Research exercise: Investigating and Improving Communication in the Center of International Program's (CIP) International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

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Abstract

To assess the daily written communication techniques used in the Center for International Programs, specifically the International Student & Scholar Services.

The analysis included observing, interviewing staff, and examining the writing methods of the department. We thoroughly analyzed 11 documents that are required to be completed by Foreign students.

Based on our findings, we make several suggestions to the ISSS, in order to improve its written communication.

Documents Analyzed

- Request to Change Academic level/Major
- Authorized Early Withdrawal
- Transfer-in Instructions
- Concurrent Enrollment
- Change of Address
- Authorization for release of education and/or immigration records
- Curricular practical training
- Transfer-out/exit plan form
- Extension of stay: Instructions
- Request for letter verification/initiation
- Reduced course load authorization

Insights of Documents

- Forms are color-coded
- All forms have University of Dayton logo on top of page
- Difficult to see purpose of document since it is smaller font than University of Dayton line
- Modification date is listed on bottom right corner of page

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Observations

- Observed the ISSS and UD International Club (UDIC) working at the International Festival
- Analyzed communication & written practices of the ISSS
- Due to Privacy issues, laws, & regulations regarding sensitive information, we were unable to read any individual e-mails.

Conclusions

Three key insights were discovered which include:

- Good communication among each other through e-mail as an effective communication tool.
- Improve use of wording on forms, shorter paragraphs, bolding, and layout.
- Increase communication between foreign students & the ISSSS.

Suggestions

- More bullets with fewer words
- More bolded terms for important deadlines and requirements
- Monitor and assist students when filling out forms
- Have a foreign language version for most important forms
- Monthly focus groups or mentors for students individually

Have you ever misunderstood an ISSS document?

- Yes
- No

Do you have a Mentor to help you adjust to life?

- Yes
- No