

CASE Circle of Excellence Awards 2021

BEST UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN **2021**



University of
East London

FIND THE CURE.
CHANGE THE NARRATIVE.
FIGHT FOR JUSTICE.
REDUCE EMISSIONS.
BUILD BRIDGES.
CREATE ETHICAL AI.
END HEALTH PRIVILEGE.
BE THE CHANGE.



University of
East London

The University of East London has a traditional over-reliance on local markets in UCAS Extra and Clearing, with more than half of our students usually applying after the UCAS deadline, and over 65% from London.

Recruiting for September 2021, our goal was to deliver an integrated campaign, backed by robust strategy, to improve our position after January and buck this trend.

	MAIN	EXTRA	CLEARING
2017/8	28.18%	36.11%	35.71%
2018/9	34.66%	32.23%	33.12%
2019/0	27.73%	34.17%	38.09%

BE THE CHANGE.
CAMPAIGN AIMS

We faced sector-specific challenges such as increasing competition and changing attitudes towards university, but the wider context in 2020 was defined by

a global pandemic,


polarised politics,

climate crisis,

and social justice movements...



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A firefighter in a yellow jacket is seen from the back, looking towards a large fire in a forest. The fire is intense, with bright orange and yellow flames rising from the ground and trees. Thick black smoke billows into the sky, partially obscuring the background. The firefighter's hands are on their head, suggesting a moment of stress or contemplation. The overall scene is dramatic and somber, highlighting the impact of wildfires.

This is the
background
against which
young people
are now making
decisions about
their future.



Our research indicated that students were, more than ever, concerned about the overall value of education, safety on campus, their mental health, and the challenges that they face after graduating – especially students from BAME communities and lower income households.

CONNECTING OUR BRAND

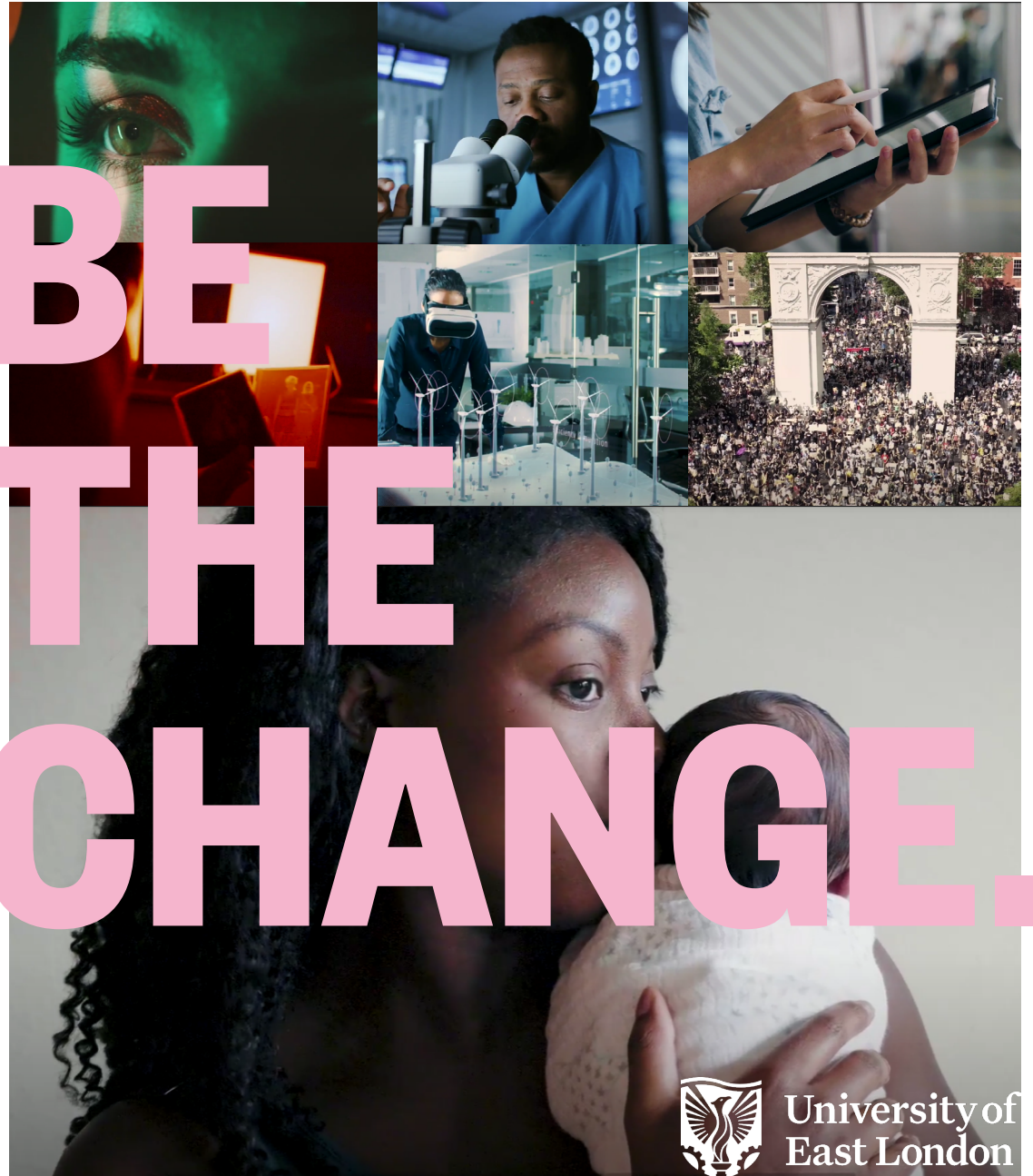
As an institution, we are committed to providing career-focused education to people from all backgrounds, and it was vital to us that our campaign reflected our broader vision as well as our strategic goals. The campaign idea flowed directly from our institutional priorities: preparing students for careers of the future and cultivating an inclusive, forward-thinking community.



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Our 2021 UG campaign therefore sought to reach under-represented audiences with an inspiring message that would reinforce the important role that education plays in our society, and gesture towards a positive future in these difficult times.

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CHANGE.**



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RECRUITMENT TARGETS

1. Increase applications vs. previous year by 5%.

CAMPAIGN KPIs

2. +20% increase on 2019 campaign metrics.

GEOGRAPHICAL REACH

3. Increase applications from outside London.

BUDGET: £255,000

**BE THE CHANGE.
OBJECTIVES**

OUR APPROACH FOCUSED ON THREE STRATEGIC PILLARS

Using great
content to deliver a
powerful message.

[INSPIRE]

BE THE CHANGE.



Employing smart
targeting to reach new
audiences.



[REACH]

Ensuring digital
excellence to improve
online interaction.



[CONVERT]

Taking place in the autumn of 2020, this campaign needed to address the global context that dominated everyone's daily lives.

Rather than ignore our students' concerns about the future, we decided to address them head-on, adapting our successful 'Be The Next' campaign to 'Be The Change', foregrounding a positive message about education and addressing the impact of the pandemic on teaching.

We wanted to invite young people to think about their career aspirations in relation to broader social themes and show how we were changing our approach to education as a university through digital innovations.

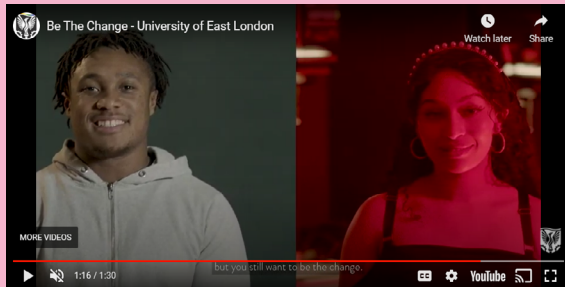
We aimed to make this bold statement while still communicating the tangible benefits of studying at the University of East London, being authentic in our approach, and addressing practical concerns about online learning and campus safety using informative content.



WE CREATED

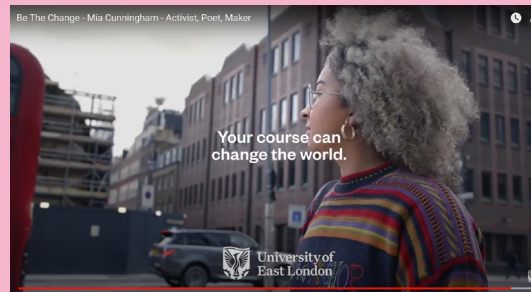
BRAND MESSAGING TO INSPIRE AND ENGAGE

- powerful hero video foregrounding the 'Be The Change' message
- broad range of creative assets



LONG-FORM CONTENT TO REINFORCE THE MESSAGE

- documentary films about inspiring students and staff
- long-form conversation series on big themes in academia



STUDENT-LED CONTENT TO INFORM AND CONVERT

- published content on online teaching and campus safety
- UCG, including filmed student testimonials and competitions



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**ONLINE LECTURES.
VIRTUAL SOCIALS.
FLEXIBLE LEARNING.
PERSONALISED TIMETABLES.
DIGITAL TOOLS.
DISTANCED SEMINARS.
SAFE CAMPUSES.
BE THE CHANGE.**

Study at the University of East London in 2021



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We utilised a vast amount of data and insight to inform our campaign strategy, identifying some important trends:

TARGETING

25+

A rise in the mature market led us to focus more energy and budget on the 25+ age bracket.



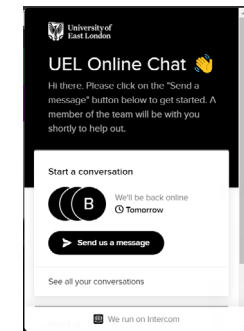
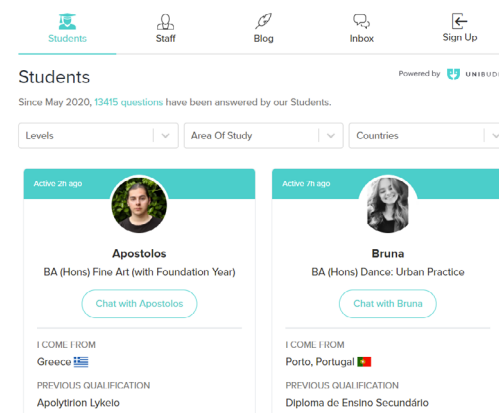
We noted opportunities in areas outside of London, particularly the West Midlands, the North and Scotland to inform our regional targeting.



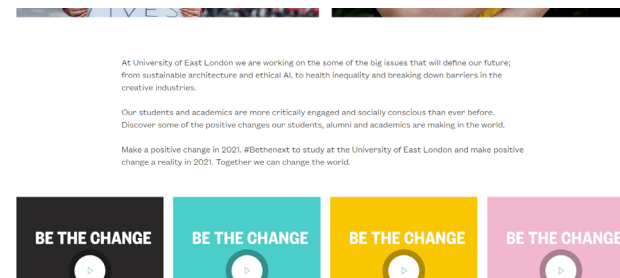
We optimised our channel strategy to take advantage of shifts in social media usage and a lack of OOH opportunities.

DIGITAL ONLY

Since the pandemic had forced students into their homes and seminars onto Zoom, we needed to ensure our campaign was not just digital-first but digital-only.



We used UniBuddy and live chat for effective real-time engagement.



Our channel strategy made use of in-home media like TV on Demand and Twitch.

Background work on SEO improved organic traffic and CRM nurture emails were connected to the campaign.

CHANNELS

TRADITIONAL

UCAS
The Student Room
UniCompare
Metro
TV on Demand

BIDDABLE

Google PPC
Bing PPC
Facebook
Instagram
TikTok
Snapchat
Twitter

OWNED

YouTube playlists for video content
Instagram stories
Sharing content on Twitter and Facebook
Be The Change landing page
Internal comms and intranet pages
CRM emails
Live chat, UniBuddy and conversion activity
Digital publications
Virtual events

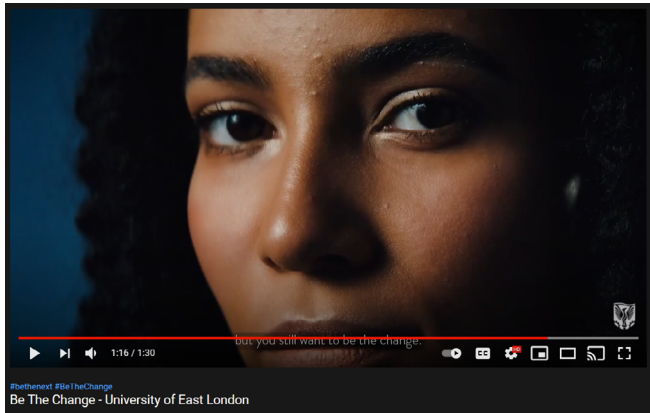


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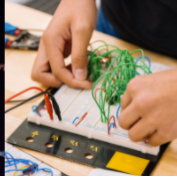


HERO

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Study at the University of East London in 2021

SUBJECTS

BUILD BRIDGES.		BE THE CHANGE.	Study Architecture and Physical Design in 2021 #BETHENEXT
BUILD ETHICAL AI		BE THE CHANGE.	Study Computer Science and Digital Technologies in 2021 #BETHENEXT
DESIGN THE FUTURE		BE THE CHANGE.	Study Fashion in 2021 #BETHENEXT
FIGHT FOR JUSTICE		BE THE CHANGE.	Study Law, Policing and Justice in 2021 #BETHENEXT

STRANDS

ONLINE LECTURES.
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Study at the University of East London in 2021



The world is changing and so are we.
 Apply now for 2021.

#BETHENEXT



CREATIVE

The campaign was highly successful, exceeding the objectives we set out to achieve and leading to a huge increase in real applications.

RECRUITMENT TARGETS

1. We increased applications by 16.4% and outperformed competitors by 7.34%.

CAMPAIGN KPIs

2. We exceeded KPIs for Impressions (^28%), Clicks (^80%) and Conversions (^45%).

GEOGRAPHICAL REACH

3. We gained significantly more applications from outside London, with a disproportionate rise in targeted areas, including the West Midlands (67.8%), Yorkshire (72.8%) and Scotland (143.5%).

BE THE CHANGE.
OUTCOMES



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These tangible benefits are superb, given the challenges of a global pandemic and massive disruption to the education system, but the campaign had – and continues to have – a strong effect beyond the metrics.

We married the external campaign with a lot of activity to generate internal buy-in and have seen the ‘Be The Change’ mentality being adopted and employed by senior stakeholders, staff and students.

The strategy achieved its dual goals of improving our recruitment position and generating an important conversation in an incredibly difficult climate.

BE THE CHANGE.
OUTCOMES

Budget	£255,000
Campaign conversions (apply clicks)	8,583
Assumption of 10% completion	858.3
Application to enrolment rate	11.2%
Projected enrolments from campaign	96.13
Revenue generated (£27,750 x 96.13)	£2,667,607

ROI £2,412,607

BE THE CHANGE.
ROI

Our campaign made a real statement.

In extraordinary circumstances, we decided against adhering to tried and tested approaches, and instead looked at inspiration from outside of HE –



– at brands with a social purpose and a unique voice – and developed a campaign that would authentically and compellingly cultivate **our** voice.



This was a timely and urgent message that spoke directly to our audience's concerns and passions, generating cut-through in a crowded market, and an output that was recognisably East London.

Informed by extensive insight, we developed a comprehensive strategy that guided messaging, content, targeting and reporting, and delivered tangible outcomes – we can demonstrate a direct correlation between the success of the campaign and progress towards meeting our institutional goals.

We worked creatively to produce compelling content with creative agencies, in-house teams, academics and students during lockdown, developing a rich suite of media that showcases our inspiring work as an institution.

We are extremely proud of Be The Change – not only for the positive impact it has had on our recruitment position heading into Clearing, but also because of the passionate response it has received from our community and the places we know we can take it in the future.



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