

# **The University of Manchester**

## Competitor analysis summary



The University commissioned a market research agency to compare our brand positioning with 29 competitor universities in terms of vision statement, strategy, web presence, job adverts for senior posts and annual reports.

The universities were chosen because they were UK competitor institutions or they had a similar world ranking to The University of Manchester.

#### Each analysis covered:

1.  
**Key brand elements and messages by audience – particular messages, straplines, brand elements and unique selling points.**
2.  
**Brand – a summary of the brand proposition.**
3.  
**The brand narrative – ambitions, strategies, big themes.**
4.  
**Visual branding – graphics, pictures etc.**
5.  
**Academic flagships – key subjects that were part of the brand offer.**
6.  
**The employer offer – the proposition for businesses and other employers.**
7.  
**The student offer – the brand for students.**
8.  
**Staff recruitment branding – how job adverts project the brand.**

#### Some key findings from the report included:

1.  
Most universities fail to use people or academic subjects to leverage their brand.
2.  
Brand messages are fairly generic, and many of the ambitions are similar (to be among the top universities, to be a world leader, to solve global problems). Some universities offer strong brands in the limited sense of logos and designs; others are rather old fashioned visually.
3.  
In terms of brand message, universities are not very good at creating any sense of uniqueness. Descriptors are fairly similar across the group, with words such as international, world-class, research-intensive, engagement and excellence being overused. Brand narratives are hard to express. Universities shy away from clear visions, specific strategies or conversations that would create a sense of personality and priority. As such, they remain fairly bland as characters, and tend to rely on place and architectural assets to express their personality.
4.  
The era of being solely defined by one's ranking (we are the best) seems to be coming to an end, and what the university does to help society is certainly a leitmotif of 2011. However, universities continue to allude to their ranking position or remind the reader that they are a 'world top 100' university. Rankings continue to be important, but solely to chase a higher ranking does not seem to be very cool or unique any more.
5.  
There are some grandiose and rather clichéd straplines in evidence, and there is a trend towards deploying headings that work more as campaign titles on certain publications or areas of the website.
6.  
Best practice. No one university stands out as exemplary in all respects, but some have elements of good brand management.
7.  
Recruitment. Few make any effort to position the brand to support the recruitment of staff within job adverts. Most simply list the jobs and benefits. Most job adverts look similar.