



# Reaching the next generation of students

Three trends driving recruitment and engagement



# Opportunities to enhance recruitment and the student experience

Facing intense competition across Europe, educational institutions are looking for ways to build their brands and engage better with students. By removing in-person contact, COVID put a huge barrier in their way—not least in terms of recruitment and enrolment. To overcome these challenges, higher education embraced digital tools, enabling interaction across the student lifecycle, from admissions and module selection to learning and pastoral care.

With the continued globalisation of the sector and sustained competition, there's a pressing need for institutions to work smarter and realign their offerings to improve engagement and the student experience.

Here are three trends that are showing great promise.



## Key UK statistics from 2021

**43.9%**

Undergraduate application rate for UK-domiciled 18-year-olds<sup>1</sup>

**19%** ↑

**Increase** in applications from students from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>2</sup>

**58%**

of students responding to an ONS survey advised they would defer starting university if courses would be delivered exclusively online<sup>3</sup>

## TREND 1

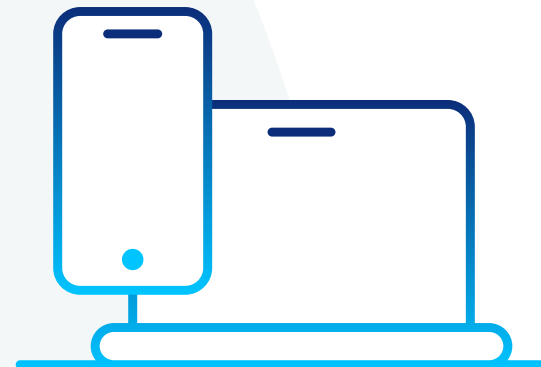
# Recruiting, engaging and inspiring in the digital space

Filling the void created by a lack of face-to-face engagement, institutions responded with a host of virtual activities, including interviews, Open Days and tours—delivered on a range of platforms such as Zoom and TikTok.

The take-up was widespread, with some 75% of institutions claiming that the fallout of COVID had changed the way they use technology to support recruitment and enrolment forever.<sup>4</sup>

While most campuses are now open for in-person learning again, these tools will continue to work alongside face-to-face events to bring added benefit not just in terms of minimising travel costs and increasing convenience, but in improving data and accessibility—and through that, the diversity of applicants.

The largest age group among TikTok's 100 million users is **18- to 24-year-olds.**<sup>5</sup>



## Next moves

- 1 Follow the lead of your student employees** who conduct campus tours and create social media. They know which platforms and stories will be authentic, entertaining and compelling, and their testimonials are what prospective students really want to hear.
- 2 Train staff on CRM and virtual meeting tools** so they can easily meet with and stay in touch with candidates.
- 3 Even as campuses open, continue virtual tours** to provide more inclusive access to prospective students who might not be able to visit due to distance, finances or a lack of transportation.



## Digital transformation in action

While reaching out to applicants electronically isn't new, the capture of that information should be.

In fact, **more than half of institutions have said that cloud services will impact their enrolment and admissions management.**<sup>6</sup>



With a CRM system, recruiting staff can capture every touch—from emails and texts to internet forms—to better lead prospective students on a personalised journey.

## TREND 2

# Digitised and automated student services in recruitment and admissions

The flexibility, convenience and cost savings of virtual services mean they are likely here to stay even as students return to campus. Even pre-pandemic, services requiring paper forms, in-person visits or long wait times no longer made sense in our on-demand world. Students today expect their experience to be personalised and digital.

Digitising services helps create a seamless and tailored experience for students as they apply for scholarships, submit their deposit, register for classes, pay tuition and check on requirements as their university journey progresses. It eases paperwork and eliminates outdated technology, freeing up time for staff and faculty to facilitate the high-touch communications that build successful connections between students and institutions.

**56%** of surveyed institutions said student services is an area where cloud services are benefiting their institution's operations.<sup>7</sup>

“

The appetite for introducing efficiencies through technology is changing. In order to be a world-class university, we have to be able to provide world-class services, and in order to deliver this we need to have the right systems to support those services.”

STEPHEN O'DEA, admissions officer,  
The National University of Ireland, Galway

## Next moves

- 1 Replace the “pivot” with planning.** Assess current tools and identify best practices for digitising services. Are the digital tools purchased in the rush to go remote the best options? What functional silos still exist and how can technology tools eliminate them? What manual recruitment functions can be improved?
- 2 Support automation that lets staff and faculty focus on value-added work.** Chatbots can answer simple questions to free staff for more complex requests. Digitising basic functions like filling out paperwork, chasing down signatures and entering data allows people more time to innovate and handle higher-level tasks.
- 3 Use data to drive dialogue.** By being able to call up detailed information, all admissions staff can engage more confidently and personally with students, ensuring continuity and encouraging them to feel valued.



## Digital transformation in action

In the past, there was a lag between enrolling and registering for classes.

Today's students expect to fill out an enrolment application, immediately register for classes, pay their fees and start an online class in the same day.

With better digitisation and integration between offices, it's possible.



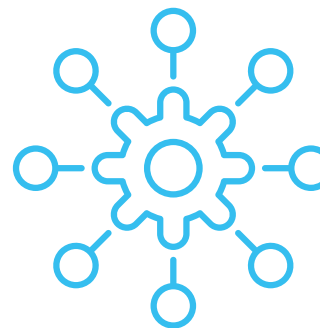
## TREND 3

# Managing recruitment and admissions on an international scale

There's a steadily growing desire for individuals to broaden their learning experiences and study internationally. Concurrently, many universities and academic bodies are working towards globalisation, creating opportunities for the 'overseas campus'.

This is a new world, bringing new challenges including the need to create a consistent and personalised experience at every single touchpoint. In Europe, institutions are well placed to meet this need and drive ambitious recruitment targets, but to do so, they need a responsive and integrated system capable of accommodating multiple locations and various application and admissions processes. And of course, these systems must be able to seamlessly deliver key data at every stage.

**60%** of surveyed CIOs and senior campus IT officials said "data analytics" was a very important institutional priority, **but only 22%** said their IT investment in analytics was very effective.<sup>8</sup>



## Next moves

- 1 Break down the silos.** Integrate data so that every stakeholder—including recruiters, as well as prospective or current students—has a complete, non-compartmentalised data set that works to common standards.
- 2 Invest in the cloud.** Avoiding the time-consuming challenges of back-ups and updates, cloud services are always on and available 24/7/365, ensuring that everyone can work effectively and consistently, wherever they are in the world.
- 3 Get up close and personal.** Engaging with a global audience is challenging and time-consuming, with potential to lose vital contact. By removing inefficiencies, it's possible to accelerate the recruitment process from application through decision-making, while also keeping close track of each applicant's progress—enabling personal intervention when necessary.



## Digital transformation in action



We were really keen to find a new admissions system that's really adapted to cope with different needs in different countries, but still meet the Heriot-Watt need of having simple standard processes that were effective and able to manage our data more efficiently. And CRM Recruit just stood out as being the most modern, effective application system we could find."

**PAUL TRAVILI**, academic registrar,  
Heriot-Watt University





# Data + digital = New opportunities to recruit and engage

While the COVID pandemic created new challenges for the education sector, it also prompted rapid digital transformation—to beneficial effect. Many institutions have emerged empowered by data and emboldened by new opportunities to engage with students more effectively, not least in admissions and enrolment.

As the sector becomes more international and intensely competitive, recruiting professionals don't just need to consider accessibility and diversity, they need to think globally, locally and digitally. The ability to recruit virtually, digitise services and capture new data will be critical for finding best-fit students who will thrive at the university of their choice.

Supporting the complete student lifecycle, CRM Recruit meets this need while complying with all statutory requirements. With powerful data at its core, it enhances engagement and recruitment activities, while also generating information to help educational institutions become more agile and able to respond to change.



To learn more about what digital transformation can do for your recruitment and enrolment efforts, visit [Ellucian.com](https://www.ellucian.com).

[Learn More](#)



<sup>1</sup> UCAS, cited by Wonkhe, "[Everything from the UCAS June deadline data](#)," 7th August 2021

<sup>2</sup> UCAS, "[Students Aim High with University Applications for Next Year](#)," 29th October 2020

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics, "[Coronavirus and the impact on students in higher education in England: September to December 2020](#)," 21st December 2020

<sup>4</sup> Chronicle of Higher Education, *Strategic Tech Decisions During the Pandemic*, 2021

<sup>5</sup> Sprout Social, "[Social media demographics to inform your brand's strategy in 2021](#)," March 9, 2021

<sup>6-7</sup> The Chronicle of Higher Education, *Strategic Tech Decisions During the Pandemic*, 2021

<sup>8</sup> The Campus Computing Project, *2019 Campus Computing: The 30th National Survey of Computing and Information Technology in American Higher Education*