Student Access

Student Access
Guiding Principle
Access for All
Elements
a) Provide 24/7 Service
b) Reduce Barriers: One-Stop
c) Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

Regardless of field of study, location, time, learning modality or desired degree level, **all students should have access to and feel part of an inclusive, transparent community of learners, educators, and innovators that is joined together by a holistic, modern and shared experience** – what makes Mason, *Mason*.

Mason should strive to achieve an ideal of *all* student access to *all* extra-curricular, co-curricular, and student services. This access ideal should be built upon a shared campus infrastructure of digital experiences, technologies, and practices to focus attention toward the student and his/her engagement with others, the institution and what it offers academically, socially, and beyond. Access to the shared campus infrastructure should be managed, but made available to all – the university, its colleges and schools, departments, offices, programs, organizations and groups.

This full approach should concentrate on removing barriers and meeting student expectations in order to create a Mason experience that is seamless and inclusive of every learner from enrollment through to completion.

Blackboard thinktiv. GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
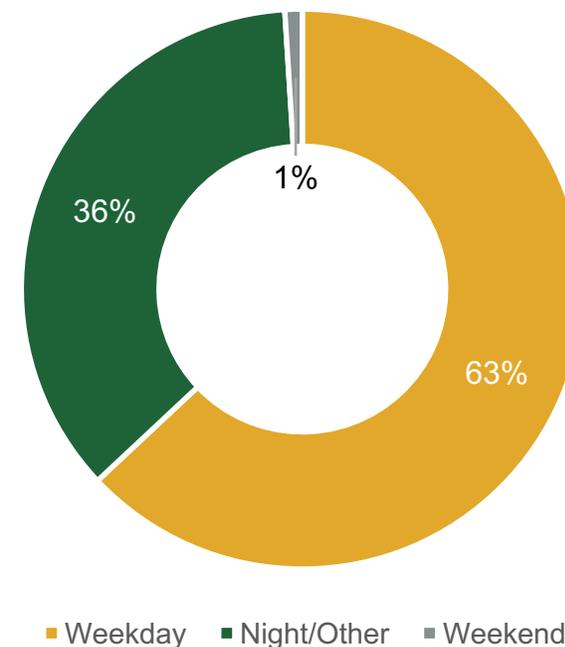
Access for All

Student Access

Guiding Principle

Access for All

Elements

a) Provide 24/7 Service

b) Reduce Barriers: One-Stop

c) Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

Promote the support and provisioning of resources for all students, including those who are online and/or unable to visit campus during normal business hours.

- **Mason should encourage all units to look beyond the traditional on-campus student** and set up communities of practice that invite all students to participate and receive support.

- **Nearly half of all classes are offered outside of "normal business hours"** and approximately 37% of all credit hours are attempted at night or on weekends[1], which represents an underserved student population with differing life experiences and service expectations.

AY 2015/16 Credit Hours (All Campuses)

1% · 36% · 63%

■ Weekday   ■ Night/Other   ■ Weekend

[1]   Based on Registrar-provided data for the 2015/16 academic year.

Blackboard   thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Access for All

Student Access
Guiding Principle
Access for All
Elements

a) Provide 24/7 Service

b) Reduce Barriers: One-Stop

c) Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

Promote the support and provisioning of resources for all students, including those who are online and/or unable to visit campus during normal business hours.

- **Provide self-service options for students** to conduct university business themselves and outside of normal business hours. This would provide access to those students who cannot visit campus during because of employment or personal obligations, and serve the needs of online and at-a-distance students (international, graduate, and study abroad) who need to engage with Mason but are unable to travel.

- **Recognize** that students need, want and expect a mix of high-touch and digital self-service options, and that one size, one approach does not fit all.

- **Ensure** that students have the ability to access necessary information about their Mason experience in whatever manner they prefer including via their mobile device, over the phone 24/7, or via a scheduled in-person visit.

- **Dynamically and proactively drive information** to students in the time and manner that they need it.

Blackboard thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Innovation Debt	Change Fatigue	Expectation Gap	Business Processes
With so much growth happening in such a short time, services intended to support students have been rapidly added, but not necessarily connected. Over the years as each college, unit, and initiative grew within the digital age, new websites, microsites, and portals were launched to deliver information. A physical "one-stop" is available on campus for certain student services, but it does not offer 24/7 support or provide remote learners with easy access to help.	Students are overwhelmed by the number of different offices, locations, websites and processes that they need to engage with over their student journey at Mason, which has given rise to the "shuffle." These facilities have caused more drain on Mason resources in recent years as students move through them seeking answers. Instead of receiving assistance quickly, they are sent place to place as well-meaning staff do not necessarily know the right place to send the student.	There is a growing gap between student consumer-based expectations and the ability of Mason to serve and support incoming students. Today's students expect university services and resources to operate seamlessly and 24/7 like those in the consumer marketplace.	Mason is a large institution with multiple distinct learner communities. By shifting to an always on, always connected model, services can be provisioned at the time of need to address different student communities. Doing so will reduce the need for boutique business processes, disjointed digital tools and exceptions because all students are considered equally in terms of their business process needs.

Blackboard thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Communication Gap	Data (and Trust) Gap	Context Gap	Lifecycle Coherence
Students are being flooded with communications that are not coordinated, timely, or relevant. The intent is to improve the communications and dissemination of information using channels of communication that are current, relevant and monitored by students — so they receive and have easy access to information when and where they need it to progress and overcome any unintended barriers along the way.	Having a "single source of truth" is a critical component in providing students with accurate and consistent information, whether it is shared digitally or by a Mason representative. When everyone involved is able to reference a single resource for answers, trust builds and data becomes consistent.	Students do not understand the bureaucracy of complex universities and how they are organized behind the scenes. As a result, when trying to resolve problems they are often confused by where to go and given the runaround (commonly referred to as the "Mason Shuffle"). When provided well, clear and consistent entry points offer holistic view of where and how to accomplish tasks. Students have a better frame of reference for how all of the campus systems fit together and support their progress.	As students move through the Mason experience, their ability to easily obtain help from Mason representatives, self-serve using mobile-friendly tools, and navigate the university's infrastructure will have a direct impact on their success. From the recruiting to enrolling, to applying for graduating — there should be seamless support at every stage of the student lifecycle to promote an optimal Mason experience.

Blackboard   *thinktiv.*   GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Provide 24/7 Access

Path Element

a

Adopt a 24/7 student service model so that all students will have access to the services they need when they need them. This includes a digital gateway to enable self-service, as well easily understood pathways to high-touch interactions such as counseling, crisis management, and advising. The model should be built to reduce the "shuffle," enable the university to reach its diverse body of students where they are and make the most of the interaction.

- **Create a digital experience gateway** that enables transparent movement throughout the Mason experience, exposing the right information at the right time with intuitive, mobile-friendly tools. Empower self-service with consistent information that is generated from a single knowledgebase and shared as appropriate. The gateway should be dynamic, meaning that the content displayed is specific to the needs and attributes of each user.

- **Inventory and define criteria for assessing the value existing Mason digital properties.** To ensure consistency and reduce student confusion, existing properties need to be evaluated in context with the new digital gateway:
  - Create a rubric and score each property.
  - Place digital tools and properties into prioritized groups based on their core objectives, audiences served, performance, and overall priority.
  - Look for redundancies and conflicts.
  - Grandfather outdated assets, connect complimentary tools, and validate design.

Blackboard   thinktiv.

GEORGE
MASON
UNIVERSITY

Provide 24/7 Access continued

Path Element

a

Adopt a 24/7 student service model so that all students will have access to the services they need when they need them. This includes a digital gateway to enable self-service, as well easily understood pathways to high-touch interactions such as counseling, crisis management, and advising. The model should be built to reduce the "shuffle," enable the university to reach its diverse body of students where they are and make the most of the interaction.

▪ **Integrate with Institutional Data Assets (IDAs):** Confirm that a common knowledge base, primary web properties, recruitment tools and communication plans are integrated with the lifecycle customer relationship management (CRM) system and other relevant IDAs to promote an up-to-date record of student disposition, needs, and attributes.

▪ **Share in the responsibility.** Grant applicable permissions to various schools, divisions, and groups to ensure accurate responses to student needs, consistency, and shared insights. Assign content owners, set expectations.

▪ **Get the word out.** Let students know about these services through an integrated campaign. Leverage social media, content, and student ambassadors to help foster adoption. Connect sites and apps within the tools themselves, and include a walk-through during the initiative period.

Blackboard   *thinktiv.*

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Reduce Barriers: One-Stop

Path Element

b
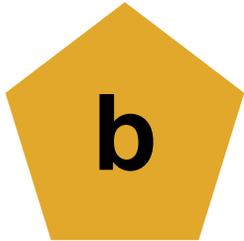
Establish a 24/7 virtual one-stop service to handle Tier 1 and Tier 2 support around the clock for financial aid, student accounts, records, registration, transcripts and transfers for any student. Staffing should be set according to anticipated traffic and include resources such as advisors, supervisors, managers, quality/compliance managers, trainers, and technology experts. The service should be supported by an appropriate technical infrastructure built around relationship management and ticketing, shared knowledge, and proactive and multi-modal communication.

- **Determine Mason's preferred approach to a virtual one-stop service.** Models include in-house solutions, outsourcing, and hybrid approaches. Vet pros and cons along with ROI.

- **Train one-stop staff to accurately represent the Mason experience and augment with a comprehensive Knowledge Base** that can serve as a foundation for self-service on digital channels and support the work of advisors, mentors, coaches and staff across campus.

- **Launch the one-stop service**. Complement the virtual one-stop with a physical presence as needed.

- As Mason scales and implements other aspects of this initiative, **scale the service as appropriate and complementary services are ready**. Performance should be monitored daily and Mason leaders should be able to use the one-stop as a means to obtain closed loop feedback from students.

Blackboard   *thinktiv.*

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

Path Element

C
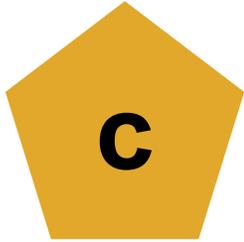
- **Promote more student participation and engagement through existing technology.** People from a number of schools and colleges expressed frustration that they offer events and no one attends. Mason has made considerable investments in technology to support engagement and collaboration that can be applied to campus events, meetings and other activities to enable students, faculty, staff, alumni and parents who are off-campus to engage with what the university has to offer.

- **Integrate a sense of community into the digital/remote learner experience.** Look for opportunities within existing touchpoints (online courses, websites, mobile apps, social media) to encourage participation as a Mason student, despite infrequent exposure to campus. Include online/remote learner messaging in all aspects of University outreach, initiation activities, as well as invitations to participate relevant in activities and student groups. Leverage social media as a mechanism to embrace this large group of learners. Ideas: live streaming, invitations to campus such as Homecoming, discussion groups, find a counselor in your area, etc.[1]

[1] Example practice: See Liberty Online Student Life (http://www.liberty.edu/online/eagles-landing/)

Blackboard   thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Ideal Implementation

Legend:
- 🟧 One-time action or activity
- 🟩 Ongoing activity or effort
- 🟦 Periodic, scheduled activity or effort
- 🟥 Disbanding of a group

Start Month (based on 4-month periods, 64 months total)																Task Description	Key Dependencies
1	5	9	13	17	21	25	29	33	37	41	45	49	53	57	61		

a) Provide 24/7 Access

																Task Description	Key Dependencies
🟧	🟧	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			Create, implement and sustain a digital experience gateway. Ongoing.	Funding, resource commitment
🟧	🟧	🟧														Inventory and define criteria to assess the value existing digital properties.	Cross-team participation
			🟧	🟧	🟧											Integrate with Institutional Data Assets (IDAs).	IDA adoption
			🟧	🟧	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			Share in the responsibility. Get the word out to students about services through an integrated campaign. Ongoing.	Cross-team participation

b) Reduce Barriers: One Stop

																Task Description	Key Dependencies
🟧																Determine Mason's strategic approach to one-stop	Funding, resource commitment
🟧	🟧															Launch 24/7 virtual one-stop service.	Resource commitment
		🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			Train one-stop staff. Operationalize and scale the one-stop service as appropriate. Ongoing.	Funding, resource commitment

c) Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

																Task Description	Key Dependencies
	🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			Increase promotion and use of invested infrastructure for departmental and college/school events. Integrate a sense of community into the digital learner experience. Ongoing.	Cross-team participation

Blackboard thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Projected ROI/Value on Investment

- **Increase student satisfaction** primarily through a virtual One Stop and self service mobile-friendly tools, expect to increase student satisfaction. Satisfaction rates can exceed 70% when services are implemented well through a coordinated and cohesive effort.[1]

- **Increase retention rate**. By providing a more seamless and user-friendly experience for students, they will feel more supported and have an easier time resolving the issues they face that jeopardize their ability to persist. Expect improvements in the following that will directly link to increases in retention: customer satisfaction, financial aid awareness and utilization, and de-registration rate.

- **Reduction in cost** as trained One Stop staff are much more efficient than college staff in answering inquiries and can reduce the cost of service provision. Improving efficiency across campus to answer questions from multiple campus silos will result in fewer inquiries at the physical "one stop" on campus.

- **Increase in digital conversion rates** through relevant and timely touchpoints online. By leveraging digital tools and mobile apps that increase engagement and reach students and prospects in the manner they prefer, Mason will see increased conversion rates on RFIs, applications, event invitations, re-enrollment rates, and more. Conversion rates on well-designed digital tools and website RFIs vary but can reach 8%, representing a visitor to the site/tool completing and submitting a Request for Information (RFI).[2] Inquiry to application conversion rates for 4-year public universities range from 12.6% (lower percentile) to 26.8% (high percentile), excluding inquiries who made their first contact by submitting an application.[3]

[1] Secondary research from US News rankings, BestColleges.com ranking, and stats published by individual U.S. universities.
[2] Marketing Sherpa 2012 Website Benchmark Report, Education or Healthcare Category.
[3] Noel Levitz 2014 Recruitment Funnel Benchmarks Report for 4-Year Institutions.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Annual Net Tuition**: Increase the net tuition by helping to collect more outstanding balances.

- **De-Registration Rate**: Reduce de-registration due to nonpayment by promoting payment plans and bill payment via outbound campaigns.

- **Social Media channels**, student engagement measured in follows, likes, shares, etc.

- **Utilization Metrics** by faculty, staff and students

- **Marketing website and microsite conversion rates**
    - Inquiry conversion on RFIs
    - Application submission

- **Digital performance metrics**
    - SEO performance
    - Site referrals and linkage
    - Monthly page views
    - Unique visits
    - Time on site
    - Bounce rates

- **Mobile application metrics**
    - App downloads
    - App usage
    - Ratings

Blackboard   thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Anticipated Key Resource Needs

Student Access
Guiding Principle
Access for All
Elements
a) Provide 24/7 Service b) Reduce Barriers: One-Stop c) Reduce Barriers: Use Infrastructure Investments

Digital Experience Gateway

- Mason Digital Team responsible for ongoing performance analysis, content administration, and holistic oversight of all digital properties
- External expertise and agency resources in digital design, SEO, digital, and analytics
- Involvement from marketing and enrollment teams
- Social Media and Content Team

Virtual One-Stop

- Senior leadership alignment and sponsorship
- Best-in-class contact center partnership or on-campus technology and resources
- Dedicated Mason point of contact/leader to oversee One-Stop effort, monitor and optimize performance
- Participation from cross-team resources at Mason to complete Knowledgebase

Infrastructure Investments

- Tiger team with expertise in Mason's infrastructure, facilities, and technology

High Additional **Resources**

Low **Cultural Shift**

High **Cultural Shift**

b

a

c

Low Additional **Resources**

Blackboard   thinktiv.

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY