

## Clearing 2019

# Insights to inform your Clearing campaign creative

Clearing can be a stressful time of year for students. They have a very different mindset and need to make quick decisions, so they may respond differently to your creative and messaging.

This guide outlines what works best in Clearing to maximise your engagement on The Student Room and how it changes from other key times of the year.



# Clearing display

Display is the best way to engage with the millions of users that visit The Student Room every year over the Clearing period. To help you get the most out of your campaign we've compiled some useful information.

## Messaging

The Student Room audience responds well to creative that mentions how quickly a decision will be made regarding their Clearing application. Use language that evokes a sense of urgency and creates the need for immediate action.

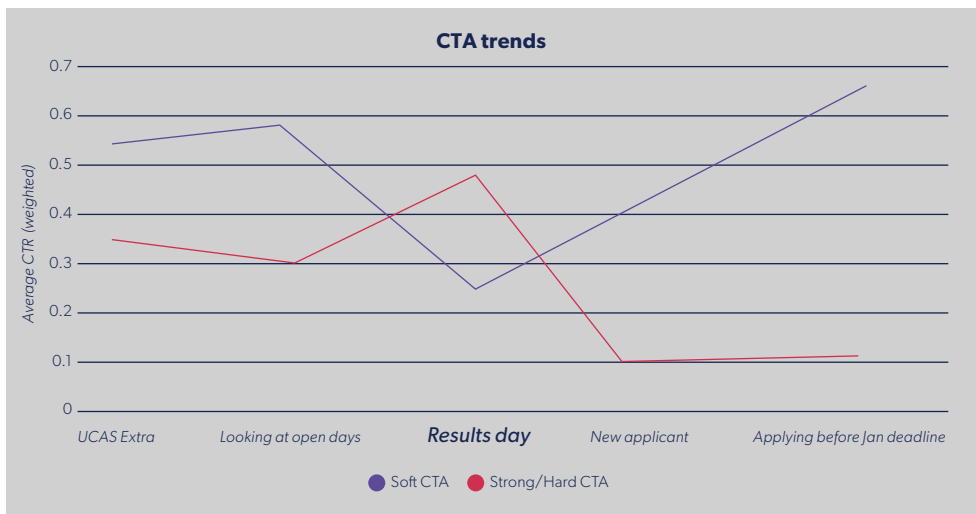
**Top tip:** The best performing creatives during Clearing last year all used the word 'Clearing'.



## Call-to-action (CTA)

Throughout most of the year soft CTAs such as 'find out more' or 'visit our virtual campus', work best. During Clearing however, we know **hard CTAs** outperform the rest.

These hard CTAs require a more decisive action, such as '**apply now**' or '**call us now**'. This creates a sense of urgency which reflects a student's mindset throughout this time.



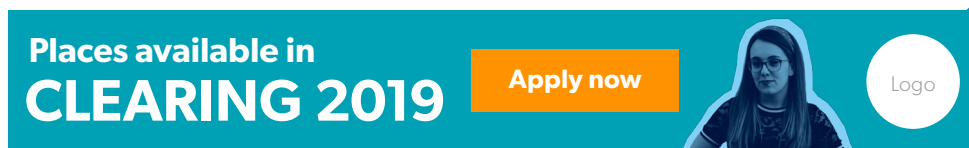
## Structure

We find real-life images aren't preferred, but if you want to use people, a **cut out of a singular person** is a clear theme that can be seen throughout the best performing creatives.

We've seen a lot of creative examples and the most effective way we suggest you organise your Clearing creative is from left to right:

**messaging > CTA > imagery or design > logo.**

Keep it simple and clear, making sure your copy is legible on all creative sizes and your logo is always present. In the case of Gifs, include your logo in every frame.



## Popular colour schemes

Colour is a great way to break up a creative to draw attention to your messaging. Green and orange hues were the most popular last year; there are some interesting psychological associations which explain why.

**Green** is associated with multiple emotions including growth and health but also greed.

**Brown** is associated with warmth, reliability and strength, but also a sense of heaviness.

**Orange** is associated with comfort and security, but also frustration and deprivation.



## What can you do?

Don't change your brand's colour palette just for Clearing, but take inspiration from the recommendations and use these findings to inform this year's campaign.

Create a sense of urgency, while conveying a supportive tone of voice to resonate best with students in Clearing and get them to engage with your campaign.

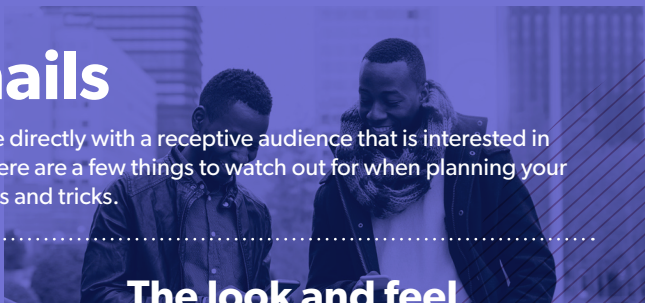
Questions to ask yourself before signing-off your Clearing creative:

- Is this creative appropriate for Clearing?
- Will my target audience click-through?
- Are these creatives all legible?
- Will it stand out on The Student Room's site?
- Is there a hard CTA included?

**Send us your creative before 28 June 2019 and we will give you feedback before 12 July 2019. You can use it to make amends (if needed) ahead of your Clearing 2019 campaign going live.**

# Clearing emails

Emails are an effective way to engage directly with a receptive audience that is interested in your course availability. However, there are a few things to watch out for when planning your copy. Check out our best practice tips and tricks.



## Subject line

This is step one in enticing your potential applicant to engage with you. The best performing subject lines are generally short, mention the subject they are promoting, the university name and pose a question.

These subject lines generally do well:

- Study 'subject' at 'university'
- 'Subject'? Clearing places available
- Get your Clearing place sorted today!

Last year, the subject lines that didn't perform well were too long or didn't use a hard CTA. During Clearing it's best to avoid words like 'discover' and 'explore' and use language that promotes a decisive action.

**To maximise results, we will always A/B test your subject lines if you supply two.**

## Email copy

Emails that are too copy heavy don't resonate with our users at this time of the year. They are already overloaded with information so you should make the copy as simple as possible. Get straight to the point, sound confident and tell them exactly what to do next.

Direct people to your website for more information instead of telling them all about your offering in the email.

## CTA

Hard CTAs apply to your email marketing too. CTAs such as 'apply now' and 'call us today' will help the performance

## The look and feel



All images should be supplied as requested in our tech specs. This ensures that everything lines up correctly and looks engaging.

Images containing people were really popular last year, which is the opposite of our display findings. So, try an alternative image choice for email. It's a more direct and personal channel so this is a great way to showcase the human element of your brand.

Always make sure that there is a CTA above the fold (top 3rd of the email), this ensures there is an opportunity for the user to click-through without having to scroll.

The header image is also the first thing the user sees, so make it count. Use that space to display what's on offer and include a CTA.

# Clearing best practice

Get the best results from your campaign by following these best practice tips.

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## Track your links

UTM is the easiest way for you to track your links. It's a great way to see how many people have clicked through. You should be tracking:

- Display
- Email
- SMS Links
- Subject alerts
- Any links that go back to your site

**Keep in mind:** It takes analytics about 24-48 hours to update so our figures might not match up exactly with yours while the campaign is live.

## Landing pages

Did you know over 60% of The Student Room's users visit on their mobile? And currently our top performing ad unit is the mobile leaderboard?

If your website isn't mobile-optimised you're going to miss out on key and engaged users.

But no need to make any drastic code changes, just make sure the landing page you're directing people to is responsive and your most important message is displayed above the fold.

## Branding

Ensure your branding for Clearing is consistent across all media for the best user journey.

Display creative and emails should have the same branding as the landing page you're taking the user to.



Get your creatives to us before  
**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June**

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and we'll give you creative  
feedback by Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July