

# **CHALLENGE**

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## **THE CASE FOR PERSONALISED VIDEO MARKETING**

### **A briefing note for senior leaders in higher education**

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#### **The context**

UK higher education is under sustained financial pressure. Nearly half of institutions finished 2025-26 in deficit. International student numbers have fallen for the second consecutive year. And recruitment targets have not moved to reflect any of this.

Marketing teams are being asked to convert more applicants with budgets that are not growing. The channels they rely on – direct mail, generic email, blanket digital spend – were designed for a different era of student decision-making. Students today move through a decision journey that is personal, emotionally driven and non-linear. They disengage quickly from communications that do not speak directly to them.

The gap between reaching a prospective student and moving them toward a firm decision has never been wider. The cost of that gap is paid every recruitment cycle.

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#### **What personalised video marketing is**

Personalised Video Marketing (PVM) uses a university's existing applicant data to deliver individually tailored video content to each prospective student. Each video is assembled from a library of short clips – course content, campus life, accommodation, societies – matched to that student's profile and delivered directly to their inbox.

The student receives a video that speaks to them specifically. The institution uses footage it already owns. The campaign is tracked end to end.

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#### **What it has delivered**

The University of East Anglia piloted personalised video marketing to help convert applicants ahead of the UCAS firm choice deadline.

Year one results from that pilot:

**800% return on investment. 24% click-through rate. 68% conversion rate.**

In year two, UEA removed direct mail from that part of their outreach entirely. In year three, the campaign reached 5,000 undergraduate and 12,500 postgraduate students.

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The decision to scale was not driven by enthusiasm for a new technology. It was driven by the economics. Personalised video demonstrably outperformed what it replaced, and the cost comparison made the case clearly.

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## **Why this is relevant now**

Every recruitment cycle in which conversion rates underperform represents enrolled students not taken, revenue not realised and marketing spend that did not deliver its potential return.

Personalised video marketing does not require a large content production budget or a new technology infrastructure. It starts with data the institution already holds and footage the marketing team has already produced. The pilot model is designed to prove the economics before any significant commitment is made.

The question is not whether this approach is worth exploring. The question is whether the current approach is delivering well enough to justify continuing with it unchanged.

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## **The suggested next step**

A 20-minute conversation between your marketing team and Challenge Marketing. No commitment. No proposal at this stage.

The purpose is to understand whether your institution's current recruitment activity and existing video assets make personalised video a realistic starting point – and if so, what a pilot campaign would look like in practice.

Challenge Marketing worked with UEA on the campaign described above. They work exclusively in engagement-led marketing for higher education and related sectors.

**To arrange that conversation:** [Book a call with Lucy](#)

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