

CASE STUDY

Novacroft and the University of Bradford

Clearing Call Centre

40% of University of Bradford (UoB) clearing applications are made through a call centre, with the remainder made through an online portal.

When the UoB was unable to operate a clearing call centre in-house, due to Covid-19, it was decided to outsource this work, via a tender process.

Discover how Novacroft worked with the University of Bradford to answer every need, giving expert, supportive and reassuring customer experience.



A logical, methodical, organised approach from Novacroft meant that everyone was on the same page from day one.

- Ros Kershaw - CRM, Content and Rich Media Manager

Delivering an essential service to students receiving exam results

To support students on the path to their future career, and effectively manage a 10 day clearing call period in August, from A-level results day, the University of Bradford (UoB) chose to outsource their clearing call centre

CHALLENGE

The objective of clearing (an opportunity for unplaced students to find a university place in the same academic year) for the University of Bradford (UoB) is to ensure the provision of an **effective, efficient customer-focused service, answering student enquiries and converting students into UoB applicants.**

During the **10 day clearing call period around A-level results day** in August, **people want the reassurance of a phone call** when trying to secure their university place.

To achieve their objectives, when **operating a call centre in-house at the UoB proved challenging (due to Covid-19, and the level of recruitment and training required)** the UoB **decided to outsource** their clearing call centre **via a tender process**, following successful business casing. The contract was awarded to Novacroft.

In recent years, students have had a **very different experience of clearing, due to Covid-19 and the grading methods** used for qualifications. **Uncertainty and anxiety due to the pandemic were high going into clearing 2021** - the first year in which Novacroft worked with the UoB on clearing, and a year when general **student enquiries were up 200% year on year.**

The UoB considered the risks of outsourcing, which included critical **loss of business**, due to clearing being strictly time bound (as many applicants are placed in the first few days of clearing) and the inability to make up business later.

An assured service of **excellent quality was required, with UoB and Novacroft systems connecting seamlessly.**

SOLUTION

A **consultative approach** to outsourcing the clearing call centre was taken, with focus on ensuring that the outsourced service fitted with existing UoB clearing processes. Together, the UoB and Novacroft **identified success criteria and de-risked the project, using scenario planning** to plan for specific situations. Governance was key, with milestones implemented and adhered to. A clear **avatar for people working on the project** was created - e.g. employing university graduates enabled the UoB to have the **empathetic, emotionally intelligent advisors** that were required.

RESULTS

Working closely in partnership, the UoB and Novacroft have achieved:

- **A turnaround in confidence and shift in mindset** from UoB management, who had some initial concerns about outsourcing, due to previous negative experience
- **A higher % conversion with fewer clearing calls in 2021** (self apply increased by 4% that year)
- **Freed up time and resource** for the UoB team to look at furthering their digital transformation.
- **Continuity of reporting** for the UoB via collaborative MI processes

The **UoB was keen to continue to work with Novacroft** in 2022 to fulfil their clearing call centre requirement.

"Outsourcing clearing calls has been well perceived amongst the senior management team. There is confidence in the quality of the service. It's been a positive experience."
- Claire Pryke, Associate Director Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions, University of Bradford

2022 brought different challenges. Over time, student aspirations have changed, and competition for places has grown. In 2022, this manifested in a higher volume of calls, but a mismatch between supply and

demand for courses. **Empathy** was more important than ever when speaking to students and **helping them navigate their future.**

- A total of **4,983 prospective UoB students were helped** over the phone in 2021 and 2022

BENEFITS FOR STUDENTS

Those going through the clearing process have had access to **experienced advisors** who **understand** what it's like to be in their position, due to the strong project avatar. Calls have been answered swiftly, with **expertise and empathy, making a potentially tense time as stress-free as possible.**

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

After several unprecedented clearing years, Novacroft continues to work closely with the UoB, which is now focusing on preparing for 2023, with emphasis on understanding the changing student landscape.

FIND OUT HOW YOUR UNIVERSITY COULD BENEFIT

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