



## CASE STUDY

# Birkbeck University automates student status amendment process to operate 90% faster to better support student loans



**Customer:**

Birkbeck University

**Industry:**

Education

**Location:**

United Kingdom

Birkbeck, University of London, embarked on digital process automation as part of its Operational Excellence program, designed to improve process efficiency and deliver better value for money in a fluctuating higher education environment.

As a result, the university tightened a process to ensure the timely application of student loans and sped up its Student Status Amendment Program by 90%.

**90%** faster student status amendment process

**16%** reduction in student debt

**30,000** students a year using the system

**3,000** cases closed a year

*"Process Modeler has gone viral; and this is only possible because Bizagi is so easy to use."*

**James Smith**

Head of Systems & Process Improvement

## Objectives

-  Increase process efficiency for students choosing to change their course of study
-  Improve timeliness of applications for student loans
-  Reduce data complexity, duplication and errors
-  Model and automate the Student Status Amendment (SSA) process
-  Interact with multiple systems (e.g. Oracle APEX, Student Loan Company)

## Achievements

-  Student Status Amendment process 90% faster
-  Proportion of student debt resulting from 'Promise to Apply' is down 16%
-  Fast Fix initiative to empower staff to instigate their own small-scale process improvements
-  My Birkbeck Profile portal enables students to action their request online
-  Accessible to 30,000 students; average 3,000 cases closed per year

## Overview

Birkbeck, London's only specialist provider of evening Higher Education (HE), attracts students who are looking to re-skill and change career. Like any HE institution, recent changes in government funding increase the pressure to demonstrate efficiency and value for money. Birkbeck's University Operational Excellence program is a landmark project designed to meet these challenges through Digital Process Automation. With Bizagi, it has the tools to support continuous improvement in a turbulent HE environment.

## Challenge

The first step towards Operational Excellence was to define and prioritize the processes that would deliver optimal services and help business users work in tandem with the Process team to deliver them.

At kick-off, Birkbeck used a process improvement facilitator to run a series of workshops. This introduced staff to a more structured approach to managing and carrying out processes of which three were chosen as the foundation of the Bizagi project.

## Solution

The first process to be automated was Student Status Amendment (SSA), a process which touches on many functions and departments. The knock-on effect of a student's decision to change, defer or withdraw from a course is huge. From the administrative side, there's exam marks to transfer, modules to be checked and student records to update. Birkbeck wanted to remove the bottlenecks and reduce the length of the overall cycle.

The next process was chosen to provide better management information associated with Student Loans. Birkbeck students are accepted on the basis that they will apply for a student loan within 28 days.

*"Prior to Bizagi, we had little visibility of whether students were delivering on their promises, so we'd see a lot of debt resulting from students failing to apply to the Student Loan Company. There were also lots of manual updates required to actually get the loans paid to us."*

## Results

turn them into running applications. The comprehensive e-learning capabilities also made the system easy to learn. Now, students wanting to change course can do so via 'My Birkbeck Profile', an easy to use, online portal based on Oracle Apex. This creates a case and via web services, Bizagi interacts with existing systems to ensure every element of the process is checked and actioned. To date, 20,000 students have access to the system closing an average of 3,000 cases per year; automation has reduced the time taken to close a case from 93 days to 10.

The loans processes are also slick; as soon as students enrol, Bizagi creates a case which 'watches' whether an application has been made to the Student Loan Company. Once the submission is made, the case is closed. Before the implementation of the Bizagi PEPSLC process for chasing loan applications, 'to be confirmed' debt (tuition fees owed by students who had enrolled on the promise of applying for a student loan) represented 18% of total debt. Just one year on, this number is down to 1.9% - providing the University with far greater clarity over its income position. This figure is even more impressive when set against a 35% year-on-year increase in debt due to more students taking out student loans under the new fee regime.

The aim of increasing knowledge and use of process modelling internally has also been achieved. Birkbeck's Fast fix initiative puts all the steps in place for staff to deliver their own small-scale process improvement.

*"The whole logic behind selecting Bizagi was to empower people to model their own processes. Process Modeler has gone viral; and this is only possible because Bizagi is so easy to use."*

James Smith

Head of Systems & Process Improvement at Birkbeck