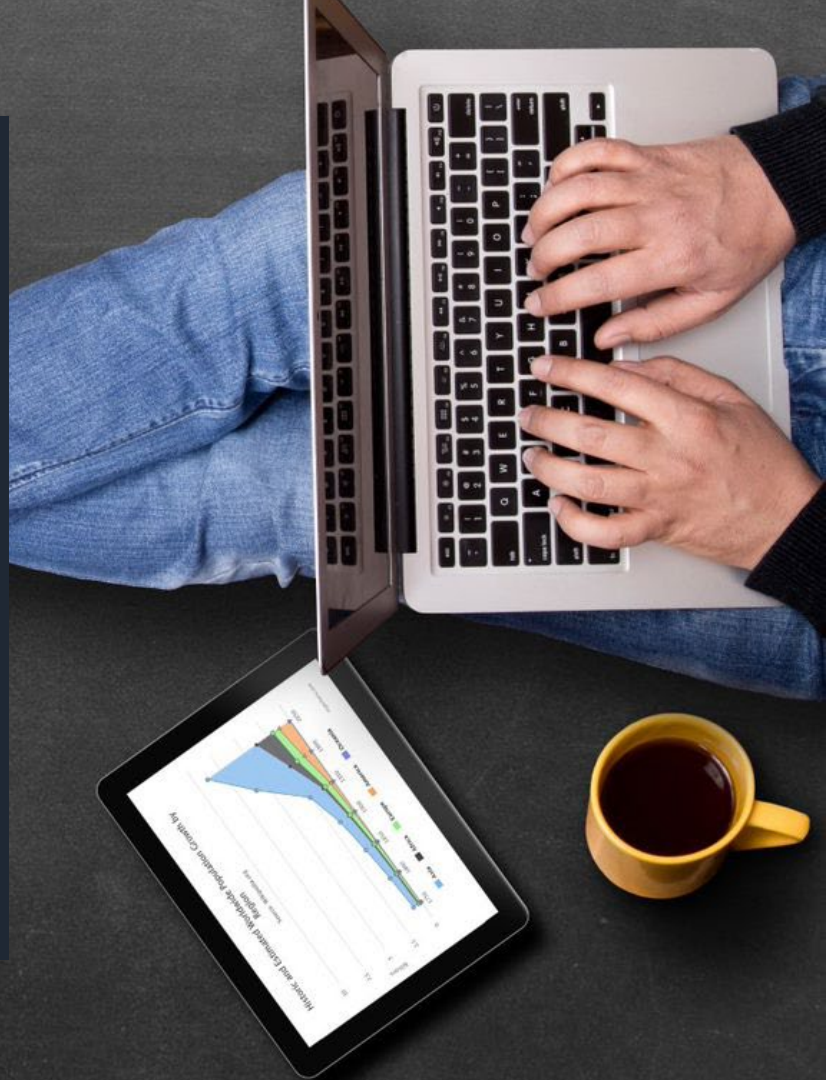


Insight Newsletter

April 2022

UCAS



Welcome to the UCAS Media Insight Newsletter – April 2022.

In the midst of Easter Break and with a Bank Holiday looming large, some of us are taking advantage of a rare and welcome respite. But it'll be a brief one for your marketing department, because it's peak season to engage with two of the most important audience types for universities and colleges:

This month we took a close look at **the 2022 unplaced applicants** who can use (and be contacted via) UCAS Extra – as well as next year's hopefuls AKA the **2023 pre-applicants**.

We looked at when's best to engage (clue: right now) and what makes a successful campaign.

Let's get stuck in.

What are students doing?

Across ucas.com

WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top searched for subjects on UCAS Search in March 2022

Position for
March 2022

=	1	Medicine
▲ ¹	2	Psychology
▲ ¹	3	Law
▼ ²	4	Nursing
▲ ¹	5	Business

▲ ¹	6	Physiotherapy
▲ ¹	7	Computer science
▼ ³	8	Midwifery
▲ ¹	9	Economics
▲ ⁴	10	Architecture

▲
Change in
position since
March 2021



WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

ucas.com users: Top ten non-UK countries in March 2022



Position for
March 2022

▲ ²	1	China
=	2	India
▼ ²	3	United States
▲ ¹	4	Nigeria
▼ ¹	5	Ireland
=	6	Hong Kong
▲ ³	7	France
▼ ¹	8	Pakistan
=	9	United Arab Emirates
▲ ²	10	Malaysia

Change in
position since
March 2021

WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

ucas.com users: Top ten UK cities in March 2022



POSTCODE DISTRICT MAP

Position for
March 2022

=	1	London
=	2	Birmingham
=	3	Glasgow
=	4	Manchester
▲ ¹	5	Leeds
▲ ⁴	6	Liverpool
▲ ⁹	7	Croydon
▲ ¹	8	Edinburgh
▲ ⁴	9	Belfast
▼ ⁵	10	Bristol

Change in position
since March 2021



WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top undergraduate pages on ucas.com in March 2022

Position for
March 2022



=	1	Tracking your UCAS application
▲ ¹	2	Applying to university
▼ ₁	3	Replying to your UCAS undergraduate offers
=	4	UCAS undergraduate: When to apply
=	5	How to write a UCAS undergraduate personal statement

▲
Change in
position since
March 2021



Audience in focus:

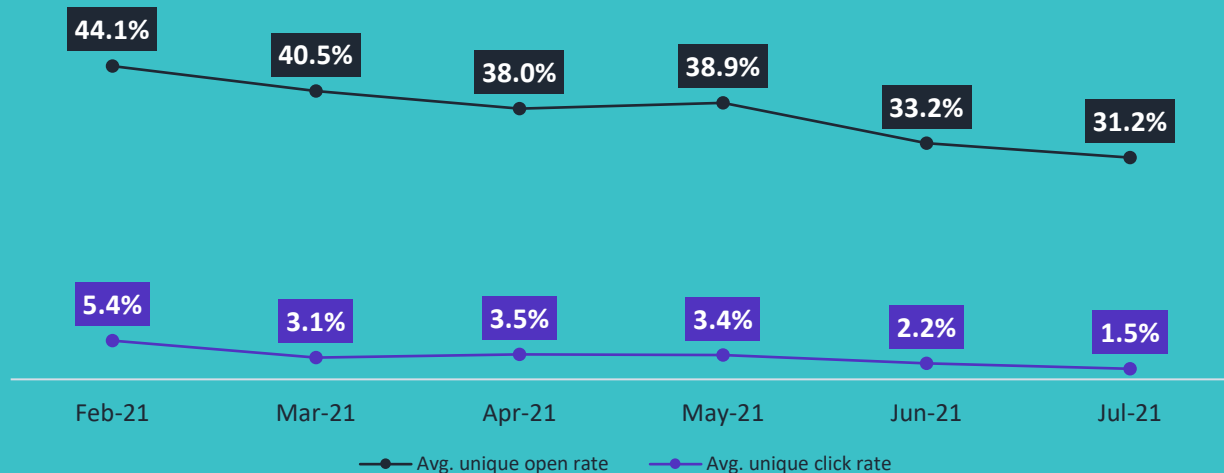
Extra unplaced applicants

AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Who are they and when can you contact them?

>

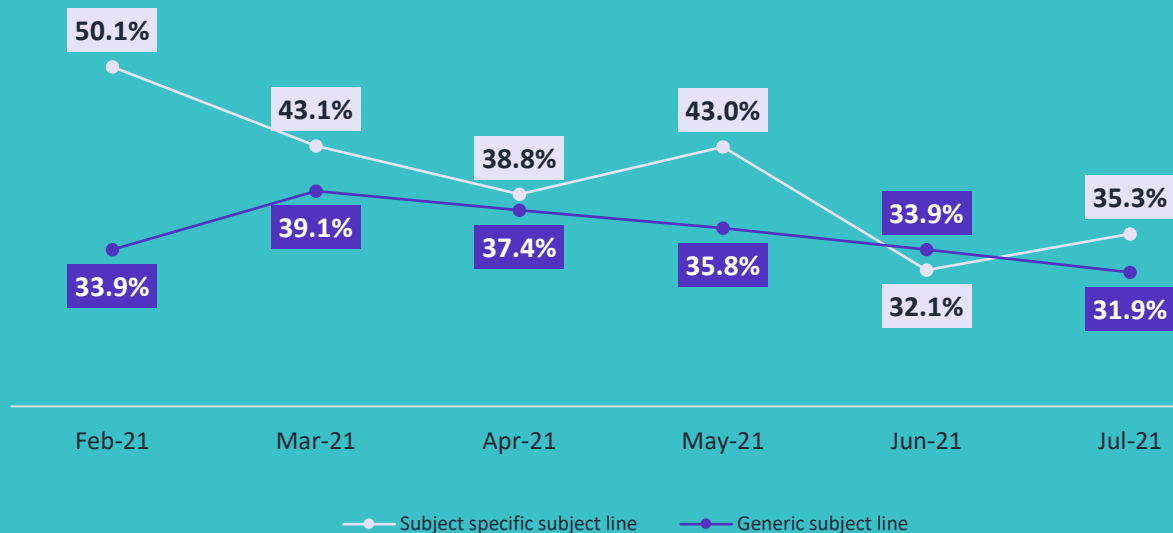
If applicants included five choices on their application, have received decisions from all five, and weren't accepted, or if they declined the offers they received, they will be able to use Extra (between 25 February and 4 July this year).



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

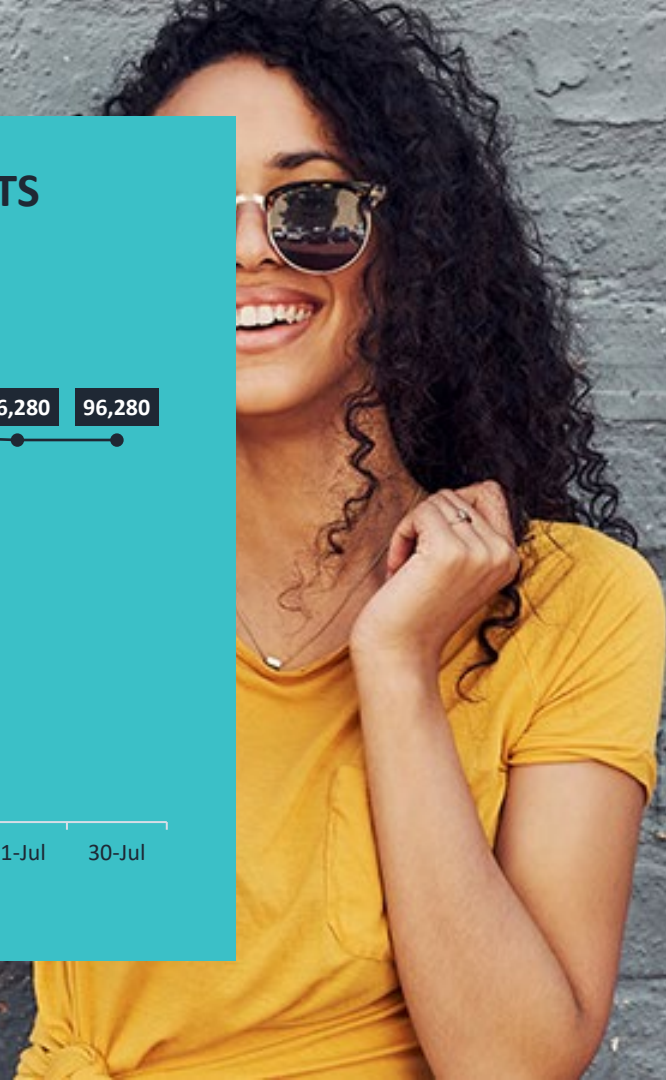
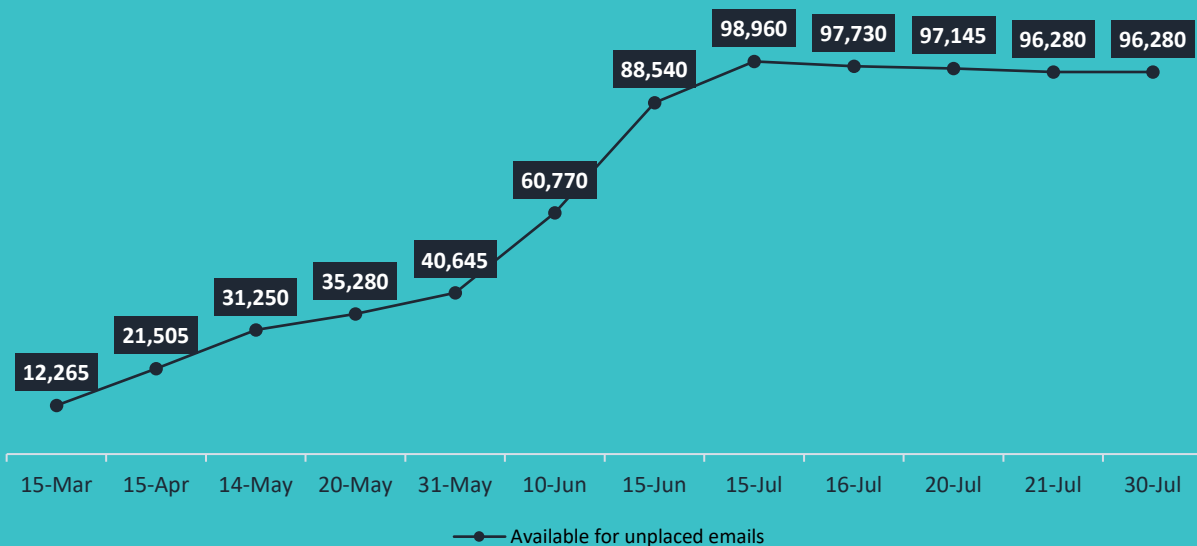
Subject specific subject lines resonate well with this audience

Extra unplaced 2021 open rates



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Unplaced opt-ins from 2021 entry



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Audience demographics for the 2022 entry cohort so far

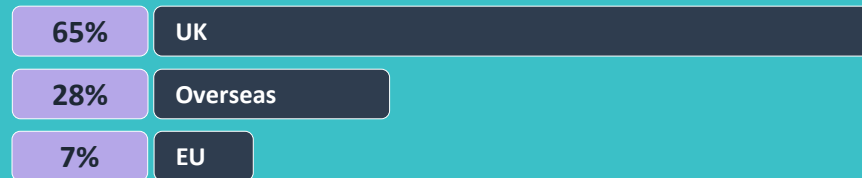
Gender



Age



Domicile



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Top preferred subjects for the unplaced 2022 entry cohort so far

1	Medicine (non-specific)
2	Adult nursing
3	Midwifery
4	Teacher training
5	Others in subjects allied to medicine

6	Design studies
7	Dentistry
8	Economics
9	Drama
10	Veterinary medicine and dentistry

Top preferred subjects for the unplaced 2021 entry cycle at the end of the Extra period in July:

1	Nursing
2	Creative arts and design
3	Business and management
4	Medicine and dentistry
5	Subjects allied to medicine not otherwise specified
6	Computing
7	Engineering
8	Education and teaching
9	Health and social care
10	Law

AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Highest performing Extra unplaced subject lines in February-April 2021



Apply to study Medicine or Allied Health at Buckingham



Prof. invites you to join him at his new fashion academy: Discovery Day, [date]



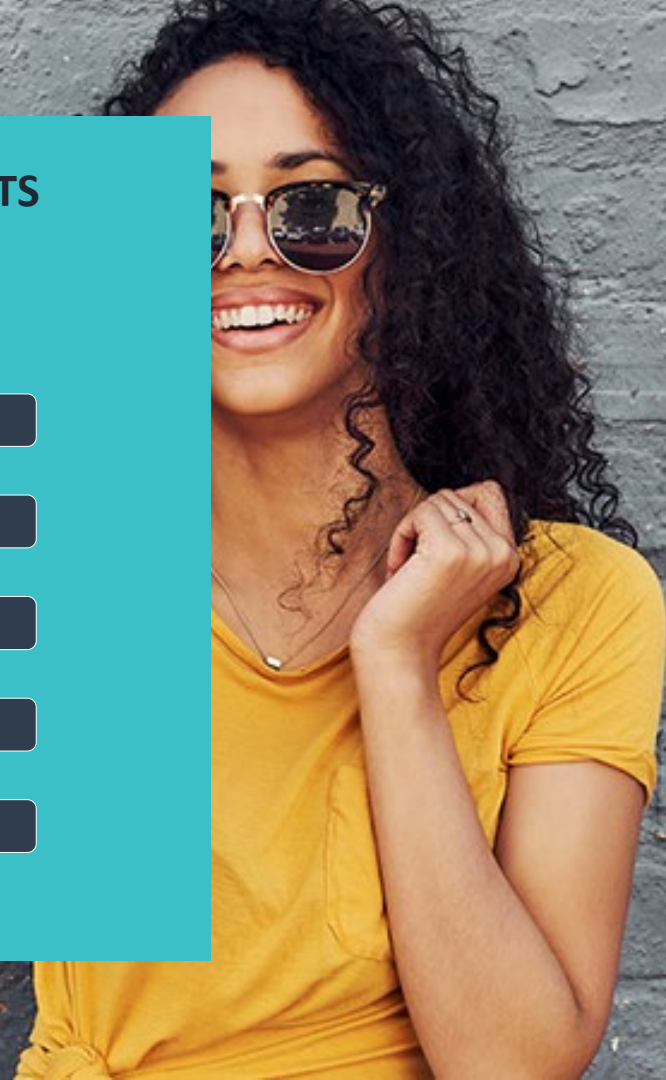
%%FIRSTNAME%%, it's not too late to go to university in 2021



%%Firstname%%, Apply through UCAS Extra to study Business & Management



%%FIRSTNAME%%, don't worry, you can still start uni this September



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED APPLICANTS

Highest performing Extra unplaced subject lines from February-April 2022



Apply with UCAS Extra and study business in 2022



There's still time to apply to the [University/College]



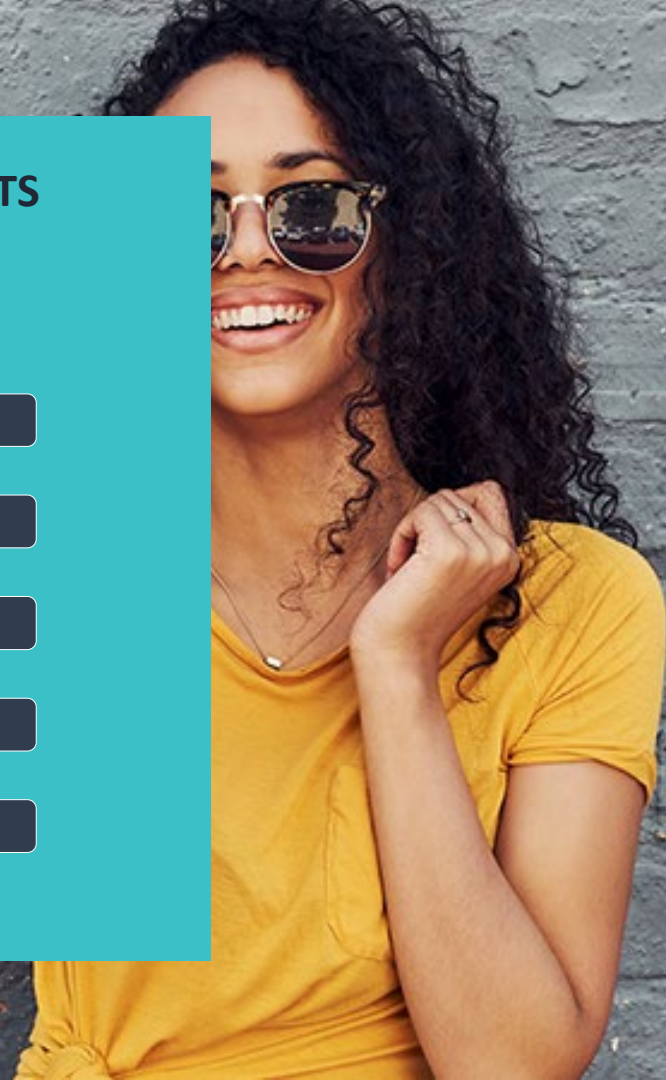
%%Firstname%%, discover more about studying at [University/College]



Study UK medicine at [University/College] – places available.



%%Firstname%%, it's not too late to go to university in 2022



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: EXTRA UNPLACED

In one of our focus groups, some potential applicants told us what they liked and disliked about a variety of unplaced email creative designs. Lists of courses or linked course buttons were popular features that they found useful.

“

‘Clear list of the courses’

“

‘everything is easily accessible’

“

[I like it because it's] ‘organised’

“

[I like it because it's] ‘not just clumped up paragraphs’

“

‘The different boxes make it easy to pick apart different bits’

PERSONALISED

COURSE BUTTONS

STREAMLINED

EYE
CATCHING

EASY TO READ
IMAGES

COLOURFUL

CLEAN, SHORT
AND SWEET



TOP 5 TIPS: ENGAGING WITH UNPLACED APPLICANTS

1

Personalise your messaging

Mentioning courses by name in the subject line of your email **can increase CTR by 16.2%**.

2

Drip feed and spread out

Opt-ins tend to **double between March and April**, then increase almost five-fold by July. But **engagement is at its highest early on**, so plan for a campaign which starts early and goes the distance.

3

Think and plan for diversity

This audience comprises all ages and locations. Only **47% are aged 18 or below**, and only 65% are UK-based. **Almost 30% are international applicants** from outside of the EU. Make sure your messaging is universal, or double down on your targeting.

4

Be prepared for changes in subjects

Right now, **5 of the 10 most popular subjects** for this year's unplaced applicants are **related to medicine**.

But **we know this can change** as Extra continues – so be ready to contact students with interests across a whole range of subjects.

5

Keep it simple

Focus groups with unplaced applicants showed us that they're most likely to engage with emails which are **clear, organised, and accessible**. Don't overdo the design and make sure you keep things concise.

(The best performing subject lines were also those with **very clear propositions & calls-to-action**.)

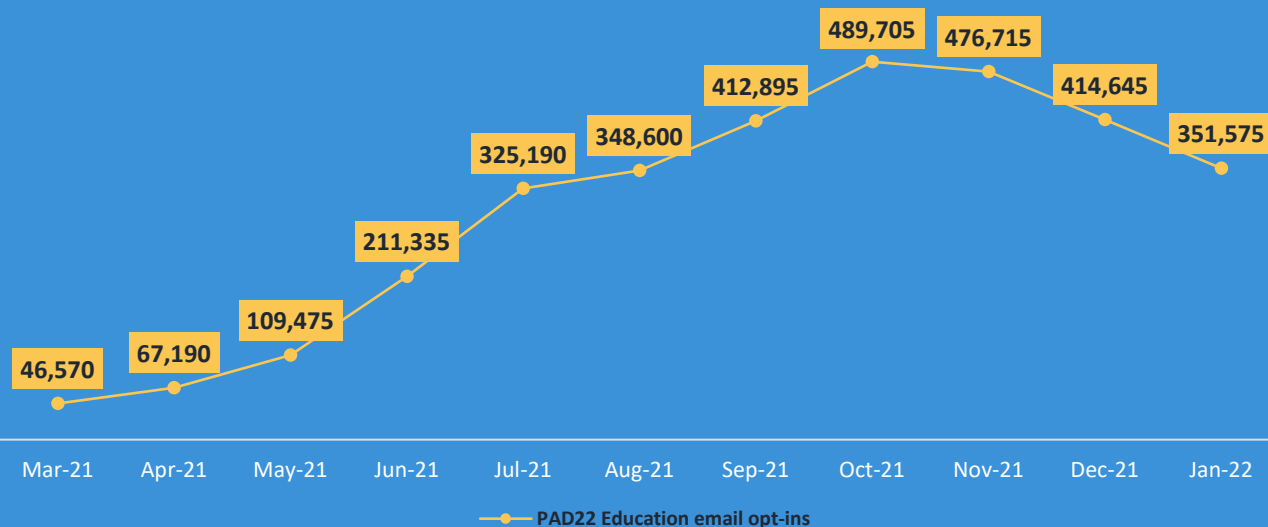
Audience in focus:

Pre-applicant database (PAD)

AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: PRE-APPLICANTS

Who are they and when can you contact them?

- Our pre-applicant database (PAD) consists of 16-17 year olds researching their HE options, collected from UCAS exhibition attendee sign-ups and from those who sign up to the UCAS Hub on ucas.com.
- We have **107k** opted into Education emails for 2023 entry. This time last year, 67k were opted into Education emails for 2022 entry:



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: PRE-APPLICANTS

Top preferred subjects for the PAD23 cohort so far

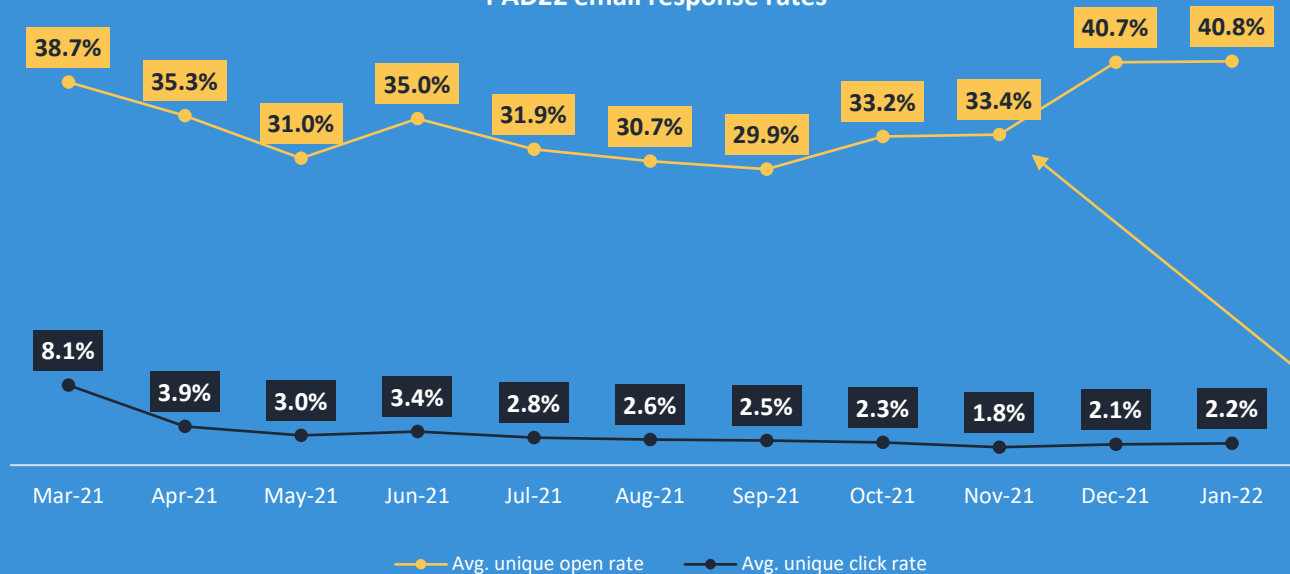
1	N1 – Business Studies	6	W9 – Art and Design
2	B7 – Nursing	7	C8 – Psychology
3	I1 – Computer Science	8	N4 – Accounting
4	A1 – Medicine	9	C1 – Biology
5	M1 – Law by Area	10	C6 – Sport and Exercise Science



AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: PRE-APPLICANTS

PAD22 response rates

PAD22 email response rates



PAD response rates are typically highest earlier on in the PAD cycle. Last year however, open rates increased from Nov-21 onwards due to Apple releasing an iOS update; this prevented the accurate tracking of email opens in the Apple mail app. This is why our PAD22 open rates started increasing from November. (Click rates were unaffected).

AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: PRE-APPLICANTS

Highest performing PAD22 subject lines sent during April-May 2021



%%FIRSTNAME%%, [HEP] are looking forward to meeting you at the April UCAS event



Are you a future engineer?



Join a leading UK Chemistry Department



%%firstname%%, Get to know [HEP] at the UCAS Discovery Event in April.

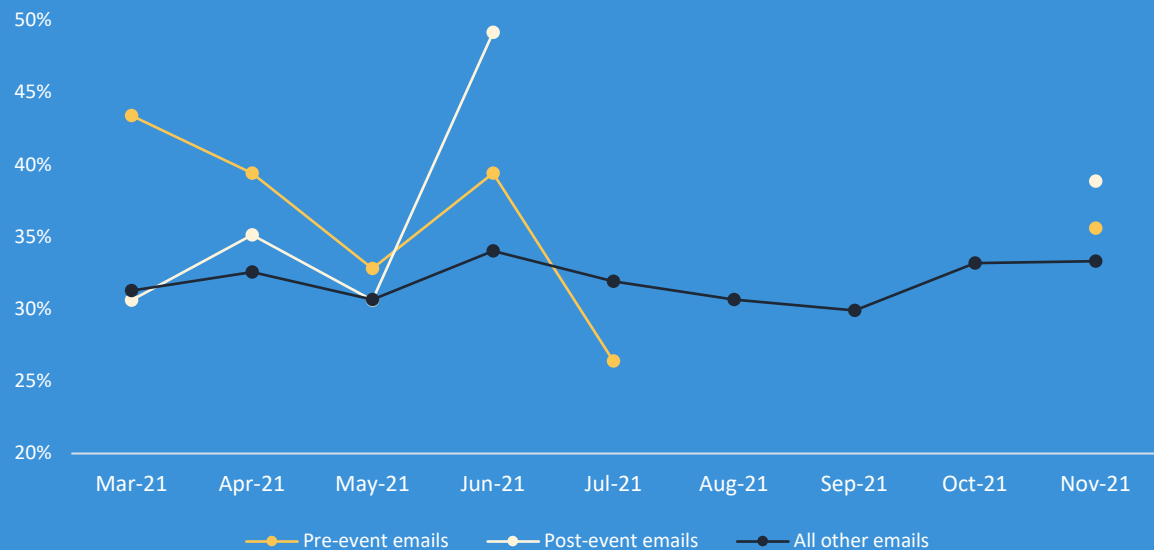


%%FIRSTNAME%%, we can't wait to meet you!

Alongside open days and course information, HEPs also contact the PAD audience to market their stands at the UCAS exhibitions, sending emails to potential applicants who have registered for specific exhibitions to let them know where to find them, and also to those who attended the events but didn't scan at their stand. You can see the results of these type of emails on the next slide.

AUDIENCE IN FOCUS: PRE-APPLICANTS

Pre and post-event email open rates (PAD22)



High performing pre-event email creative aspects

Opening paragraphs:

Dear [Firstname],

We really hope to meet you at the **UCAS [Location] event on [date]**. Visit us at our stand to consider why you should consider studying at [University/College].

Hi [Firstname]

We hope you're looking forward to the UCAS event!

Visit our stand to find out about student life in [Location] and discover our range of subjects.

Before the event make sure you check out our useful event tips to help you prepare and get the most out of your visit.

Dear [Firstname],

We hope you're as excited as we are for the UCAS exhibition in [Location].

Come to **stand [number]**...

Hi [Firstname],

We hope you're as excited as we are for the UCAS Exhibition in [Location].

Come to stand [number] and hear about our fantastic courses, student support and university experience where you are known by name and not a number.

List of linked course buttons so that recipients can research the University or College and their courses prior to attending the exhibition:

BUSINESS

CREATIVE DESIGN

EDUCATION

FINANCE

LAW

MEDICINE

MUSIC

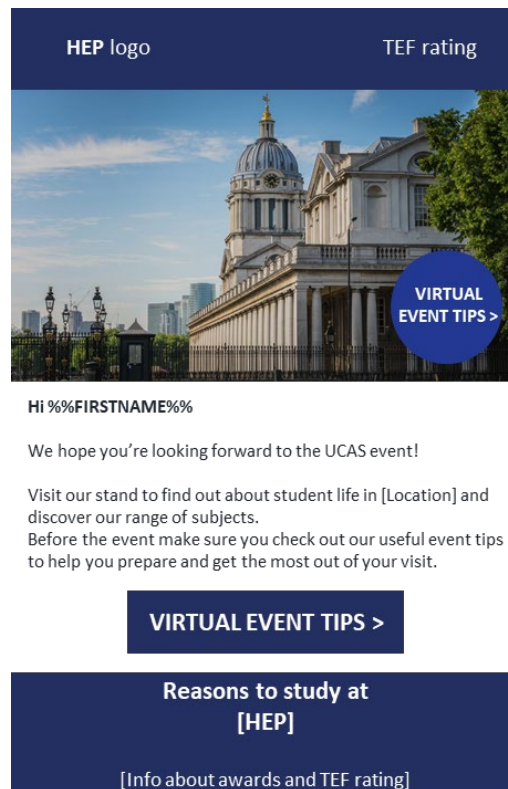
PSYCHOLOGY

SPORT

TOURISM

High performing pre-event email creatives

UCAS



High performing post-event email creative aspects

UCAS

Opening paragraphs:

%%FIRSTNAME%%

We hope you enjoyed the [Location] UCAS Exhibition.

If you want to know more about our courses, student life, student support or anything else, come and visit us on one of our open days.

Dear %%FIRSTNAME%%,

We hope you enjoyed the [Location] UCAS exhibition.

Want to learn more about [University/College]? Register for one of our upcoming Open Days.

Sorry we missed you at the [Location] UCAS Exhibition. If you're looking to study [courses], come and meet us at one of our undergraduate Open Days. We'd be delighted to meet you and tell you more about why [University] is a great choice.

List of linked course buttons so that recipients can carry out further research about the University or College and their courses:

BUSINESS	CREATIVE DESIGN
EDUCATION	FINANCE
LAW	MEDICINE
MUSIC	PSYCHOLOGY
SPORT	TOURISM

TOP 5 TIPS: ENGAGING WITH PRE-APPLICANTS

1

A growing demand for information

There are **60% more pre-applicants opted in** to receive emails compared to this time last year. This growth of early engagement signifies an eagerness to access more information like yours.

2

A preference for the professional

5 of the 10 most popular subjects for pre-applicants this year are **professional/career-focussed**, including accounting, computing, and law. Tailor your messaging and target your comms appropriately.

3

Strike while the iron is hot (that's now)

Emails sent in spring can generate **click rates 4x higher** than those sent in summer. Open rates are also **much higher earlier in the year**, so it's time to get going.

4

Align your marketing and events

Pre and post event emails have the highest engagement rates of all email types. Last year, we saw **open rates of 40% and 50%** for emails aligned to events, significantly higher than the average.

5

Short, sweet, and to-the-point

The best performing emails from last year's pre-applicant comms all shared **the same characteristics**:

- Personalised body content (by name)
- Minimal, eye catching design
- Friendly, colloquial language
- Concise messaging
- Useful CTAs and related content.

And that's a wrap. But before we go...

If we had a penny for every time that our insight highlighted the power of early engagement, we could stack them to the moon and back. From teenage pre-applicants to middle aged postgrads, the most effective advice we can give to universities and colleges is to **get your timings right**.

Armed with the knowledge of what your audience is thinking about and when (plus insider information about opt-ins and engagement rates) means better return on (and results from) your marketing activity.

If you'd like to hear about what other advice and insight we can share, or you'd like to start designing a timed campaign, [get in touch](#).

We'll be back next month, with more unique info, from April.

Get in touch

For further information and insights contact your UCAS Media account manager or email us at ucasmediaeducationteam@ucas.ac.uk.