On the whole, the staff response to the administrative adjustment tick-box issues was not as strong as either the personal or academic adjustment issues. The first point to note is that the centralised support response was strongest in the two issues describing students’ lack of knowledge of supports available to them, from Student Services and from within their own Faculty.

Teaching and Faculty support staff registered significantly stronger than centralised support in the issues with regards to students’ enrolment management.
In two generic logistical issues, finding class venues and understanding timetabling, the Faculty support response was the strongest. "Difficulty with 8am lectures due to travel times" had the weakest response of the whole survey, a majority of respondents to the survey did not see this as an issue.

"The problem is most of the info is written but students do not read instructions (perhaps they have an information overload?)" (Teaching staff respondent)

"Information overload - too much to take in in too short a time. Even though the information is available - in course booklets, in early lectures, in notices on boards - students still do not seem to take it in. Many prefer to bumble and use lack of knowledge as an excuse - we do not seem to get through at enrolment the importance of reading the regulations! And though students know there is a counseling unit I've found a common response from students in trouble is it is for "other people" not me - yet they soon find the medical centre if they are crook! Student apathy is a huge block to getting information across, they don't want to take in information unless it is absolutely necessary." (Teaching staff respondent)

"The main problem I see is that students simply haven't taken the trouble to read all the material that is available to them. Not so much that they can't find it, they don't look. They still expect that someone will tell them what they need to know and don't take responsibility for finding out the info themselves." (Teaching staff respondent)

"The material is often available to students, but it is how best to make them read it/engage with the information that is the issue" (Faculty support respondent)

While many staff acknowledged that the provision of information was a key initiative for assisting students’ transition, there was a lot of feedback describing the ‘information overload’ that students experience, particularly after orientation. This coupled with the fact that a lot of students do not seek to independently source the information they need, (and they often don’t read the information that they are provided with) makes the provision of information problematic.

"Make them read some of the information that is sent out or available - many simply do not do this, and hence don't understand some processes - a surprise "lecture" about some of these issues could be valuable, but evidently difficult to do! Making an optional session may not attract the necessary crowd - those who attend are likely to be those who are interested in finding out answers and would go investigate themselves; it is the students who have a laissez-faire attitude that need to be approached.” (Teaching staff respondent)
Students’ awareness of Information Technology facilities and their supports was another significant issue. Staff cited the decentralised nature of the different IT resources that a student may come into contact with as a problem. Students in the present university environment have to negotiate different email accounts, WebCT sources and other online web sources from UCS, faculties, the library and other centralised services.

“Unsure where to go for IT support. The Library IT does not deal with students directly and most don't know where to go within their Faculty for support.” (Centralised staff respondent)

“Accessing WebCT courses seems to be a particular problem for first years and they often come to the library seeking support for this. Managing pin numbers and passwords in general is confusing for them. 1st years often seem to be seeking a “one stop” type place where they can find all this administrative information, particularly relating to IT, and access.” (Centralised staff respondent)

“I am not certain but it seems as if they are told where to go for Teaching help but not necessarily where to go for computing/IT help which is becoming more and more a part of teaching.” (Centralised staff respondent)

Students’ negotiation of a complicated timetabling system was cited by staff as another significant administrative issue. In addition to the central timetabling system, discrepancies in the way lab and tutorial times are administered between different schools and faculties further complicated students’ organisation.

“The timetable is impossible for new students to understand! Insufficient information as to whether multiple classes are ‘and’ or ‘or’. And whether you have to remain in the same stream or can move between them.” (Teaching staff respondent)

“Appalling management for central timetabling, especially this year” (Teaching staff respondent)

“Not being able to get into tutes at suitable times for workloads, or into tutes with friendship group.” (Centralised support respondent)

Some typical responses to Administrative adjustment issues

Staff sought to address students’ lack of knowledge about supports by providing information in different ways. As discussed above, the effective provision of information to commencing university students can be problematic, and staff offered a selection of ways that were perhaps more effective in getting the information through to students.

Some staff described information sessions or opportunities to provide information via events that happen during orientation and the early part of the first semester:

“Orientation tours at the beginning of the semester. It as become evident that, as these are voluntary sessions, not many students sign up for them, even though we offer the opportunity to win book vouchers just for attending!” (Centralised support response)

“A more comprehensive/extensive orientation session at the beginning of each semester that is compulsory.” (Centralised support response, initiative that “could be done”)

“Morning teas - our Faculty ran morning tea on Fridays from 11-1 for the first 3 weeks of first semester on the Crawley campus. Students popped by, asked timetable questions, changed their enrolments, or just had some juice with us! As our Faculty Office is located off campus it was a good opportunity to go onto campus and they did not have to trek all the way to us. We want to continue the “Morning Tea” initiative.” (Faculty support respondent)
Information provided in a hard format (flyers, bookmarks, handouts, guides) was also a typical mode of this kind of support.

Several respondents suggested ways that administrative and logistical information could be provided via electronic means:

- Electronic reminders on a calendar for crucial dates (e.g., HECS census, 3 weeks to exams etc., assignment due next week). Referrals to student services, training of tutors to alert students to these opportunities." (Teaching support response, initiative that "could be done")
- "It would also be helpful to have automatically generated class email lists (e.g., unitcode@student.ee.uwa.edu.au) to email all students in a class at once." (Teaching support response, initiative that "could be done")
- "Maybe a webpage with FAQ about those sorts of issues - this webpage should be easily located by both students and staff (maybe such a thing already exists, I don't know)" (Teaching support response, initiative that "could be done")

There were suggestions for streamlining the timetabling process, with more provision for students with special circumstances. These included, for example, students who are enrolled in degrees that are across two or more faculties, and students who have to travel between campuses in between classes, with little time to do so.

- "I keep trying to get lab/tutorial allocations streamlined centrally, and a priority for school who use central processing first and those schools who opt out, should allocate into whatever spaces students then have left. Currently we have at least 3 or 4 different systems who all tell the student to get some other unit changed, but not this one. This is a problem for all students but particularly 1st years." (Teaching staff respondent)
- "At my school unit coordinators of large units are looking at the wider implications of the lab allocation decisions, and they provide feedback to the central system when requested." (Teaching staff respondent)

Specific Initiatives

Initiative that “could be done” – Centralisation of IT

*My humble opinion is that a centralised IT for the entire university would be an advancement into the 21st century! Centralised IT would create less user problems for staff and clients of UWA.*

Centralised support respondent, Library

Initiative that “could be done” – Website for students, by students

*Obviously the information on the university's website is not user friendly to first year students, in that they either don't know where to find relevant information or don't understand what is written there. I think in the first instance the content relating to students should be written by students for students, therefore ensuring it is easily understood by those it’s targeted to.*

Centralised support respondent, Student Administration
Initiatives that “could be done” – Provision of information in the library.

A large display board inside the entrance of the Reid Library Building entrance with fortnightly features such as ‘most asked questions from new students’ or FAQ’s – for example - How do I access Course Materials Online? How does the Library Reserve Collection operate? What is the bookings facility related to Reserve Collection items? What to do if my Lecturer said an item has been placed in the Reserve Collection and it is not available/processed? How many books can I loan at one time if I am an undergraduate, honours student, postgrad coursework, postgrad research, or staff? How do I activate my student email? How does the Dewey classification system work, and why can’t I locate the book I want? (include information about the older Dewey classification)

Arrange orientation tours at different times throughout each semester not just the beginning of semester one.

Perhaps have a designated desk in the Library to answer questions and queries from students.

Centralised support respondents, Library

Initiatives that “could be done” - Provision of administrative information

One stop shop with people available at crucial dates for advice - ask me buttons, posters with common problems and solutions - user and youth friendly language etc.

Teaching staff respondent, School of Social and Cultural Studies

I think students need a repeat of some orientation material a few weeks into semester when they are not bombarded with new experiences.

Faculty support respondent, Natural and Agricultural Sciences

I have held discussions with the faculty marketing manager about holding an information session at the beginning of each year to provide first students with the range of options that are available to them. Not likely to happen in 2005

Faculty support respondent, Engineering, Computing and Mathematics

Initiative that “could be done” - Building more cooperative arrangements between support agencies around the University

Building more cooperative arrangements with various student support agencies, possibly even at crucial times, such as start of semester having a range of university support services represented in the library - or other central location.

Centralised support respondent, Library