Using behavioural insights to improve student engagement through randomised control trials

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This presentation

• The KCLxBIT project
• Introduction to behavioural insights through EAST
• Applying EAST to student engagement
• Tackling student belonging
“A choice architect has the responsibility for organizing the context in which people make decisions.”

Thaler and Sunstein, Nudge
Full lifecycle widening participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Stage 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-16 outreach</td>
<td>Post-16 outreach</td>
<td>Fair admissions</td>
<td>Positive student experience</td>
<td>Successful graduates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We will deliver aspiration-raising activities for local students that encourage higher education participation. King’s outreach programmes will support informed choice-making through impartial guidance.

We will deliver targeted outreach work with students in London and beyond to improve access to King’s College London and other universities. Activities will seek to enhance attainment and preparedness for higher study.

We will ensure that King’s College’s recruitment, selection and admissions processes are fair, transparent and identify the talent and potential of students from all backgrounds.

We will provide excellent student and education support services that seek to address the on-course needs of students from widening participation backgrounds.

We will deliver tailored support to improve the employability and career outcomes of students from widening participation backgrounds.
“Disadvantage can follow you like a shadow down the years, affecting the degree you end up with and your ensuing postgraduate study or search for a job.”

Professor Les Ebdon, Director, Office for Fair Access
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EAST framework
Easy

Defaults
Simplification
Remove friction
Participation in workplace pensions

Before auto-enrolment: 61%

After auto-enrolment: 83%

Auto-enrolment led to more than 1million new savers in less than a year - and especially the young.
Attract
Salience
Messenger
Personalisation
Affect
Incentive design
Encouraging applications to competitive universities

“Back in 2009, I was in exactly the same position as you... I came to realise that people with grades like you and me are in high demand from very prestigious universities.”

Ben, University of Bristol
Encouraging applications to competitive universities
Social Norms
Networks
Reciprocity
Active commitments
Eyes & faces
Increasing attendance through social support

Effect of Study Supporter On Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Study Supporter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.67</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total N=745

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, + p<0.1
Timely

Priming
Framing
Key moments
Police recruitment
Police recruitment

Probability of Passing the Test

- Non-BME
  - Control
  - Treatment

- BME
  - Control
  - Treatment
• The KCLxBIT project
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How many “nudges” can you spot on the poster in front of you?

If you’re stuck, the EAST cards on your table provide some examples of approaches you might find.
This year: pulse surveying

First month at KCL
- Current emotions
- Expectations
- Personality (Big 5)
- Family & external support
- Practical factors

After first exams
- Current emotions
- Interactions with faculty

Before final exams
- Current emotions
- What they’re doing (actions)
- Academic motivations

End of first term
- Current emotions
- What they’re doing (actions)
- University social connections

After reading week
- Current emotions
- What they’re doing (actions)

After results
- Current emotions
- University social connections
- Academic and intellectual development
- Expectations
Peer-group interactions at university

% of students responding “agree” or “strongly agree” to the following statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since coming to this university I have developed close personal relationships with other students</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student friendships I have developed at this university have been personally satisfying</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interpersonal relationships with other students have had a positive influence on my personal...</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interpersonal relationships with other students have had a positive influence on my intellectual...</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with other students</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few of the students I know would be willing to listen to me and help me if I had a personal problem</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students at this university have values and attitudes different from my own</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question

How can we get more widening participation students to join societies?
First term texts

Nudge A1: welcome fair attendance and sign up

Control

Build your skills & networks by joining a society or club. Employers value these experiences.

Employability

Lots of students are concerned about making friends in their first few weeks at uni. Don’t worry! There is a society or club for everyone.

Belonging
Results

Different messages are effective for different people

*: p < 0.05    +: p < 0.1    ^: These are students for whom no Acorn status is recorded, likely because they are international students.
Question

How can we get more students to enrol in online study support modules?
You’re more likely to do something when you make a plan. Pick a day to log on

It’s ok to feel uncertain. Don’t worry. 4/5 first year students are using online study support

Planning + belonging
Results

Control
Planning
Planning + Social Belonging

Subgroup analysis

*: p < 0.05, **: p < 0.01, ***: p < 0.001 ^: These are students for whom no Acorn status is recorded, likely because they are international students.
Trials to increase belonging

King’s Community Ambassadors

- Nov 2016 - Apr 2017
- Catch-up calls from student ambassadors
- Students from A&H, NMS and LSM faculties involved
- Total 1000 students included

- Dec 2016 - June 2017
- Programme for first year King’s Living Bursary recipients
- Branded diary
- Special social events
- Information about useful events and services at King’s
- 472 students involved
THE BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM

What I wish I'd known

What I wish I'd known is a programme of support for students who are eligible to receive King's Living Bursaries. Once the funding envelope has been paid up, you're on your own to make the most out of your time at King's.

To start with, we've added second- and third-year students to give tips and advice on what they wish they had known in their first semester at King's. We've also shared their feedback with you so you can learn from their mistakes and set them on the right path.

We're here to help.

We're here to give you a little guidance to help you make the most of your time at King's. This can help you better organize your life on top of both your academic work and all your social activities.

You can use this diary to plan your study time, schedule in interesting society events and life happening around the university. If you need more ideas, you can check out our website, admitting your book duties to user the King's Living Diary, applying for study abroad - or whatever is most useful to you.

Top tips - everyone's in the same boat - you can find all sorts of useful information about services and events. For example, there's less of information on the student services pages: http://www.bit.ly/1kmpaUx

Everyone is in the same boat

Don't say you to things! You will find loads of random opportunities. Try everything. It's typical that things don't go the way you expect, so do and do that you regard.

Join a society or two!

One of the best ways to make friends with people to get involved with societies and groups is through joining. One other way to involve yourself is through volunteering.

"Everyone is in the same boat, we're all here together. I didn't know what to do then I joined the Alumni Club and I've been with them ever since. I'm happy, I'm doing what I want to do. Everyone is in the same boat!"
Over to you…

How can we encourage students from widening participation backgrounds to join societies?

• Discuss your ideas with those around you (roughly groups of 6)
• If you need inspiration, take a look at the EAST cards for more ideas on how these insights can be applied
• Note down your best ideas on the paper
Sample cost of an intervention

- Total number of students in trial: 4509
- Number of students texted: 3005
- Number of messages per student: 3
- Cost per message unit: £0.031
- Average length of message: 2
- Total cost of nudge A1: £583.36
- Average cost per student: £0.19
Final thoughts

• Behavioural insights can provide effective and cheap ways to encourage student engagement
• Testing is essential to establish what works, and for who
• Deeper problems may require more in-depth interventions
• More results at the end of the year!
Contact details

Follow us on twitter @kclxbit

More results and information:
www.blogs.kcl.ac.uk/behaviouralinsights

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