

HOW TO BUILD HIGH-PERFORMANCE HIGHER EDUCATION BRANDS

JAYWING



Introduction

The last two years have brought unprecedented disruption to the higher education sector - with institution revenue challenged by declining income, increased deferment of places from international students and increasing uncertainty about Government grant provision.

This has been somewhat offset by the record-breaking number of UK undergraduate admissions for the 2021-2022 academic year, but the path forward for institutions remains uncertain. Ensuring effective recruitment for the 2022-2023 cycle is more important than ever and institutions must work harder to build brands that cut through to attract students, while at the same time embracing the value and importance of effective marketing performance to increase and convert undergraduate applications.

We take a closer look at three key challenges that higher education marketers will continue to tussle with into 2022 to drive student acquisition, adapt to the increasing pace of digital transformation and build a high-performing, higher education brand.



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DRIVING STUDENT ACQUISITION

Challenging the status quo.

The consequence of the global lockdown occurring throughout the annual recruitment period and the impact of Brexit depressing applications from potential EU students has forced institutions to challenge the status quo of their operations, both to preserve student acquisition and to build financial resilience for the future.

For many UK students, vast changes in the job market and ways of teaching mean students increasingly value the outcome of their education – the job they land after graduating – more than the experience of student life.

For digitally native 17 to 18-year-olds, institution choice is not just driven by your marketing, but also from content created by current students sharing their higher education experience on social media, particularly TikTok and YouTube.

Despite digital touchpoints being a key acquisition tool, university marketing channels often remain siloed, with few links between paid advertising, the content created by institutions to promote their courses, and the content actively shared and created by current and prospective students online.

Insight

Over the last few years at Jaywing, we've observed with interest the changes that have taken place in this sector. From seeing seasonal peaks like Clearing become significantly more competitive, to witnessing the growing demand from international students, particularly from outside Europe. The requirements for effective marketing and tracking have become even more complex.

As the requirement for more data and visibility grows, this must be balanced with the changing ecosystem in which we are executing our marketing - where we can only expect greater obscurity as time goes by. Ensuring that tracking and measurement solutions are in place that will set you up for success when it comes to gaining insights and being able to activate based on what you learn is crucial.

Arianne Donoghue

Paid Media Strategy Director, Jaywing

What drives potential applicants, what are they looking for and what will make them engage?

We explore three key components to student acquisition to drive marketing effectiveness, improve the efficiency of marketing spend and drive student applications:

Understanding your audience

Institutions must gain a deep understanding of the differing needs, triggers and behaviours of each key student segment; what drives them, what are they looking for and what will motivate them to engage? Motivations differ, and messaging must be tailored to meet these varying needs.

Engaging prospective students through the decision journey

At each stage of applicants' decision process, institutions can be ruled in or ruled out depending on individual decision criteria at each phase. It's not enough to simply make sure that students are aware of you.

Communicating the right message at the right time and through the right channel on the path to application submission is vital. Showcasing opportunities and real stories about life after graduation will ensure prospective applicants are more likely to convert. This messaging strategy should be combined with an understanding of what channel this messaging should be communicated through. YouTube may be most effective for real world experiences of student accommodation, while search engine optimisation drives consideration for students seeking specific information about courses.



It can be difficult to understand what parts of your communications strategy are having an impact.

The impact of each channel on acquisition

With the increasing proliferation of channels and media partners available, it can be difficult to understand what parts of your communication strategy are having an impact, what messaging is most effective in driving applicants through the journey, and which channels are most effective at each stage.

Understanding and gaining insights from the performance of your marketing investment enables better budget optimisation both in the short term and the long term, leading to better return on your marketing investment.



Key Takeouts

Consider the power of influencers

With 72% of Gen Z following influencers, there is an opportunity to capitalise on both macro and micro influencers. Macro influencers with large numbers of followers on social platforms can tap into platform reach, while micro influencers – existing students for example – might not have the same level of reach but do have highly targeted and engaged audiences.

Often, prospective students will more closely relate to this rather than direct marketing messaging from the university.

Don't forget retention

In market research that evaluated the impact of Covid-19 on the Clearing 2020 cycle, when asked the main reason students applied through Clearing, 40% of respondents had either changed their mind about the university they had initially chosen or the subject that they wanted to study. This is a powerful signal to universities that it's vital to continue to focus on applicant engagement after students have made their initial decision.

Personalise the digital experience

Personalised, relevant content today is an expectation, not an option. Prospective students expect tailored communications and journeys that reflect and are relevant to their needs.

Effectively personalising communications means both accurately segmenting leads and tailoring communications to meet the needs and attributes of these segments.

To gain insight, data should be collected throughout all interactions, starting with key information that enriches over time, rather than overwhelming them with requests for information at their initial registration of interest.





Address any gaps in your communications strategy

For prospective students choosing where to study, what was already a major life decision is now rife with uncertainty due to the pandemic. The ability of institutions to be transparent, clear, and timely has become a competitive differentiator as institutions work to secure tuition revenue.

When communicating with students it's important to be consistent across all channels, ensuring that students are confident that your institution is not only safe for teaching, but that the student experience will be enjoyable and rewarding. Looking to the 2022 - 2023 academic year, new student institution consideration will likely be focused on these key areas:

- What are the potential outcomes of study? What are the employment opportunities after graduation?
- What will the learning experience look like? Are lectures and tutorials still focused on virtual rather than in-person teaching?
- What will life look like this coming year - what opportunities will students have to socialise and have fun? And what about clubs, and student organisations?

Case Study

University of Sunderland

Results

Campus event attendance

+ 15%

UCAS fair interactions

+ 5%

Conversion rate

+ 6%

Surrounded by leading universities including Newcastle and Durham, the University of Sunderland was perceived as one attended by local people and wanted to change its perception.

Understanding the breadth of the University of Sunderland's challenges, Jaywing created a proposition that was far beyond anything else in the space. We dared Sunderland to be different. To forget about the rulebook and stand out from its competitors. We reimagined a bold, optimistic, and confident look and feel to the brand that immediately asks for a direct response, ensuring that the University of Sunderland is memorable long after open day.

The proposition focuses on powerful life-changing moments. That intimate moment you saw your future ahead of you. The moment you knew the University of Sunderland was the place for you. The moment you found your calling.



The strategy was supported by key touchpoints and materials throughout the student journey, including the prospectus, education fairs and open days. A completely personalised editorial-styled prospectus showcased the city's vibrancy, tailored with specific courses based on individual interests.

The University has seen success in an uncertain climate. Campus event attendance has risen by 15%, with an increase in the quality of UCAS fair interactions increasing by 5% from the previous year. Conversions from registration to attendance at open days also increased by 6%.

The proposition speaks to all audiences and is both flexible and scalable across all touchpoints, including social media and website activity. The unconventional yet compelling concept has worked beyond just a campaign; it has become embedded into the university's ethos.



CREATING DIGITAL-FIRST EXPERIENCES

Digital ecosystems within higher education are always developed with the best of intentions.

Yet, the unique challenges faced by institutions often leads to overly complex user journeys, legacy platforms and social channels that fail to deliver the experience needed for the wide variety of user audiences they seek to address.

According to eQAfy, the average UK higher education institution's brand website has more than 120,000 pages spread across the main website and sub-sites, with the University of Cambridge leading page numbers with a total of 1.9 million indexed pages across its main and sub-domains.

Additional complexity is driven by the number of active and legacy social channels created, both by the core marketing team, but also by faculties and facilities departments, leading to an exceptionally complex digital ecosystem that can often lead to inconsistent messaging and brand expression.

But does this really matter? Complexity, it can be argued, is a function of the unique digital needs of higher education institutions – derived from the diverse audiences and needs to be satisfied.

But simplified information architecture and user experience really does matter. Users expect streamlined and friction free journeys, and information needs to be relevant, accurate and timely. Every element of friction reduces the quality of experience and reduces the possibility of users meeting their final goals – a course application or offer of research funding.

The core of every digital transformation project must be understanding the needs of the user, their objectives and their experience in meeting those objectives – what works well and what does not. Using a range of online measurement tools and research techniques, the optimum digital experience can be defined, and solutions developed that drive engagement and journey conclusion.

Insight

A search-friendly, tested and optimised information architecture has become vital to all higher education organisations vying to acquire students in what has become a highly competitive market. There is a tendency (and temptation) to overwhelm the prospective student with signposts to all the things that make your organisation special. However, this approach typically leads to cognitive overload and choice paralysis.

Our experience tells us that journeys to course enrolment are complex, fragmented and occur over months of repeat visits.

Effective user experiences, like good tutors, take this very human behaviour into account, are not “shouty” and lead the student through their journey of discovery confidently, and with empathy to what is often a challenging and life-changing decision.

David Rubery

Head of UX & UCD, Jaywing

Key Takeouts

Ensure all content is optimised for SEO

On the journey to creating a streamlined and friction free journey on the university website, institutions must also efficiently execute SEO as part of their marketing plan. With already very complex user journeys, it's vital to update website pages with up-to-date staff biography pages, courses and blog content. Blog posts and other forms of content can be used to inform and educate prospective students and their parents.

For businesses in the education vertical, these can be a sustainable source of fresh content, ranging from details on specific courses, graduate success stories and university lifestyle advice.

Seamlessly connect campaigns

Attracting traffic to your university's site is important, but if you want PPC ads to lead prospective students to apply to your programs, consider the next phase in their student journey after clicking on your ad.

The ad shouldn't link to a generic landing page or the department's homepage. Instead, create a unique landing page that highlights the program based on the interests and needs of those potential students.



71% of students view university websites using mobile devices, so opt for a responsive site.

Improve user experience

University websites are the gateway to your institution, so it's important to get the basic technical aspects related to your site's user experience up to standard.

Conduct a thorough user experience audit to make sure that user journeys across your site are as simple as possible and limit the amount of friction for key user groups. Ideally this should be conducted via user research. Limit the use of downloadable PDF content where this content is as easily contained within a webpage.

Test and improve your page speed. Pages with a longer load time tend to have higher bounce rates and lower average time on page. Longer load times have also been shown to negatively affect conversions.

Case Study

University of Portsmouth

Results

In the year since launch, our partnership has seen:

- **Session page views doubled**
- **Session duration increased by over a minute**
- **Bounce rate decreased by 10%**

The higher education sector has undergone a massive shift across the last five years, with increasing competition to secure students, an expanding international market and organisations facilitating new B2B relationships.

In response to this, and as part of their strategy to become a market leader, the University of Portsmouth appointed Jaywing to help deliver a “transformational leap forward in the digital experience”. This aimed to create an enjoyable, personalised digital experience that would make choosing the University of Portsmouth an easy decision.



Jaywing’s team worked collaboratively with the university’s own experts in an extensive discover phase, to research and redefine how the University is digitally marketed.

We subsequently delivered a new website based on the powerful Sitecore platform and hosted on Azure. The program continues with a series of iterations, refining and releasing new functionality as use of the site evolves.



BUILDING YOUR BRAND

Many higher education institutions rely on their reputations to attract students and research funding.

Yet, as the market for student acquisition and research funding intensifies, the role of brand is becoming more and more significant.

While many Russell Group university brands are founded on their heritage and academic authority, it's becoming increasingly difficult for other higher education institutions to stand out from the pack. For most students and other stakeholders, it can be difficult to distinguish between these different education institutions. Many have a surprising level of congruity in terms of messaging, content, and touchpoint use, creating a sea of sameness.

For students, deciding on an institution has both emotional and rational contexts, and the lack of a distinctive brand experience makes it hard for individual institutions to stand out from the crowd.

As a higher education institution, your brand is your promise, convincing your potential applicants, research investors and partners that the money and time they invest is worthwhile.

Insight

Universities are, by nature, varied and complex – pretty much a destination brand in their range of products and lifestyle, all in equal measure. However, in seeking to showcase everything, it's impossible to stand out.

So, much like how we perceive a city or country, it's important to distil a select number of tenets to be known for. Preferably ones that transcend the standard, practical statistics and services.

To stand for something, in order to stand out. As challenging as this may be, it's a powerful way to unify the inevitable variety of people it represents.

Ben Marshall

Creative Director, Jaywing

Creating your brand

There are three key factors that should be considered when working to build a strong higher education brand:

Understand your audience

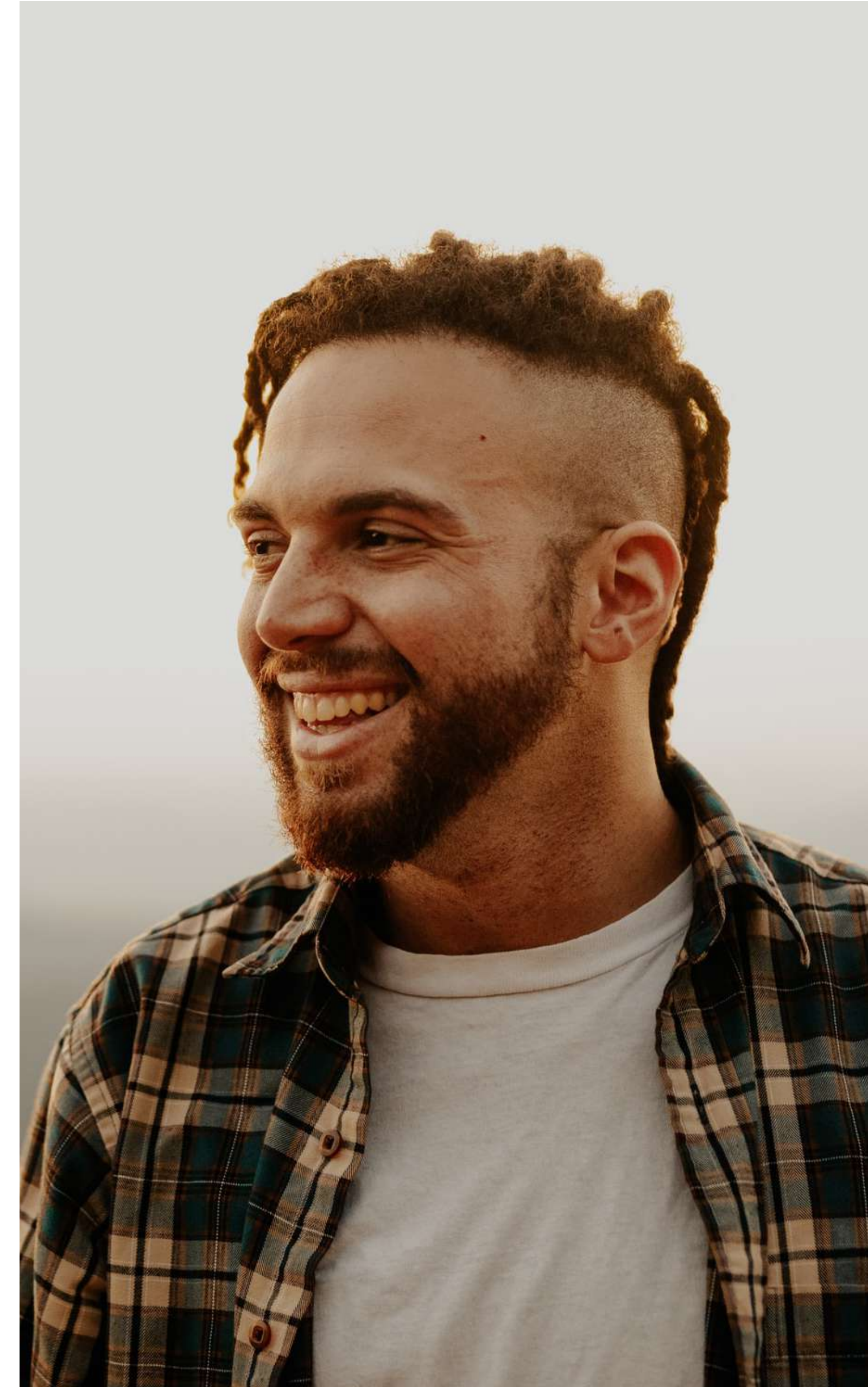
Your potential applicants, research investors and partners have unique characteristics and when defining your brand you need to understand what drives them, what are they looking for and what will make them engage.

A key part of creating a high-performance brand is understanding where the biggest opportunities lie and how you as an institution should engage and deliver against your targets' needs.

Understand your institution

Understand what makes your institution unique and what you bring to your offer that is distinctive from the market and your competitors.

This includes the experience of studying with your university, your location and your key strengths, in research, in courses, in your faculty or the facilities you offer. It's the combination and correlation of these three factors that will better define your higher education brand.





Understand your competition

A significant number of institutions offer higher education courses in the UK, from smaller boutique organisations offering specialist courses in drama, design, agriculture or other faculty areas, to the mega-universities of Nottingham Trent and the University of Manchester. But most are likely to compete with a small set of other institutions which share similar characteristics.

It's important to be able to understand what your relative strengths and weaknesses are with closer competitors. When you think about your institution, in what areas do you lead, which area is your relative strength about the same, and in which areas are you weak? This analysis helps to identify competitive strengths and potential missed opportunities to help more strongly define your position in the market.

Bringing your brand to life

For many people, the word brand is naturally linked with the word logo. But a true brand is more than the graphic design of your name. A brand represents all parts of your institution, and indeed the logo is part of that, but it's also about how you communicate both externally and internally, the way your faculties engage with their students and potential students, and extends as far as the courses you offer, providing consideration in new course and faculty development.

An institution's brand positioning should set it apart, reflect its strengths, values and mission. To avoid generic or misguided messaging, your marketing team (and other key stakeholders) must first clearly define your institution's unique traits and positive attributes, and how they align with your target audiences' aspirations, challenges and educational preferences.

All of this sounds like it's a lot. And it should be. To work well, a brand development program should be reflected throughout the whole institution. But a strong brand reaps benefits. Taking examples from the commercial world, strong brands deliver higher levels of growth and share of market. Both are critical considering the high level of competition for the hearts and minds of potential applicants, investors and partners.



Case Study

University of Nottingham


The University of Nottingham asked Jaywing to reposition its brand to build its profile to all stakeholders and enhance its reputation globally. Focusing on developing a more sophisticated look and feel, and a stronger, more differentiated brand experience to help meet the University's strategic challenges was needed.

Informed by market research and stakeholder engagement, the University's distinctive brand brought a new era of being both bold and confident as an institution. Already synonymous with outstanding international education and world-class research, the brand's overarching proposition 'Discover our world' builds on the University's unprecedented investment in the future of research excellence in an evidenced and authentic way.

For launch, an inspiring and impactful campaign centred on the introduction of the University's £200 million investment to transform its research infrastructure through the funding of six new 'Beacons of Excellence'.

These multi-disciplinary research groups focus on creating ingenious solutions to today's most significant global challenges; exploring new ways to feed the world, helping to end global slavery, transforming healthcare, greener transport, securing the sustainable bioeconomy of the future and smart products.

The campaign expanded across a vast suite of material to articulate the University's brand story across a brand microsite, brand film, on-campus signage and assets and through press, out of home, display advertising and social media, in addition to dovetailing into all other communications activity, collateral and messaging.



University of
Nottingham
UK | China | Malaysia

Version 1.0
March 2017

A world beyond ordinary

Brand and identity guidelines





University of
Nottingham
UK • CHINA • MALAYSIA

Welcome

Here is a powerful expression of our identity that not only reflects our proud reputation and heritage, but also looks confidently towards our future.

Our identity uniquely symbolises the reputation and values we've built up over 120 years.

Our story is told with passion and authenticity, and our identity has been crafted to bring our story to life.

Every decision has been taken deliberately to build up to the bigger picture. These guidelines are built on detail.

This document contains everything you need to communicate the University's strengths in a way that celebrates our extraordinary world.

University of Nottingham
Diversity and Identity guidelines

Welcome | Our identity | Tools and templates

Looking towards the future | Our vision | **This big idea** | Our strengths | Our values | Our personality

A world beyond ordinary

This embodies and underpins everything we do

A world beyond ordinary isn't to be used as a replacement phrase over information. It's a reminder to your communication team to ensure all relevant fact sets are integrated across to support the University.

University of Nottingham
UK CHINA MALAYSIA

Lead it.
Exceed it.

Postgraduate prospectus 2018

Award-winning teaching and career prospects

The highly innovative programme will allow you to develop your research skills and gain a range of transferable skills.



Rated 9th in the UK for research

Research Excellence Framework 2014



£44,500 scholarship places over 150 countries across all our campuses



An inspiring research portfolio worth £600m



Pushed into the top 100 universities worldwide

QS World University Rankings 2015



£200m investment to build research for the future





Start your journey

Medicine and Health Sciences

- Academic and Clinical Studies
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Health Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Physics
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Statistics
- Teaching and Learning
- Therapeutic Sciences
- Translational Research
- Wellbeing and Health

Science

- Astronomy
- Biology
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Health Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Physics
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Statistics
- Teaching and Learning
- Therapeutic Sciences
- Translational Research
- Wellbeing and Health

Doctoral Training Programmes

- Academic and Clinical Studies
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Health Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Physics
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Statistics
- Teaching and Learning
- Therapeutic Sciences
- Translational Research
- Wellbeing and Health

Engineering

- Academic and Clinical Studies
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Health Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Physics
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Statistics
- Teaching and Learning
- Therapeutic Sciences
- Translational Research
- Wellbeing and Health

Information

- Academic and Clinical Studies
- Biomedical Sciences
- Biotechnology
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemical Sciences
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Engineering
- Environmental Science
- Health Sciences
- Life Sciences
- Mathematics
- Medicine
- Physics
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Statistics
- Teaching and Learning
- Therapeutic Sciences
- Translational Research
- Wellbeing and Health

Wellcome Sanger Institute

Our £200m vision for research

We are making the largest research investment in our history

The genome revolution is now reaching its peak. We are now able to sequence the entire genome of any organism in just a few days. This has opened up a new world of possibilities for understanding the genetic basis of disease and for developing new treatments.

Our goal is to build on this success by developing new technologies and approaches that will allow us to study the genome in even greater detail. We will focus on three main areas of research:

- Highly targeted and personalised medicine** – We will develop new ways of identifying the genetic causes of disease and of tailoring treatments to individual patients.
- Precision imaging** – We will develop new ways of visualising the structure and function of the brain and other organs.
- Precision therapeutics** – We will develop new ways of treating disease by targeting specific genetic defects.

Smart industrial systems

Future Food

Green Chemicals

Wellcome Sanger Institute

© Wellcome Sanger Institute 2015

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Services for students

Your support network

To help you make the most of your time with us, we're here to support you every step of the way. We offer a full range of services, so you can focus on your studies and enjoy all that Nottingham has to offer.

Academic and Disability Support

We provide individual support for students with specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, autism, ADHD, and other specific learning difficulties. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Financial Support

We provide financial support for students who are unable to pay their fees or who are unable to cover their living costs. We offer a range of support services, including:

- Grants
- Scholarships
- Student loans
- Emergency funds

Student Service Centres

Our Student Service Centres are located in every faculty and provide a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Counselling Service

We offer a confidential counselling service for students who are experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Chaplaincy and Faith Support

We provide spiritual and faith support for students of all faiths and beliefs. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Childcare Services

We provide childcare services for students who have children. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

The University Health Service

We provide health services for students, including GP, dental, and mental health services. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Visas and Immigration

We provide support for students who are applying for visas and immigration. We offer a range of support services, including:

- One-to-one support
- Group support
- Online support
- Support for students with specific learning difficulties

Discover the full range of support services

Visit our website for more information:

- www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices

 **University of
Nottingham**
UK • CHINA • MALAYSIA



**Achieve it in a world
beyond ordinary**

Undergraduate prospectus 2018

Supporting your studies

Studying at university is very different to studying at school or college. You will need to develop new skills and strategies to succeed. Our Learning Support team can help you with everything from time management to writing essays.

Research study

Research study is a key part of your university experience. You will need to develop new skills and strategies to succeed. Our Learning Support team can help you with everything from time management to writing essays.

Learn to improve

Learn to improve your study skills and become a more effective learner. Our Learning Support team can help you with everything from time management to writing essays.

University Park Campus

The University Park Campus is a beautiful area with a mix of modern and traditional buildings. It is a great place to study and live.

Jubilee Campus

Jubilee Campus is a modern, vibrant area with a mix of modern and traditional buildings. It is a great place to study and live.

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 University of Nottingham

Discover our world

Where we unlock the potential of our 45,000 students both in and out of the classroom

nottingham.ac.uk/world

University of Nottingham
an award winning university

Discover
our world

Where our ground breaking
research transforms lives
around the globe

nottingham.ac.uk/world

University of Nottingham
 THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

Discover our world

Join our global family of 270,000 alumni – making their mark on the world

www.nottingham.ac.uk/world



University of Nottingham
An international institution

Discover our world

Where our stunning campuses
in the UK, China and Malaysia
will inspire you every day

Nottingham Academic

University of Nottingham
an OPEN UNIVERSITY

Discover
our
world

nottingham.ac.uk/world

University of Nottingham
UK · CHINA · MALAYSIA

**Discover
a world of
innovation**

**Discover how our pioneering invention
of MRI continues to transform lives
and medical care across the world**

nottingham.ac.uk/world

 University of
Nottingham
an Oxbridge University

Discover
how we
can end
slavery

Learn how we're using
cutting-edge research to
achieve a world of freedom

nottingham.ac.uk/world

The advertisement features a background of golden wheat. In the top left corner is the University of Nottingham logo, which includes a stylized tree and the text 'University of Nottingham' and 'Leading in Learning'. The central text, enclosed in a white rectangular border, reads 'Discover a world beyond hunger'. Below this text is a photograph of a small, modern, white and green automated farming machine, possibly a seed drill or sensor, positioned in a field. At the bottom, the text 'Discover how we're fighting hunger by creating more resilient nutritious crops to feed our crowded planet' is displayed. The website address 'nottingham.ac.uk/world' is at the very bottom.

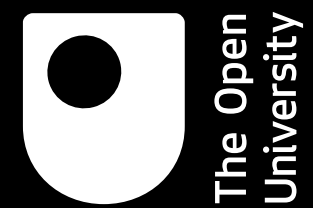
University of Nottingham
Leading in Learning

Discover a world beyond hunger

Discover how we're fighting hunger by creating more resilient nutritious crops to feed our crowded planet

nottingham.ac.uk/world

[illegible]



At Jaywing, we work extensively with the UKs leading education institutions and understand what it takes to create high-performing higher education brands.

JAYWING

Want to hear more? Talk to us.

jaywing.com
chancenothing@jaywing.com
0333 370 6500

Everything is changing.

Our real-time world is unpredictable, complex and relentlessly challenging. Certainty is rare, and increasingly valuable. It takes a different kind of agency to deliver immediate results and long-term business growth. Jaywing is a data-powered integrated agency, bringing together 300 of the best minds in data intelligence, creative engagement and channel performance to uncover unique insights that enable smarter outcomes. The result? Better performing, effective solutions that create certainty, maximise opportunity and eliminate chance.