**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

**INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMMES**

A/B testing the CTA button and copy generated 45% more applications

BACKGROUND

In 1858, the University of London established an international program to facilitate first class high education for students all around the world. This makes the University of London International Programmes the world's oldest provider of distance and flexible learning. Currently, the International Programmes support over 50,000 students in more than 180 countries worldwide.

In 2008 the University of London International Programmes celebrated its 150th anniversary and theirs is a story of innovation, expansion and open access. The University is constantly seeking new ways of reaching out to students around the world.

The University alumni have shaped the world in which we live with leaders of business and industry, judges, authors, scientists, and politicians. Several alumni have won Nobel Prizes ranging from Literature and Economics to most notably the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela and his lifetime of work with South Africa.

CHALLENGE

The University of London is a prestigious institution with a reputation reaching out globally to new, current and alumni students. With almost 500k visitors monthly (58.5% being new visitors), the online service for their distance/ correspondence courses is a distinct advantage both to the visitors and the university itself.

To best increase student numbers, the university focussed in the area of online applications. This included graduate courses, postgraduate degrees and individual subject units. Through an extensive audit and analysis, we identified the type of visitor, the frequency of visits and where most of their interest was directed.

We observed that interest was evenly split between male and female and the highest searching category by age were 25-34 year-olds, followed closely by 18-24 year-olds. A relatable age range when considering that most people applying for higher learning have either just completed secondary schooling or a graduate degree.

Upon further analysis, we noticed page distractions in the guise of external links, videos, chat boxes and volumes of informative text particularly on the course pages. For a university of higher learning, this information was naturally available to reference subjects, study materials, fees, assessment, entry requirements and other academic related topics. The most important feature of application buttons was almost lost in this 'noise'.

With this in consideration, the presentation and user experience were factored into the hypothesis. The primary purpose would be to create a better converting course page using clear CTA application buttons. This would minimize the distractions already present and redirect focus on applying for a course.

SOLUTION

In collaboration with the University of London, a number of course pages were selected for testing. The variation included CTA's on the side and at the bottom of the course description. This was designed to serve as a reminder to visitors that applying for a course was the next step.

In the control version, the button was overly descriptive. It had varying sizes and did not convey the message to apply. Application buttons were already highlighted, but the long message copy and no CTA was not as effective.

Apply online

BSc Information Systems and Management (Graduate Entry)	Application button for BSc Information Systems and Management (Graduate Entry) course
BSc Information Systems and Management	Application button for BSc Information Systems and Management course
Individual courses	Application button for Individual courses
Download Prospectus	
Ask a question	
Request a printed prospectus	Various sized buttons
Download Programme Specification	

The overall view of a course page found the text presented in large volume. While the apply CTA's are evident, they do not call you to action. The text in the orange buttons is a statement of the course offered. The 'Apply online' CTA is a non clickable phrase stated above the actual buttons.

Control page sample image
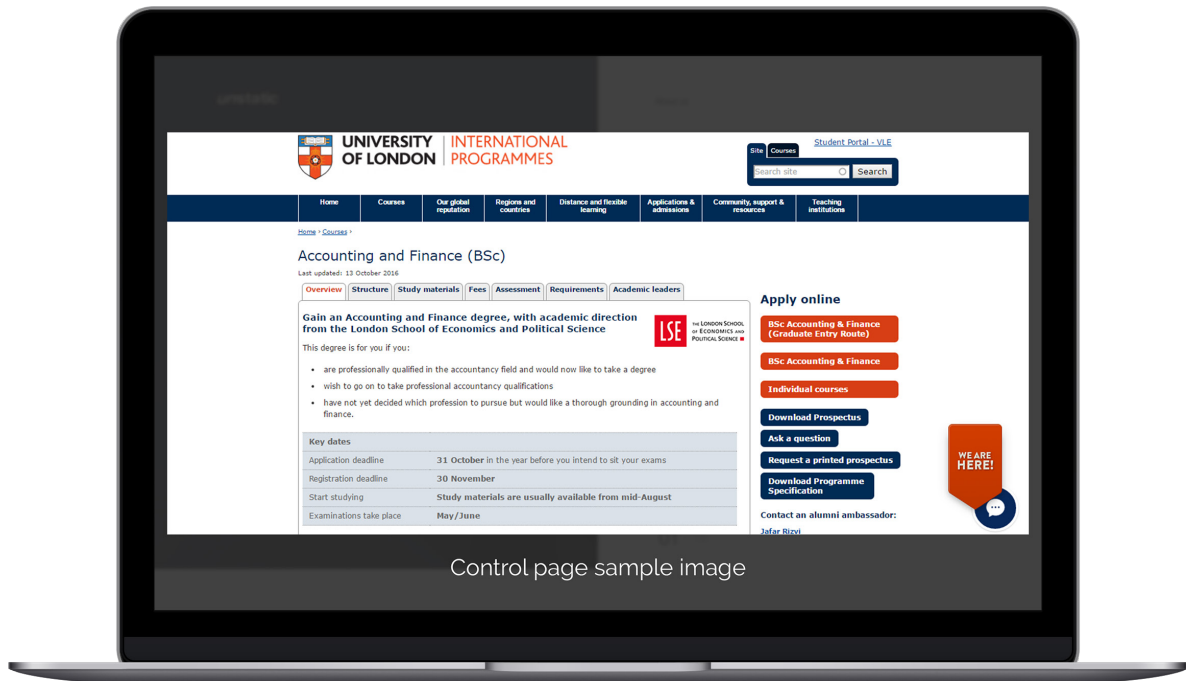
A natural behavior when reading the information is to scroll below the fold where there were no application buttons. The length and the content of the page were crucial for information delivery but also potentially undermined the application process. Visitors that scrolled all the way down were also observed to either navigate to another page or close this completely.

In the variation, the CTA application buttons were simplified and the message copy adjusted so visitors knew distinctly where to apply for the course. Additionally, the sizing of each button was adjusted to become uniform. The additional intent here was to create a visual panel that stood out from the rest of the page.

Apply online

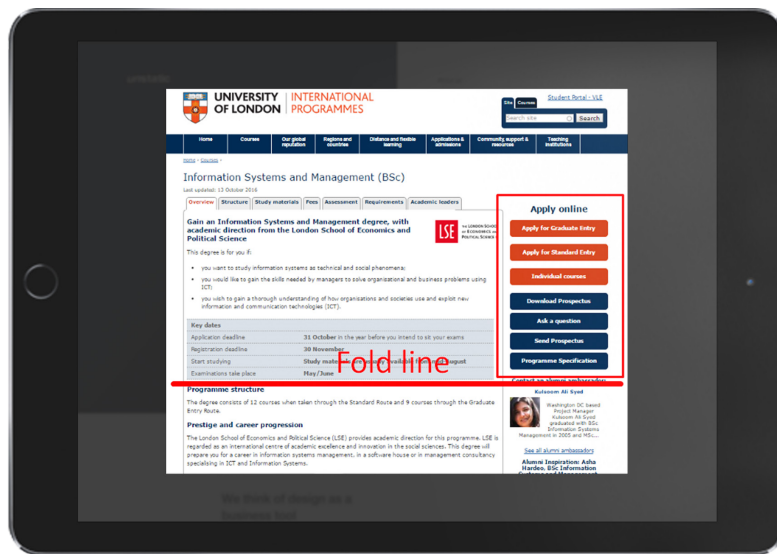| Apply for Standard BSc | Clear Apply message for the Standard BSc |
Apply for Graduate Entry	Clear Apply message for the Graduate course
Apply for Individual courses	Clear Apply message for Individual courses
Download Prospectus	
Ask a question	

Variation CTA's sample image:

CTA simplified and sized uniform.
This created a solid panel that was distinct from the rest of the page and emphasized the apply buttons.

Message copy was centralized and orange buttons were much more visually appealing with a clear message.
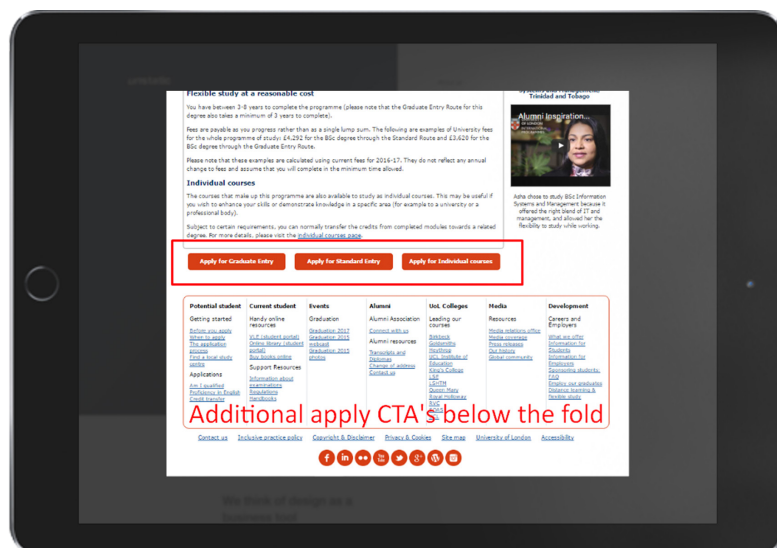
Additionally below the fold, the same primary apply CTA's used on the right side above the fold were re-introduced.

This served as a reminder and visual cue for visitors to apply and complete their journey on this page.

RESULTS

This experiment ran for 21 days and had traffic split evenly (50/50) between control and variation. It was segmented to all audiences and for desktop visitors only.

Results of the experiment:

- An increase of 45.26% in applications
- CTA's below were 4.21% more effective in applications
- Click through rate uplift of 15.68% across main goals
- Statistical relevance achieved with 99% validation

The Call to Action buttons were vital in securing more applications for the University of London. The adjusted message copy and uniform design helped make the next step clear and evident for the visitor. The easiest principle to remember is to keep the CTA simple and direct. The next step should not be something that needs to be thought about especially after potentially reading so much information.

The key focus in testing the CTA button design and message copy, is to know what triggers the visitor into following your desired action. This is a crucial link that helps drive conversions in the right direction.

If you haven't tried A/B testing yet, try the Omniconvert platform. You can also test additional tools such as surveys, web personalizations and experience the most advanced segmentation engine in the industry.
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