

The Long Read

As the previous Leadership Bulletin made clear, we need to increase our income as well as reducing our expenditure. Increasing our student population is essential to our ability to do this

In addition to accelerating the work needed to consolidate and re-define our portfolio of modules and programmes, we are investing in and enabling a step-change in our marketing and recruitment activities as part of a programme of work overseen by the Recruitment Oversight Committee and the Student Recruitment Board.

The Recruitment and Marketing Office has been given additional resource to support and enhance current activity with a view to aiding conversion in the current cycle and looking to the medium longer-term to help improve the position for next year and beyond.

This includes increasing staffing levels in this area, and we are already appointing additional recruitment officers. The Executive Group has also agreed to appoint a senior-level marketing director for the University and we are currently working with an executive search agency to help us find the right person for this post. In the meantime, we have sought input from a consultant to help us refine our thinking and she will shortly be meeting with a group of internal stakeholders.

The 2020 undergraduate recruitment cycle started in February. With new materials, a greater social media profile, a higher public profile, and a larger recruitment team with more funding we are able to increase the number and range of activities in the UK and the EU.

The strategic focus is on improving enquiry and applicant management, driving applicant conversion, enhancing our marketing efforts and our social media campaigns and presence. We are employing an agency to provide specialist support. The central recruitment team is working closely with school teams to improve the Applicant Day experience



and to support improved direct communications with applicants.

We have increased resources in international recruitment and, whilst our activities continue to attract high-quality applicants, we are facing increased competition and increasingly challenging recruitment strategies from other universities as with the home and EU market. Both the central team and schools are working to address this in our key markets supported by in-country recruitment activities and an increase in digital initiatives.

Additional resource is also being targeted at postgraduate recruitment with increased external advertising as well as across the University to ensure that current students are aware of our postgraduate offer through the schools and across campus.

This weekend sees the second open event for the Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) which will be hosted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). The first was held in April on the Canterbury campus and attracted around 300 visitors. Feedback from that event was very positive.

This year's Clearing is more important than ever to the University and we anticipate that we will see aggressive competition from other institutions so we have far-reaching campaign plans in place. The 2019 Kent Clearing site is now live with UCAS Clearing opening on 5

July. Clearing arrangements have changed which means that those who are eligible can apply for a place until 9 August when there is an A-level results embargo period which ends on 15 August – after which, the usual conditions apply.

We will have a new video available soon as part of our central campaign to promote the University of Kent which sits alongside the schools' campaign to promote particular subjects. We also run a call centre during the A-level clearing period and, this year, we have increased the number of student operators to more than 40.

This year our challenge will continue to be conversion, and, while we need to ensure we are being robust in our assessments, we need to process applications quickly through to confirmation. Our systems will allow us to do this so I would urge heads to make sure that you have sufficient admissions resource in place, not just to process the applications but also to do follow-up activity such as calling prospective students.

This is a tough time for us all, but I am proud to see how staff across the University have risen to the challenge. I would like to thank all those in schools and professional service departments, such as EMS, International Recruitment, Commercial Services and others, for their hard work.

David Nightingale, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost