

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

De Montfort University saves £11,000 and slashes admin time by 65%

The most successful organisations recognise the value of understanding individual identities.

First Advantage combines individual identity data with technology to provide clients with the identity data intelligence they need to make good business decisions. That's why De Montfort University chose First Advantage to support its student application process.

First Advantage's user-friendly eBulk online service improves the efficiency, management and process of criminal record checking, ensuring speed and cost reductions within an approachable system.

Background

De Montfort University (DMU) is a vibrant, multicultural hub of learning, creativity and innovation.

The most improved university in the UK according to The Sunday Times league tables, it offers a fantastic student experience coupled with award-winning teaching and world-class facilities. Over 19,000 students are supported by 2,700 staff at its Leicester campus.

The Health and Life Sciences Faculty is one of the largest at DMU, containing the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery, Allied Health Sciences, Pharmacy and Applied Social Sciences. Offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, over 2000 new students arrive there every year. That means there's no shortage of work for the Faculty's Admissions Team, especially in the peak May-September application period.

// **Everything about First Advantage's solution worked better for us.**

Jayneeka Lad
DBS Admissions Officer, De Montfort University.

9,000 students

De Montfort University has 19,000 students and 2,700 staff.



2,500 DBS checks

The Health and Life Sciences faculty carries out over 2,500 DBS checks annually.



65%

First Advantage service cut staff admin time by 65% and saved £11,000 in annual print and postage costs.



Overview

Company

De Montfort University offers award-winning teaching to UK students

Challenge

To complete criminal records checks of their students, De Montfort University needed a more efficient checking process.

Solution

De Montfort University chose First Advantage to streamline their criminal records checking and management process.

How First Advantage helped De Montfort University

- Processes criminal record checks rapidly with an intuitive online portal
- Cuts time spent on checks by 65%
- Completely removes the need for manual ID checking
- Saves £11,000 a year on postage, printing and stationery costs
- Reduces errors and delays – compared to paper forms
- Receives online and telephone-based support for admissions staff.

The Challenge

Looking for a more efficient way to manage DBS checks for applicants.

Practical work placements outside the university are an integral part of Health and Life Sciences undergraduate courses like Nursing, Speech and Language, Midwifery and Social Work.

So besides managing the conventional student application process, the Admissions Team must also check applicants' details with the government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

"Nursing and Midwifery students will be out in the hospital environment," explains Jayneeka Lad, DBS Admissions Officer at DMU. "That means they will be working with vulnerable adults or children, so valid DBS certification is a mandatory part of entrance requirements."

The DBS check reveals details of any convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings the applicant has received and, if applicable to their course, any other relevant details the police may hold about them. However, with admissions staff manually checking DBS forms and IDs before submission, the paper-based process was extremely slow and error-prone. Applicants would often send late, incomplete forms or the wrong form of ID which caused endless chasing, with documents being posted back and forward.

"We would send the forms out in May and students would send them back in dribs and drabs, with most arriving between July and September," says Jayneeka. "That took a lot of extra work at our busiest times for admissions and we had to request additional resources."

With the DBS itself taking up to 12 weeks to process paper forms, there were frequent delays in approving course applications. Sometimes new students couldn't go out on placements because their DBS certificate hadn't come through. There had to be a better way. In October 2013, the Health and Life Sciences Admissions Team started to research online solutions.



The Solution

Moving to the web with First Advantage.

The decision point for DMU came when Jayneeka visited another university to see the difference online DBS checking had made for them. Nottingham Trent University were already First Advantage users – and enthusiastic advocates of the system.

"They said online checking had saved them a huge amount of time," says Jayneeka. "I looked in detail at other suppliers and their systems, but I simply found everything about First Advantage's solution worked better for us – the process, the system and the set-up as well as the way their account team worked with us from the start."

The UK's largest criminal record checking provider, First Advantage offers a comprehensive DBS service with full UK coverage, including Disclosure Scotland. Accessed via a simple and easy-to-use online portal that links to the DBS's e-Bulk interface, it drastically reduces paperwork and administration. Completing an application can take as little as 24 hours and online applications using the First Advantage system have a 99.97% success rate.

With the new admissions period about to begin, DMU signed up with First Advantage in May 2014. After some brief onsite training, the 24 Faculty users were ready to go. "We decided to trial the system for a year," says Jayneeka. "The 13 people in my team found it really simple to learn how to use."

// **It's a far more pleasant way to work** and provides a much better experience for applicants too."

Jayneeka Lad
DBS Admissions Officer, De Montfort University.

The Benefits

First Advantage delivers rapid DBS processing, cuts costs and slashes admin time.

As the Admissions Team emailed links to the First Advantage system to prospective students, they quickly realised the benefits. Applicants could complete the online checking process independently and it completely removed the need for manual ID checking.

“It worked really well for us right from the start,” says Jayneeka. “The applicants do their ID checking in person at their local Post Office rather than through us and the DBS processes the online forms far more quickly too – you often get the certificate back within a week.”

While the DBS’s average turnaround time for paper applications is four weeks, 80% of online applications are completed within five days and 97% within 10 days. And, unlike a paper form, it’s not possible for applicants to submit an incomplete online application, so staff don’t need to chase up half-finished or wrongly-filled-out forms either. The constant stream of queries the Admissions Team used to deal with has dropped to almost zero, with First Advantage’s DBS expertise helping both Faculty and applicants comply with the latest safeguarding legislation.

“If applicants have any problems, they refer to First Advantage’s online guidance documents,” Jayneeka says. “If they need more assistance, they can dial their helpline. First Advantage’s agents have been able to answer any tougher queries from applicants that we can’t resolve ourselves.”

Using First Advantage, staff still monitor the progress of checks and chase up unpaid or incomplete ones, but it takes a tiny fraction of the time previously required. So, instead of processing DBS applications, they are able to focus on more productive tasks at their busiest time of year.

// **This year, there have been no delays to the applications** at all which is completely down to the First Advantage service.”

Jayneeka Lad
DBS Admissions Officer, De Montfort University.



De Montfort University- First Advantage Partnership Breakdown

- First Advantage service helps De Montfort University cut DBS checking admin time by at least 65%.
- Annual saving of £11,000 on postage, printing and stationary costs.
- Massive reduction in errors and delays compared to paper forms.
- Excellent online and telephone-based customer service provides support for admissions staff and applicants.
- Simple, easy-to-use system requires minimal training

“Using First Advantage for DBS checking has reduced our admin time by 65% or more, and we’ve also made big savings on postage and stationary – at least £11,000 annually,” says Jayneeka. “This year, there have been no delays to the applications at all which is completely down to the First Advantage service.”

After a very successful first year, De Montfort University has just extended its licence for another two years and is working with First Advantage to build a configured portal to precisely fit the Faculty’s application process. “First Advantage is efficient and effective, and it takes a lot of the pressure off my team,” says Jayneeka. “It’s a far more pleasant way to work and provides a much better experience for applicants too.”