

Managing the Chaos in Your University Offices

12 Ways to Satisfy Your Students While They Wait

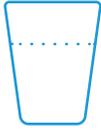


Introduction

Waiting rooms and lobbies can be stressful places to spend any amount of time. Just ask anyone who has worked in a busy Financial Aid or Registrar's office. The nature of checking in and sitting down or waiting in a long line often causes anxiety and uncertainty for your students who, more times than not, are late to their next class and are left unknowing how long they are expected to wait for their turn.

The following best practices reveal how to alleviate stress (and sometimes chaos!) that can arise in a busy waiting room.

Implementing any of the following ideas in your office will improve your students' experience. And if you're able to eliminate the inconvenience of waiting in a physical line, you can improve student satisfaction (and your office's reputation) even further while allowing staff to feel confident and in control.



1. Keep them hydrated.

When people are thirsty or feeling dehydrated, tension can mount. Help students from having to walk out of the office to find a water fountain or purchase bottled water.

Maintaining a spring water dispenser with disposable cups is an easy way to show that you're dedicated to keeping them comfortable—and it doesn't require a huge investment.



2. WiFi + phone charging stations.

It's become nearly a must-have these days: free WiFi. If your office isn't equipped to provide your students with free access to the internet on their mobile devices, they will usually become frustrated.

Access to WiFi in public spaces is becoming so widespread that many people anticipate its presence whenever they're in a place like a waiting room, office building, restaurant, or lobby.

Modernize your office with complimentary guest WiFi access along with phone charging stations so students can charge their batteries while waiting to be served. Remember to post a sign that gives information about the free WiFi as well as the password to log in.



3. Keep pens and paper at the ready.

Many students use the time they spend waiting in your office to make to do lists, and catch up on homework. Keeping pens and paper readily available also prevents your staff from being interrupted by students coming up to ask if they can borrow a pen.



4. Keep chairs, surfaces, and doors clean.

You probably already have a cleaning crew that maintains your office regularly. But if they're not servicing your location daily, it's important to assign daily general cleaning duties to your staff or on-site janitorial crew.

Waiting areas are best checked 2-3 times throughout the day to ensure that trash cans are emptied, magazine racks/piles are straightened and that doors, glass and other surfaces are free from smudges, debris, dust, and germs.

Many students already feel a bit anxious waiting in tight spaces with strangers and an untidy appearance or lack of cleanliness can increase anxiety for everyone.



5. Hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste baskets.

Being in close proximity to strangers may be stressful, so long wait times can heighten the anxiety for some of your students.

Providing tissues and waste baskets in visible areas of the waiting areas is common practice, but it's important to also offer hand sanitizer. This will encourage good hygiene among your students and allow everyone to feel a bit more secure in the environment if someone does have need to sneeze, cough, or blow their nose.



6. Soft, calming music.

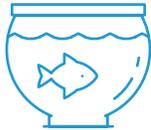
Silence can make people feel uncomfortable when they're standing in line or sitting in close quarters with strangers. Some people feel pressure to make small talk to try and eliminate silence and wind up putting other students in a position to hold conversations they may prefer not to have.

This is why calm music is a great way to keep your students relaxed. Please note that playing music in a business requires a business licensed account. You can find commercial-free, licensed music accounts from several places on the internet — SiriusXM for Business and Mood Media are two to check out.



7. Crosswords, puzzles, brain teasers, and Sudoku.

In addition to magazines, brain games are a great distraction for people waiting in line. Sudoku and crossword puzzles are entertaining crowd pleasers.



8. Add an aquarium.

Maintaining a nice fish tank in your office will require a bit more effort in terms of maintenance, but the payoff could be worth it. Many people find water elements to be relaxing and soothing.

The aquarium provides a point of concentration for your students and allows them to relax while they observe the fish swimming in the water.



9. Trivia games on the wait notification screen.

Companies such as Tap TV and Buzztime offer trivia game channels to help your students pass the time. For example, a trivia question will appear on the screen along with 4-5 multiple choice answers. A timer at the bottom of the screen indicates how much time is left to make their final selection before the correct answer is displayed.

This keeps people engaged and entertained and can even end up sparking a friendly competition with fellow students waiting together in your office. And best of all? Their focus is taken off of the fact that they're waiting (and they might even learn some cool facts to impress their friends!)



10. Pleasant lighting.

Lighting is known to play a major role in people's moods, so take a bit of the budget to invest in lamps and track lighting. Providing a calm setting that's easy on your student's eyes is one key way you can keep people feeling less irritated.

We all know how unpleasant it is to be stuck waiting in line in an office that is showered in fluorescent or other harsh lighting. Talk to a contractor or your building manager to switch outdated lighting to a more modern system that operates on a dimmer. If this isn't a possibility, consider keeping the overhead lights off and invest in well-placed floor and table lamps that add a bit of ambiance to the waiting area. One final trick is to unscrew every other fluorescent bulb; that will do wonders alone.



11. College newspaper and student program brochures.

Expand the reading material in your office to include copies of your college's newspaper and relevant campus information.

Students are often glued to their screens, so why not post some links around the office to help inform them about activities. Brochures about financial aid, enjoy taking a break from staring at their screens and so whether it's a subscription to your area's daily or weekly newspaper, having a bit of local news on hand that people can flip through allows students a break from their phone screen during longer wait times. Here's a [few books](#) you might consider in the Financial Aid office.



12. Implement a mobile check-in system.

Mobile check-in systems eliminate lines and crowded offices, increase productivity, and decrease operating costs. Have you ever actually gone through the process of waiting in your office?

If you haven't, go ahead and try it to get a feel for the experience—you might be surprised by what you discover.

However, with today's technology, there are mobile-enabled queuing systems capable of creating virtual lines that eliminate physical lines and reduce the number of students crowded within an office.

The technology is out there, but you'll want to ask a few questions as you check out the various systems available today:

- ▶ Does the system provide students with the ability to join these virtual lines from their mobile phone, home phone, an on-site kiosk or directly from your website?
- ▶ Are your students able to interact with the system if they need to scoot back in line while they run an errand or step outside to take an important personal phone call?
- ▶ Are students informed via text message updates as their turn approaches? When they reach the front of the line, do they receive a text message summoning them to the correct counter number?

Selecting the right automated queuing system for your education office needs will result in boosted productivity, happier staff, better response quality, and improved student satisfaction scores.

This last tip allows your students to wait for services however and wherever they choose by holding their spot in line with a mobile phone — no matter where they are!

This decreases your students' perceived wait time and equips busy offices with flexible solutions that provide absolute control over scheduling and student flow.

For more information on how to implement a mobile check-in system at your education office, please schedule a demo with QLess today!

Request Demo

About QLess

QLess is the global leader in wait management and mobile check-in. The company's patented, cloud-based technology helps colleges and universities lower operating costs and improve student experiences by eliminating lines and offering convenient ways to make and manage appointments. QLess clients span six continents and include the University of California, University of Melbourne, Santa Monica College, and many more.



99%
citizen satisfaction



75%
reduction of walkaways



40 million
current users



1,200+ years
of time saved

"QLess is a fantastic way for our Student Services Department to manage walk-ins and schedule appointments. Using QLess gives students more control over their wait times and has improved student satisfaction."

— Director of International Student Services, South Seattle College

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