How to Convert More Applicants Into Enrolled Students

Create Learning Journeys That Last a Lifetime

Manage, market and sell courses in a way students love.

Introduction

Converting applicants into enrolled students is crucial for any higher education institution. Universities must create a personalised and engaging experience that fosters a sense of belonging and inspires students to choose their institution.

This sense of belonging is a critical driver of student success. Research shows that students who feel connected to their institution are more likely to achieve their academic goals.

Creating this sense of belonging requires a multifaceted approach, addressing factors such as academic reputation, programme quality, career opportunities, financial aid, technology and student support services. By addressing these factors and creating a personalised, supportive and engaging experience, institutions can increase conversion rates and improve student retention.

How Can Your University Cultivate a Sense of Belonging?

A Sense of Belonging Is Achieved Through:

Meaningful interactions:

Personalise communications and tailor them to individual needs.
Connect students with mentors for guidance and support.
Create opportunities for personalised interaction through smaller class sizes.

Supportive community:

Encourage peer to peer mentoring and study groups.
Connect students with alumni for networking and careers advice.
Create online spaces where students can connect and build relationships.

Brand engagement:

Showcase your university's values and commitment to student success. Highlight unique strengths and produce engaging content that demonstrates impact.

Course relevance:

Demonstrate the practical relevance of courses and offer careers advice. Showcase successful alumni outcomes to inspire prospective and current students.

Nurturing campaigns:

Create targeted content and personalised email campaigns. Use social media to connect with students and nurture a sense of community.

What Is the First Step?

Data is the foundation of effective student recruitment. To truly leverage its power, universities need to use data strategically, transforming it into actionable intelligence.

Track a wide range of metrics:

Go beyond basic application metrics like completion rates and login dates. Monitor email opens, website traffic patterns, social media interactions and event attendance to understand how prospective students are interacting with your institution. This comprehensive view provides valuable insights into their level of interest and engagement.

What Is the First Step?
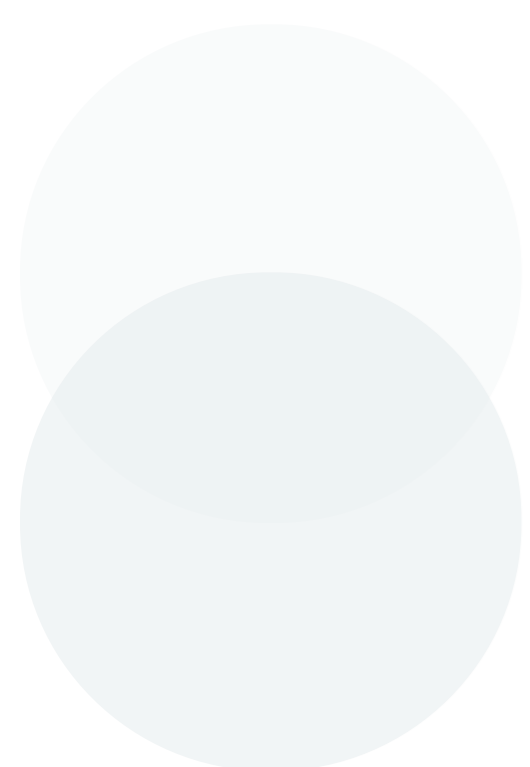
Analyse applicant demographics and behaviour:

Gather data on applicant demographics, academic interests and career aspirations. Analyse their behaviour on your website and social media channels to understand their preferences and tailor your outreach accordingly. For example, if a prospect frequently visits pages related to your engineering programmes, you can provide them with targeted content and invitations to relevant events.

**Personalise communication and content:**

Use data to segment your audience and personalise your communication. Send targeted emails with relevant content, recommend specific programmes or events and provide proactive support based on individual needs and interests. This personalised approach fosters a sense of connection and demonstrates that you understand their unique aspirations.

Identify and support at risk applicants:

Monitor application progress and engagement metrics to identify applicants who may be struggling or disengaged. Provide timely support and guidance to help them overcome challenges and complete their applications. This proactive approach can significantly improve conversion rates and ensure that promising students do not slip through the cracks.

Optimise recruitment strategies:

Analyse data to measure the effectiveness of your recruitment efforts. Identify which channels and strategies are driving the most engagement and conversions and adjust your approach accordingly. This data driven approach ensures that you are investing your resources in the most impactful activities.
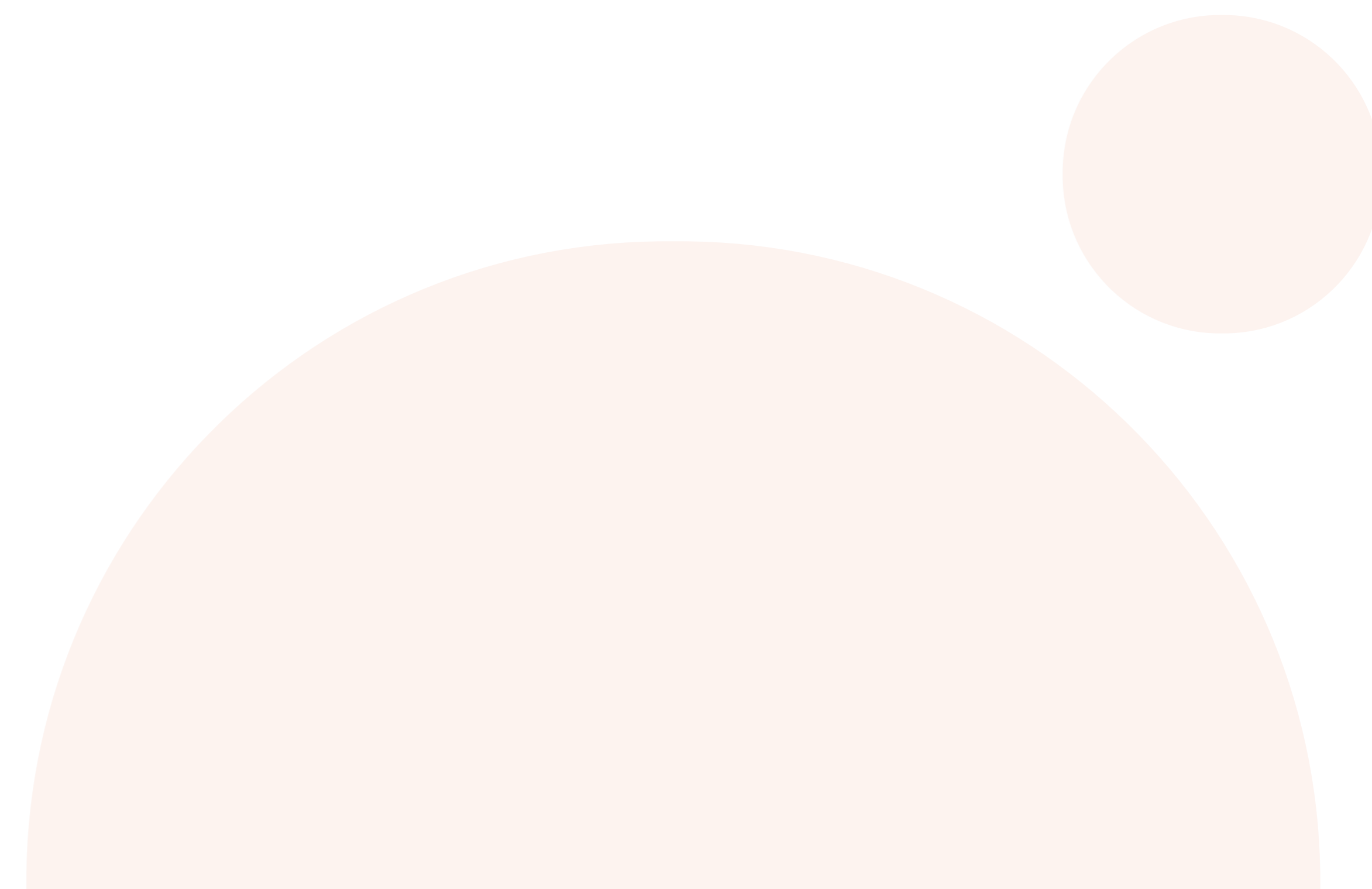
What Is the First Step?

Utilise predictive analytics:

Leverage predictive analytics to anticipate future enrolment trends and identify potential challenges. This allows you to proactively address issues and optimise your resources. For example, if predictive models suggest a decline in applications from a particular region, you can adjust your recruitment strategies accordingly.

Ensure data security and privacy:

Protect sensitive applicant data with robust security measures and comply with relevant data privacy regulations such as GDPR. This builds trust with applicants and safeguards your institution's reputation.

By embracing a data driven approach to student recruitment, institutions can gain a deeper understanding of their applicants, personalise their engagement strategies and improve their conversion rates.

Which Messages Should Be Included?

Students choose universities that understand their needs and aspirations. It's about building relationships, not just broadcasting information. Provide personalised advice, address applicants' concerns, and connect them with current students and on campus experiences. Create engaging content, including targeted emails, interactive content and videos. Utilise technology such as mobile optimisation and virtual events to enhance the student journey.
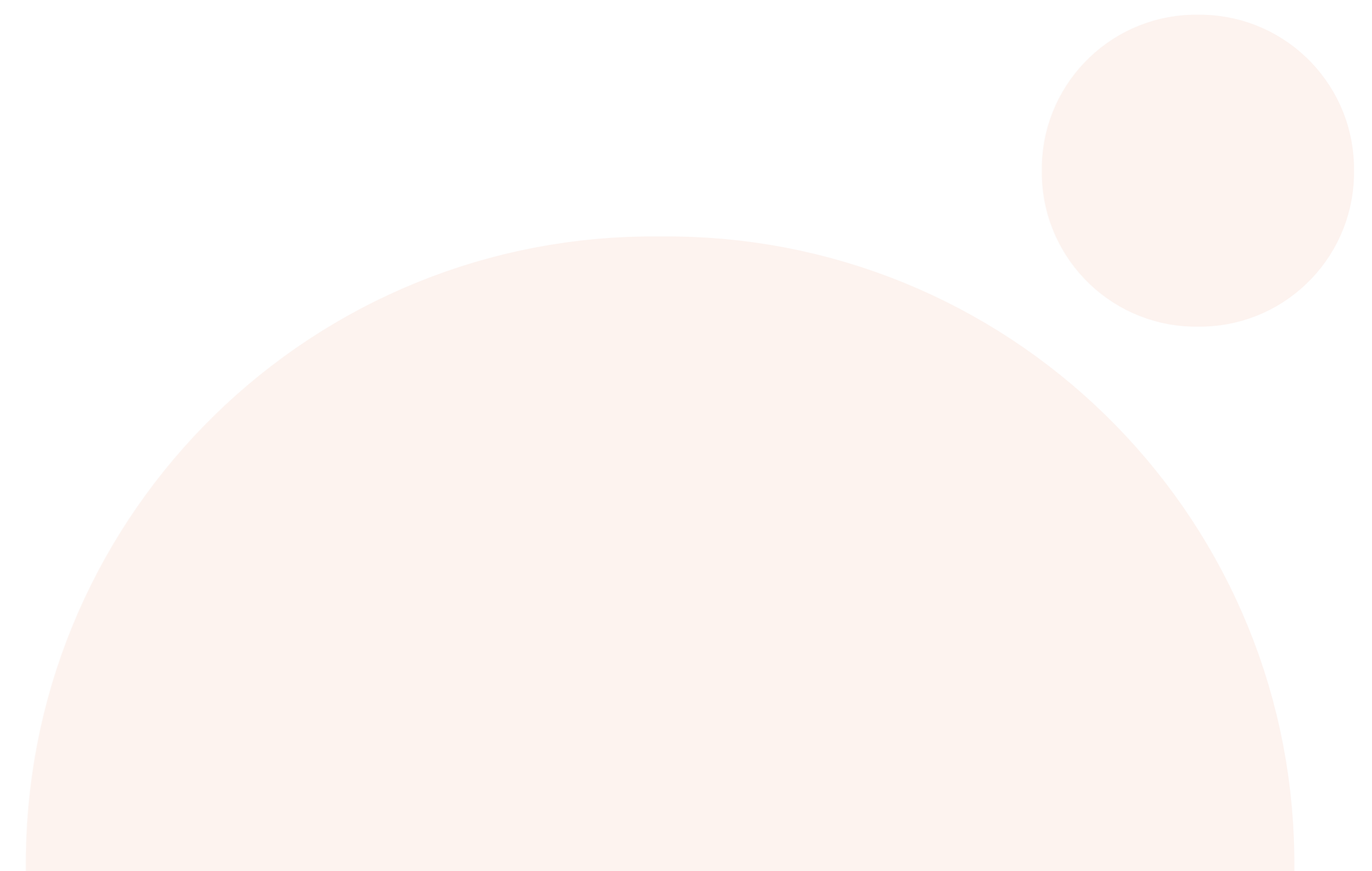
What's the Best Way of Contacting Your Audience?

Reaching today's students requires a multi-channel communication strategy that adapts to their diverse preferences and habits. Gone are the days when email alone could capture attention. To truly engage prospective students, your institution needs to meet them where they are, whether that is on social media, instant messaging apps or via personalised video messages.

How to optimise your multi-channel communication:

Channel diversification.

Expand beyond email and application portals. Utilise social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and X to share engaging content, connect with students and build community. Explore instant messaging apps like WhatsApp and Messenger for direct, personalised conversations. Incorporate video platforms such as YouTube and TikTok to showcase campus life, student testimonials and faculty interviews.

Tone and style adaptation.

Tailor tone and style for each channel. Maintain a professional and informative voice on your website and in emails while adopting a more conversational, playful approach on social media. Use humour and visual storytelling to capture attention on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Consistent messaging.

Ensure messaging is consistent across channels so your brand and core messages are reinforced. Whether a student reads a blog post or watches a video, they should get a clear and unified sense of your institution's values and offerings.

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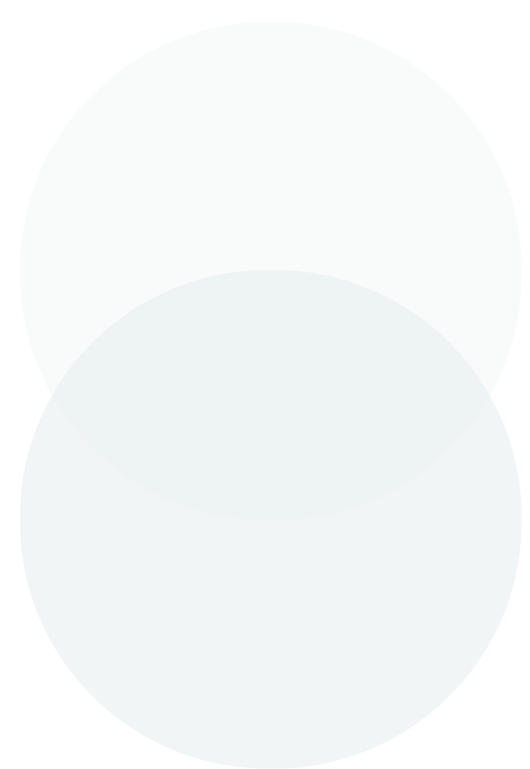
Personalised content.

Use data and analytics to personalise communications across channels. Segment audiences by interest, demographics and behaviour, and tailor content accordingly. For example, send targeted emails about specific programmes or events that match a student's academic goals.

Integrated tracking and measurement.

Track and measure activity across all channels to understand what works. Use analytics to monitor website traffic, social engagement, email open rates and event attendance. Use those insights to optimise your approach and invest in the most effective activities.

When is the Best Time to Run a Nurture Campaign?

Timing is crucial in nurture campaigns. It's not just about sending regular emails; it's about delivering the right message at the right time through the right channel. This personalised approach shows students that you understand their needs and are invested in their success, fostering trust and loyalty.

Early Stage:

- **Frequent and valuable communication:** Maintain consistent contact with prospective students, providing them with relevant information about your institution, programmes, and campus life.

- **Multi-channel approach:** Utilise a variety of channels, including email, social media, and your website, to keep your institution top-of-mind.

- **Personalised content:** Tailor your messages based on student interests, demographics, and engagement patterns.

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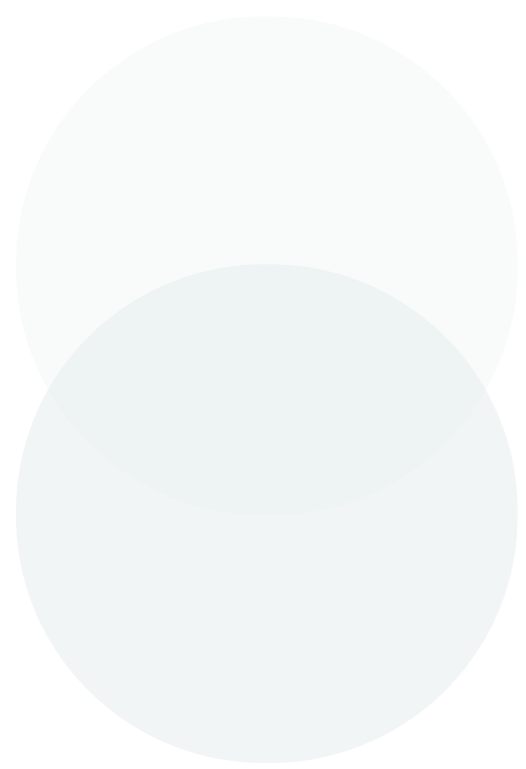
Application Stage:

- **Increased support and guidance:** Offer personalised support and guidance to applicants as they navigate the application process.

- **Proactive communication:** Send timely reminders about deadlines, application requirements, and financial aid opportunities.

- **Address concerns:** Proactively address common questions and concerns about the application process, programme specifics, and campus life.

Post-Admission Stage:

- **Welcome and onboarding:** Provide a warm welcome to admitted students, offering personalised onboarding resources and support.

- **Build excitement and anticipation:** Share information about campus life, student activities, and upcoming events to generate enthusiasm.

- **Address remaining questions:** Offer multiple channels for admitted students to connect with your team and receive answers to their questions.

- **Facilitate connections:** Connect admitted students with current students, faculty, and alumni to foster a sense of community.

Ongoing Engagement:

- **Maintain consistent communication:** Continue to engage students throughout their academic journey with relevant updates, opportunities, and support.

- **Personalise interactions:** Use data and analytics to personalise communication and tailor content to individual needs and interests.

- **Monitor engagement:** Track student engagement and proactively address any signs of disengagement or challenges.

Who Are Nurture Campaigns Aimed At?

Nurture campaigns should target potential students, but a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. Students have diverse needs and motivations, so segmenting your audience and tailoring your communication is crucial.

By Level of Interest.

- **High-intent students:** actively expressed interest and are likely to apply. Provide personalised support, detailed programme information, and opportunities to connect with current students and faculty.

- **Undecided students:** still exploring options and weighing multiple institutions. Showcase your unique strengths, highlight student success stories, and address common concerns.

- **Passive prospects:** shown some interest but not actively engaged. Nurture them with valuable content, invitations to relevant events, and gentle reminders.

- **Reluctant prospects:** have hesitations or concerns about your institution. Engage in personalised conversations, address their specific questions, and provide tailored information to reduce doubts.

By demographics and background.

- **International students:** give tailored information about visa requirements, language support and cultural integration programmes.

- **Mature students:** address needs such as flexible learning options, financial support and career transition services.

- **First generation students:** offer practical guidance on navigating university life, accessing support services and building a sense of belonging.

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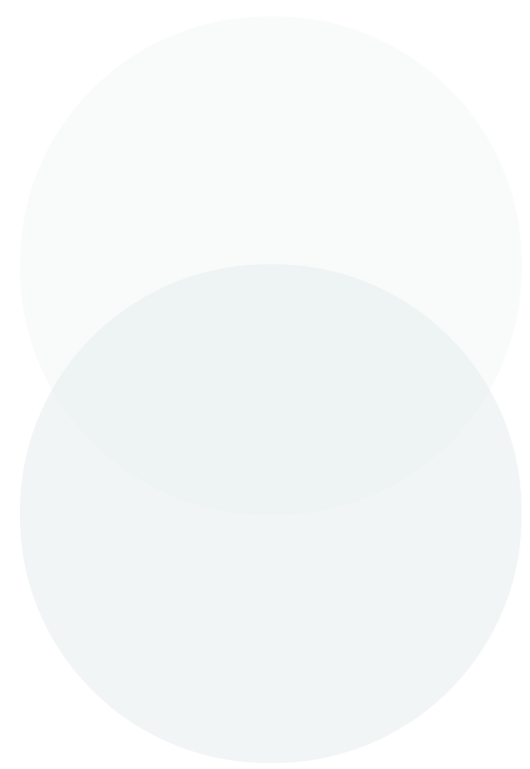
By academic interests.

- **STEM students:** highlight STEM programmes, research opportunities and industry partnerships.

- **Arts and humanities students:** showcase creative programmes, cultural events and opportunities for personal and intellectual development.

- **Business students:** emphasise business programmes, careers services and connections with industry leaders.

By engagement level.

- **Active engagers:** regularly interact with your website, social media and emails. Provide personalised content and exclusive opportunities to deepen engagement.

- **Passive engagers:** have shown limited interaction. Nurture them with targeted content and timely reminders.

- **Disengaged prospects:** show little or no engagement. Re-engage them with targeted campaigns, personalised outreach and win-back incentives.

Post-Enrolment Support

Nurturing campaigns shouldn't end at enrolment. The initial weeks and months of a student's journey are crucial for long-term success and retention. A strong support system and a welcoming environment help students feel confident in their choice and set them up for a positive university experience.

Welcome and onboarding.

- Personalised welcome messages that acknowledge each student's achievements and welcome them to the community.

- Orientation programmes that introduce campus resources, academic expectations and support services.

Post-Enrolment Support
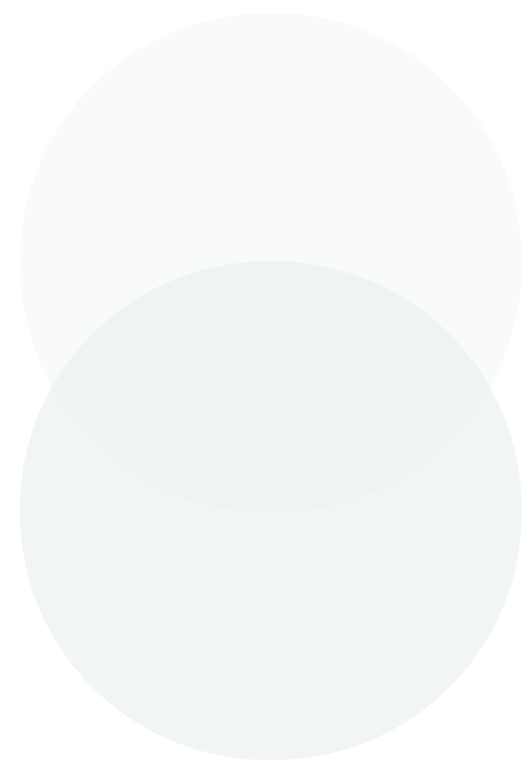
- Welcome events that help students meet peers, faculty and staff and start building friendships.

Ongoing support.

- Personalised academic advising to help students plan their studies and reach their goals.

- Peer mentoring that pairs new students with experienced peers for guidance and moral support.

- Easy access to essential resources such as library services, IT help and financial aid information.

- Regular check-ins via email, newsletters or an online platform to share updates, reminders and targeted support.

Community building.

- Encourage student clubs and societies that align with a range of interests and help students belong.

- Regular social events and activities that create low-pressure chances to connect.

- Online communities and forums where students can interact, share ideas and support one another.

Technology-enabled support.

- Personalised student portals where students can view their progress, access resources and connect with services.

- Mobile apps that give students on-the-go access to timetables, notifications and support.

- AI-powered chatbots to answer common questions instantly and personalise signposting to services.

How Can the Success of a "Keep Warm" Campaign Be Fully Evaluated?

Evaluating nurture campaigns requires a multifaceted approach. Track key metrics like enrolment conversions, application completion rates, website traffic and social media engagement. Gather feedback from students through surveys, focus groups and online forms. Analyse data to identify trends and measure the effectiveness of different strategies. Visualise results with charts and dashboards.

Calculate ROI by comparing costs with revenue generated and use attribution modelling to understand which channels drive conversions. Continuously adapt and optimise campaigns based on data analysis and feedback.

Quick practical checklist you can drop into a comms doc or hand to analytics.

✔ **Key metrics & feedback:** Track enrolment conversions, application completion rates, website sessions, event attendance and social engagement. Gather insights through surveys, focus groups and quick online forms.

✔ **Analysis & reporting:** Use cohort analysis, funnel conversion rates and attribution modelling. Share results via executive dashboards for leadership and weekly tactical dashboards for recruitment teams.

✔ **ROI & optimisation:** Compare campaign costs with enrolment value. Run experiments, measure impact, iterate on content and timing, and reallocate budget to the top-performing channels.

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