



The University of Manchester

University College

for interdisciplinary learning

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT



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This toolkit has been produced by the Student Communications and Marketing Team, in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Support Office in the Directorate for the Student Experience.

Enquiries and feedback

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Purpose

This toolkit is designed to give academic and professional support staff in Schools the necessary information and tools to advise and communicate with students confidently on the unique opportunities offered by the University College.

While the College has a strong central marketing and communications plan to raise awareness among the undergraduate population, it is at the programme and School level – particularly during course unit promotion and selection processes – where the biggest impact can be made in terms of highlighting the great opportunities the College offers.

Brief overview of the College

The University College for Interdisciplinary Learning presents an opportunity for students at The University of Manchester to broaden their educational horizons. It offers course units that showcase the breadth and depth of research and knowledge found at the University and encourage students to go beyond the boundaries of their degree programme.

The College provides students with a learning experience that will ensure they are skilled to challenge conventional thinking and able to offer perspectives that make them more employable. Furthermore, the University College will connect teaching to current, cutting-edge thinking and research, allowing students to locate their disciplinary knowledge in the wider world, and helping to make a Manchester education of benefit in any future endeavour.

Success so far

Course unit survey feedback from Semester 1 has been extremely positive with excellent teaching scores and very positive comments from students.

"I can honestly say it is the best course that I have studied in my degree so far."

Leadership of Learning

"From the training sessions down to the placement – I cannot stress enough how much this unit has helped me to gain an insight into my future career. It's such a great course."

Leadership of Learning

"Really value the opportunity to do something not strictly related to my degree."

Essential Enterprise

"Developed the ability to look at concepts in a different way and to research in a way that's very different from my major."

*Science and the Humanities:
Bridging the Two Cultures*

A role for schools

Student feedback on the College concept has been very positive from the two formal consultations run to date. Surveying students on their knowledge and understanding of the College demonstrated that the central University communications channels were having an impact, although it also found there was limited information available through schools and the information had been inaccurate for some students.

Success so far

Response to course unit commissioning

The course unit commissioning process remains strong with excellent proposals from across the University and input from all Faculties. The course units are broad ranging covering topics such as security, sustainability and the cities of tomorrow as well units directly contributing to the University's social responsibility agenda with placements in schools and community organisations. The unit brochure can be found by visiting www.manchester.ac.uk/college.

Effective governance structure

The University College has established a governance structure that will be sustainable and meet the long term needs of a teaching delivery unit. With the establishment of the Academic Board, Teaching and Learning Panel and Examinations Board, the College moved from the project phase to the implementation phase. All Faculties are represented on each group and cross-faculty discussions are leading to continuous improvement in the guidance provided to course unit convenors as well as highly detailed scrutiny of all proposals from multiple perspectives leading to further development of units.

Signature lectures

It was agreed by Senate that the College would host an annual lecture series which would allow students, staff and members of the wider University community, as well as members of the public, to find out more about the University's diverse and significant contribution to education and research. The 2013-14 lecture series programme will be announced in the autumn.



Kostya Novoselov

Extra-curricular awards

Building on the success of the Manchester Leadership Award, the academic component of which is now overseen by the College, and recognising the significant drivers to enhance graduate employability, the College has taken ownership of the academic components of a new range of Manchester Awards.

The first award to be approved was the Manchester Global Award which will pilot with up to 50 students in 2013-14. This award will focus on intercultural competence (including intercultural communication skills) and will have significant academic input. Further awards focussing on cultural engagement, sport and enterprise are in development.

Key messages for students

- The University College gives you the opportunity to broaden your educational horizons, to step out of your disciplinary comfort zone and explore subjects that fascinate and inspire.
- All University College course units are credit bearing and count towards your final degree.
- You'll benefit from a learning experience that provides the comprehensive skills needed to succeed beyond your time at Manchester.
- It's about stretching your learning beyond your degree and opening your mind to the differences and commonalities between a wide range of subject areas.
- It's an opportunity to see how knowledge is formed and research is inspired through the collaboration of disciplines.
- See the course units available at **www.manchester.ac.uk/college/courses**
- Learn more about the College through Facebook and Twitter:
www.facebook.com/theunicollege
www.twitter.com/theunicollege

In addition to using some of these key messages outlined, you should inform students how and when they should make their choices, in line with your local processes for course unit selection.

Who is the target audience?

It's important that we don't confuse students who are not eligible to take University College course units. So to be clear, the target audience is;

- Undergraduate students with free choice option space in their programmes.

Channels to use

Effective channels for student communication and engagement

In recent feedback, students have highlighted that information coming from their Schools on the opportunities offered by University College has been limited. Some ideas for getting key messages across to students are as follows;

Email

When asked, students still identify this as the primary channel for receiving information. What they don't seem so keen on is receiving a lot of ad hoc messages on single subjects, which they often feel are irrelevant or could be rolled into a single weekly email.

The trick is to use email sparingly and thoughtfully – for example, include messages about the University College in established channels such as weekly bulletins or monthly messages rather than sending specific 'high priority' emails about it.

Top tip: Refer to the Materials and Resources section below to find some suggested text, which you can use as the basis for any communications about the College

As the University College is only applicable to undergraduate students, please be careful when using Listservs to ensure that information does not go to large groups of students to whom the College is not relevant. If this is unavoidable for some reason, clearly mark your message so it's clear who it is applicable to (and to whom it's not relevant).

If you're sending a specific email out to a cohort of students, make sure it comes from a named person – and preferably a name they will recognise.

The message should also make it clear what the 'call to action' is – that is, what they should do to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the University College (eg – visit **www.manchester.ac.uk/college/courses** to see what course units are on offer).

One other suggestion is to add a University College 'banner' to the signature file of your email, perhaps for short periods, as this will help raise awareness without much extra effort (when you email students about other matters). Details of where to get one from are in the Materials and Resources section below.

Channels to use

Online

If you have an active and well-read Intranet for student, this is also a good supporting channel to use to promote the College. Be sure to refer to the section below on Materials and Resources to find text and images you can use.

Screensavers in centrally owned IT clusters will be used as part of the central Communications and Marketing plan, so you do not need to worry about this – unless you have your own school controlled clusters.

Blackboard

A potentially powerful channel, it's where students would expect to see messages and information related to their studies. If you can get messages out in programme and community spaces as part of your overall approach, it can certainly help raise awareness.

Social media

While not a magic bullet for communicating to students that many imagine it to be, it does have a part to play. If you have very active Facebook pages for your students, you should definitely look at using these – and it's not just a case of broadcasting information out. You could start by posting an interactive poll asking: "If you had the chance, would you take course units that allow you to explore subjects beyond your main degree?" You could then use the responses and the debate it creates to introduce the University College.

In promoting the NSS, some Schools have found that asking Reps to post information on their student-run Facebook pages is a very effective of creating engagement.

Blogs and Twitter feeds can also be used – but if not many people read them, the impact is going to be limited.

You can link to the College's social media presence as follows;

 www.facebook.com/theunicollege
 www.twitter.com/theunicollege

Face to face

Lecture and seminar 'shout outs' are tried and tested ways of communicating with students about various University opportunities and initiatives. Like anything else, if overused this technique can quickly become a blunt instrument. But on the whole it seems to remain a very effective approach.

Staff student liaison committees also provide excellent opportunities to get key messages across to student reps about the opportunities offered by the University College. Peer to peer promotion has proved to be a very effective approach in many instances.

Channels to use

Events

If you're keen to engage your students with the opportunities offered by the College, why not look into holding a special event.

Course unit convenors may also be available for promotional activities with students – please contact the College (unicollege@manchester.ac.uk) if you would like to arrange for the College team or course convenors to take part.

Perhaps you could incentivise a special event by holding it over lunchtime and offering free pizza to all those who attend? Contact the College to discuss your ideas.

Posters and postcards

Another 'old fashioned' approach, but one that still has a place. A well-positioned poster or two in key areas that students use can help reinforce messages being communicated through other channels.

Flyers or postcards tend to be less effective, especially if just left 'lying around' to be collected and can become seen as clutter once they have been there a while. They tend to be much more effective if used in tandem with another communication approach, such as a lecture shout-out or an event – they serve to reinforce the key messages and give students something to 'take away'.

Both postcards and posters can be ordered from the University College team – see the Materials and Resources section for more details.

Digital screens

While quite passive and ambient, digital screens can help reinforce messages going out through other channels. Static and animated materials for these screens, promoting the University College, are available – see the next section.

A little bit of everything

As with all the best communication campaigns, it's the ones that use a rich mixture of methods and approaches that will have the greatest effect. Simply using email and ignoring face to face and posters won't give you the best result, but we realise that employing all the techniques outlined will be time-consuming, and all support is very much appreciated.

Materials and resources

Print

- Course unit posters and postcards – request these from **unicollege@manchester.ac.uk**
- Course brochure – request a copy from **unicollege@manchester.ac.uk**

Digital

- Postcard images –
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15592>
- Posters –
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15593>
- Video for course promotion periods – for OneLAN digital screens (no sound)
- Video introduction to the College – for online use (with sound).
- PNG file for course promotion periods – for use on digital screens and online
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15597>
- PNG for email signatures –
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15596>

Text

- Article / email template –
<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=15509>



University College postcard

Outline of central communications and marketing plan

Workstream	Activities	Audiences	Dates	Owner	Resources/Channels
Course units	Targeted communication to incoming students during confirmation	Incoming students	Mid-late Sept	Student Communications and Marketing	Key messages from UCOL team Unit Survey results Other student feedback
Course units	Start of Year fair for new and returning students	New and returning students	Week 0	UCOL	Staff to man a stand Promotional materials (flyers, posters, pop-ups etc)
General College promotion	Positive marketing and awareness raising	Students	Ongoing	UCOL/Student Comms	Unit Survey results Key messages from UCOL MyManchester portal Student eUpdate Social media
Course units	Video marketing – Deploy video content across OneLan network	All students	From week minus 1 to week 1	UCOL/AGLC/ Media Services	Updated videos with new courses
Signature lectures	Advertising student tickets for lecture 1	All students (UG/PG)	From mid October (assuming lecture in mid/late November)	UCOL	EventBrite set-up Flyers Social Media
Signature Lectures	Advertising ‘for sale’ tickets for lecture 1	Alumni/ Staff/ Public	From late summer	UCOL/Royal Exchange/ Alumni	Description of lecture Web presence
General College promotion	Positive marketing based on S1 Unit Survey results	Students/ Staff	December - February	UCOL/Student Comms	Unit Survey results Key messages from UCOL MyManchester portal
Signature Lectures	Advertising ‘for sale’ tickets for lecture 2	Alumni/ Staff/ Public	From early Winter (depends on publication schedule for Royal Exchange programme)	UCOL/Royal Exchange/ Alumni	Description of lecture Web presence
Course units	Video marketing – Deploy video content across OneLan network	All students	From the start of the S1 exam period until the start of teaching	UCOL/AGLC/ Media Services	Updated videos with new courses Focus on S2 courses Include S1 case studies and vox pops
Signature lectures	Advertising student tickets for lecture	All students (UG/PG)	Mid February	UCOL	EventBrite set-up Flyers Social Media
Taster Sessions	Advertising to students	All students (focus on UG)	From mid February (sessions to run from mid March onwards concurrent with course selection in Schools)	UCOL	Social media Flyers Website Follows course approvals process in January (see annual workplan)
Course units	School toolkit	School admin Academic Advisers	End of Feb/Early March	UCOL/ Student Comms	Follows course set-up (see annual workplan) To assist with academic advising in Schools for course selection Include S1 case studies and vox pops
Signature Lectures	Advertising ‘for sale’ tickets for lecture 3	Alumni/ Staff/ Public	From early Spring (depends on publication schedule for Royal Exchange programme)	UCOL/Royal Exchange/ Alumni	Description of lecture Web presence
Signature lectures	Advertising student tickets for lecture 3	All students (UG/PG)	Early/ Mid May (assuming lecture in mid June)	UCOL	EventBrite set-up Flyers Social Media

Key People



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