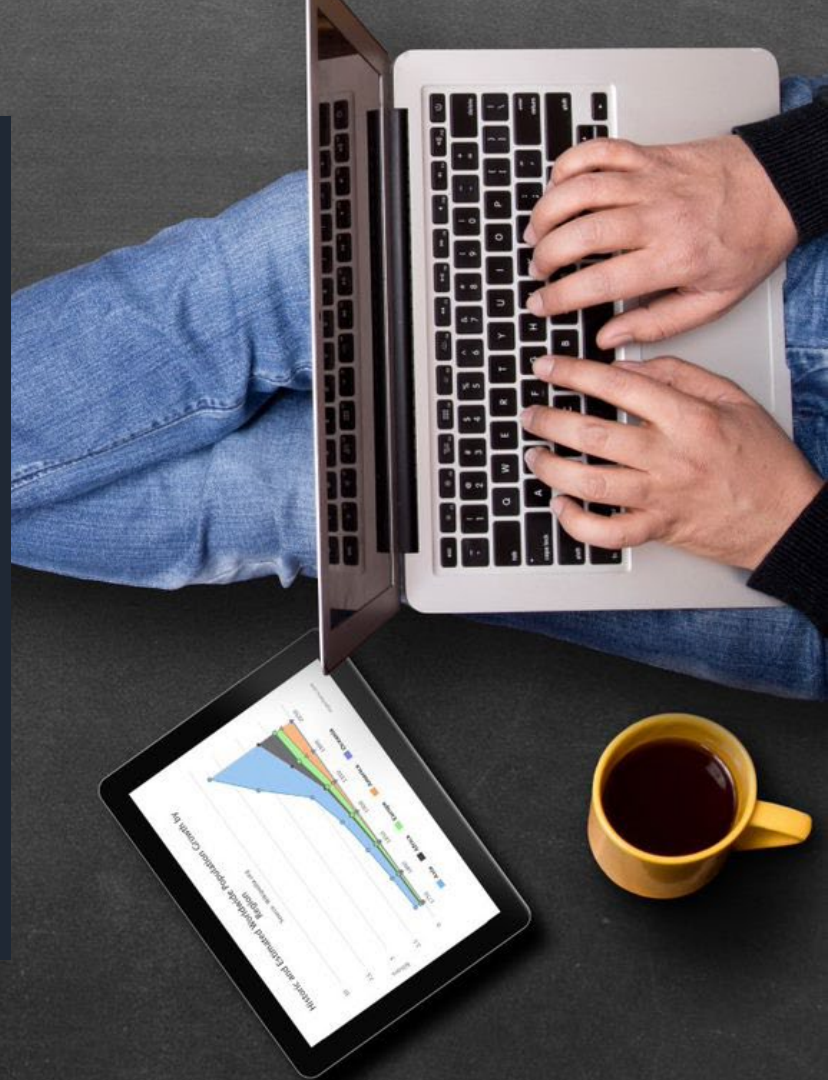


# Insight Newsletter

May 2022

UCAS



## Welcome to the UCAS Insight Newsletter – May 2022.

With spring term back in full swing, the pace is picking up.

**Pre-applicants** are right in the heart of their open day season, attending exhibitions and campuses all across the country.

**Applicants** are narrowing down their choices and getting down to business: arranging their student finance, opening bank accounts, and buying their first year essentials.

With endless activity and high competition for attention, this month we've been looking at how you can cut through the noise and make yourself heard. With Clearing starting in just over a month, we're showing you the best creative, timings, language, images for your upcoming campaigns.

**Let's get stuck in.**

# What are students doing?

Across [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

## WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top ten searched for subjects on UCAS Search in April 2022

Position for April  
2022



=	1	Medicine
▲ <sup>1</sup>	2	Psychology
▼ <sup>1</sup>	3	Law
=	4	Nursing
▲ <sup>3</sup>	5	Computer science

▲  
Change in  
position since  
April 2021

=	6	Business
▲ <sup>2</sup>	7	Economics
▼ <sup>3</sup>	8	Midwifery
▼ <sup>2</sup>	9	Physiotherapy
▲ <sup>5</sup>	10	Pharmacy



## WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

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



Position for  
April 2022

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

Change in  
position since  
April 2021



## WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

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



Position for April  
2022  
▼

=	1	London
=	2	Birmingham
▲ <sup>3</sup>	3	Leeds
=	4	Manchester
▲ <sup>4</sup>	5	Edinburgh
3 ▼	6	Glasgow
▲ <sup>3</sup>	7	Liverpool
3 ▼	8	Bristol
▲ <sup>2</sup>	9	Sheffield
3 ▼	10	Newcastle

▲  
Change in position  
since April 2021

POSTCODE DISTRICT MAP



## WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top five undergraduate pages on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) in April 2022

Position for April  
2022



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

▲  
Change in  
position since  
April 2021

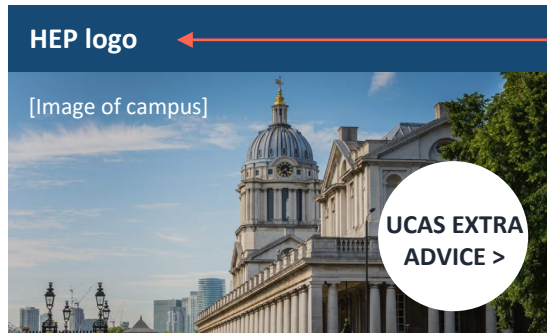


# Pre-Clearing

Which creative features and subject lines did unplaced applicants engage most with in the run up to Clearing last year?



# High performing email creative aspects



HEP logo

[Image of campus]

UCAS EXTRA  
ADVICE >

Hi %%FIRSTNAME%%,

We have a place for you at University/College.

We have courses available at our [Faculty/School name], apply through UCAS Extra to secure your place for September 2021!

[Course info]

UCAS EXTRA ADVICE >

HEP logo included in the top-left of the creative

Reassuring language to let recipients know that there is time to apply to another course and go to University/College

Introductory text included links to the HEP's landing page about Extra

Individual linked subject/course buttons



HEP logo

There's still time to do

something you love

Hi %%FIRSTNAME%%,

Intro paragraph with three lines of text, each containing a [highlighted text link](#).

Find your perfect course

COURSE 1

COURSE 2

COURSE 3

COURSE 4

COURSE 5

COURSE 6

View all our undergraduate courses

# High performing subject line examples

Examples from May-July 2021:

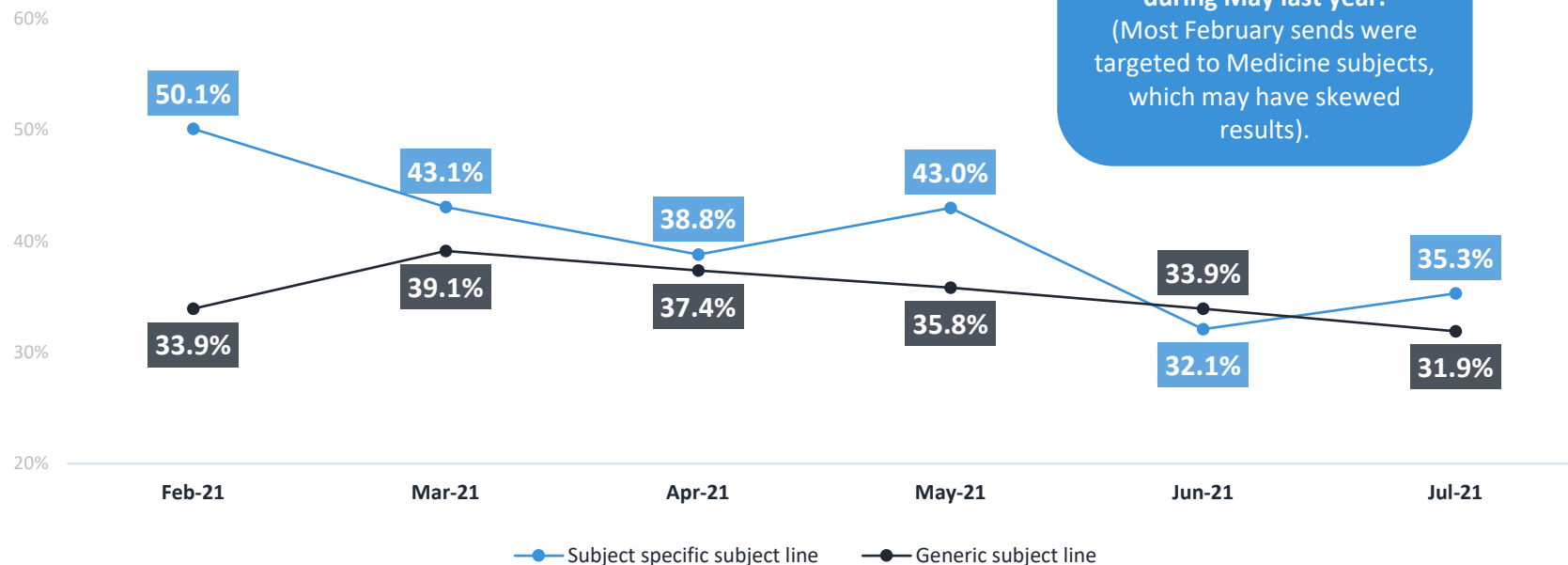
- There is still time to apply 🕒
- Secure your place, %%firstname%%!
- Clearing vacancies at [University/College]
- Hi %%firstname%%, we're [University/College]
- %%firstname%%, don't worry, you can still start uni this September



# Subject specific subject lines

## 2021 open rates

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# Clearing 2022

Which creative messages and attributes resonated best with unplaced applicants in 2021?

# Display

Ads across [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

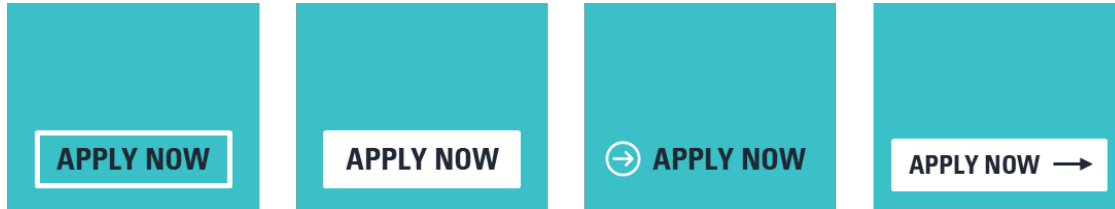
UCAS





# High performing display creative attributes

- High performing creatives outlined their call-to-action text, or included an arrow next to it, to attract the user's attention. The call to actions were also clear and concise e.g., Apply now, Apply today, View our vacancies



- Mobile ads included one line of text per frame, to ensure the text was clear on the smaller sized ad – consider that your desktop MPU design won't always work for mobile ads and cut down the text if needed.
- Creatives mentioned Clearing, especially on the last frame.
- Most creatives were vibrant and colourful.

# High performing display calls to action

Across Clearing display ads live within the first two weeks of our Clearing 2021 display period (5 July – 18 July 2021)

- Register for Clearing
- Find out more →
- Register for updates
- Call now
- Check our entry requirements now →



# Low performing display creative attributes

- Calls to action were not always included on the last frame, unlike the highest performing ads where all creatives did.
- Only half of the creatives mentioned Clearing and therefore sometimes it wasn't clear what the ad was about.
- Rotation of some frames was a little fast, making it difficult to read the text or gain a quick understanding what the ad was about, especially for creatives with multiple/busy frames. **Ensure users have enough time to read each frame, and keep text short and snappy if possible.**
- NB some ads included phone numbers on the last frame which may have impacted CTRs.

We held a focus group earlier this year to get students' thoughts on display ads that included phone numbers;



'I'd prefer there to be a website or email as I am anxious about calling people straight away before researching'



'Personally, I would be unlikely to call straight away I would prefer to visit the website'

However, some of the group recognised that phone numbers would be useful in Clearing in particular. We suggest including a clickable call to action as well as a phone number to cover both routes.



'The phone number being present means that people could directly have a conversation with a person which can be easier'



'Phone number is useful as it provides a clear + quick way to get into contact'

# High performing keyword creative attributes

- Higher performing creatives included a clear call to action on the last frame e.g., Call us, Find out more, Search for courses.

**These were all outlined or highlighted in a contrasting colour to the background of the ad.**

- Lower performing creatives didn't always mention the subject or course they were promoting, and therefore perhaps users didn't know the ad was relevant to them.

**Try to include the subject on the first or last frame.**

- Almost all lower performing creatives didn't mention Clearing, whereas almost all higher performing creatives did.

**Ensure students know that your ad is relevant to them by using phrases such as 'Apply through Clearing', 'Study [subject]'.**

# Use of imagery within keyword creatives

Some high performing keyword creatives used images relating to the course e.g., images of students in a lecture or learning setting, helping prospective students to visualise what it would be like to study at that particular university/college.

We asked a focus group earlier this year about ads that included images/photos of people. Here are their thoughts;

- 'Imagery on an ad stands out more'
- 'The people make it more appealing'
- 'Imagery helps to connect better with the ad'
- 'I really like the imagery of students - more personalised'
- 'Is comforting as makes me feel like other people are going through clearing and that you are not alone'
- '[I like] Images [that] have a better link to uni and students'
- 'I like imagery on an ad as it catches the eye more than one which is just text'
- 'Images of different people can catch reader's attention and have something to relate to'
- 'The images of people are good, however not the ones where the people look suspiciously happy! The diversity is also good. The text is also short and to the point.'



# Sponsored content creative attributes

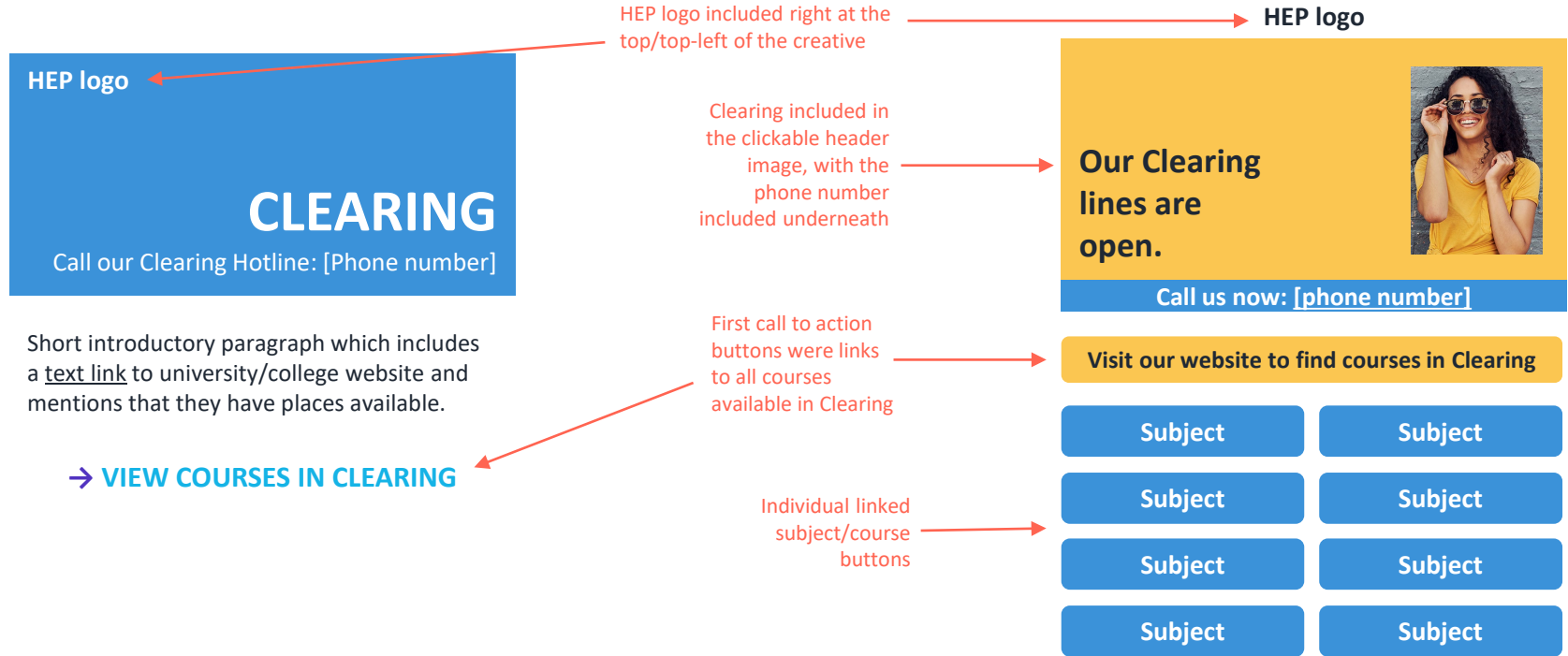
- **The highest performing creatives focused on helping and guiding applicants** prepare for Clearing in the early stages, using words such as 'guide', 'tips', 'checklist', 'preparing'.
- **High performing creatives either included a call to action** or ensured it was clear what clicking through would enable the user to do e.g. 'Apply now', 'register today' – they were snappy and clear cut. Some lower performing creatives used phrases which were a little vague e.g. 'Be limitless', 'Get ahead of Clearing' – these are a little unclear as to what landing page the ads link to.
- **Some lower performing creatives used abbreviated university names** – the university names are obviously included underneath the creative so it should be clear what the abbreviation is. However, the creative itself is the more prominent text and is therefore a chance to include your key message in relation to Clearing – ensure this is clear if seen alone.

# Emails

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# High performing email creative aspects



# High performing subject line examples

- [HEP] has courses available in Clearing!
- %%firstname%%, you've got your results - what next?
- Choose when and where to study for your degree
- %%FIRSTNAME%%, secure your place at a [No.] UK Medical School this September!
- [HEP] is still offering places at his new fashion Academy

Higher performing subject lines used during August 2021 included relevant phrases/keywords for unplaced applicants in Clearing such as **courses available, degree, secure your place this September, results.**

Lower performing subject lines included acronyms of the HEP and didn't mention Clearing or ensure it was clear what the email was about.



## Registrants: small change, big impact.

**Registrants** are next year's potential students who have started, but for whatever reason, not yet submitted their applications.

And you can now email every single registrant on our books – wherever they are in their application and however many choices they have logged.

**That means up to 50,000 extra names on your list.**

With most applying before Clearing (which starts in just 6 weeks), now's the time to act if you want to capture their attention:

- ☐ **Send them tips on how to complete their application**
- ☐ **Give them opportunities to visit your uni or college**
- ☐ **Use caring language and stick to facts about the process, rather than pushing a strong APPLY NOW message.**

**TWO THIRDS**  
OF REGISTRANTS

are still likely to apply to university/ college despite missing the UCAS deadline

**46%**  
OF REGISTRANTS

are still considering applying, but have not yet made up their mind, they are aware that they can still apply.

**43%**  
OF REGISTRANTS

would like to visit the university before applying, which may help them make up their mind

**7.5%**  
OF JANUARY REGISTRANTS IN 2020

went on to apply. Of these, 82% applied by the June deadline and 18% in clearing.

**6.6%**  
OF JANUARY REGISTRANTS IN 2019

went on to apply. Of these, 86% applied by the June deadline and 14% in clearing.



## Out of the frying pan and into the summer

The next time you receive this newsletter, Clearing will be just two weeks away. With the busiest season in higher education on the horizon, knowing how to get the most out of your campaigns has never been more important.

(And with those 50,000 extra registrants, never more fruitful.)

We're here to equip you with everything you need to make your voice heard above the crowd. From the insight to make strategic decisions, to the reach for getting to your market – we've got you covered.

**How can we help?**

# Get in touch

For further information and insights contact your UCAS account manager or email us at [educationservices@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:educationservices@ucas.ac.uk).