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# Admissions and the Impact of Covid-19

## A UCAS Viewpoint

HE Marketing Conference, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021

# What were the highlights from the incredibly turbulent 2020 cycle?

## Highlights

Over 500K students secured a place at university +4% on 2019

The deferral rate was under 6%, despite widespread fears

High tariff saw a 12% growth, much of it late in the cycle

Clearing was up by 7% with much activity later than 'normal'

89% of those with revised grades were placed at their firm/insurance or comparable university

40.5% of all UK 18 year olds applied to HE

highest ever number of Polar 1 and 2 applicants placed at a high tariff university

# Applicant characteristics



160,610 of UK 18 year old women applied to an undergraduate course compared to 121,370 men



33.9% of UK domiciled 18 year old men applied, compared to 47.3% of women.

Women are now 1.40 times more likely to have applied in the main scheme, compared to 1.37 times last year.

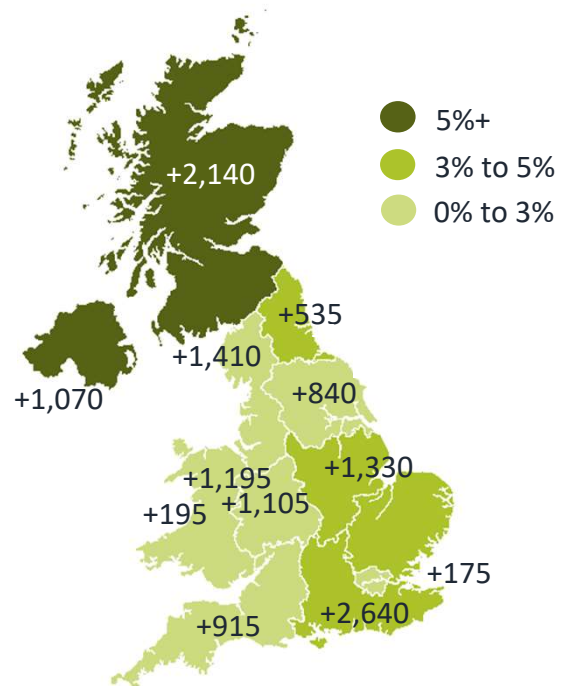


18 year old applicants domiciled in the UK increased by 2.3% to 281,980, despite population decrease.



Increase in 30-34 UK domiciled applicants by 9% to 14,470 and 35+ applicants by 13% to 26,890

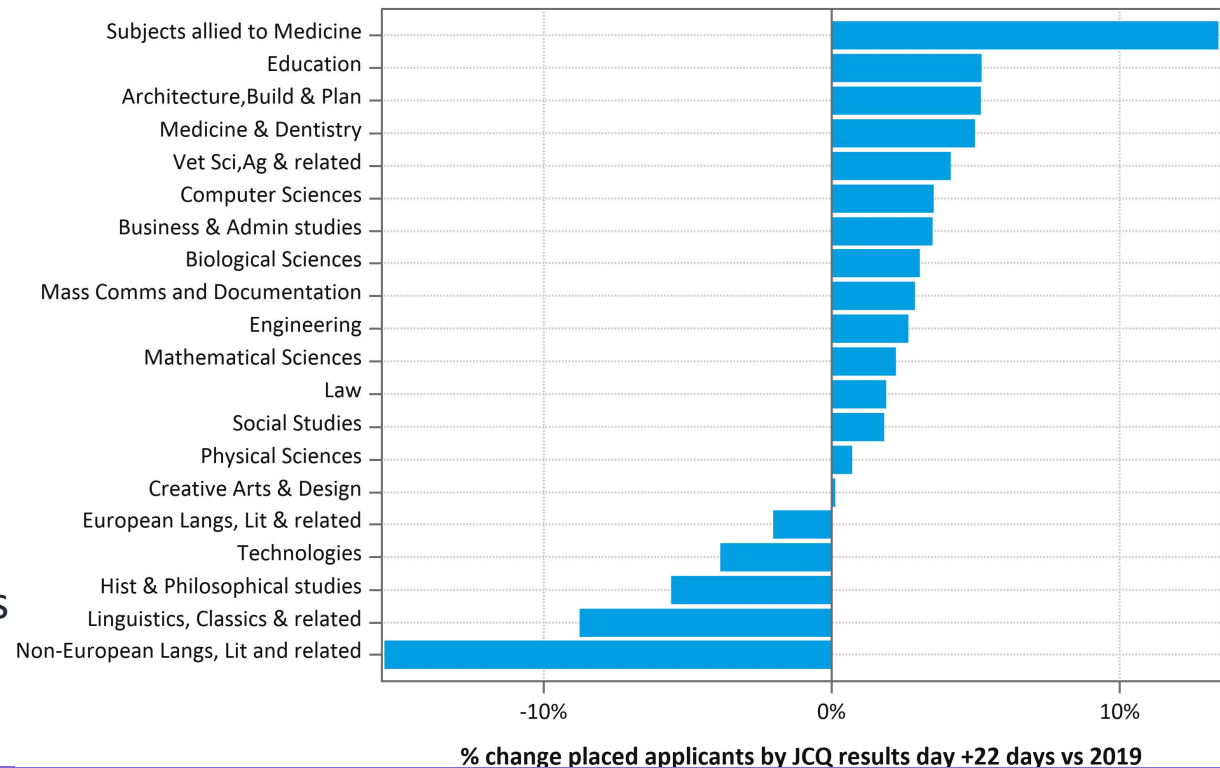
## Over 500k students secured a place (+4%)



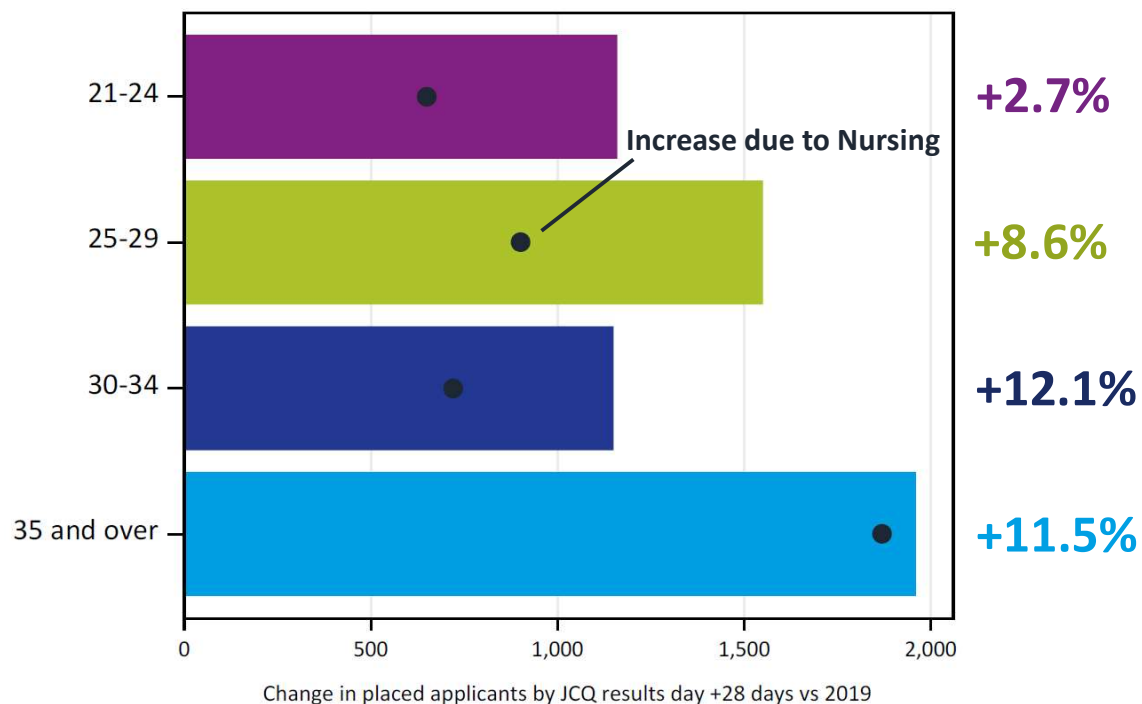
- All regions of the UK saw increases in the number of placed applicants
- Notable percentage increases were seen in Scotland and NI with very large overall increases in the South East of England

# Acceptances increased across most subjects

- The overall increase in acceptances had a good spread across subjects with most subjects seeing growth.
- Subjects allied to Medicine saw the largest growth, with a 13% increase in placed applicants (driven by nursing).
- History and Language courses saw the largest decrease in demand.



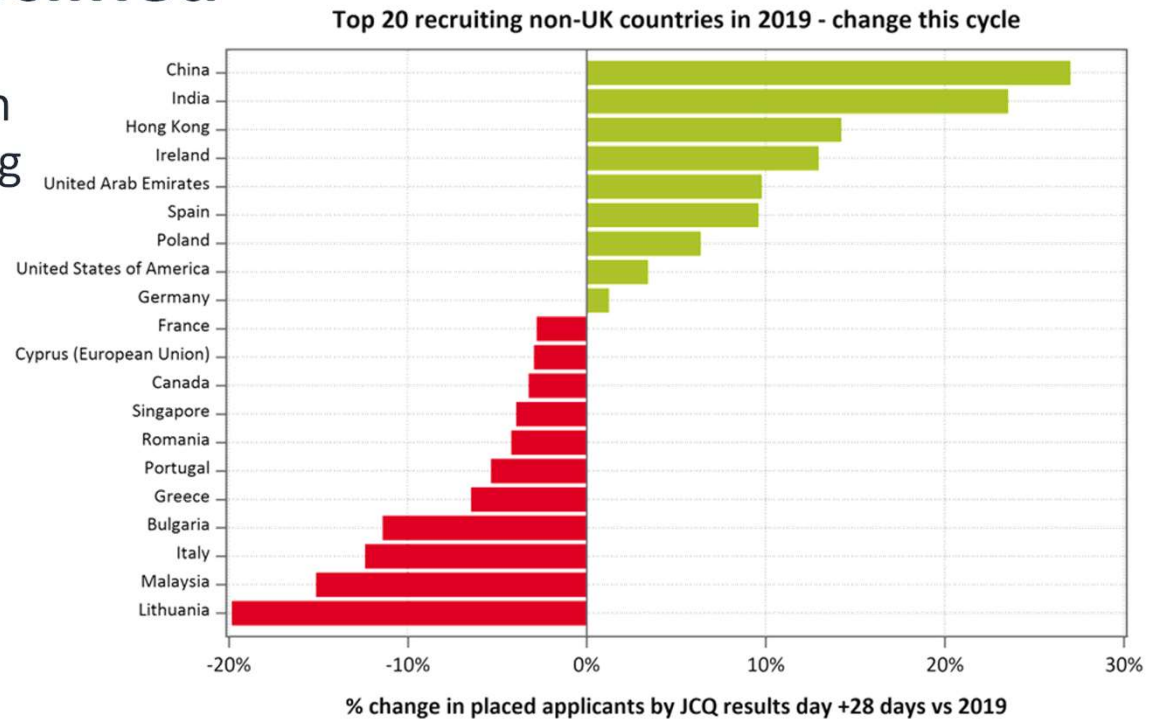
# The growing demand for Nursing saw an increase in mature students



- The largest growth in UK acceptances was amongst older applicants, with groups **over 21** increasing, while 19 year olds declined by 5%.
- In particular for students aged 35+, this growth is driven by an increase in **nursing** acceptances

# Growth continued from top countries in Asia, but the EU declined

- Historically large markets such as China, India, and Hong Kong continued to grow.
- The majority of the large recruiting countries that declined are in the EU.



# So, what about Covid?

At the height of Covid  
nervousness

**25%**

of applicants said they  
were thinking of  
deferring



However in contrast to sentiment, deferrals didn't increase significantly

### 5.7% deferral rate

The deferral rate was only 0.3 percentage points higher than in 2019 despite sector and media expectations.

### Non-EU deferrals were markedly up

6.8% deferred their place in 2020, up from 3.8% in the previous cycle.

## What were they thinking about Clearing?

- **46%** said they were considering changing their university choices
- **35%** of students said they were planning on using Clearing
- **22%** of students said they would use Clearing to 'trade up'

Clearing acceptances  
were up

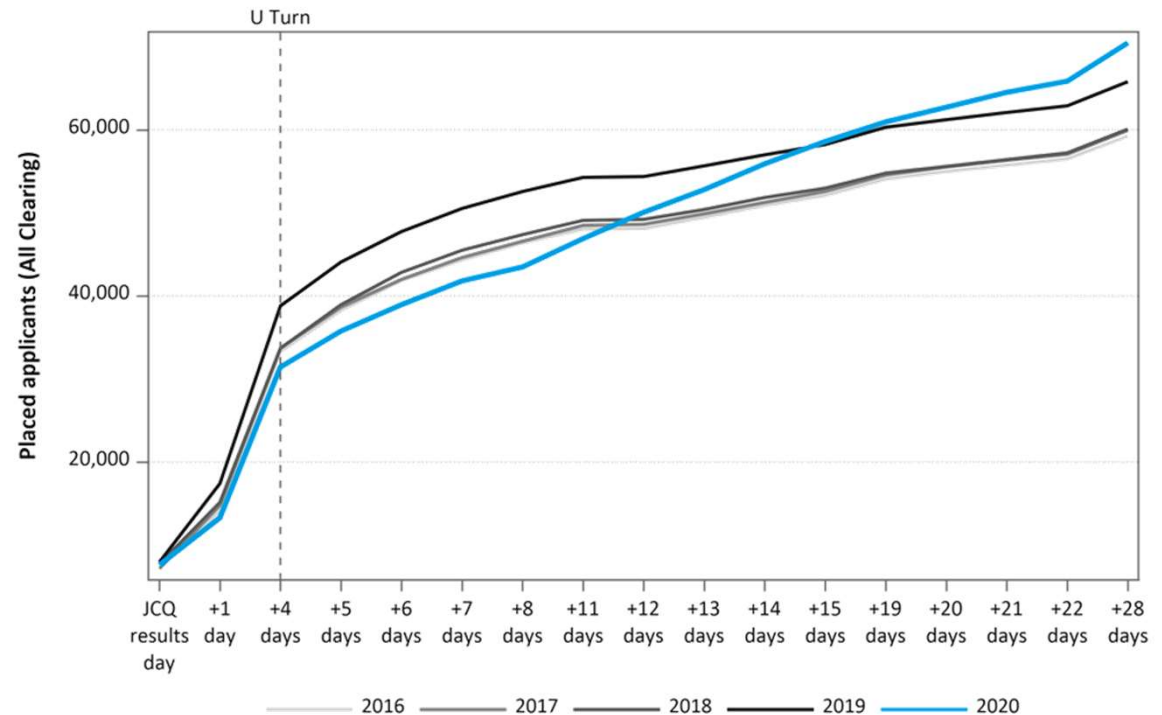
**7%**

year-on-year driven by  
late applicants directly  
to Clearing



## Clearing activity was much later than usual

Numbers were significantly down in the first week (-17.3%) but increased at a much higher rate from then on.



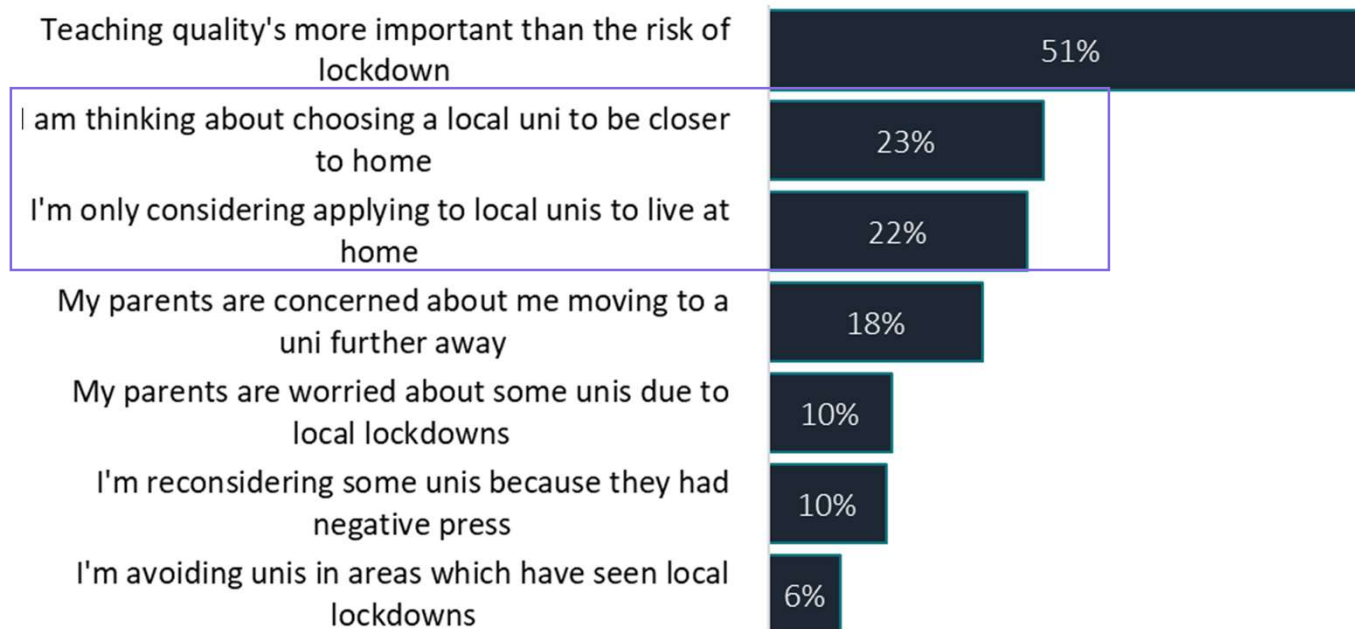
## Clearing Plus had a positive effect

- **21,000** students registered an interest with at least one course through Clearing Plus
- **7,000** were then contacted by a provider regarding that course
- **40%** of these were placed at a provider they registered an interest in

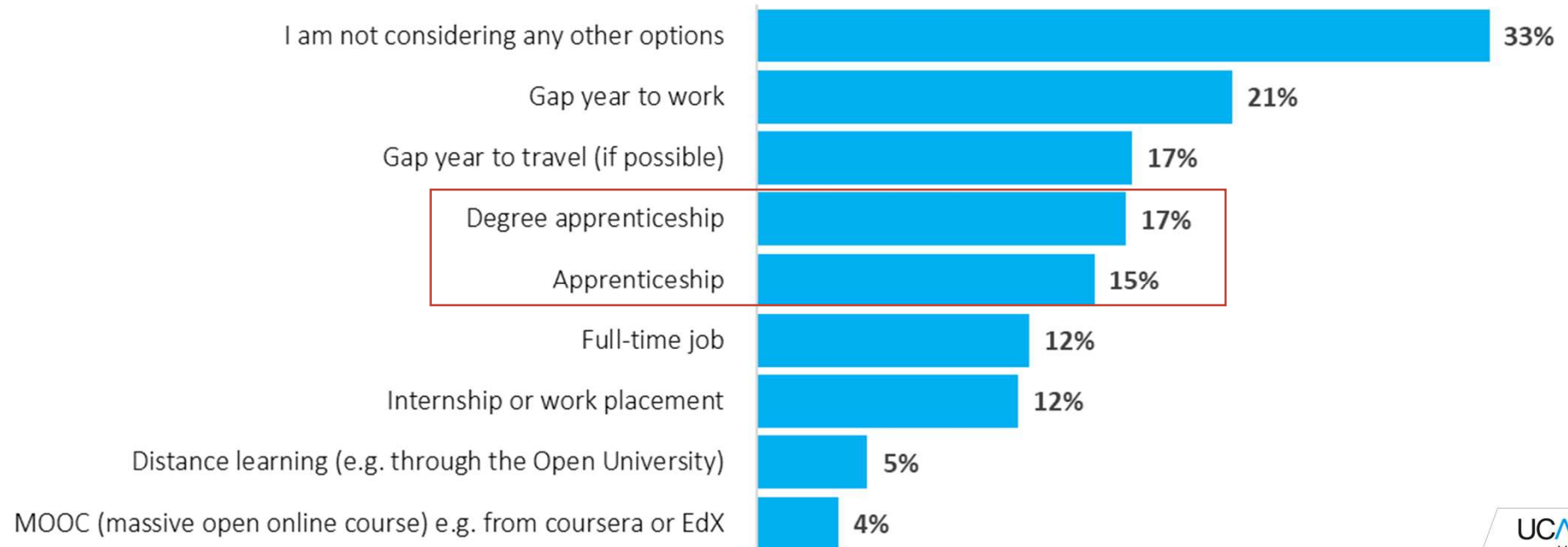


# What's been the impact of Covid?

# Many applicants do want to remain local but teaching quality is most important



# And they are keeping their options open



There has been a

**28%**

increase in the  
importance of talking to  
current and former  
students



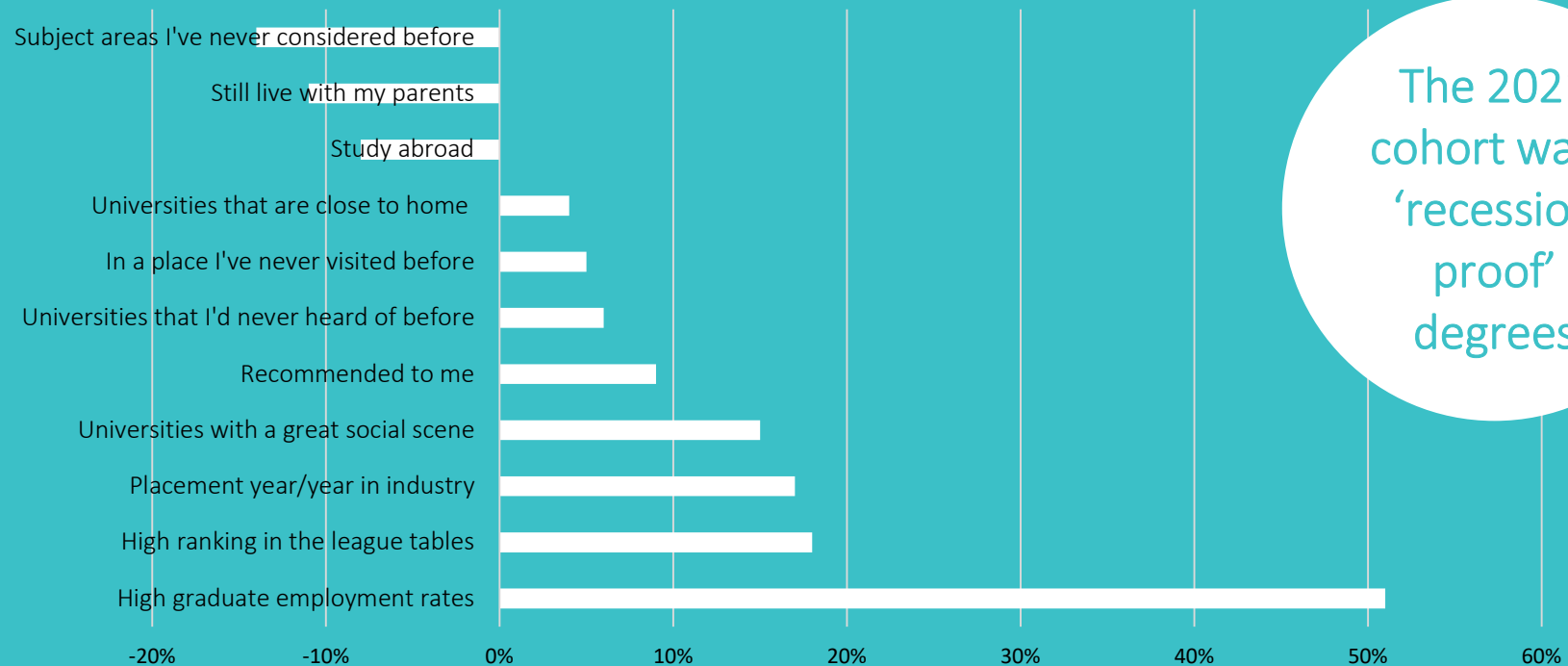
# 51%

Now think that high graduate employment rates are more important



# Covid has changed applicants' priorities

## Decision-making factors



# How Covid is shaping the 2021 cycle and beyond

# Our COVID-19 experience

## Coordinating announcements

Ofqual, Government, OFS, UUK, British Council, SQA...

## Supporting stability

Extending deadlines  
Data led decisions  
Student first approach



## Going social:

FB Live sessions  
BBC Bitesize content  
80% increase in social interactions  
Digital events

## Maintaining services:

No service interruption, despite furlough of workforce

## 29 January 2021

# Equal Consideration Date



**42,500**  
Telephone queries  
(-6% vs 2020)



Over **27,000**  
Social Media  
responses  
(+10% vs 2020)



**10%**  
Increase of  
18-year-olds



Over **616k**  
applicants applied  
(+8.5% vs 2020)

## What's happening right now?



Offer Making  
vs deferrals



Open Days and  
Campus Tours



Decision  
making



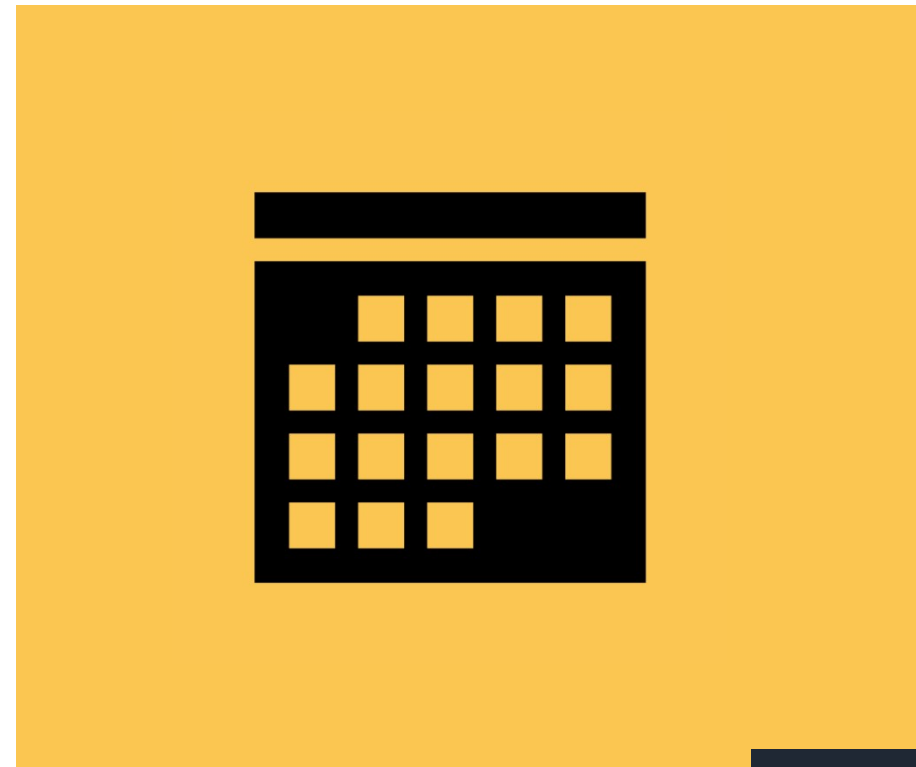
Over-  
recruitment in  
'Covid'  
subjects?



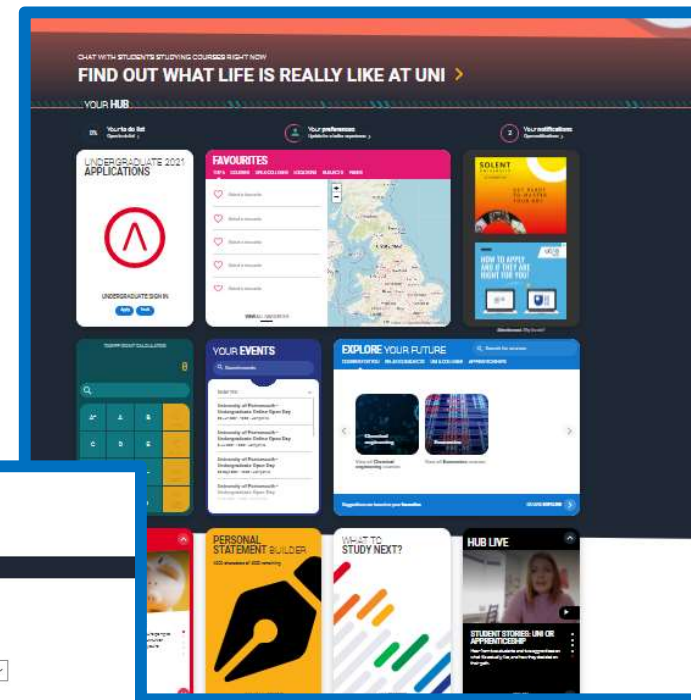
EU and  
International  
challenges

## What will this summer look like?

- The majority of UK results will be issued on a combined SQA and JCQ Results Day on 10<sup>th</sup> August.
- **The results embargo runs from 12:00 on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> August to 08:30 on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August.**
- Delivery of provisional grades in Wales but not in England.
- How will this drive applicant behaviour?



# Looking ahead to 2022



### NATIONALITY DETAILS

2022 Undergraduate application

UCAS application / Nationality details

Return to application overview

Personal details  
 Contact and residency details  
 Education  
 Employment  
**Nationality details**  
 Supporting information  
 English language skills  
 Finance and funding

**What is your country of birth? \***  
 For the purpose of this question the UK includes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

**What is your nationality? \***  
 If you're applying from outside the UK choose your nationality as it appears in your passport. If you have dual nationality and you need a visa to enter the UK, enter your first nationality, as it is shown on the passport you intend to use when travelling to the UK for your course.

**Dual nationality**  
 If you have dual nationality, select your first nationality in the previous field and your second nationality here.