

Bywords for success

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Emerging as a viable long-term institution post COVID requires some fundamental re-examination, with or without recourse to the Higher Education Restructuring Regime. This crisis-fuelled environment is though one in which change and improvement can be rapidly achieved, especially when great minds collaborate.

Define, refine and streamline are post COVID bywords for success. DAC Beachcroft's Education team puts forward some suggestions about how institutions can make themselves more robust, by examining customer appeal, service delivery and asset enhancement.

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THE CUSTOMER

Students are astute customers; they can very quickly see when their interests are not paramount. It is more important than ever to develop a customer focused, collaborative relationship.

1. *Challenge propositions.* What makes you distinctive? Is it sustainable to offer a full range of courses? How can appeal be extended to other countries and other age cohorts to satisfy life-long learning requirements? Are Student Protection Plan up to date? Don't wait, predict and plan.
2. *Strengthen defences.* The OfS places great importance on the prospectus and the Competition & Markets Authority also requires that prospective students are provided with "clear, intelligible, unambiguous and timely information; and that the information was given. Are systems up to scrutiny? If not, institutions make themselves very vulnerable to claims of mis-selling and subsequent legal action.
3. *Identify other litigation vulnerabilities.* Codes of Conduct need to be re-examined to identify risk of discrimination charges, in all its many forms.
4. *Improve Well-Being Programmes.* This element will be higher on the selection agenda and the quality of care a more valuable attribute. New ways of learning and living post COVID, add to the existing, well documented, pressures for twenty first century students.

DELIVERY

The regular 18-21 year old student cohort will come to accept a formalised blended approach to learning of actual and virtual. For different age groups, the campus experience is not so important. New customers can be reached with new technology, which also supports improved contact with existing student bases, as well as academic and administrative personnel.

5. *Accelerate digital transformation plans.* The right technology can help institutions scale, evolve and streamline, delivering information in a different way and helping personalise the learning experience. It is an investment, but it will sharpen competitive edge, especially when quality and accessibility of on-line learning will become a new performance indicator. Artificial Intelligence, Mixed and Virtual Reality may be IT facilitated, but digital transformation is not IT driven. It needs a top down , organisation wide approach, with full consideration of all the legal risks. Changing the mode of delivery does not inherently carry with it any worsening of standards or value, but it needs careful management to ensure that the potential is met.

ASSETS

Success in the post COVID world requires reaching out to the business community - international, national and /or local.

6. *Consider extending your partnerships.* Whether this takes the form of joint ventures or sponsorships, alliances or mergers with other institutions, the contract is critical to the success of the association to maximise your investment and protect your assets
7. *Nurture new talent.* Are you taking full advantage of available support that will enhance your research and development reputation? The Government has introduced the Global Talent, Innovator and Start-up visas that benefit HE providers. The former enables leading researchers who bring with them lucrative research grants or the possibility of

them. And the Innovator and Start-up visas allow HE providers to nurture innovative and scalable new business ventures set up by international entrepreneurs.

8. *Effective estate management.* The selling of assets, land for example, may be a means of supporting pension funds . Bear in mind that, as exempt charities, trustees do have specific duties, with considerations around land transactions. Carefully explore the legal risks before making decisions.

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