

Title: E-advantage for academic Schools: guidance

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Summary: Guidance for academic Schools on the production of an e-advantage newsletter

1.0 Background

The E-advantage is a monthly e-newsletter sent out centrally from the Student Communications and Marketing team to all students who hold an offer with The University of Manchester.

The aim of this newsletter is to provide students with relevant and timely information corresponding to the particular stage in the application cycle. This serves to be a useful communication, providing practical information and advice, but its main function is support them through the decision making process and 'convert' offer holders into registered students at the University of Manchester.

With that in mind, the e-advantage selects key topics and showcases the facilities, services and opportunities that make Manchester distinctive and unique selling points of The University of Manchester in the best possible light, to help applicants make an informed decision - the e-advantage is a key conversion tool.

In order to fulfil this aim, the newsletter itself needs to stand out in a competitive market, and the new template addresses that need by being modern, clean and bright, and aligned with the University brand – whilst enabling viewing on multiple platforms.

2.0 Schools e-advantage

The central e-advantage is segmented by level of study (UG, PGT, PGR) and by location (UK, EU, international) which enables its messages to be targeted and relevant to a particular audience. This approach provides the offer holder with relevant and targeted information which goes some way to developing a relationship with the University on more of a personal level.

What we are unable to do centrally, and what students really need, is information that is segmented by Academic School. Students really want to know about the subject area to which they have applied, what's going on in the School and why they should study their subject at Manchester rather than somewhere else.

It is for this reason we encourage Academic Schools to produce an e-advantage newsletter - to give students an insight into what it's like to study their subject at Manchester.

3.0 Template

A new template has been designed by Campaign Master and the Student Communications and Marketing team for Academic Schools to use to produce a monthly e-advantage newsletter.

The template follows the same format as the central e-advantage template which was new for 2013-14 and performed very well. The new 'signposting' approach, where readers are directed to online content via links was much more effective than the 'traditional' newsletter format, with a list of articles which had been previously used, and resulted in a 9% increase in open rate and a 45% increase in click through rate since last year.

The look and feel of the Schools' template is very similar to that of the central template, but with a different lead colour and a slightly different layout. This will help the student to identify the sender as the University as they will already be familiar with the central template and provide a level of consistency across communications.

In addition the new template should be much easier to use than many of the templates that are being used currently, some of which are quite old, clunky, and prone to formatting issues.

If you already have a Campaign Master account then you will be provided with the new template in mid-November. If you use another platform, please skip the next section and go straight to the information about the content schedule and content type (3.4).

3.1 How to use the new Campaign Master template

There are six sections to the new template:

3.1.1. Lead image

Although the central e-advantage changes the image each month to relate to the theme, we recommend that Schools use the same lead image each month. This will help offer holders to identify with the School and will mean this version is immediately identifiable as the School, rather than the central, e-advantage.

Try and select a bright, bold and edgy image which sits with the University brand and represents your subject area.

You will need to re-size the image to 575 x 300 pixels. If you need assistance with this, please email studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk

3.1.2 Intro text

This should be a short paragraph (around 100 words) which grabs the reader's attention, and which briefly introduces the calls to action which follow.

Good practice is to try and not include any extra information in this text - it's intended solely as a taster to the content in the calls to action. Adding extra information here dilutes the key messages.

It's important to try and keep this paragraph short, or else it runs the risk of detracting from the key calls to action and therefore the core content of the communication.

Try and write this introduction in a casual and fun manner which is easily accessible to all. Make sure any copy is written in the house style, details of which can be found online: <http://www.brand.manchester.ac.uk/written-word>

If you would like support with copywriting, send your proposed copy to studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk and we can give you some pointers and suggestions.

3.1.3 Calls to action

There are three pink buttons towards the top of the template. These are the key calls to action, and should link to your three main features for the month.

The content which they link to should be hosted on your School's website. If absolutely necessary, we can provide you with a landing page to host your content on, but this is not ideal. The idea is that all newsletters signpost to good quality content on your website, giving one central point of truth.

There is no room to write an explanation of this content (there is not 'article' as such) - there is only space for one or two words on each pink button which then link through to the main content on your website. This is quite a challenge, and it is important to ensure the words chosen are compelling, in order to persuade readers to click through.

The intro text can be used to supplement these calls to action and explain them in a little more detail.

If you are unable to source three compelling features each month, it is possible to adjust the template to have one call to action, rather than three. Please do not attempt to edit the format of the template in such a way yourself. Contact studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk and we will send you a revised template.

3.1.4 Sub-features

These two sub-features present an opportunity to highlight two further features which would generally be less important than the three signposted to by the pink buttons, but still of relevance to readers.

Each sub-feature includes an image which should be re-sized to 275mm x 135 pixels. Try and use bright photographs without too much detail, as they will appear quite small on the reader's screen. It's nice to try and include people in these images to help offer holders identify with the content.

The header of these, and the image should link through to further content, but there is an opportunity for a longer explanation here (we recommend no more than 50 words).

3.1.5 Signposts

There is space for four signposts towards the end of the newsletter. These should link to key areas of your School website. These should not link to the main University website, as these will be covered by the central e-advantage.

These can be changed each month, depending on the priorities at that time of year, and a selection of icons will be provided by Student communications & Marketing with the template. You should not upload any other images to this section of the newsletter.

If you feel you do not have appropriate web content for these signposts, please email studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk and we can remove this section of the template for you.

3.1.6 Footer

The footer includes key links to the main University website, which should remain static, so readers are always able to easily navigate to these main areas of information.

4.0 Content

Below you can see the schedule of topics that will be sent out centrally.

We advise that you send out an e-advantage two weeks apart from the central communication, on a monthly basis. In order to avoid duplication please try not to cover these same topics as the central e-advantage unless specifically relating back to your school. Also it is preferable where possible that the emails are staggered so offer holders do not receive large quantities of information at the same time. We operate to a fixed schedule (see below) and would recommend that schools follow the suggested dates below.

These are only suggested themes and you can deviate away from these if you feel it is appropriate.

4.1 Schedule of e-advantage content 2014-15 (TBC)

Date (central)	Suggested date (Schools)	Content theme (central)	Ideas for Schools' content
Dec 18	Dec 5	Careers (Focus on employability)	Profile of graduate from School, student on a placement
Jan 16	Jan 5	Finance/Funding (Student finance, bursaries & scholarships)	Any scholarships/funding specific to schools
Feb 13	Feb 2	Accommodation (Types of accommodation, Open House, Apply)	
March 13	March 2	Living in Manchester (The city, getting around)	Any city attractions related to the subject area could be profiled
April 17	April 2	Around campus (Facilities, maps)	School and faculty facilities (labs, libraries, lecture theatres)
May 15	May 1	Good luck (Teaching & Learning, Wellbeing)	Approach to teaching and learning in the School/faculty, study tips from current students
June 19	June 5	What next? (Prepare for results, track your application, arrival)	Transition between sixth form and University
July 17	July 3	Get involved (SU, volunteering, Sport)	Subject related clubs/societies, subject sport teams
Aug (various)	n/a	Congratulations	
Sept 7	Sept 1	Welcome & Orientation	Course registration details

4.2 Ideas for content

The table above shows ideas for content that relate to the central theme each month. In addition, more general ideas for content are:

- Research going on in School
- Significant research breakthroughs/publications from staff in faculty
- Profile of lecturer
- Profile of student
- New facilities
- Focus on particular modules available

- Profile of students who are studying abroad
- Student projects
- Info on School social media accounts

Feel free to be creative, and to highlight anything that is unique or significant that your School has to offer students. Do remember that this content should ideally be hosted on your website.

4.3 Types of content

As mentioned, the content of the newsletter itself will be a web link with a short description.

This link could go to any of the following:

- page on your School website
- page on the University website
- video on YouTube or Vimeo
- social media feed
- Student/staff blogs

4.4 Titles and email subject

Don't underestimate the significance of the title of the newsletter. This is what will appear in the reader's inbox, and it needs to be something that will persuade them to open and read the newsletter.

Try and use creative language, and try using questions as titles. These are much more effective than traditional newsletter titles, such as, 'December e-advantage: Careers'. Some examples used centrally last year are:

Your future starts at Manchester
We want you to feel at home
Make every penny count
What will you do in your spare time?
What happens next?

4.5 Personalisation

If systems allow, it is really effective to personalise your e-advantage by referring to the reader's first name in the first line of the newsletter, eg. 'Hi Louise'. This can be done easily in Campaign Master - please contact studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk if you would like to learn how to do this.

5.0 Support and further information

If you need any help with content or learning how to use the new template, please contact studentmarketing@manchester.ac.uk and do our best to support you. For technical issues you can contact Campaign Master technical support on xx

Good luck!