



Streamlining Year 11 References: A Step Towards Efficiency and Equity

Managing Year 11 references is a challenge faced by many schools, particularly those without a Sixth Form. This issue was highlighted in a recent conversation with Celine, Careers, Enrichment and Progression Manager at Deptford Green School in South London. Her insights into the complexities of reference requests and student applications shed light on the urgent need for a more centralised and efficient process.

The Challenges of Year 11 References

In schools without a Sixth Form, students apply to multiple post-16 institutions. Our data shows that, on average, students submit applications to five different Sixth Forms or colleges. This means that a single student requires five reference requests, creating a bottleneck for the staff responsible for completing them.

Celine shared that before using Applicaa, the reference process was incredibly fragmented. Schools received reference requests in various formats—Word documents, Google Forms, emails, or even paper copies brought in by students. The inconsistency in requests meant that managing and tracking references became an overwhelming task, particularly in schools with large cohorts of Year 11 students.

Beyond references, schools are also responsible for tracking students' intended destinations. Reporting on where students enrol is not just a statutory duty; it's crucial for ensuring students find suitable post-16 pathways and remain enrolled for the full two years.

The Need for a Centralised Solution

Celine emphasised that applying to post-16 education can feel like navigating the “Wild West” for students, especially those from under-resourced backgrounds. Unlike UCAS, where university applications follow a standardised process, post-16 applications vary significantly between institutions.

A centralised approach to references and destination tracking could significantly ease this burden. With a streamlined system, schools could efficiently complete and track references while ensuring no student is overlooked. A uniform process would also help students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not have parental support in managing their applications.

How Appicaa is Making a Difference

Recognising these challenges, Appicaa has worked towards creating a solution that simplifies reference requests and destination tracking. By standardising reference forms and centralising the process, schools can save time and reduce administrative overload. The platform ensures all students receive the necessary references and that Sixth Forms get the critical information they need.

Additionally, the **Matching Hub**, a new feature inspired by university clearing systems, helps students who may have missed application deadlines or faced enrolment barriers find suitable post-16 options. This functionality is particularly beneficial for students who, due to lack of support, find themselves without a place in September.

The Impact on Schools and Students

A centralised reference and tracking system benefits both schools and students:

- **Reduced Workload:** Staff no longer need to juggle multiple formats for reference requests.
- **Greater Accuracy:** The risk of missing or lost references is minimised.
- **Better Student Support:** Schools can more effectively track and assist students at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).
- **Improved Enrolment Outcomes:** Students can access a system that helps them find appropriate courses based on their aspirations and grades.

Moving Forward

As Celine pointed out, having a streamlined process for references and destination tracking is essential for equity in education. Applica's ongoing development, shaped by real feedback from schools, aims to address these pressing challenges. By working together, we can create a system that better serves students, reduces administrative burdens, and ensures every young person finds a pathway that supports their future success.