Marketing 101 toolkit: How to market your programme

Introduction
This document has been produced by members of the Publications & Marketing Office and the International Office, and its aim is to support staff who are tasked with promoting new or existing programmes. It is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of the principles of marketing, nor a substitute Chartered Institute of Marketing qualification. Instead it is a simple step-by-step overview of what you need to consider when establishing a new programme, and an overview of promotional channels that you may want to use in order to promote your new and existing programmes and engage the right audience. It also aims to point you in the direction of further sources of information and support.

The main focus of this toolkit is graduate programmes, particularly taught Master's degrees. Much of the advice is also applicable to undergraduate programmes, although if you are targeting particular under-represented groups you should contact UCL's Access office. Contact details are at the end of the document.

Step 1: Research and planning
Getting started

The above diagram highlights the importance of research and planning in the whole process – and also that it is not something you do just once!

If you are planning to launch a new degree programme you need to establish whether or not there is a market for it. Questions you need to consider include:

- What are the objectives of the programme? How do they relate to your prospective students’ needs (‘value propositions’)
- Who is the target audience?
• Where is the target audience – university or workplace? Geographical spread?
• How big is the potential market?
• How many players are already in the market?
• Who are your competitors? How does your programme differ from theirs?
• What pricing policy do you have? How does that compare to competitors?
• What external factors may influence recruitment to the programme ie political, economic, social, technological, legal?
• What resources do you have/need in order to market the programme?

If you are promoting an existing programme, you still need to address these questions before you decide on your next steps.

Once you have done your research into the potential market for your programme you need to set your objectives. What are you hoping to achieve? What are your recruitment targets? How will you measure your success?

Where to get help
The Graduate Marketing Manager & International Liaison & Recruitment Manager can advise re: UK & international market potential and other suitable sources of information to inform your planning. All contact details are in Step 6, at the end of this document.

Step 2: Promoting your programme
Now that your programme has been approved, how can you get the message out to prospective students? The key channels you can to use to promote your programme are outlined below, and we will explore each area in turn.

You need to understand who and where your target audience is in order to develop an appropriate strategy. Different media will be useful at different stages of the promotion/application/conversion process. Your also need to understand what will motivate your target audience to ensure that your communications and activities include the right messages.

The chart below illustrates the kind of promotional channels you may want to use during the process. It may not always be practical or appropriate to use all of the channels; what you do will be determined by your research and planning. The Graduate Marketing Manager and the International
Liaison and Recruitment Manager can meet with you to discuss the channels most appropriate for your specific programme.

**Step 3: Digital means of reaching your audience**

### 3.1.1 Website
It’s impossible to overstate the importance of the web as a source of information for prospective students. Having a clear, easy to navigate website which contains all the information that students are looking for is essential. Your website needs to be in place before other promotional activity is started, because you will be directing prospective students to it for more information from the outset.

Students consult the online prospectuses, which also signpost visitors to departmental websites. Web use for the online graduate prospectus has increased threefold since 2009, and the prospectus now receives over 5 million unique page views every year. Make sure that if a prospective student follows the link in the prospectus to your website that they are directed to your website, are not looped back to the online prospectus.

If you offer a scholarship for your programme please ensure that the information is not just on your website but also linked to the central UCL scholarships database. The database feeds all the main sources of information including the prospectuses and the UCL student funding website, and will ensure you have the widest reach.

*Where to get help*
There is a wealth of information available from the Communications & Marketing (CAM) toolkit website to help you create a website which provides the information prospective students need and in an easily accessible way.

The toolkit website is at [www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/toolkits](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/toolkits) and the following documents will be particularly useful:
‘Web guidelines for content developers and editors’, ‘Search engine optimisation for your webpages’ and ‘Using analytics to improve your website’.

A wealth of information, advice and support in creating a website is also available from UCL Web & Mobile Services ([www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/staff/websites/web-services](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/staff/websites/web-services)). Do also contact your Faculty Communications Manager before you start, to check on Faculty-wide developments.
The Head of the UCL Student Funding Office can advise with regard to listing scholarships on the central UCL database http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/our-services/student-administration.

3.1.2 Listings sites
All taught graduate programmes at UCL are listed on the following websites:

Hotcourses.com/whatuni.com/postgraduatesearch.com
(graduate profile and listings of all PGT programmes)
FindAMasters.com
(all UCL PGT programmes are listed on the website)
Postgrad.com
(all UCL PGT programmes are listed on the website)
Prospects.ac.uk
(UCL PGT and PGR programmes are listed on the website)

It is possible to take out paid-for adverts on these sites.

Where to get help
More information about these sites and others, plus a guide on what to look for and how to measure results are included in the ‘Third-party listings sites and graduate promotion toolkit’ on the CAM toolkit website at www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/toolkits. The Graduate Marketing Manager can also advise on sites and additional advertising opportunities.

The information for these sites is mostly pulled from the database which feeds the online graduate prospectus. Do make sure your prospectus entry is accurate. If anything needs changing please contact Patricia Newby in PAMS (p.newby@ucl.ac.uk or see contact details at www.ucl.ac.uk/pams)

3.1.3 Hobsons Connect CRM system
UCL’s central marketing function, Communications and Marketing, has implemented a simple Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to support prospective students in the pre-application stage. Prospective students are able to register their interest in subject areas at UCL, either through the online Prospectus or through links which can be placed on departmental webpages. Students are sent a small number of targeted emails with information such as relevant deadlines and sources of funding. This CRM system offers a valuable marketing resource for academic departments. It provides a pool of motivated and subject-relevant prospective students that we can, for example, invite to open days and inform about relevant new programmes.

Where to get help
Depending on who your target audience is, the Graduate Marketing Manager or International Liaison & Recruitment Manager (Digital Marketing) will be able to advise on setting up a link on departmental pages, and creating tailored emails.

Please note that this particular system can only be used for engagement with enquirers. For email campaigns to applicants and offer-holders, see below.

3.1.4 Email campaigns
Targeted emails can be used at various stages. They can be sent as a follow-up to enquirers, and as a ‘keep-warm’ for applicants and offer-holders. Do consider how you collect and hold data from these sources (if you don’t already do this), in order that you can create mailing lists. Remember to ‘clean’ your data regularly and remove out-of-date contacts. It is stating the obvious but also extremely important that you tailor the content according to where the recipients are in the enquiry/application/offer-holder process, to ensure that it is relevant and interesting.
Html emails (also known as ezines) are the most visually attractive and engaging. Communications & Marketing use the email marketing platform Dotmailer for internal and external audiences. Templates can be made with the support of Dotmailer, and the system is easy to use. There is a small charge for emails sent. There are free email marketing providers as well, such as MailChimp. Whatever you use, do make sure that the appropriate UCL visual identity is used. The corporate visual identity template is on the web at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/corporate-identity/webpages/Web_Templates_Guide.pdf and Neil Rodger, Communications Manager can advise further to ensure appropriate branding. If you use an email marketing provider you should check its policies with regard to where imported contact data are stored. Storage should be in the EU or US so that it is fully compliant with data protection regulations (Dotmailer meets this requirement).

Another benefit of using an email service such as Dotmailer is that email campaigns can be monitored and tracked, allowing you to measure how the number of emails opened, which links were the most viewed and so on, all of which should inform future email campaigns.

If time and particularly money is an issue then sending a regular email will do as a means of maintaining contact and is certainly better than nothing, but this route will not enable you to track your campaign.

Where to get help
The Graduate Marketing Manager and/or International Liaison & Recruitment Manager can put you in touch with Dotmailer and provide examples of ezines used by UCL.

3.1.5 Google Adwords/LinkedIn
Google is by far the most popular search engine, and a number of departments have used Google Adwords to raise the profile of their programmes to prospective students. Adwords enables you to choose keywords and phrases related to your programme area so that when someone using Google uses these keywords, your advert may appear. How many times your advert appears will depend on your budget. You can determine how much you want to spend, but be warned that too small a budget won’t have a great impact. Charges are only incurred when someone actually clicks on the advert, but do check carefully how much you will be charged per click. We recommend that you test your keywords before you start, to see what the reach of your keywords will be. As with Google AdWords, you set your budget before you start.

LinkedIn is an alternative way to reach your audience, and allows you to target your advert according to job title and industry. LinkedIn is more expensive than Adwords but likely to be more targeted. Again, you should test your keywords before starting, to ascertain what the reach of your keywords will be. As with Google AdWords, you set your budget before you start.

Both routes will provide sophisticated analytics to help you monitor the success of your campaign but you can also get a feel for this yourself by monitoring traffic to your website through Google Analytics, the volume of enquiries and applications. Contact Web & Mobile Services for assistance in setting up Google Analytics (www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/staff/websites/web-services).

Where to get help
Contact the Graduate Marketing Manager and/or International Liaison & Recruitment Manager for contacts in academic departments which have tried Adwords.

3.1.6 Social media
The massive growth in the use of social media in recent times has made using these channels an essential element of linking with your audience. You can see what is happening at an institutional level by clicking on the social network icons on the UCL homepage. There are specific Facebook and Twitter sites for international students at www.facebook.com/uclinternational and https://twitter.com/UCL_IntOffice.

The most popular social media sites are available in most countries, but Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are not accessible in mainland China. The UCL International Office has established a presence on Weibo and Youku, the equivalents of Twitter and YouTube respectively. Both can be accessed via the Weibo account at http://e.weibo.com/uclinternational.

It’s worth browsing the UCL website for examples of how different departments are using social media. An easy way to do this is to use the social media links on the homepage and click to see who we are ‘liking’ or ‘following’.

A vital element of social media engagement is keeping your content fresh; a Facebook page or blog which has not been updated sends out the wrong signals. You need to commit to maintaining the sites that you run in the same way that you need to keep your website up-to-date, although regular posting on most social media, particularly social network sites, is quick and easy. If you have both Facebook and Twitter it is possible to link them using an RSS feed so that updating a status in one automatically updates the other.

We are still learning how external audiences engage with us through social media, but monitoring activity on the UCL International page suggests that those who follow the page respond best to ‘soft’ information (good news stories and interesting/fun images eg of UCL in the snow) and use it as a means of feeling connected to us, rather than a source of vital information. The International Office now publishes a social media scorecard every three months which gives an overview of activity on the IO’s social media pages, and responses from viewers. The scorecards are available online at: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/international-office/digital-marketing

Where to get help
To understand your options and help you determine what will best suit your goals please refer to the ‘Using social media in your communications’ guide in the CAM toolkit at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/toolkits/social-media.doc and on the social media website at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/social-media.
UCL branded Facebook and Twitter icons can be downloaded via http://www.ucl.ac.uk/corporate-identity/social-media.

3.1.7 Rich media
Good quality multimedia content can be extremely valuable for prospective students. There are two main uses:

1. Giving prospective students an impression of what it would be like to study here. This is particularly important in the final stages of their decision making process when students are seeking to validate their choices. This applies particularly to overseas students who may be unfamiliar with the UK Higher Education system and are seeking reassurance. Content can include testimonials from current staff, alumni or employers, sample lectures or programme overviews from programme leaders, or a guided tour of the facilities.
2. Offering an alternative, accessible format to explain complex information. Audiences increasingly scan-read websites, meaning they miss important details that may affect their decisions to apply. In high volume areas providing multimedia how to guides can reduce the number of errors and unnecessary enquiries a department receives - resulting in reduced administration for staff.
Where to get help
For advice in making videos focused on student recruitment colleagues should contact:
Niko van Poortvliet in Publications and Marketing Services - email n.poortvliet@ucl.ac.uk or call 37108. Advice is also available from Rob Eagle, Multimedia Producer in the Communications Team, email r.eagle@ucl.ac.uk, and you can also contact UCL Multimedia - email mm-productions@ucl.ac.uk, or call 09261.

3.1.8 Advertising
UCL does not generally do any kind of generic, institution-wide advertising in newspapers or journals to promote degree programmes, but you may want to consider print/digital advertising with appropriate publications.

You need to be satisfied the publication in question will reach your target audience, and therefore you will need to check information such as the size and profile of the readership before you commit. Adverts should have a ‘call to action’ i.e. directing people to your website (direct url or your homepage) or to contact your department. You should monitor traffic to your website using Google Analytics to see if the adverts have had the desired effect of increasing visits to your site and leading to more enquiries/applications. Do not commit money to any form of advertising in which it is difficult to measure your return on investment.

The quality of enquiries and applications is as important as the quantities, and this should be part of the evaluation of adverts placed in print or digital press.

Where to get help
Publications & Marketing Services are developing services to support departmental student recruitment activity. See www.ucl.ac.uk/pams for further details, and please contact them as far in advance of any advertising deadline as possible.

Step 4: Using print media to reach your audience
Despite the dominance of digital communications you may decide that you have a need for print. All programmes which are fully approved by the end of June are listed in the Graduate Prospectus, and approval is required by late November for inclusion in the Undergraduate Prospectus. Although requests for the printed prospectuses have fallen in recent years there is still demand for hard copy material, and print prospectuses are distributed to enquirers at recruitment fairs in the UK and abroad.

Leaflets, postcards and flyers can still be a handy and inexpensive means to alert prospective students and influencers to your programmes eg at conferences. Posters may be useful in departments, but are only worth sending to specific contacts. Return on investment is much harder to judge using these channels, so do avoid a completely scattergun approach.

Before embarking on any kind of print production you need to be clear about what and who your print is for. You should also consider the shelf-life of any publication and ensure that the print run is appropriate. Print media should always direct people to a website and provide a clear contact point, so do make sure your website is up and running before any print communications are disseminated.

Where to get help
Departments wanting to create print media for student recruitment purposes are advised to contact the Publications & Marketing Services at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/pams for guidance, and to ensure that all communications confirm to the corporate identity and house style. In addition you should consult the ‘Hints and tips on print and design’ at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/toolkits before you start.
Step 5: Using events to reach your audience

Events can be face-to-face or virtual and can include open days/evenings, online chats or using opportunities at conferences to promote your programme. Events also useful at the conversion stage, to ensure that effort expended on attracting suitable applicants is carried on to deliver a satisfactory conversion rate.

Open days and evenings can be promoted through the channels mentioned above. You may want to consider broadcasting aspects of your event over the web as a means of involving prospective students who are not in London or the UK, or of recording sessions which students can watch at their own convenience.

We strongly recommend that you encourage students to register in advance and capture details of visitors who turn up on the day so that you can send follow-up emails in order to maintain interest, and also conduct post-event evaluation. Likewise if you attend any kind of fair, capturing the data of your enquirers is just as important as handing out information, so do make sure you have some means of doing this. The International Office can provide sample enquiry forms, hard copy and electronic.

Online chats eg with an admissions tutor or current students could be used for prospective students and may also be useful for students who are unable attend an event in person, or for offer-holders.

Sample lectures are a good way to profile the department and could be hosted on your website or, if relevant, link to a lunchtime lecture.

Where to get help
Depending on the nature of your event, the Events team have an Events toolkit on the Communications & Marketing website at www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/events which contains practical information on running an event.
You may also want to talk to Faculties and departments which have held events as part of their recruitment strategies, including Arts & Humanities and Social & Historical Sciences (contact Felicity Stafford, Faculty Communications Manager: f.stafford@ucl.ac.uk) Mathematical & Physical Sciences (contact Dr Caroline Essex, Faculty Tutor: c.essex@ucl.ac.uk), both of which have organised open days and the School of Public Policy (contact Helen Elliot, Senior Postgraduate Administrator: h.elliot@ucl.ac.uk) which has held post-offer open days.

On an institutional level, UCL is represented at many recruitment events in the UK and beyond. Details of UK undergraduate events are online at:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/access-ucl/access-ucl/higher-education-fairs
UK graduate event information is at:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/apply/next/open-days-visits
and details of international events is at:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/international/overseas-visits

For advice on making the most of attending external events, do talk to the Graduate Marketing Manager and/or International Liaison & Recruitment Manager.

Step 6: Useful contacts

Graduate Marketing Manager: John Burnett (john.burnett@ucl.ac.uk)
For advice marketing for Master’s and research degree programmes

International Liaison & Recruitment Manager: Julie Rolls, (j.rocks@ucl.ac.uk)
For advice on international markets, for all levels of study
International Liaison & Recruitment Manager (Digital Marketing): Neil Green, (neil.green@ucl.ac.uk)
For advice on Hobsons Connect and other digital communications channels for student recruitment
International Office:  http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/international-office
For information on other support available from the UCL International Office

Publications & Marketing Services:  www.ucl.ac.uk/pams
For advice on student recruitment publications and websites, for all levels of study

Communications:  www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/communications
For advice on digital communications, corporate identity and the house style

Faculty Communications Managers
Contact your Faculty office

UCL Marketing LinkedIn group:  www.linkedin.com
An opportunity to share thoughts and ideas on marketing at UCL.

Access Office:  http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/our-services/access-and-admissions
For advice on UK undergraduate recruitment, with a particular focus on widening participation

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