

PGR Admissions Process Rapid Improvement Workshop

University of Sussex
23-25th July 2012



Workshop participants

Improvement champion

Sharon Jones	Academic Registrar
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Improvement team

Vicky Lebeau	Director of Doctoral Studies (English)
Barbara Crossouard	Director of Doctoral Studies (Education PhD)
Jon Mitchell	Director of Doctoral Studies (Global)
George Kemenes	Director of Doctoral Studies (LifeSci)
Bernard Weiss	Head of School (Eng & Info)
Jayne Paulin	REC (Global)
Richard Chambers	REC (MPS)
Pascale Fanning-Tichborne	REC (ESW)
Robert Evans	Head of Admissions
Paul Roberts	Deputy Head of the Doctoral School
Philip Baker	Postgraduate Admissions
Michele Saliman	ITS
Terry O'Donnell	Recruitment

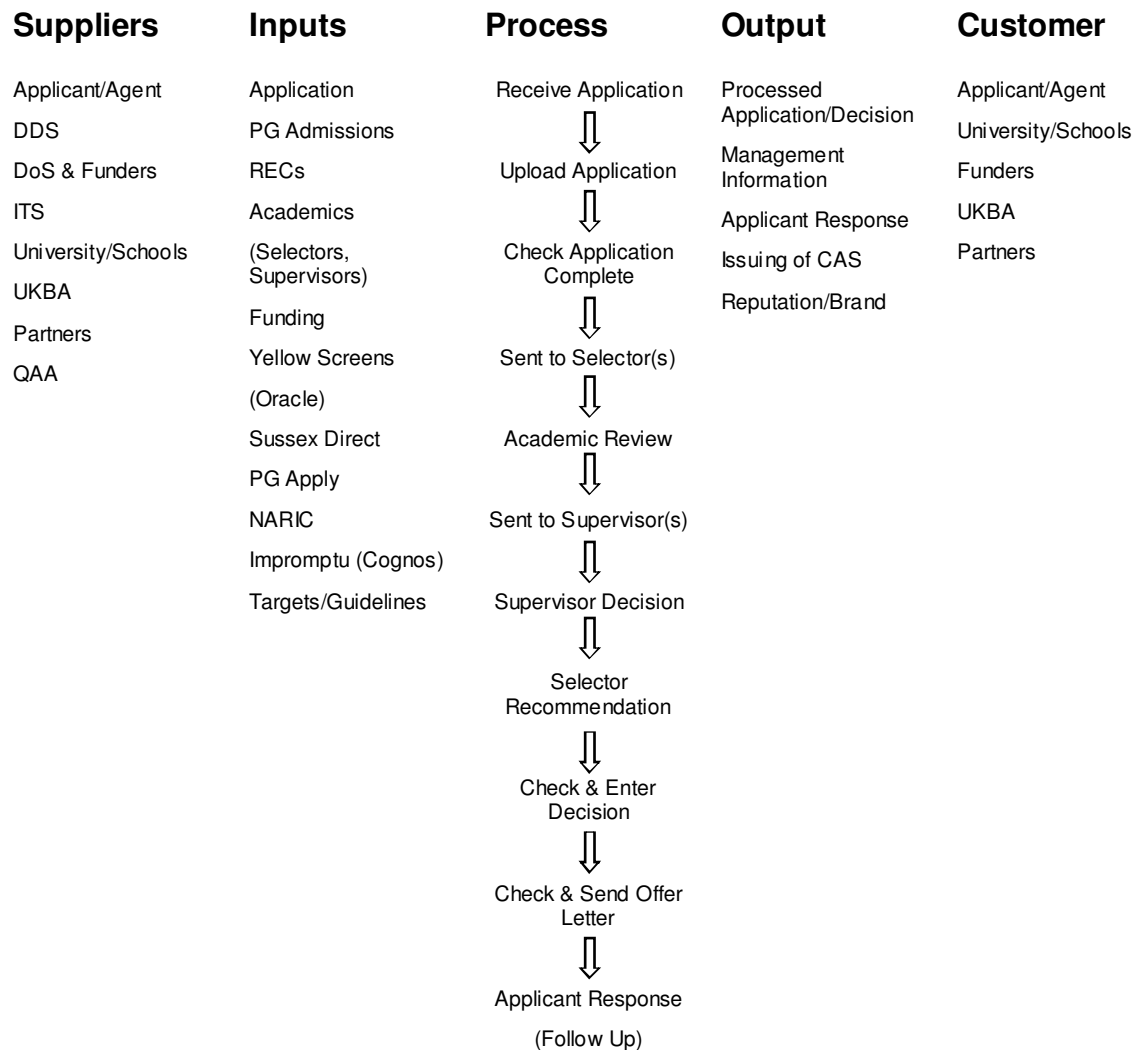
Improvement facilitator

Dave Jones	Processfix Limited
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Scope process

Processes that require improvement are often lengthy and complicated sequences of activities. To overcome this complexity processes are often broken down into distinct improvement projects with a defined scope for each.

SIPOC (an acronym for Suppliers, Inputs, Process, Outputs and Customers) provides a mechanism to scope each improvement project and provides a point of reference for the improvement team to judge what is and what isn't within scope throughout the project life cycle.



Identify needs

As a fundamental principle process improvement projects should lead to benefits accruing to the customers of the process. But to do this effectively it is vital to understand what all the different aspects of the end product customers consider important.

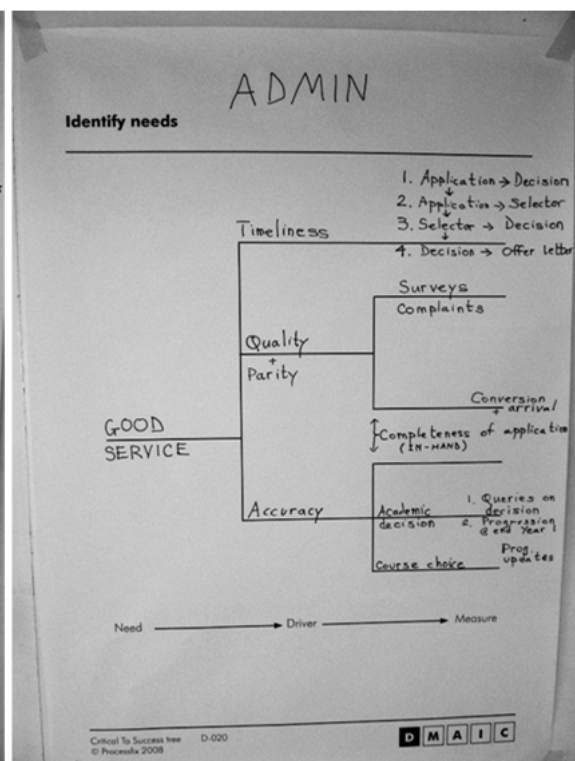
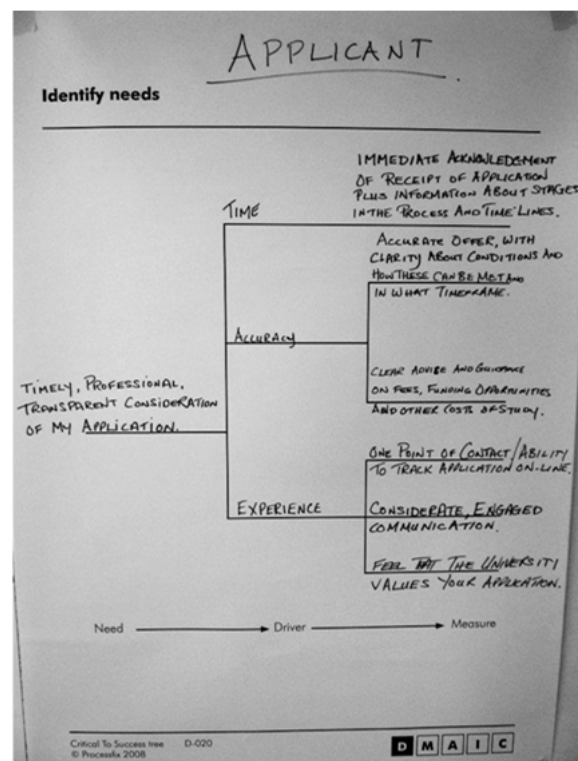
To gather this information Voice of the Customer techniques are often used. However customers often express their needs in broad terms often using subjective statements such as "I want a good service". These loose statements are not sufficient to specifically define the customers need.

The Critical To Success (CTS) tree provides a way to break down these subjective statements into something more meaningful to a point where specific and measurable attributes can be identified.

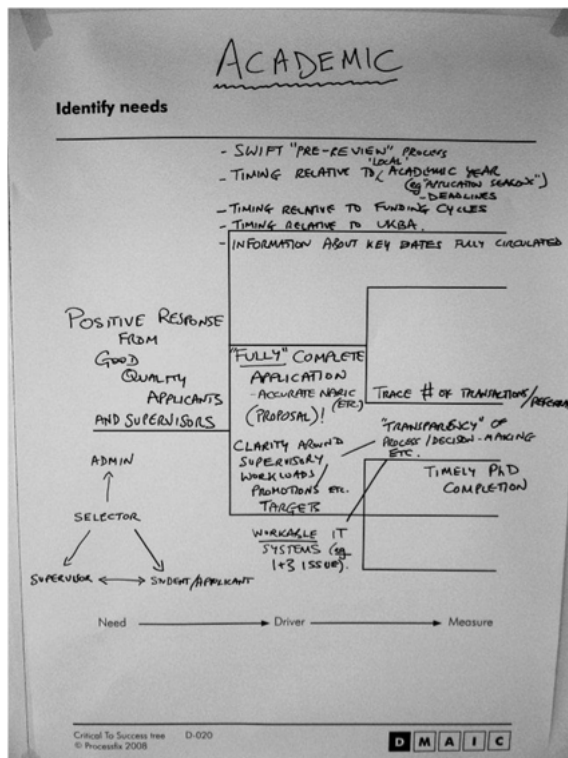
It is only by understanding all of the attributes, and after attaining information about the level of performance expected for each attribute, that overall performance of the process (from the customers perspective) can be truly understood.

Applicants

Admissions Office



Academics



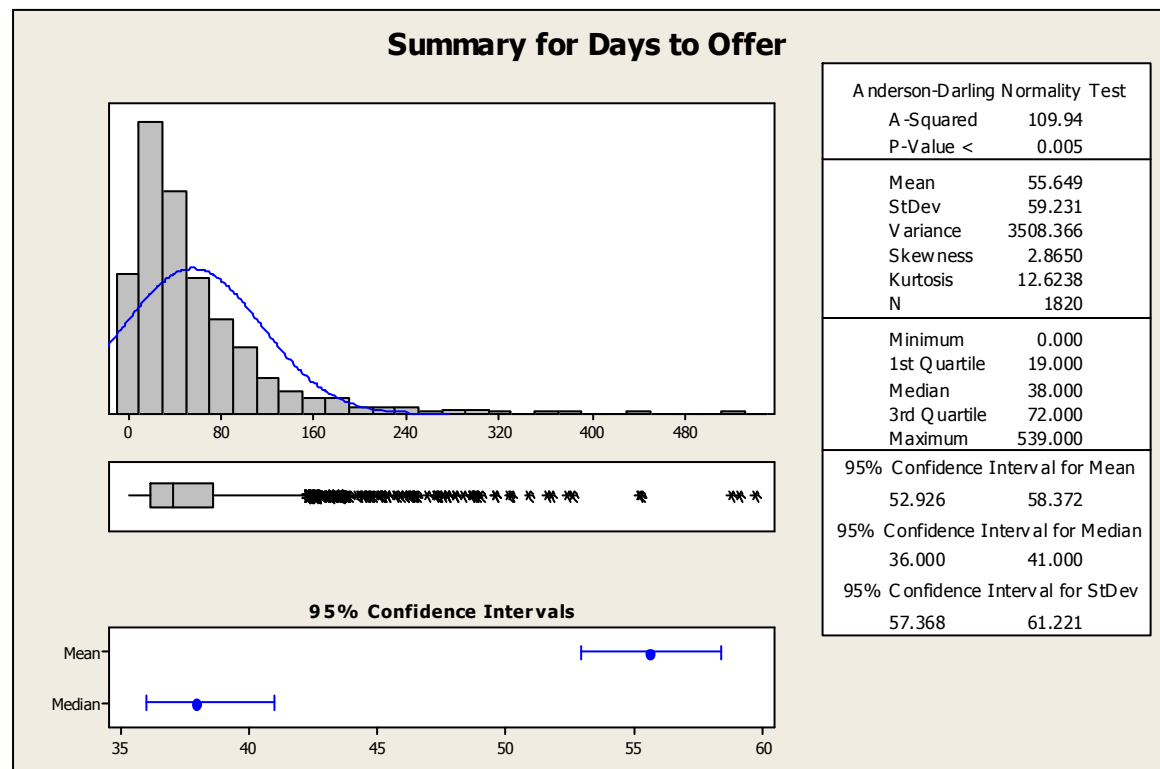
Visualise variation

Analysing data provides a great insight into the behaviour of a process, but when there is lots of it, a picture or graph is almost always easier to analyse than a set of numbers.

The histogram helps to identify whether the process is capable of meeting the customer's expectation and provides an insight in to its behaviour. It provides a means to visualise the frequency (occurrence) of data, and thereby allows interpretation of process performance by analysing the centre of the data, the amount of variation and any significant changes or anomalies.

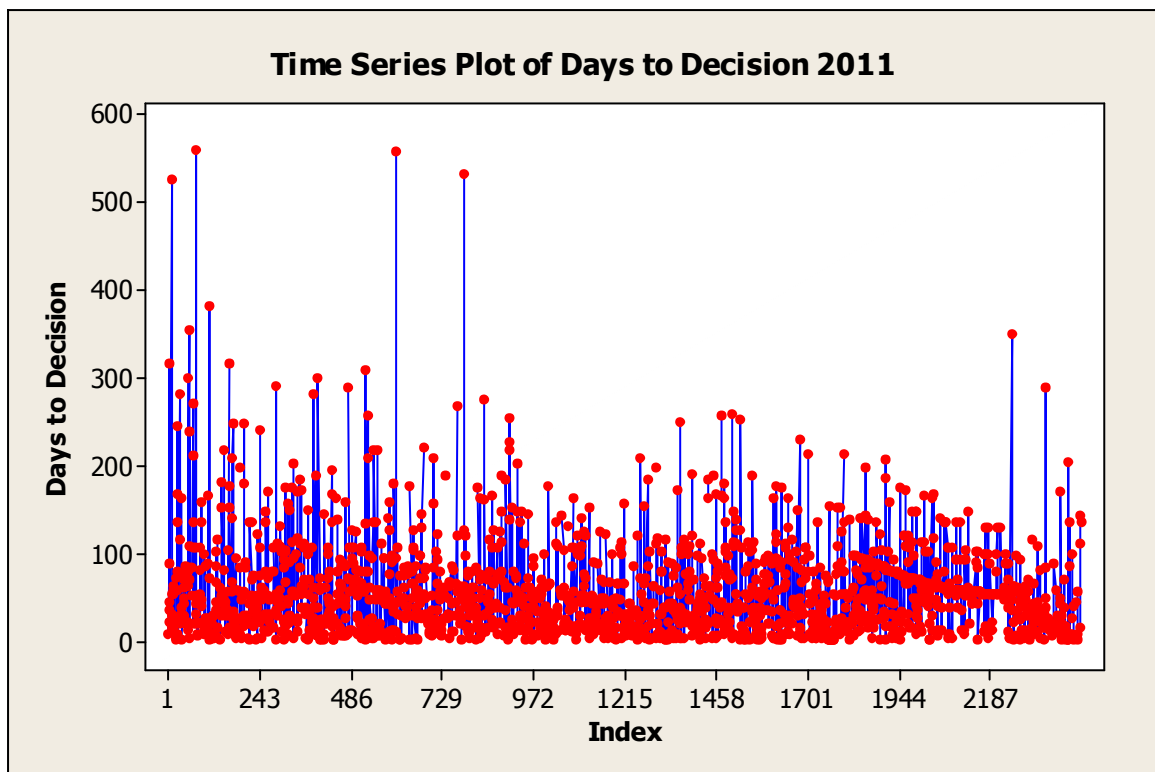
The shape of the histogram gives further insight in to the behaviour of the process. Shapes that differ from the normal distribution (a symmetrical bell curve) indicate that other factors may be affecting the process, such as imposed targets, constraints or perhaps secondary processes.

55 calendar days average time from Application Received to Offer being sent to the Applicant



Data taken from 2010, 2011 and 2012 applications.

Time Series Plot of the Number of Days from Application to Decision Date:



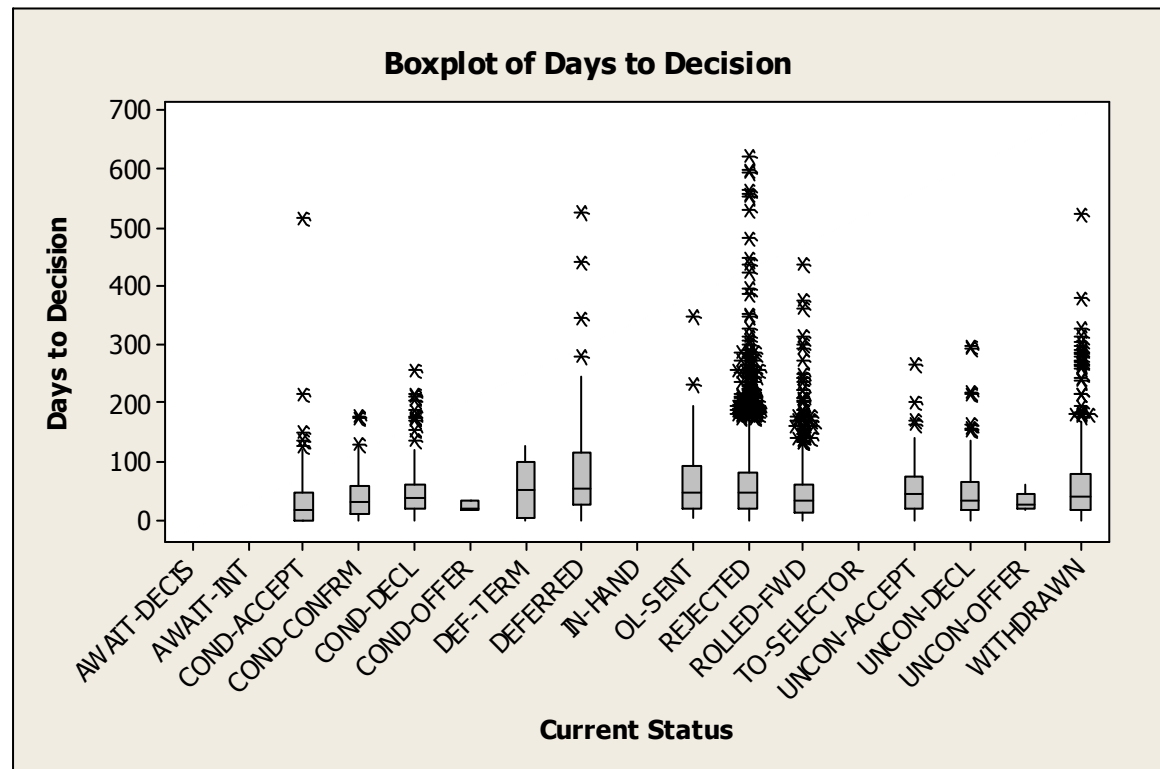
The number of days shows no particular trend for 2011. 2010 and the 2012 to date where decisions and offers have been made shows no trend either.

Y=f(x)

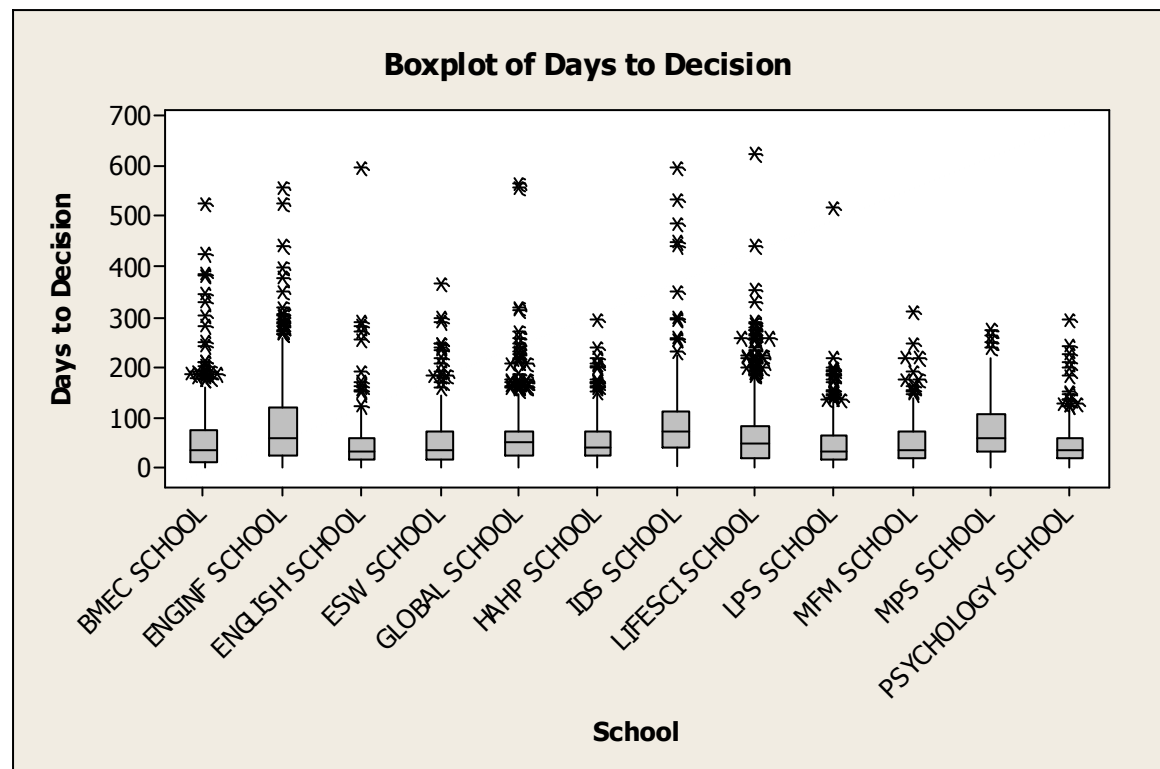
$Y=f(x)$ describes the relationship between the output (Y), the process and its inputs (x's) and provides a way of thinking about how the process operates.

Essentially $Y=f(x)$ defines a cause/effect relationship such that the output is an effect of the underlying causes within the process and its inputs. This enables the team to pinpoint improvements, confident that each solution will result directly in process improvement.

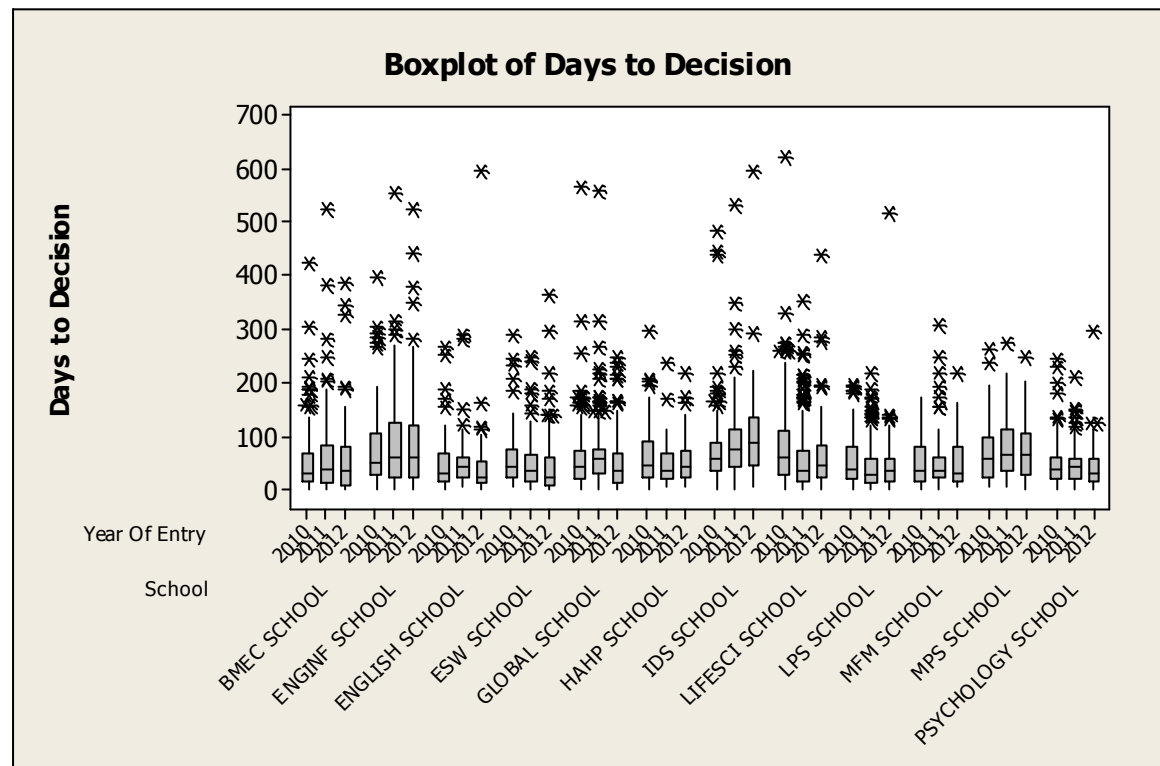
X₁ = Days to Decision by Current Status:



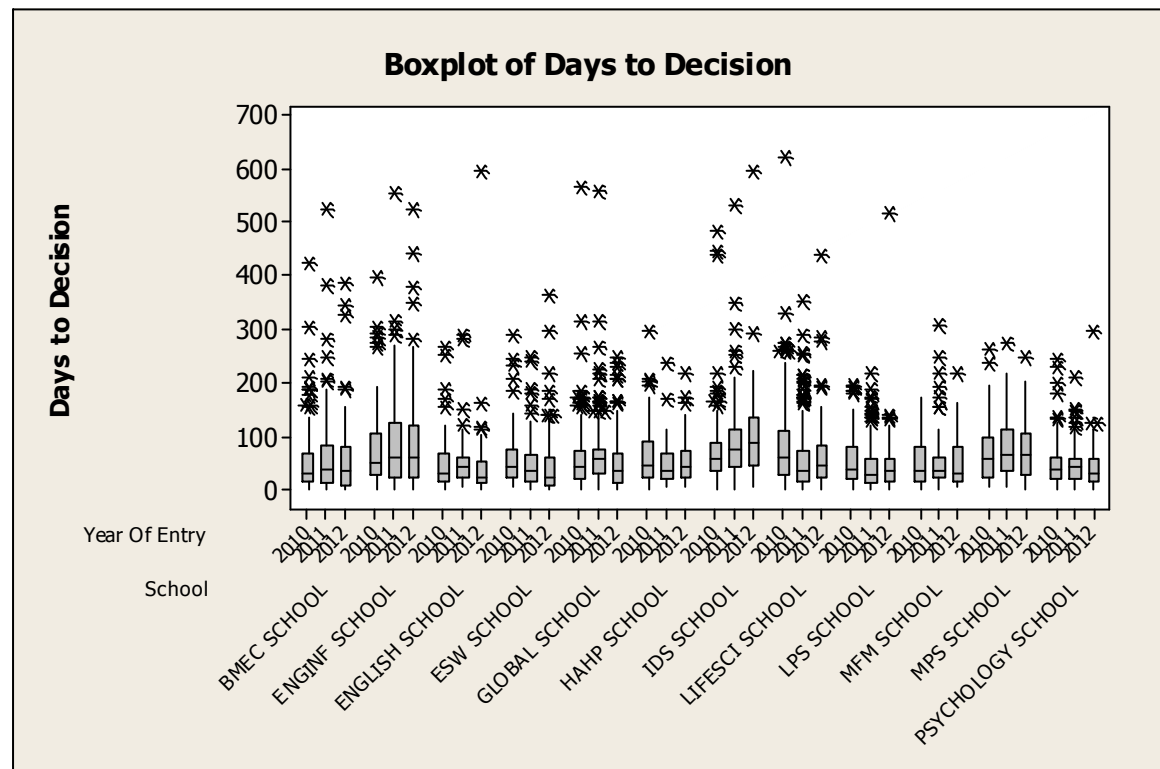
X_2 = Days to Decision by School:



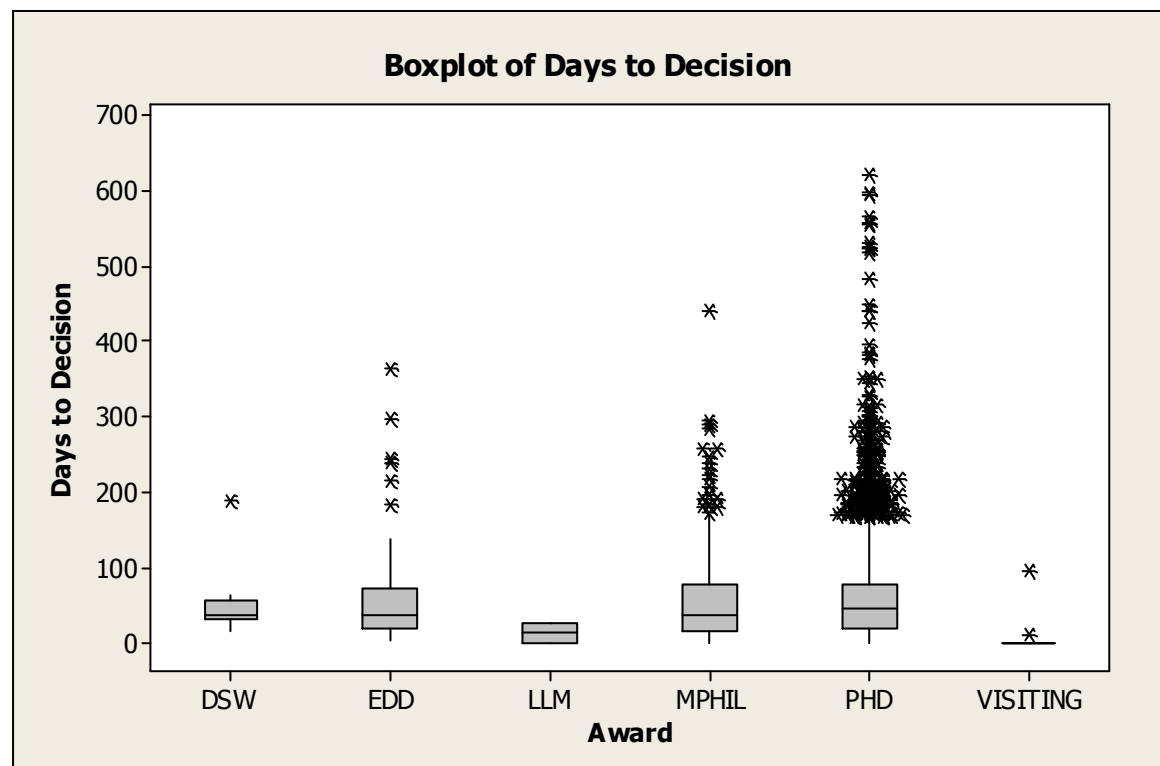
Days to Decision by School by Year:



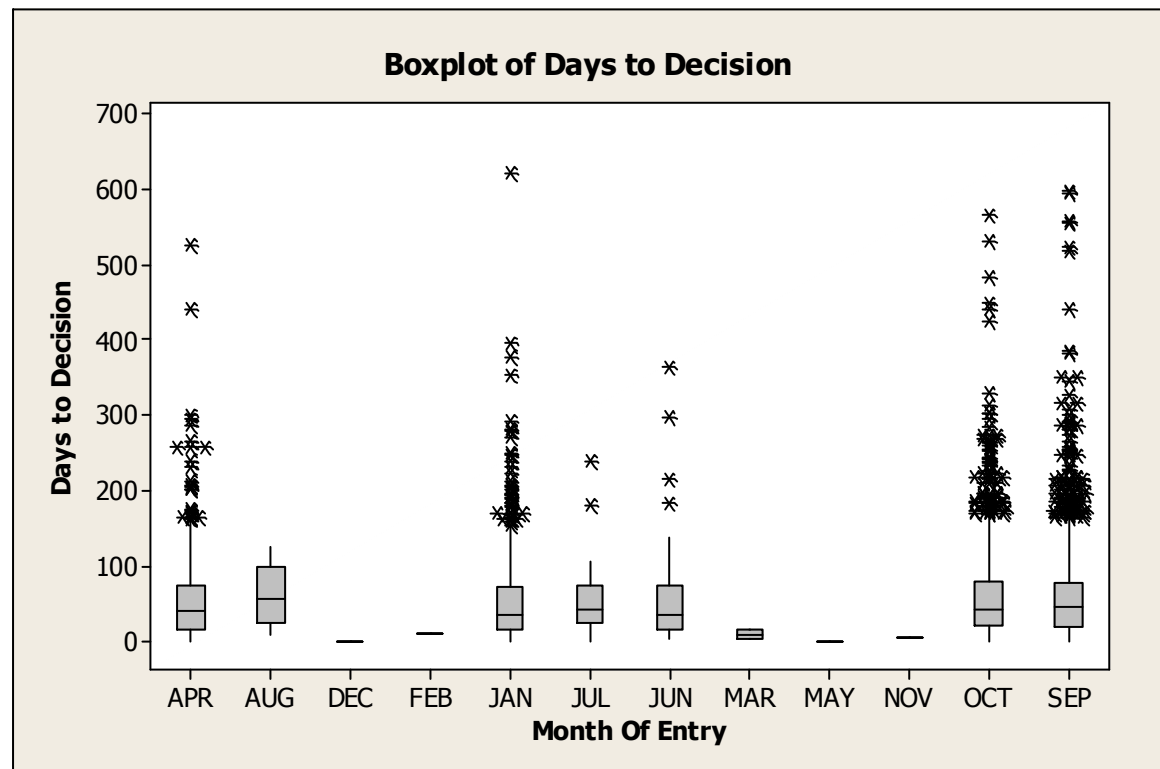
X_3 = Days to Decision by Department:



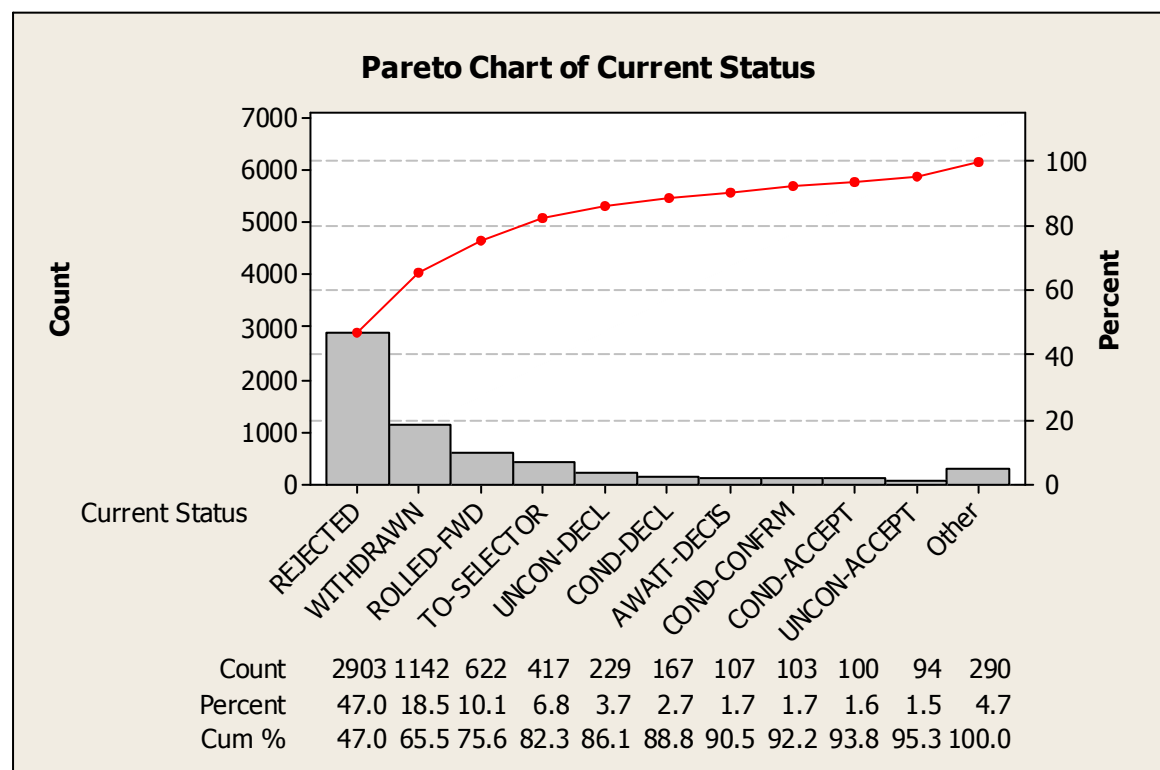
X_4 = Days to Decision by Award:



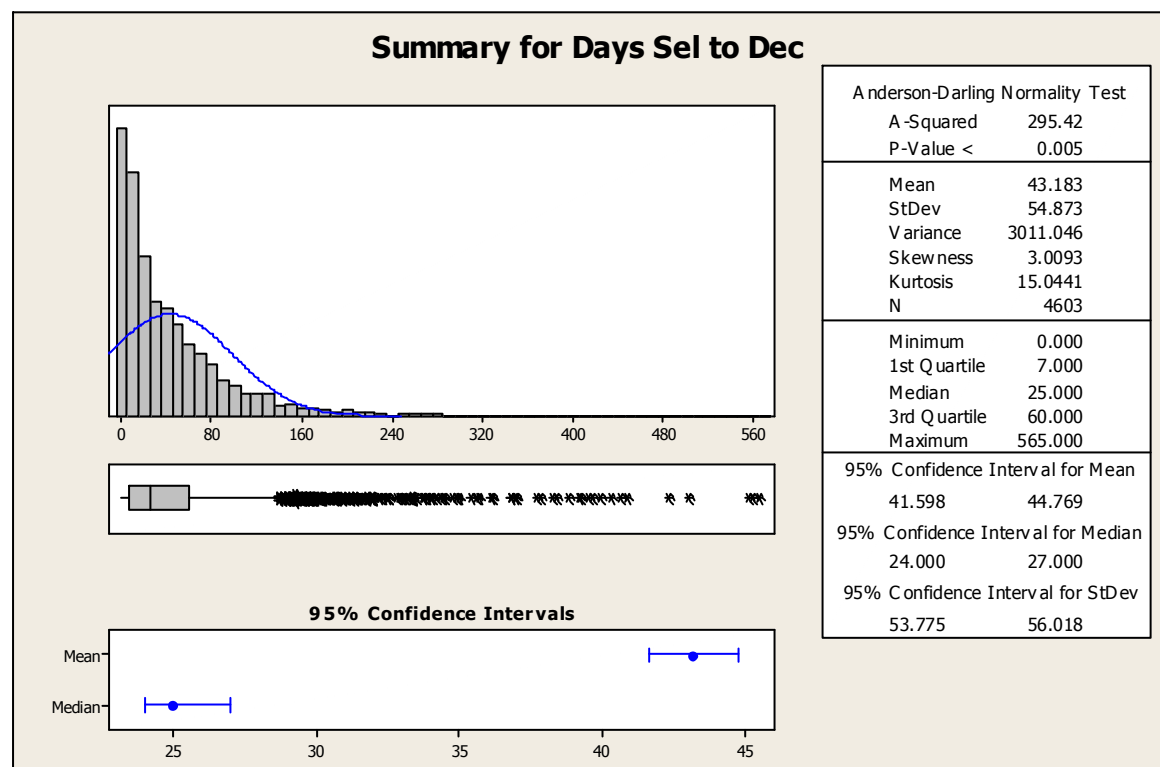
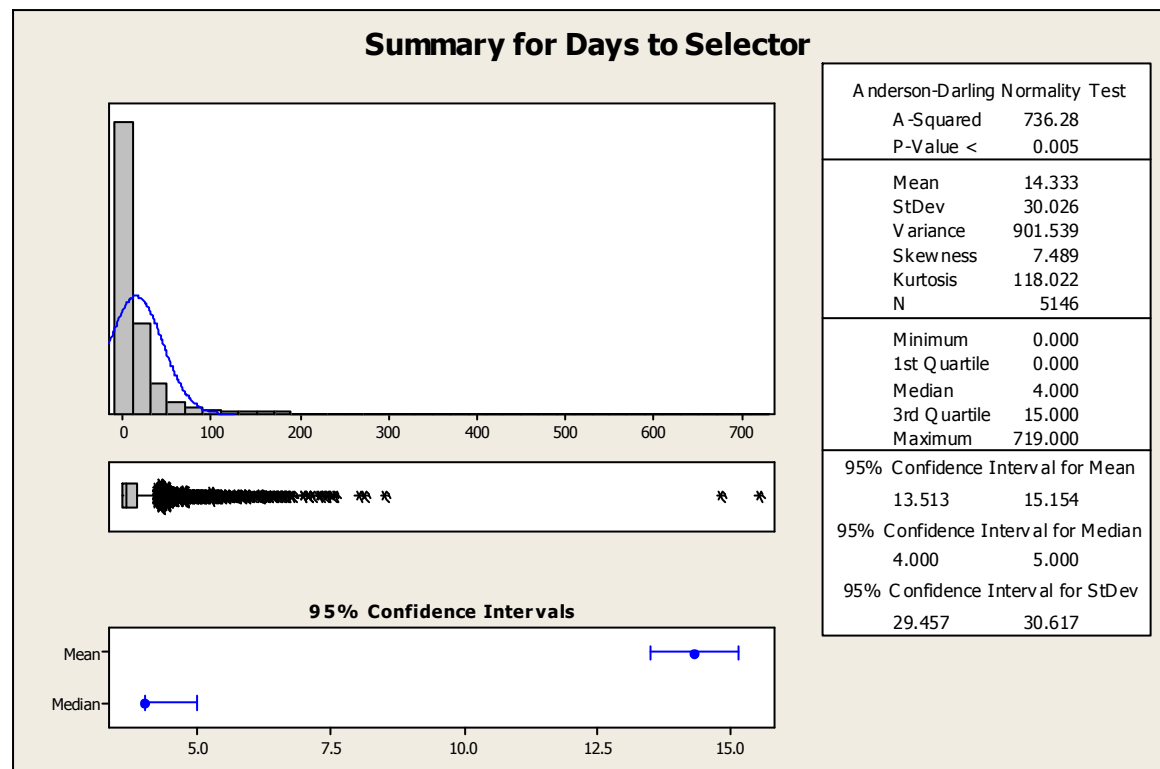
X_5 = Days to Decision by Month of Entry:

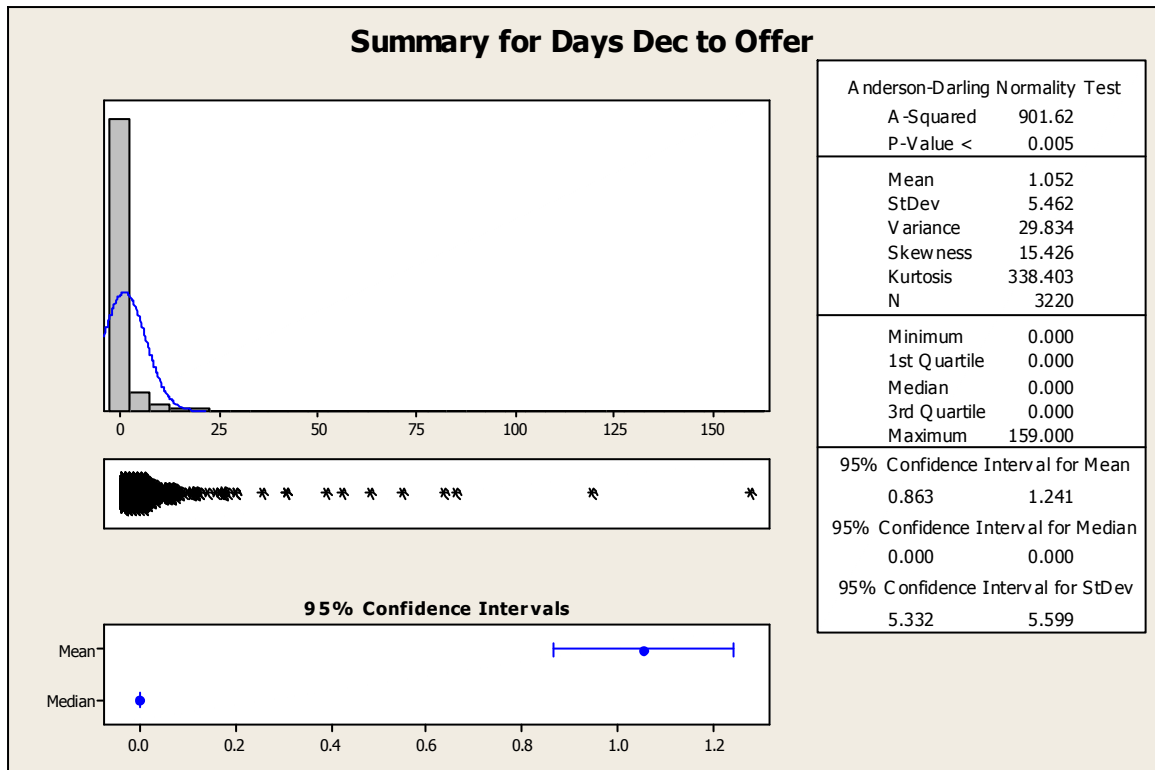


X_6 = Pareto of Current Status:



X_7 = Days spent at Different Stages:

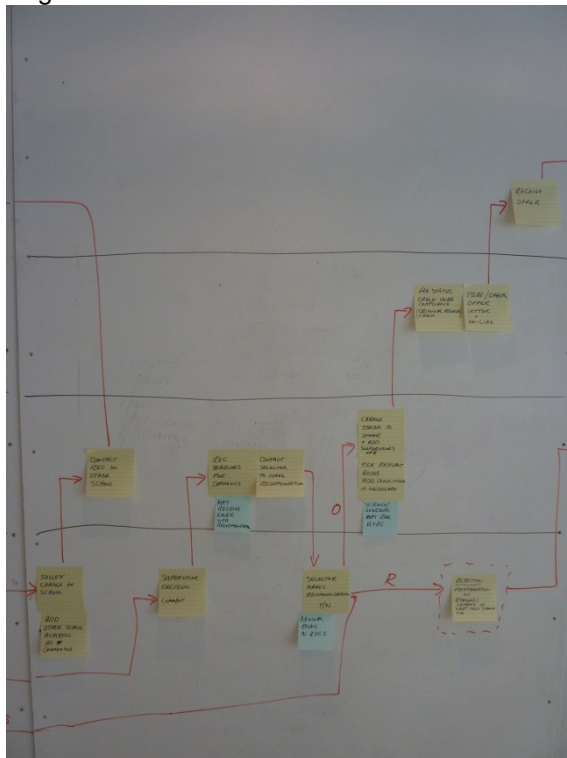




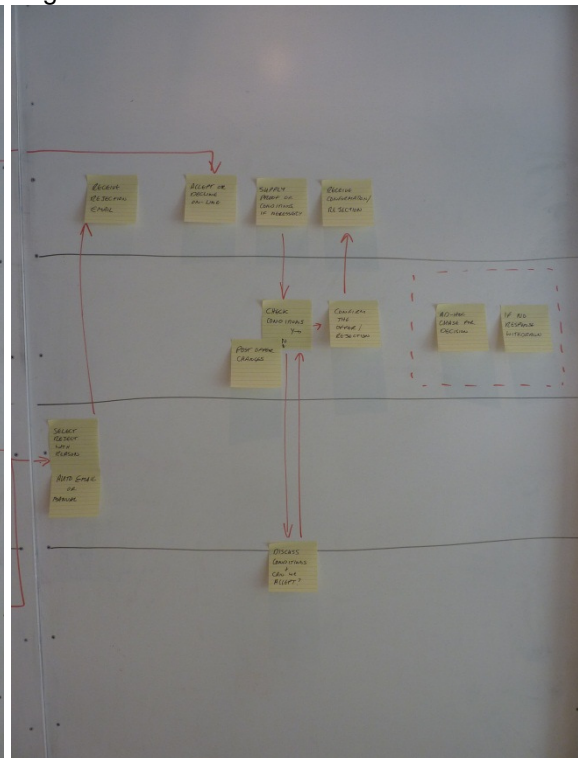
The average number of days spent at each stage are:

Application to Selector	= 14 days
Selector to Decision	= 43 days
Decision to Offer	= 1 day

Page 3:



Page 4:



Use zoom function to view detail

Define opportunity

Eighteen words is a 'rule of thumb' that refines a statement to become focused, clear and concise. The rule states that any statement should be ideally limited to eighteen words to eliminate any unnecessary 'waffle'.

Too often time is wasted in writing, reading or interpreting long winded reports or statements. Wordy documents run the risk of not bringing out the salient points quickly and clearly to the reader. It is somewhat counter intuitive but quite often the more words that are written, the greater the chance for misinterpretation.

The Eighteen Word rule is used in process improvement to ensure time is not wasted as a result of miscommunication or lack of clarity about a project's needs, objectives or definitions. The rule may be applied to any written statement and is judged successful if readers consistently and fully understand what the statement intended.

Reduce the decision time for complete applications to 28 days by supporting high quality applications and processing them efficiently whilst improving communication by Jan 2013.



Eliminate waste

Waste is defined as any activity that does not add value to the customer or that the customer is not willing to pay for. Waste occurs in every process and in organisation. No matter how effective or efficient a process may be, some level of waste is always present.

Taichi Ohno, often referred to as the father of the Toyota Production System, identified seven forms of waste that exist in a process:

- **Waiting time** – the time spent waiting between activities
- **Transport** – the movement between activities
- **Component design** – the effectiveness of the tool in meeting its intended purpose
- **Inventory** – the number of items of work at each activity step
- **Over production** – any effort or output that exceeds the customer expectation
- **Motion** – the movement within each activity
- **Defective goods** – outputs that do not meet the customer expectation

The continuous identification and removal of waste is at the heart of continuous improvement and operational excellence.

Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
WAITING TIME

Specific example	Proposed solution
MISSING DOCS <i>PROPOSAL REFS. FUNDING INFO (etc)</i>	1. IMPROVE ONLINE FORM (INFO) 2. DEFINITION OF MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS (GAT GROUP) 3. AUTOMATIC REJECT (RE: NO CHASING) 4. IMPROVE GUIDELINES/WEB INFO.
CLARIFYING "COURSE" <i>STAFF MEETS</i>	1. REMOVE MPRA (IN SOME UNITS) 2. MAKE ALSO SRM FOR (ANT PET).
IDENTIFYING SUPERVISORS	1. APPLICANT TO (INTERVIEW) SUGGEST SUPERVISOR (STAFF MEETS) 2. COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS TO SUPERVISOR (WHAT DO THEY NEED TO DO?) 3. CLEARER MANAGEMENT AND RE. SUPERVISOR WORKLOAD 4. BETTER MANAGEMENT OF CONVENIENCE/ACCESS & WORKLOAD 5. MANAGEMENT OF REC/ACADEMIC COVER (MAYBE DIFFERENTIATE "SCHOOL")
ITERATIONS / "TODAY AND PREVIOUS"	LINKED TO DISTINGUISH PRODUCTIVE VS. UNPRODUCTIVE (RELATIVE) CHASING TRANSCRIPT A DEBATING RESEARCH PARADIGM).
WAITING FOR THE APPLICANTS	1. "TIME OUT" QUERIES TO APPLICANTS 2. CUT DOWN/AD HOC CHASING REMOVE
NEGOTIATIONS OVER CONDITIONS	1. QUALITY vs QUANTITY / SELECTION IS BEYOND MEAT. 2. NO NEGOTIATION OVER CONDITIONS. 3. REDEFINE THE NATURE OF TARGETS IS MEETING A TARGET AS AN OUTCOME 4. REMOVE PROFESSIONAL EFL FOR (Q/R) REAME

Seven wastes © Processfix 2008 1-050

D M A I C

Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
WAITING TIME

Specific example	Proposed solution
- WAITING FOR ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS INFORMATION - FROM APPLICANT - FROM REFEREES.	- PG Apply solutions - Defined Chasing criteria and by whom - Candidate Chasing Refs. - Define policy on how many referees to make offer.
- WAITING FOR APPLICANT RESPONSES	- Defined policy - USE 'In Hand' !!
- WAITING FOR SELECTOR / SUPERVISORS RESPONSES.	(NEW... WITH SUPERVISORS) - Standards of expectations - Staffing cover (Study leave, etc) - Looking at alerts / support workflow management. - Reduce need for email communication
- WAITING FOR REC TO PROGRESS	STAFFING COVER / WORKLOADS (Competing priorities) - Context / planning during REC
- WAITING FOR ADMISSIONS TO ISSUE LETTERS	- NOT CURRENTLY A PROBLEM
- ADMISSIONS SCHEDULE DEADLINES NOT PLANNED TO BUSINESS CYCLE	- CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR BULK CHASING DEADLINES

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D M A I C

Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
TRANSPORT

Specific example	Proposed solution
COMMENTS "TRAVEL" BY RECS	1. SYSTEM FLAGS. 2. FULL SYSTEM TRAINING.
SYSTEM "PARALLAX" (IF RECS USE YELLOW SCREENS; FACULTY USE SY DIRECT).	1. INTEGRATE YELLOW SCREENS AND SYSEX DIRECT.
LACK OF KNOWLEDGE / IDIOSYNCRATIC USE OF SYSTEMS	1. PROPER INDUCTION / TRAINING FOR ALL. 2. BETTER MANAGEMENT OF SELECTED REC / OR. WORKLOAD 3. COMPREHENSIVE / COHERENT / EASY OVERVIEW OF ADMISSION PROCESS/ SYSTEMS (NEW ONE)
INTR-REC DISCUSSION / DEBATE - SCHOLAR SLO - ING - CULTURE OF RECS WITH FUNDING - BUREAUCRATIZATION OF FGR PROPOSALS	1. ESTABLISH KEY RULE FOR RECS IN PROPOSAL (OR NOT) 2. RECS AS EXPLICIT "RELATIONSHIP MANAGERS".

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Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
COMPONENT DESIGN

Specific example	Proposed solution
APPLICATION FORM	ENFORCED • REQUIRED FIELDS - SY UNIT e.g. RESEARCH PROPOSAL • EMBEDDED GUIDANCE • SPECIFIC FOR FGR ONLY SEPARATE SYSTEM FROM FGT? • FUNDING SECTIONS MORE FROM INVENT. INTERACTIONS WITH FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.
TWO SYSTEMS	• SEE TRANSPORT.

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Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
COMPONENT DESIGN

Specific example	Proposed solution
INCONSISTENT - USE OF STATUSES	- CLARITY OF STRUCTURE
- INSUFFICIENCY OF STATUSES	- REVIEW AND REFINE FOR WORKFLOW
- SEE DEFECTIVE GOODS.	

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Eliminate waste

Type of waste:
INVENTORY

Specific example	Proposed solution
APPLICATIONS HANGING AROUND	• TERMINATION POLICY!

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Eliminate waste

Type of waste:

OVER PRODUCTION

Specific example

TOO MANY APPLICATIONS
OF QUESTIONABLE QUALITY
(avg. 60-90% need info request)

E-MAILS

Proposed solution

• ~~MANUAL~~ AUTO-REJECT AT
EARLY STAGE.

• SYSTEM CHANGED TO AUTO-FLAG

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1-050

D M A I C

[illegible]

Eliminate waste

Type of waste:

MOTION

Specific example

- TRACKING APPLICATIONS (yellow Screen)
- TRACKING AND ALERTS (SUSSEX DIRECT)
- LACK OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN SYSTEMS
- LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENT
- PRE-ACADEMIC REVIEW FILTERING PROCESS AND AUTHORITY FOR REC.
- STAFFING AND COVER (periods of leave, sickness etc.)
- BOTH RECS + SELECTORS

Proposed solution

- ACCESS - BY WHO AND WHAT PURPOSE
- "
- "
- INTEGRATION OF SYSTEMS
- USE OF STATUS WITHIN SYSTEM
- GUIDELINES FOR RECS
 - How many choices
 - Clarity of entry requirements.
 - re-directing under qualified apprc
- Email Aliases (communication)
- Workload Management
- Staff Training.

Seven wastes
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1-050

DMATIC

Eliminate waste	
Type of waste:	DEFECTIVE GOODS
Specific example	Proposed solution
GENEROUS OFFERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LESS BENEFIT OF DOUBT?• HIGHER IELTS? / ACADEMIC ABILITY.
PRESSURE OF TARGETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ENSURE QUALITY IS <u>NOT</u> COMPROMISED• COMMUNICATION OF FUNDING + COMPLETION CHALLENGES (EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT ALL PARTIES)

Eliminate waste	
Type of waste: DEFECTIVE GOODS.	
Specific example	Proposed solution
INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS - missing/weak proposal - References - CV (where relevant)	- Better advice in PG-apply. - Tailored to School/program - Clear guide lines - mandatory fields are defined - Statement on important fields (tick box to ensure they read).
POORLY ALIGNED APPLICATIONS	- Clear information on prospects and PG-Apply
FUNDING	- (CHANGE PG APPLY (+ CAS) TO CAPTURE MORE FUNDING INFO FOR SCIENCE (PG ONLY)
<small>Seven wastes 1-050 © Processfix 2008</small> <div style="float: right;">D M A I C</div>	

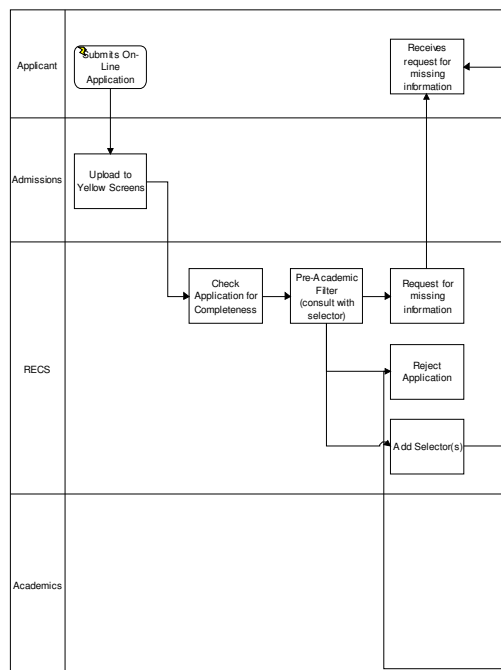
Eliminate waste	
Type of waste: COMPETITION FOR FUNDED STUDENTSHIPS	
Specific example	Proposed solution
- APPLICATIONS GETTING CAUGHT UP IN INAPPROPRIATE PROCESSES	- DEFINE PROCESS - GTA STUDENTSHIP - RESEARCH COUNCIL STUDENTSHIP - DTC STUDENTSHIPS - CHANCELLORS STUDENTSHIP
	- SCIENCE MODEL VS ARTS + Soc. Sci. MODEL
	SI - MONEY AND PLACE LINKED
	A+SB - PLACES + FUNDING DECOUPLED
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To-be process

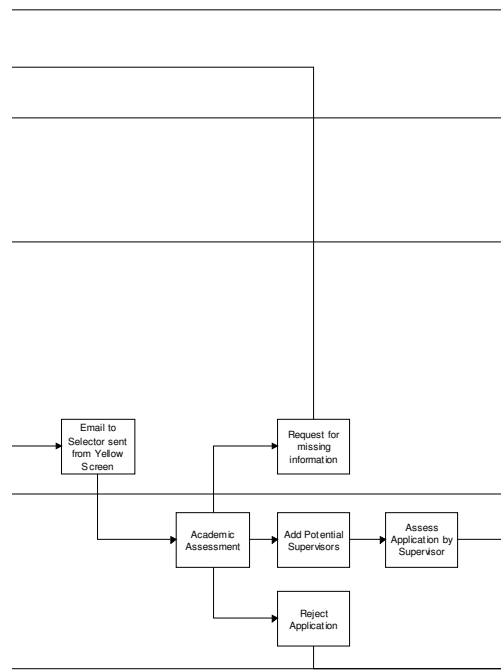
The to-be process illustrates the future state of the process as it will be upon completion of the implementation plan. It is the culmination of the analysis undertaken during the workshop to minimise waste, eliminate duplication and resolve idiosyncrasies in the previous way of working.

The to-be process often starts as an ideal way of working that may be adapted and modified during the course of implementation to overcome any immovable barriers or constraints. Yet throughout it remains essential for communicating the new process to the team and stakeholders whilst providing the basis for on-going continuous improvement.

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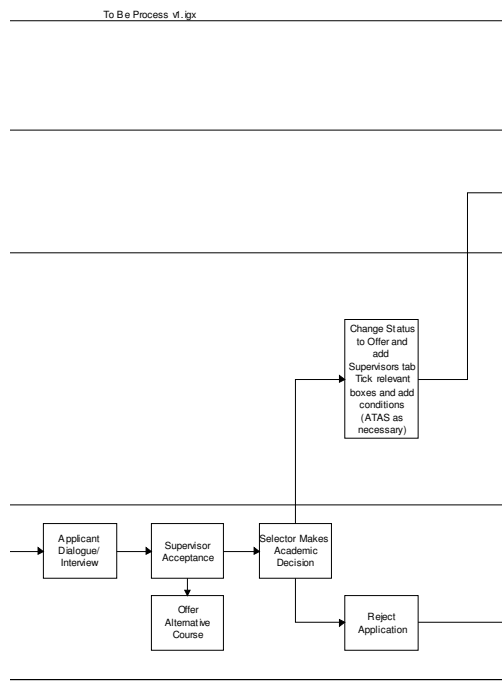


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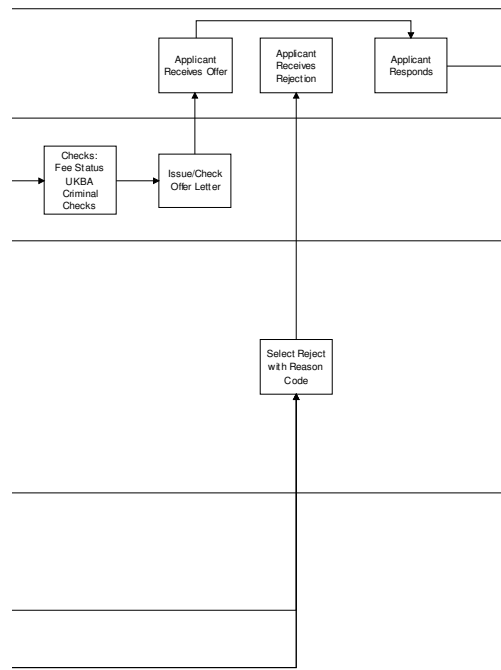


For detail see: To-Be Process v1 pdf

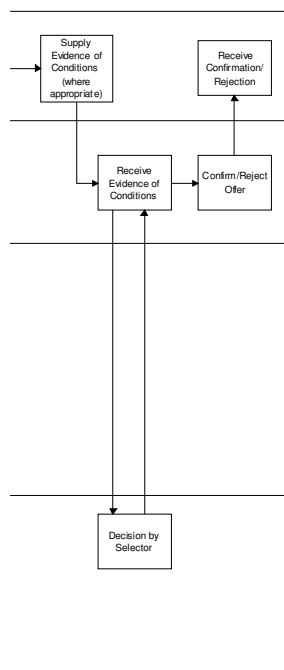
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Implementation plan

ID	Action	Owner	Date
1	Working party on PG Apply (Consistent across all media)	RE	Jan 13
2	Definition of complete application by School/Course	PR	Sep 12
3	Define delegated authority for RECs Rules for pre-academic filter Policy on chasing Criteria for reject/reasons to be notified in email	PR	Sep 12
4	Development of Sussex Direct and prompts	PB	Jan 13
5	Create new status 'With Supervisor' in Yellow Screens	MS	Jan 13
6	Work out process for offering alternative course (e.g.: +3, 1+3)	RE/PAB	Jan 13
7	Develop PGR Admissions policy, staff development and training to support roles & responsibilities	RE/PAB/PR	Dec 12
8	Develop policy on deadline for applications including policy on chasing/closing applications	RE/PAB	Dec 12
9	Develop MIS report for VCEG, HoS, DDS	SJ	Jan 13
10	Develop policy and procedure for handling PGR scholarships aligned to revised PGR admissions procedures	PR	Jan 13
11	Relaunch REC forum to development/continuous improvement	PR	Jul 12
12	Develop online application process for scholarships/funding applications	PR	Nov 13
13	Review arrangements for 1+3 admission, including ensure the MSc SRM is redefined as PGR	PR	Sep 12
	Follow-up review meeting	All	Mid Dec 12

Parking lot

The items below were outside the scope of this Rapid Improvement Workshop and are to be raised to the appropriate persons by the Improvement Champion.

- 1 Link to the enquiry process (pre-application enquiries)

Improvement facilitator

Your Processfix facilitator for this Rapid Improvement Workshop was:

Dave Jones

For further information your facilitator can be contacted on:

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Workshop output

High resolution versions of all the images shown in this report are available from your improvement facilitator.

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