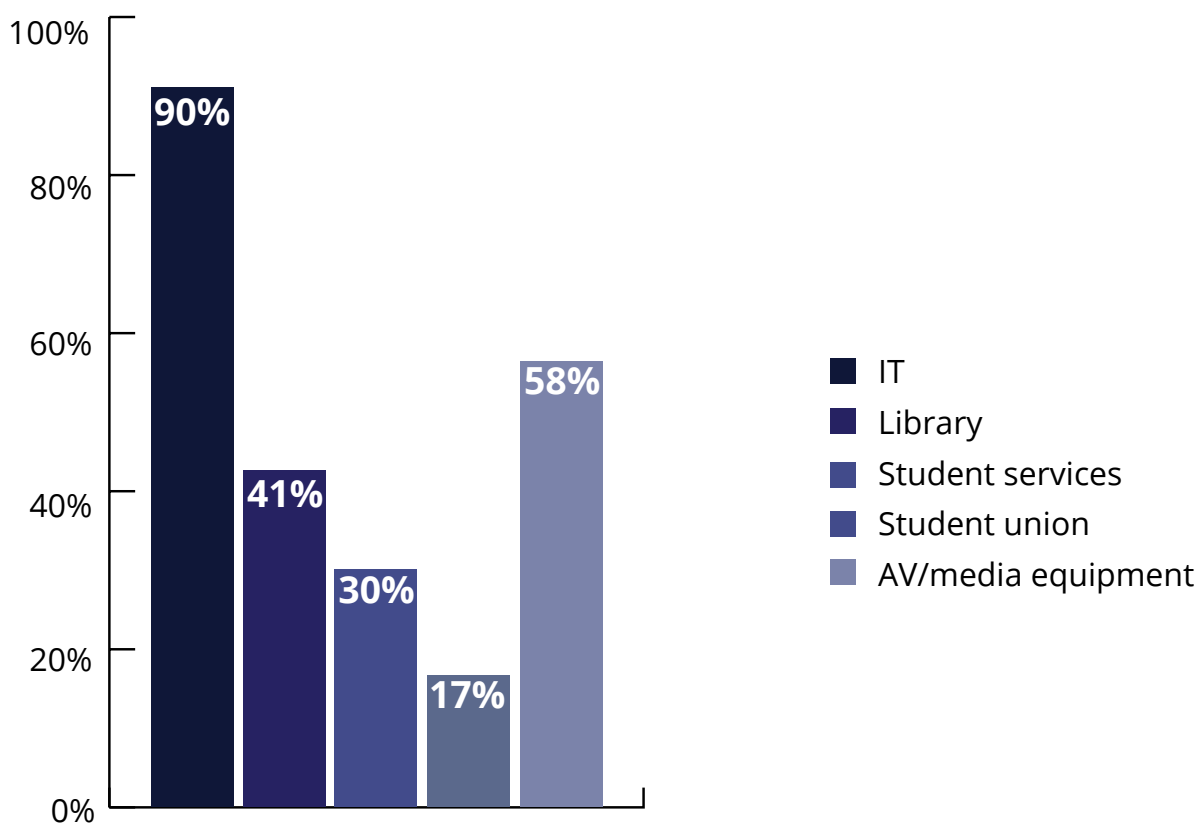
Do you provide on-call support?  
i.e. after hours.



Of those desks offering 24/7, how is it provided?

For those that provide 24/7 support, it is delivered by a third party (outsourced for out of business hours) or outsourced to NorMAN.

Which of the following does your service desk provide support for?



# Staffing

## 2.1 Service Desk Staffing

|  | Higher Education | Industry |
|--|------------------|----------|
| Average number of staff employed at a service desk   | 25               | 22       |
| Average number of customer facing staff i.e. first line with direct contact with customers | 7                | 13       |
| Average number of support staff (second and third line)                                    | 19               | 6        |
| Average number of management/supervisory staff   | 4                | 3        |

## 2.2 Headcount

63% of respondents stated they expected their headcount to remain the same in 2014 compared to just 50% in industry wide service desks.

20% said they anticipated their headcount will increase during the next year versus 32% industry wide.

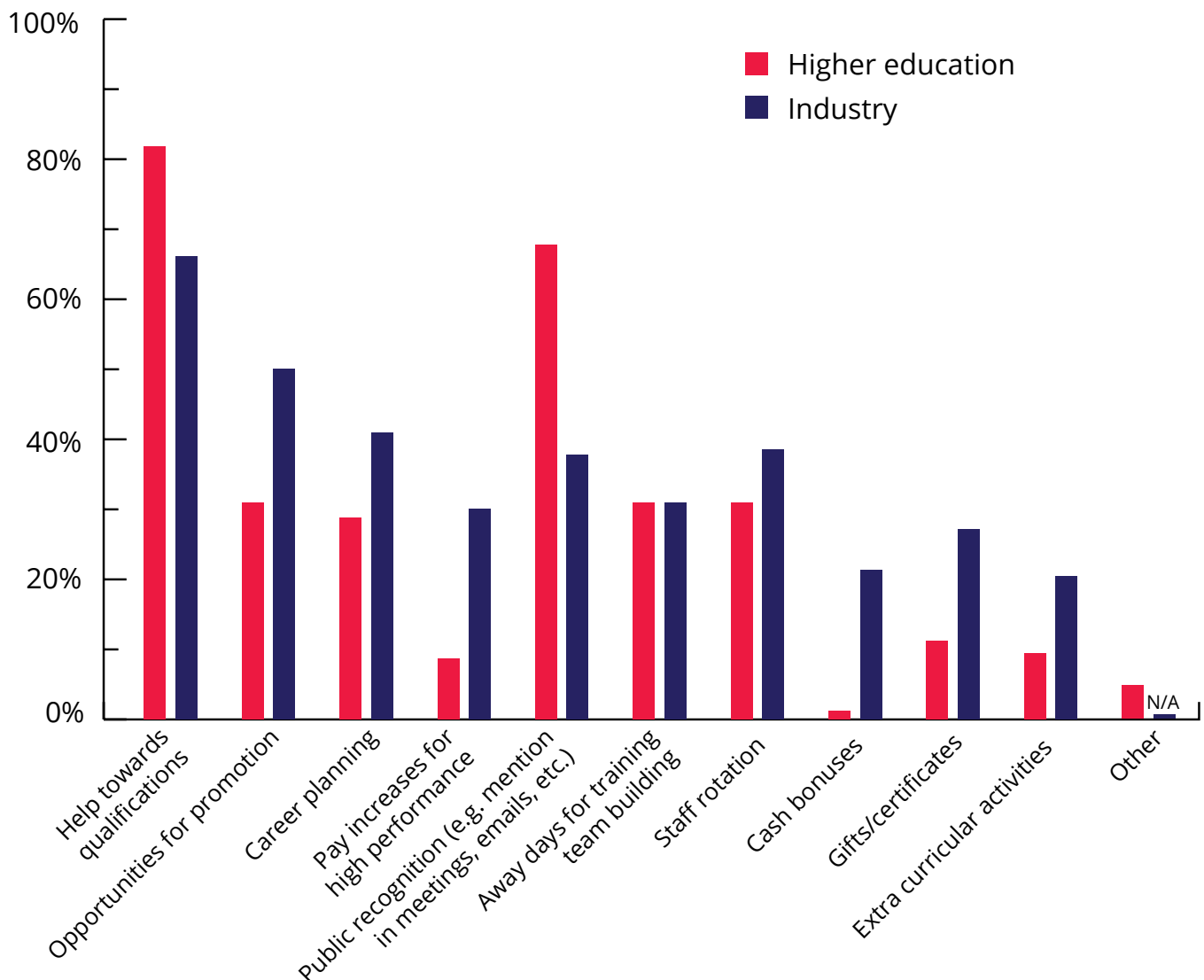
Only 12% indicated they anticipate staffing levels to be lower, whilst 4% confirmed they had no idea what would happen to their staffing levels, during the next 12 months.

If you compare this to the results from the wider industry benchmarking report, it would imply that the growth of service desk resources in the higher education sector is lower than the wider industry. 32% of respondents of the wider survey reported their headcount would increase during the next year.

# People

## 3.1 Staff Incentives

What incentives do you offer to your service desk staff (over and above your university's policy on reward and recognition)?



The table above shows that incentives are key in engaging service desk staff over and above standard policies on reward and recognition. The incentives are widely spread across a range of options with help towards qualifications and public recognition being the most popular, with the higher education sector surpassing the wider industry in using this cost effective method of recognition. This supports the theory that a *thank you* goes a very long way.

The spread of results across a number of areas indicate that HEs provide a variety of rewards and incentives ranging from public recognition in newsletters to help towards qualifications. It is encouraging that help towards qualifications, opportunities for promotion and career planning feature prominently in these results, particularly when compared to the service desk industry overall.

### 3.2 Staff Morale Surveys

*Do you carry out employee morale surveys that are specific to the service desk?*

|     | Higher education | Industry |
|-----|------------------|----------|
| No  | 85%              | 45%      |
| Yes | 7%               | 45%      |

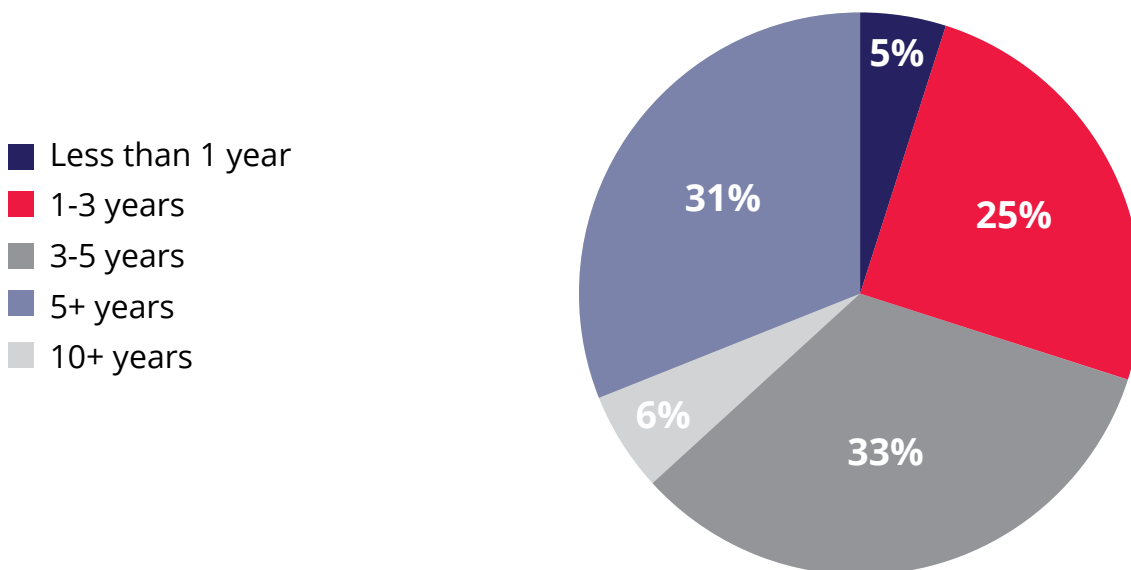
For those that carried out employee morale surveys specific to the service desk, there was a similar number of those taking place every 0-6 months, 6-12 months and 1-2 years.

However, it is disappointing that so few respondents carry out specific service desk employee morale survey as these provide excellent quantitative indicators of current satisfaction levels and enable a proactive response to address an issue. There is also a significant gap between the wider industry where 45% of respondents carry out service desk employee morale surveys versus just 7% of respondents from the higher education sector.

On a more positive note, employee morale information is gathered using a number of other methods with information being collected at staff meetings by 72% of respondents. 69% of respondents collected feedback on morale at performance reviews, whilst 64% relied on word of mouth as a way to gauge morale.

### 3.3 Staff Retention

*What is the average time in role of your service desk analysts?*



On average, the length of service for a service desk analyst is 4.8 years.

### 3.4 Induction Training

*What type of formal induction training, if any, is given to new service desk analysts?*

|                              | Higher Education | Industry |
|------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Service desk procedures      | 91%              | 75%      |
| Buddy training               | 82%              | N/A      |
| Product/service information  | 52%              | 62%      |
| Customer service training    | 45%              | 23%      |
| Telephone skills             | 37%              | 38%      |
| Computer skills              | 24%              | 11%      |
| Problem solving              | 18%              | N/A      |
| Written communication skills | 6%               | N/A      |
| Other                        | 6%               | N/A      |

It is encouraging to see the importance placed on service desk procedures training. Routinely followed process and procedures enable a service desk to deliver effective, efficient and consistent service and support. The importance placed on delivering great customer service is indicated by 45% of respondents who provide formal induction training in this area. This, coupled with the use of buddies and product/service information training, implies this sector has a well rounded approach to new staff induction.

# Qualifications

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*During the next 12 months, what qualifications are your staff due to take?*

|                                  | Higher Education | Industry |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| ITIL®                            | 48%              | 64%      |
| Technical (Microsoft of similar) | 46%              | 49%      |
| SDI certifications               | 27%              | 26%      |
| None                             | 20%              | 20%      |
| Other                            | 19%              | N/A      |

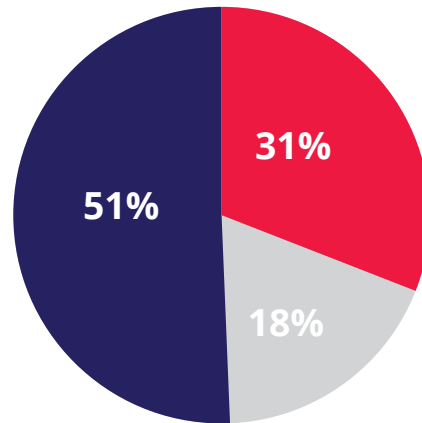
It is positive to see that that during the next 12 months, 80% of respondents will be enhancing their career with a formal qualification.

# Recruitment

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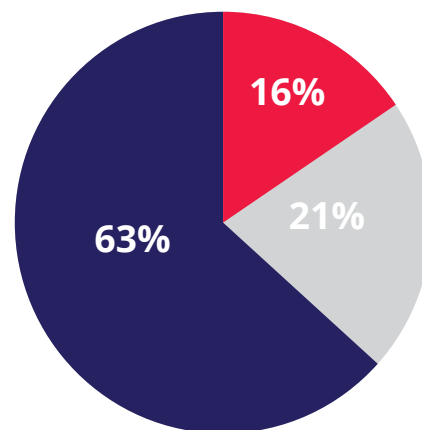
*Do you recruit students to work on the service desk?*

- Yes
- No
- Considering in the next 12 months



*Does your institution offer an internship programme, working as a staff member on the IT Service Desk?*

- Yes
- No
- Considering in the next 12 months





# Best Practice Standards

## 6.1 Adoption

*Which of the following best practice frameworks/standards have you adopted?*

|   | Higher Education | Industry |
|---|------------------|----------|
| We do not adhere to any external quality standard | 21%              | 12%      |
| ITIL®   | 70%              | 62%      |
| SDI Service Desk Certification/standards          | 19%              | 10%      |
| ISO/IEC20000                                      | 4%               | 5%       |
| ISO9000   | 3%               | 7%       |
| EFQM  | 1%               | 0%       |
| COBIT   | 1%               | 0%       |
| MOF   | 2%               | 3%       |
| COPC  | 1%               | 1%       |

It is not surprising that ITIL® dominates above all other frameworks, as it is widely seen as the best practice for the service desk. SDI's service desk standard is the second most popular framework for 1 in 5 higher education service desks.

## 6.2 Benchmarking

*How do you benchmark your service desk?*

|                             | Higher Education |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Against higher education    | 23%              |
| Against IT support industry | 14%              |
| No, we don't benchmark      | 34%              |
| Ourselves year-on-year      | 40%              |

It is a positive sign that just less than two-thirds of respondents carry out some form of benchmarking.

# Customer Satisfaction

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Key to the value a service desk delivers to the business is the perception of the service and support delivered and how happy customers are. This question uncovers the methods service desks employ to gauge levels of customer satisfaction.

*How do you measure customer satisfaction?*

|  | Higher Education | Industry |
|--|------------------|----------|
| Email/web based surveys                          | 73%              | 79%      |
| Call monitoring/listening in                     | 14%              | 25%      |
| Telephone surveys                                | 7%               | 11%      |
| Dedicated account/customer relationship managers | 33%              | 30%      |
| Social media monitoring                          | 30%              | N/A      |
| We do not measure customer satisfaction          | 8%               | 10%      |

This question allowed respondents the option to tick as many options as applied to their service desk. Almost a third of respondents use a combination of two or more of these options. This demonstrates that the service desk has a good understanding of its customers and is resourceful in how it collects data regarding satisfaction levels.

It is encouraging to see that fewer than 1 in 10 higher education service desks do not measure customer satisfaction, yet as a key indicator of service desk performance, we would like to see this percentage closer to zero.

## 7.1 Your Customers

Always of critical interest to any service desk is an insight into how other desks operate and how they try to improve customer satisfaction. This question looks at the different types of methods customers employ to contact the service desk.

*What methods do your customers employ to contact your service desk?*

|                                  | Higher Education | Industry |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| Telephone                        | 100%             | 96%      |
| Email                            | 96%              | 95%      |
| In person                        | 82%              | 62%      |
| Self-service (web contact forms) | 76%              | N/A      |
| Voicemail                        | 63%              | 44%      |
| Social media                     | 37%              | N/A      |
| Instant chat                     | 14%              | 24%      |
| Other                            | 12%              | N/A      |

Telephone and email are still the most popular methods for contacting the service desk, and this is the same for the wider SDI Service Desk Benchmarking Report, produced by SDI in October 2013. What's interesting is that 76% of customers prefer to contact the service desk using the web contact form route, which is a typically a more cost efficient option than telephone or email.

*Do you use any of the following social networking tools to communicate with your customers?*

|          | Higher Education |
|----------|------------------|
| Twitter  | 57%              |
| Facebook | 27%              |
| Blogs    | 20%              |
| LinkedIn | 1%               |
| None     | 29%              |

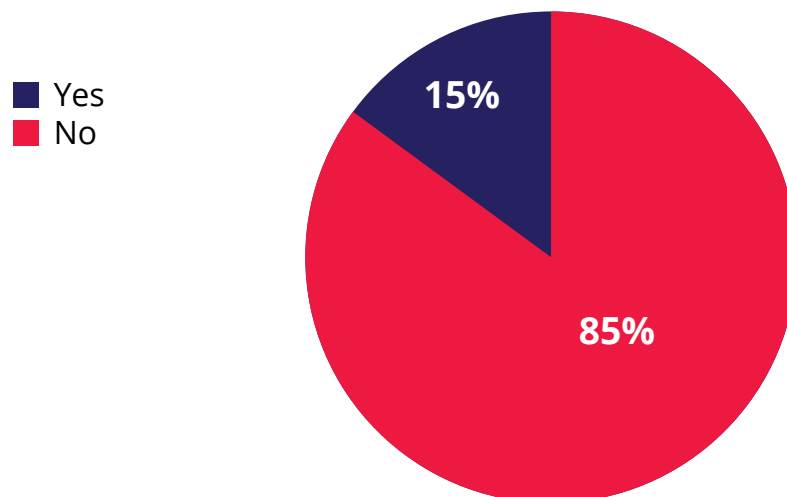
Using social media as a way for service desks to contact their customers and vice versa is on the rise and is reflective of the prevalence of social media in all areas of life today. What's interesting is that Facebook and Twitter are by far the most popular, and just more than a third of respondents use both. Social media is much more popular as a method of communication within the higher education sector, than the wider industry.

*Do you have formal, written SLAs with your customers?*

|                       | Higher Education | Industry |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------|
| We do not have SLAs   | 62%              | 37%      |
| Services for staff    | 42%              | N/A      |
| Services for students | 32%              | N/A      |

Given that SLAs represent the contract between the service desk and the end user, and are used to define a level of service, it is of concern that more than 62% of higher education service desks do not have a formal service level agreement in place. This is much higher than the generic cross industry benchmarking report produced by SDI in October 2013, where 63% of service desks had SLAs in place, indicating that the higher education sector is falling behind in this area.

*Do you have formal, written and agreed Operational Level Agreements (OLAs) with your support teams?*



Formal, written and agreed OLAs are the utopia for many service desks, so it is not surprising that just 15% of respondents have these in place.

*Does the organisation publish a Service Catalogue?*

|                                   | Higher Education |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| No                                | 48%              |
| Yes                               | 12%              |
| Planning to in the next 12 months | 40%              |

# Productivity Measures

It should be stressed that these figures should not be considered to equate to any kind of industry standard and are for interest only. Such standards can be misleading as they do not reflect variations on the industry and differences in types of support. Also, calculations are not always based upon equivalent criteria, which can make comparative analysis misleading.

|   | Higher Education do measure | Higher Education average | Wider industry do measure | Wider industry average |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| First contact resolution                | 63%                         | 61%                      | 78%                       | 61-70%                 |
| Call abandon rate                       | 58%                         | 12%                      | 77%                       | <5%                    |
| Average speed to answer                 | 77%                         | 60 (Seconds)             | 87%                       | 10-20 (Seconds)        |
| No of tickets logged on a monthly basis | 96%                         | 2741                     | 98%                       | 2001-4000              |

|   | HE Do measure | Industry Do measure |
|---|---------------|---------------------|
| Number of Incidents and service requests  | 95%           | 98%                 |
| Average cost per incident/service request | 5%            | 30%                 |

|   | HE Do measure |
|---|---------------|
| Number of outstanding incidents                   | 76%           |
| % of incidents/service requests closed within SLA | 40%           |
| Average resolution time by priority               | 31%           |
| Re-opened incident rate                           | 15%           |
| Average resolution time by incident category      | 16%           |

What is interesting here is that higher education first contact resolution is measured by 63% of respondents, compared to 78% of respondents in SDI's wider benchmarking survey, along with call abandon rate, measure by 58% of respondents versus 77% of respondents in the aforementioned wider survey. This could indicate that the higher education sector has found more sophisticated ways of measuring what is important to the business than their counterparts in the wider industry. More than a third of respondents reported that their first contact resolution has increased during the past 12 months. This, coupled with the induction training offered to new analysts, indicates that the service desks are becoming more skilled at dealing with customer enquiries at first point of contact.

*What is the average time taken for an analyst to respond to an email?*

| Higher Education            |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Less than an hour           | 35% |
| More than an hour           | 30% |
| More than four hours        | 12% |
| More than twenty four hours | 2%  |
| Don't measure               | 21% |

*If your incidents/service requests are via social media, what is the average time taken to respond to during service hours?*

| Higher Education            |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Less than an hour           | 12% |
| More than an hour           | 12% |
| More than four hours        | 4%  |
| More than twenty four hours | 3%  |
| Don't measure               | 61% |

*What is your first contact resolution rate?*

| Higher Education |     |
|------------------|-----|
| <10%             | 0%  |
| 11-25%           | 2%  |
| 26-50%           | 15% |
| 51-75%           | 44% |
| 76-100%          | 13% |
| Don't measure    | 26% |

*Has this increased or decreased in the past 12 months?*

| Higher Education                   |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Increased                          | 43% |
| Decreased                          | 4%  |
| Stayed the same                    | 29% |
| Not applicable as we don't measure | 24% |
| Don't know                         | 14% |

*Considering all of your tickets, on average, what percentage makes up incidents?*

| Higher Education |     |
|------------------|-----|
| <10%             | 6%  |
| 11-25%           | 13% |
| 26-50%           | 39% |
| 51-75%           | 20% |
| 76-100%          | 3%  |
| Don't know       | 19% |

# Tools and Technologies

---

*Which of the following service desk technologies/tools do you currently have access to?*

| Higher Education  |     |
|---|-----|
| Remote support  | 76% |
| Service desk can announce any known problems or service outages | 73% |
| FAQs for users  | 67% |
| Allow users to log their own tickets                            | 62% |
| Online self help  | 61% |
| Customers can reset passwords online                            | 59% |
| Allow user to check the status of their tickets                 | 55% |
| Knowledgebase   | 44% |
| Social media  | 37% |
| ACD system  | 27% |
| Live chat/chat link   | 15% |



# BYOD

*Which best describes your BYOD support?*

|  | Higher Education | Industry |
|--|------------------|----------|
| We provide full support to connect to University systems and services (ie wireless network, email) | 88%              | N/A      |
| We do not provide any support for BYOD   | 8%               | 58%      |
| We provide full support for BYOD (including the device itself)                                     | 4%               | N/A      |

One of the biggest recent trends in the service desk arena has been the explosion of BYOD. The higher education sector, however, is way ahead of its counterparts in the wider industry. Just 42% of respondents in SDI's wider benchmark report currently support BYOD compared to a significantly higher proportion of respondents 92% in the higher education benchmarking survey.

*Do you have a BYOD policy in place for staff and students?*

|  | Higher Education |
|--|------------------|
| Yes  | 11%              |
| No   | 35%              |
| No specific policy but covered by existing policies and procedures | 54%              |

*How do you share/communicate this policy with staff and students?*

There were a varied range of responses to this question, but the most popular response was through the university's website or service desk intranet pages.

*In regards to BYOD, what is your university's biggest challenge?*

| Higher Education  |     |
|---|-----|
| Support expectations  | 56% |
| Determine what we're going to support and what we're not going to support | 45% |
| Data/information security   | 37% |
| Work load increase  | 22% |
| Security  | 26% |
| Customers managing their devices appropriately                            | 24% |
| Wifi/bandwidth  | 18% |
| Culture change/shift  | 15% |
| Access to our network   | 11% |
| Device management   | 11% |
| Infrastructure  | 10% |
| Staff training  | 12% |
| Remote IT support systems   | 6%  |

The three biggest challenges faced by respondents are support expectations 56%, determining what will and won't be supported 45% and information security 37%. This demonstrates the importance for a BYOD policy that meets the needs of the customer and the security policies of the organisation.

# Challenges

*As a service desk manager, what is your biggest challenge?*

| Higher Education   |     |
|--|-----|
| Managing customer expectations                                       | 50% |
| Ability to easily produce metrics and reports                        | 35% |
| Increasing business demand for services                              | 35% |
| Lack of resources to help meet business expectations                 | 33% |
| Outdated service desk tool   | 33% |
| Lack of recognition/profile within the business                      | 25% |
| Ability to demonstrate the service desk's value to the business      | 17% |
| Budget constraints preventing service and/or technology improvements | 16% |
| Lack of career progression   | 10% |
| Ability to recruit and retain high quality staff                     | 8%  |

The top 3 challenges faced by service desk managers are managing customer expectations 50%, increasing business demand for services 35% and the ability to produce metrics and reports 35%. This demonstrates that the greatest challenges faced by the higher education sector are based around the growing demand to meet service requirements, which go hand in hand with managing user expectations and demonstrating (through the ability to produce metrics and reports) the value service desks provide to the business.

*During the last 12 months, our service desk has spent most of its time on ...*

|  | Most time | Least time |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Firefighting                                     | 27%       | 17%        |
| Implementing ITIL®                               | 20%       | 33%        |
| Speaking with customers & building relationships | 15%       | 4%         |
| Implementing new processes                       | 10%       | 9%         |
| Justifying existence                             | 10%       | 4%         |
| Helping customers with own devices               | 6%        | 17%        |

More than a quarter of respondents reported they spent the most time firefighting, which would imply they are working in a reactive state. By introducing formal SLAs, this figure could reduce significantly during the next 12 months.

*What are your top service desk priorities for 2013–2014 academic year?*

| Higher Education                     |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Improving what we have               | 76% |
| Increasing our value to the business | 61% |
| Increasing first time fix rates      | 59% |
| Managing changes within the business | 53% |
| Reducing inbound calls/emails        | 40% |
| Supporting more devices (BYOD)       | 40% |
| Restructuring of support model       | 36% |
| Consolidating services               | 30% |
| Investing in a new ITSM tool         | 26% |
| Cost reduction                       | 13% |

This question allowed respondents to tick as many options that applied. It looks like 2014 will be a challenging year for the higher education sector as it aims to increase value to the business (a trend across the whole industry), improving what they have and increasing first time fix rates.

More than three quarters of higher education service desks see improvement as their biggest challenge in the current academic year. Continual service improvement is high on the list for the majority of service desks and particularly so for this sector.

# Conclusion

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This benchmarking report is the first of its kind in the UK to focus specifically on IT service desks within the UK higher education sector. There are no direct comparisons on which to make conclusions about industry trends, but where possible, the results of this survey have been compared to the results of SDI's wider industry service desk benchmarking survey.

Running through this report is a thread that service desks are still getting to grips with managing customer expectations, whilst meeting the needs of the business. The report has also highlighted that service desks in this sector still have some way to go in understanding employee morale and engagement.

There is however lots of optimism. The UK higher education sector is way ahead of its peers in the wider industry in using social media as communication channel, which would fit with the profile of its customers. A very high percentage of customers also prefer to contact the service desk using the self-service web contact form route, which is typically a cheaper option than telephone or email.

Those that took part in this survey also report to have a good understanding of the challenges they will face during the next academic year. The biggest challenges are around continual service improvement and meeting the increasing demands of the business, which are high on the agenda for every service desk across all industries.

Overall, this report demonstrates the higher education sector excels in some areas compared to the wider industry and has some catching up to do in others.

# About Cherwell Software

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Cherwell Software builds Cherwell Service Management® (CSM) – the award-winning IT Service Management software – as well as extraordinary customer relationships.

Recognised by global analyst companies, CSM is an affordable, easy to use, and flexible ITSM platform you'll never outgrow.

Founded by some of the industry's most notable leaders, Cherwell Software began with simple goals: to make helpdesk software we'd want to use and to do business honestly, putting customers first.

Cherwell Software is one of the fastest growing IT service management software providers with corporate headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO, USA; EMEA headquarters in Wootton Bassett, UK; and a global network of expert partners.

For more information, please visit [www.cherwellsoftware.co.uk](http://www.cherwellsoftware.co.uk)



# About UCISA

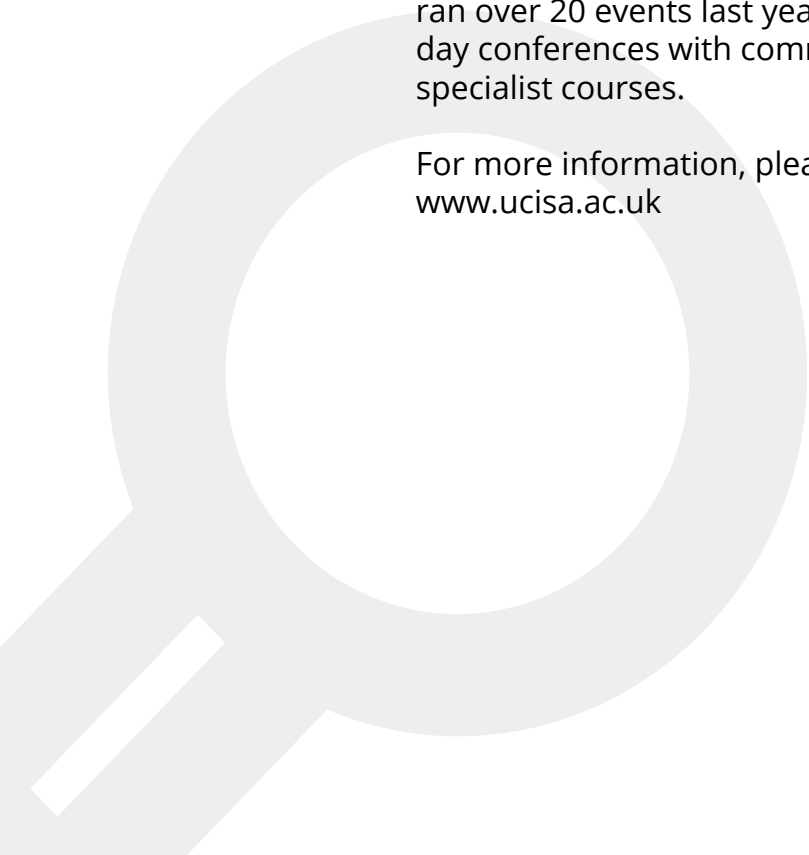
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UCISA, the Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association, is the membership organisation representing those responsible for delivering information management systems and technology services in universities, colleges and other institutions. UCISA membership is institutional and has almost 100 per cent coverage within the higher education sector.

UCISA represents the higher education IT community on working parties and steering groups. We also respond to consultations and provide advice and guidance to our members on the impact of new legislation. UCISA has over 100 corporate members in addition to our membership from the higher education sector and so we are uniquely placed to be able to represent the interests of both the sector and the companies that supply it.

UCISA promotes best practice in the sector through publications, events and awards. We ran over 20 events last year ranging from multi-day conferences with commercial exhibitions to specialist courses.

For more information, please visit [www.ucisa.ac.uk](http://www.ucisa.ac.uk)



# About SDI

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Founded in 1988, the Service Desk Institute (SDI) is the leading authority on service desk and IT support related issues, providing specialist information and research about the technologies, tools and trends of the industry. It is Europe's only support network for IT service desk professionals, and its 800 organisation members span numerous industries.

Acting as an independent adviser, SDI captures and disseminates creative and innovative ideas for tomorrow's service desk and support operation. SDI sets the best practice standards for the IT support industry and is the conduit for delivering knowledge and career enhancing skills to the professional community, through membership, training, conferences, events and industry awards. It also offers the opportunity for international recognition of the support centre operation through its globally recognised Service Desk Certification audit programme.

For more information, please visit [www.servicedeskintstitute.com](http://www.servicedeskintstitute.com)





# Interviews

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Benjamin Eidam  
IT Help Desk Team Leader  
University of Exeter

*The University of Exeter, a member of the Russell Group, is one of the fastest-rising, fastest-growing universities in the UK. It was **The Sunday Times** University of the Year 2012/13 and is within the top one per cent of universities in the world, according to the **Times Higher Education** international rankings. Its students, 18,500 of them, are among the most satisfied in the UK. It has consistently been in the National Student Survey Top Ten every year since its launch.*

Q: Does your University have a BYOD policy? How do you manage customer expectations around BYOD? Do you provide loan laptops/tablets? Does your University have a specific BYOD policy (or is it covered by other policies/procedures)?

A: No, the University of Exeter does not have a specific BYOD policy. This may be covered within other policies or procedures, but I'm not aware of this.

A few years ago, we considered purchasing software to help students with their own devices in regards to security and connecting to the University's student halls network, but we decided this would be a large project requiring significant investment. We therefore decided to outsource to a third party called Cable Com, which now manages all of this for us.

We used to have a fleet of laptops that could be loaned out to student from our student facing counter, but we have replaced this with a netbook service that runs from all of our site libraries and can only be used onsite. We are putting significant investment into raising awareness for this facility. In the past few years, we've also built a few new building, which has brought a significant rise to the number of PCs available for students to use on campus.

In regards to BYOD support, we run a free laptop connect service five days per week during the afternoons. We also offer walk-in clinics on Tuesdays and Thursdays and follow-up clinics on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Students come in with a variety of issues, and we try our best to help them, but we don't provide hardware support because we're not covered by insurance. For staff, we support all PCs bought for staff, but we do not support their own personal devices. We'll set-up their email on their own device, connect them to core services and trouble-shoot any problem, but we do not provide hardware support.

Q: Do you use social media to engage with your customers? Do you respond to users reporting service issues via social media or do you use it more as a push mechanism? Do you monitor social media to see what your customers are talking about? If you are using social media, are you measuring/monitoring its usefulness? Is it a successful mechanism for engaging with users?

A: Yes, we use social media. We have a Twitter account. In fact, the University has 50 different Twitter accounts. The IT Service Desk Twitter account doesn't yet have a lot of followers, but we have some important followers (other departments with the university) who retweet our tweets so that greatly helps us.

We absolutely use social media to both share information with our followers and to respond to questions or queries. We respond to everyone who contacts us. When we proactively share information, we try to keep it light and informal but to remain professional at all time. At the moment, no, we do have any social media measurement capabilities in place.

Also, about nine months ago, we created our own YouTube channel, putting videos up that we hope are useful to students. These videos are about everything - connecting to WiFi, cache and cookie issues, removing nasty stuff, setting-up email on your own device.

Q: Do you have standard training plans for your service desk team? Do you require any specific qualifications that are listed on the job description? Do you struggle to get budget for training staff on the desk? How do you reward staff? Are you doing anything additional to what is provided by the University in terms of staff reward and recognition?

A: We do try to get everyone on the service desk through ITIL® foundation training. Budget is spread thin across the IT department. We have a big team with more than 100 staff members, so our budget doesn't always spread as far as we'd like. But, ITIL® for a service desk is very important so getting everyone ITIL® trained is key.

One great thing the University has is a staff rewards scheme where you can get nominated for doing exceptional work in a particular area. In regards to the service desk itself, we definitely do reward our team members but mostly through soft recognition.

Q: Has your institution sought to invest in the service desk as part of an institution wide move to improve the student experience? Or, has the current economic climate meant you are having to deliver additional services without additional resources?

A: I would say that investment in the service desk is not something high on the radar for the University. When I started in 2007, the IT service desk could not reset passwords. Gradually, over time, we built up a rapport and started to improve our skills and technical capabilities to the point that now, in some areas, we're further ahead than other service desks.

We are at a point now, where we are maxed-out. If we need to take on more, the service desk will suffer, and staff morale will suffer, so managing the balance between what we can do and what we're being asked to do is difficult. Keeping our staff happy is key so we make sure people know that at 5pm, they can all head off home unless of course, there's a significant issue that needs to be immediately resolved. We have a great team of laid-back, relaxed individuals who can switch off at the end of the day.

Q: How do you manage customer expectation? Do you have a customer charter? Do you have formal SLAs and OLAs in place? Do you publicise timescales for standard service requests, and if so, where do you publish them?

A: We do have SLAs with students and staff. At the end of every call, the customer gets an email inviting them to rate the service they received. We also have a monthly email that goes out asking customers to rate the service they received from the whole of IT that month. From that, we produce a monthly report, and I go through all the negative feedback and try to iron out where the customer thought the issue was. Nine times out of 10, the customer got the wrong end of stick, sort of speak.

They were either too busy to get back to us, misunderstood something, etc. But we do do this as it's incredibly important. Yes, we do have timelines for standard service requests, and they are published to the University's senior management team.

Q: Are you doing anything on your service desk that you think is radically different and exciting that you have a burning desire to tell everyone about?

A: During the past nine months, we have put significant work into developing our knowledge base and self-service itself. Also, we've merged our IT Helpdesk Counter (face-to-face) with the Student Information Desk, which is the main desk that deals with student enquiries. It's been a little tricky to get things ironed out, and we're not there yet, but we're getting there. It's been a challenge, but it's been really good as everyone has been cross trained so they can answer all questions, supporting students with all enquiries.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you're facing right now, and how are you tackling this?

A: The biggest challenge is meeting the demand being placed upon the service. During term time, we're constantly fighting to keep on top of the call queue. That's the big challenge. We also have a resource challenge as some staff members have left, and we are yet to secure permanent replacements.

Q: What is the biggest opportunity you're facing?

A: The new Student Support Team that's come from the merger of the Student Information Desk and the IT Helpdesk Counter. Also, continuing to improve the service desk as a whole, improving our fix rate on 1<sup>st</sup> line, and increasing our technical knowledge.

Sarah Kennedy  
Customer Services Manager  
University of York

Jackie Knowles  
Head of Customer Services  
University of York

*The University of York opened in 1963 with just 230 students. Now, York has become one of the top ten universities in the UK for teaching and research – and is first in the UK and seventh in the world in the **Times Higher Education** world rankings of universities less than 50 years old. The university encompasses more than 30 academic departments and research centres, and its student body has expanded to nearly 16,000.*

Q: Does your University have a BYOD policy? How do you manage customer expectations around BYOD? Do you provide loan laptops/tablets? Does your University have a specific BYOD policy in place (or is it covered by other policies/procedures)?

A: Yes, we have a support policy, which encompasses guidance around BYOD. It outlines what support we will provide depending on what services you're looking to access and the devices you have. It's available on our website <http://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/policy/policies/supportpolicy/>

Our preference is for the University to use the managed desktop that we provide, but we appreciate that people want to use their own device, and they want a level of support - hence the development of the policy. It also came about because the pace of technology change is rapid, and we found that we were being asked to support devices we were not familiar with.

In summary, our policy is that we will provide support for any device used to access University services. However, we are unable to extend this support to hardware issues on personal devices. We offer a referral service to a local repair to provide a repair service. Machines are dropped off at our IT Support Office, and the company will collect it, diagnose the problem and give customers a quote to carry out the work.

We don't currently provide loan laptops although we do have a project scheduled for the next academic year to look at this.

Q: Do you use social media to engage with customers? Do you respond to customers reporting service issues via social media or do you use it more a push mechanism? Do you monitor social media to see what customers are talking about? Are you actively looking out for feedback or do you only respond to direct contact? If you are using social media, are you measuring/monitoring its usefulness? Is it a successful mechanism for engaging with users?

A: We've seen a growth in traffic and followers on our social media channels since they were established in 2009 (Twitter), 2011 (Facebook) and 2012 (YouTube). We haven't formally tracked numbers and response rates as yet but are looking at tools that will allow us to assess engagement. We know that follower numbers rise when we are retweeted and when there is something significant happening (e.g. network outages). Our social media strategy has evolved over time - our initial intention was to use them for news,

information and status updates, but we have accepted that customers expect us to engage and to answer queries on those channels, so we've adopted it as a more interactive communication channel.

You can access the University of York IT Services' social media channels here:

[www.facebook.com/UoYITServices](http://www.facebook.com/UoYITServices)

[www.twitter.com/UoYITServices](http://www.twitter.com/UoYITServices)

[www.youtube.com/user/YorkInformation?feature=g-hist](http://www.youtube.com/user/YorkInformation?feature=g-hist).

Q: Do you have standard training plans? Do you require any specific qualifications that are listed on the job description? Do you struggle to get budget for training staff on the desk? What internal training do you provide? How do you reward staff? Are you doing anything additional to what is provided by the University in terms of staff reward and recognition?

A: Yes, we have standard training in place for the service desk team. Each member of the team attends Certified Training for Windows 7 and ITIL® training. Also, we use Google Apps for education, so we encourage everyone to complete the online Google certification.

In addition, we have a programme of weekly training slots, which are designed to help the team keep their knowledge up-to-date. Other members of the IT department attend these sessions to provide information or hands on training on hot topics, new services, existing services, etc.

Every new member of staff within our Directorate goes through an initial induction program, which is quite comprehensive and looks at broader knowledge. This is partnered with the technical skills required to fulfil the role, and a series of objectives are agreed for each member of staff. As an organisation, we are wholly committed to ongoing staff development, training, and our performance review framework underpins this. Luckily, we have not experienced any difficulties in securing budgets for staff training as it is considered a priority.

With regards to rewarding staff, the University offers a rewarding excellence program. Our Directorate was awarded at the University level for good practices in the development and roll out of Google Apps across the university. In addition, we have a range of internal reward schemes for the Directorate; a good ideas/service improvement scheme and an excellence in customer service nomination scheme.

Q: Has your institution sought to invest in the service desk as part of an institution wide move to improve the student experience? Or, has the current economic climate meant you are having to deliver additional services without additional resources?

A: We are not being asked to deliver more without additional resource. Although our current budgets are static, we have a certain degree of flexibility and choice in regards to what we choose to invest in.

Investing in improving the student experience is a University wide theme, this is in line with priorities seen across our whole sector. Fundamentally, we strive to provide an excellent customer experience across everything we do.

Q: How do you manage customer expectation? Do you have a customer charter? Do you have formal SLAs and OLAs in place? Do you publicise timescales for standard service request, and if so, where do you publish them?

A: We have a draft customer charter that is currently out to consultation with various user groups and our staff. To increase our transparency, we're also going to be publicising a range of agreed customer facing service standards and measuring our performance against them. This is an emerging area for us and aligns with our objective to gain the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. Our performance measures will be made available on our website in due course.

Q: Are you doing anything on your service desk that you think is radically different and exciting that you have a burning desire to tell everyone about?

A: I wouldn't say that we're doing anything radical, but we do things that people might find interesting. The support policy is one, as well as the partnership with a local repair company. We're just about to launch a software downloads page where staff and students can download software, which we have an appropriate licence for. This will be a much better experience from the current method, which is either mapping a drive, which hosts the files, or borrowing a disk. We also use Bomgar™ for remote support, giving support to all our users anywhere in the world.

You can find the University of York/Bomgar case study here:

<http://www.bomgar.com/customers/university-of-york>

Q: What is the biggest challenge you're facing right now, and how are you tackling this?

A: BYOD and the range of devices and the support people expect. Having the support policy helps us to manage expectations - what we can and can't do for a user. We've gone from the majority of people using our managed desktop to now, students having 2-3 devices and wanting to do everything on these devices. We're increasingly seeing customers with the full range of kit - a laptop, tablet and a Smart Phone, and they all come to us and want help. Keeping your skills up to date is very important - familiarity with the range of devices and operating systems is key to meeting those expectations.

We have bought a number of devices for staff to use in order to become familiar with the typical range we see at the service desk. We encourage everyone to take home these devices and to use them so their knowledge and skills increase. In summer 2013, we offered staff a tailored Mac OS training session, which was every useful. We hope to do more of these types of learning sessions for our team.

Q: What is the biggest opportunity you're facing?

A: We're often the first people the students engage with when they arrive on campus. This presents a great opportunity for us to make a great impression for the entire university. If we give them great service and point them in the right direction, this helps to build our reputation and embody the University's culture of excellence. This is a lot of responsibility, but it's a great opportunity.

Sharon Mossman  
Service Process Manager  
Newcastle University

*Newcastle University is a Russell Group University and ranked in the top 20 of UK universities in **The Sunday Times** 2013 University Guide. It has a world-class reputation for research excellence and is spearheading three major societal challenges that have a significant impact on global society: Ageing and Health, Sustainability, and Social Renewal. Its student body is comprised of more than 20,000 students from more than 120 countries.*

Q: Does your University have a BYOD policy? How do you manage customer expectations around BYOD? Do you provide loan laptops/tablets? Does your University have a specific BYOD policy in place (or is it covered by other policies/procedures)?

A: We do not have a policy as such, but we do offer a lot of support for BYOD. We allow students and staff to get email and to log into the university network using their own devices, and we have a dedicated team for student support who proactively do the work to get people on the network and into their email accounts.

What we do is talk about what we can and will do for them. We talk about accessing your university email account, and we will get you on to the network to access Blackboard and the timetabling service, or search for a Cluster PC, that sort of thing. We talk about what we want to help them to have access to do to support their studies and to keep in touch with their families.

The University runs a hardware loan scheme aimed at staff and students with accessibility issues. Our library also has loan laptops for staff and students to use in the libraries. We also have PC clusters in several rooms across the university, something in the region of 1,200 PCs available for students to use. You just need a university computing account to use them.

Q: Do you use social media to engage with customers? Do you respond to users reporting service issues via Social Media or do you use it more a push mechanism? Do you monitor social media to see what customers are talking about? Are you actively looking out for feedback or do you only respond to direct contact? If you are using social media are you measuring/monitoring its usefulness? Is it a successful mechanism for engaging with users?

A: Yes, we do use social media, but we're fairly new to it. We use Twitter and Facebook, and the University has several accounts for different purposes. We started within the past year, and we didn't launch it with a big splash. We gently introduced it into our normal communications activities. We have 'follow us on Facebook and Twitter' dotted around our email signatures and on our webpages.

We view social media as two-way communication channel, but we don't really get people reporting many IT problems via social media. We've had the odd feedback comment or customer complaint, and we treat that the same way we would if we received that comment via email or the phone.

We do use social media to talk about system issues, but we mostly aim for awareness of the facilities and things our customers can do, for example, we have one Facebook account that talks about Top Tips you may not have known about. We don't have any measurements in place yet. This hasn't yet been discussed.

Q: Do you have standard training plans? Do you require any specific qualifications that are listed in the job description? Do you struggle to get budget for training staff on the desk? What internal training do you provide? How do you reward staff? Are you doing anything additional to what is provided by the University in terms of staff reward and recognition?

A: We do lots of things. Within our service desk job descriptions, Service Desk Analyst and ITIL® training are listed as desirable but not essential. We do aim to put everyone through SDI analyst training at the earliest opportunity. If we have enough staff, we'll ask the SDI to come in and run an in-house course for us. We want everyone to have the same experience. ITIL® Foundation training is desirable, and again, we would aim to have an in-house facilitated course.

We do not struggle to get budget for staff training, but we try to use our budget in the most cost effective way possible. We are well looked after in regards to a training budget.

We also have our own internal induction program that covers the way we do things, such as the processes we use.

In regards to staff recognition and rewards, we don't offer anything separate from what the University offers, which is a number of recognition schemes. At the end of 2012, our service desk team won a 'spotlight award' for recognition of how we managed an influx of work with a reduced number of staff. Everyone was working extra hard and longer hours, keeping each other going through a difficult period while recruiting and training new staff. We also do more simple things like bringing in biscuits and cakes. A 'thank you' goes a long way, and we do go out of our way to do that. We also have a staff newsletter in which we mention people's achievements and projects we've worked on.

Q: Has your institution sought to invest in the service desk as part of an institution wide move to improve the student experience? Or, has the current economic climate meant you are having to deliver additional services without additional resources?

A: We are receiving investment, but this is not directly linked to improving the student experience. We have a planned series of service desk improvements that started 18 months ago and relate to an overall Service Improvement programme. This followed a review of all IT service provision across the University. During the past year, there's been quite a significant investment in the service desk. The initial trigger was to improve the whole customer experience, improving the overall service and the quality and efficiency of the service. This doesn't only relate to the student experience, but to all of our customers.

Q: How do you manage customer expectation? Do you have a customer charter? Do you have formal SLAs and OLAs in place? Do you publicise timescales for standard service requests, and if so, where do you publish them?

A: No, we don't have SLAs or OLAs in place. We are looking to put in place a system for how we handle service level targets rather than an agreement, and we hope that this will happen during the next 3-6 months; and it will be published.



We do have a service catalogue, defined largely on what the services are, and this is published on our webpages. It does not talk about the service level target for each service.

Q: Are you doing anything on your service desk that you think is radically different and exciting that you have a burning desire to tell everyone about?

A: We've just implemented a new telephone system, with a call recording system, with the aim to improve the quality of our calls with customers. This is really a quality control/feedback process. We score the calls and work with analysts to improve and use the feedback as a learning opportunity. The aim is to introduce a degree of consistency - we don't want the calls to seem staged, and we certainly don't want calls to be scripted, but engaging and handled in a predictable way. I'm really looking forward to the outcome and the benefit, which we should see in about 6-12 months.

Also, we've had an external consultant come in and do a workshop with the team on vision and values. We want the team to take ownership of their direction and what they stand for. This is a completely new way of thinking for our team, and the aim is to give them a sense of ownership, direction, what their focus is, what their team principles are. We started this work just over 12 months ago, and we will have a follow up in April 2014.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you're facing right now, and how are you tackling this?

A: We recently had a review of IT across the University. We have a central IT department with some diverged IT teams spread out across the University. We were not unified, so the recommendation was for all teams to group together into one IT central service. This was agreed by the University senior management, and this year, we see this come to fruition. For the service desk, this means we need to work out what the impact of this will be in terms of additional work load and how do we then scale the team to not only 'keep the lights on' but grow the service we provide to fit the university's needs. This will be a big challenge.

Q: What is the biggest opportunity you're facing?

A: Really, it's the same thing. To do things well, maintain, and improve our reputation with these people. We have good relationships with our IT colleagues and our customers, but it's a big change, and we need to carefully manage it to ensure we can manage the transition well.

Aline Hayes  
Director of Information Systems & Technology  
Sheffield Hallam University

*Sheffield Hallam University is a modern university with a long and proud history, dating from the opening of two 19th century schools, which would later become the foundations for Sheffield Polytechnic. It is one of the UK's most progressive and innovative universities and one of the UK's leading universities for e-learning. The university has invested heavily in new technology, and it is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning, e-learning and employability.*

It is clear from the overall findings of this survey that the top priorities for higher education service desks relate to quality improvement and making services better for our users/ customers. Given the pressures on university budgets and the primacy of the quality of the student experience, there is no better time than now to set a baseline and to really start measuring future improvement.

I'd offer a possible note of caution when reading these results in that the different support structures seen in universities – centralised, federated, etc. – are not reflected in this survey. The significant differences that exist between support models in HE service desks may be masked in these figures, for example, around first time fix rates and numbers of staff.

The first surprising finding of this survey is that the 24 hour support model hasn't been more widely adopted. Many students and staff are now expecting to be able to work on a 24 hour basis, and it is a service that many customers would welcome and find invaluable. It is a slight concern that more university service desks appear to be thinking about support through social media than about offering 24 hour support. Social Media may indeed heighten expectations around responsiveness that goes beyond 'office hours'.

The length of service of a service desk analyst is almost five years; an interesting find. This indicates that the service desk is perceived as a place where staff members are happy to stay and make their career. It is good to see that the service desk isn't necessarily seen as merely the springboard or stepping stone into other areas of IT, or worse, as the 'Cinderella of IT'. Managers in the IT service must continue to make support a rich, fulfilling role rather than simply call handling to ensure staff are skilled and motivated so they want to stay.

The results around customer contact preferences show that the self-service web contact form is a very popular way to communicate with HE service desks. However, social media and instant chat channels are set to grow in this sector, which is particularly valuable as they will reduce transaction costs overall. Good training in both these methods of support will be essential and the key to their success. There will be some challenges here in terms both of responsiveness (mentioned above) and also the sheer range of possible channels that our customers might choose to use however.

Highlighted in this survey is the obvious challenge around SLAs. One barrier to improving the number of service desks reporting the use of SLAs is getting customers to buy into SLAs and changing their expectations around support. Not clearly communicating what the service does is likely to be the reason why firefighting comes through as a big issue for this sector. Encouraging users to become 'good customers' is the utopia, and while SLAs can sometimes feel like a barrier to good service, universities might consider a slightly softer approach to this

by creating a set of customer-focused Service Standards that set out what the service desk does, what customers can expect and clear measures of service performance. It is essential however to ensure that the performance measures attached to these standards are things that customers actually care about!

Other interesting findings in this survey worth noting include:

It is perhaps no surprise that the number of service desks carrying out staff morale surveys is low as many universities tend to carry out organisation-wide employee satisfaction surveys. More local and informal methods may be being used by university service desk managers to determine morale therefore.

Recruiting students can prove to be really valuable both for the student and for IT so it is surprising that more universities aren't capitalising on this great opportunity.

A high number of respondents say they are adhering to best practices, for example 70% following the ITIL® framework. Are they just paying lip service? Some of the other figures suggest so, for example, the number who do not seemingly routinely measure performance or the significant number who have no published IT services catalogue.

8% of respondents are not measuring customer satisfaction, and a number of other general measures of performance aren't done at all at the moment. This is worrying as it provides service desk teams with only a limited view from which to judge the effectiveness of future improvements.

BYOD support is possibly lower than might be thought from the survey results. Really, it depends on how this is defined, as BYOD support might be anything from accepting that such devices are being used on campus through to a fully supported service for any and all devices connecting to university IT services on demand. It's a growing area of demand though, and it is clear that the service needs to think about how it will respond to a fast-growing range of possibilities and heightened expectations.

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*The University of Liverpool, a Russell Group institution, is one of the great centres of research, knowledge and innovation. It is rated in the world's top 1%, and its pioneering reputation attracts students, experts and partners from around the world. More than 36,000 students participate in 400+ programmes in 54 subject areas, and the university's 177,000 alumni live in 192 countries.*

The overall results of this survey demonstrate a growing number of HE service desks committed to providing quality IT service and support. However, it is clear that many are still in the early stages of maturity and are growing the skills of both their staff and their service desks against industry frameworks and standards.

Given the current level of maturity, it isn't surprising that 21% of respondents do not adhere to a best practice standard; however, it is encouraging that the ITIL® framework is being adopted more frequently in HE service desks than in the wider industry service desks.

With the changing HE model, service desk customers now expect more and demand more as IT grows in importance to staff and students. As the value of IT service desks is now being recognised, the need for more formal service desk structures is rising and more services are becoming centrally supported. In turn, the capability of staff is growing, and this is evident through respondents' commitment to training and qualifications.

That 76% of respondents are concerned about 'improving what we have' is likely to be due to a lack of investment historically; however, in order to improve customer support service maturity, university IT service desks need to start thinking about improving for tomorrow by looking 3-5 years ahead. An example of this is shown by the high incidence of firefighting. This is a key issue in the sector suggesting that HE service desks need to have a focus on addressing underlying problems as well as immediate incidents.

While it is a surprise that just 19% of HE service desks are offering 24 hour support, and 37% are still delivering a 9-5 service, it is encouraging that the HE sector is significantly ahead of the wider industry in supporting BYOD. Given the high level of demand outside of working hours from university departments and their students, extended support hours is likely to grow, and BYOD support providing assistance with connectivity should become 100%.

It is clear from the results that HE service desks understand the importance of providing multiple channels for supporting customers and that single channel communication is not an option any more. HE customers demand the same types of communication channels as in their consumer lives so the adoption of web forms and instant chat is growing.

The number of service desks operating without SLAs is somewhat alarming. Running a service desk without SLAs in place is like driving with a blacked out windscreen! You only have the rear-view mirror to guide you. It is very likely that the 32% with SLAs for services to students will grow significantly during the next few years.

In summary, the growth of IT use and expectations in education means that HE IT service quality and the competence of service desk have to grow to match it. There needs to be an appropriate level of investment to provide the appropriate level of service to support the growth in technology as it comes on board.

I see the following as the top service desk priorities to address for the 2014 academic year:

- Maturity of process
- Increasing customer demand
- Increasing complexity of technology
- Increased use of IT in HE



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