

**UNITE
STUDENTS**

Return to Campus 2021/22 Pack



Overview

A fresh start for 2021/22

This slide deck outlines Unite Students' student welcome plans for the 2021/22 academic year, as well as some of our priorities for the rest of their stay.

The past 18 months have caused untold disruption to both current and incoming students. We have carefully planned a robust, insight-driven welcome plan for September, which will reassure and support the students coming to live with us as well as complementing our university partners' efforts.

Where relevant, we have included supporting documentation and website links to expand on aspects of our offer. These are indicated by the following icons:



Preparing for 2021/22

What we've learned

The incoming student cohort has had two years of disrupted schooling, cancelled exams and limited opportunities to socialise, explore and find themselves – so it seemed more important than ever to understand them.

We undertook a survey of 2021's applicants, with data to compare against from 2017.

We also led a round table of experts in the experiences of 16-19 year olds. Universities, sixth forms, Students' Unions, charities and sector bodies all shared their insights.



The full findings of our survey and round table can be found in our 'Applicant research deck'.

Students feel less ready for university

In April 2017, 45% of students felt ready to go to university.

Just 36% felt the same way in June 2021.

Socialising is important – but support is needed

Meeting new people is what applicants are most excited about – but there are anxieties about fitting in.

73% wanted to contact flatmates ahead of arrival.

Wellbeing is down compared to 2017

There was a modest drop in wellbeing seen in the survey, and more students registered a preference for support from staff members and counselling services.

Preparing for 2021/22

What we're doing

We're going all out to get 2,000 employees on board with our September preparations and service offering for 2021/22 – which is more student-focused than ever before.

- In June, we held a virtual live event to get our teams up to speed with our pre-arrival and welcome plans.
- We are also holding a range of employee events over the summer to share how these plans can be tailored for each property and city based on survey data.

Our new strategy team is working on insight-driven new ways to meet students' needs, wherever they are in their student journey. That includes a trial of properties aimed at meeting postgrad needs.



Before arrival

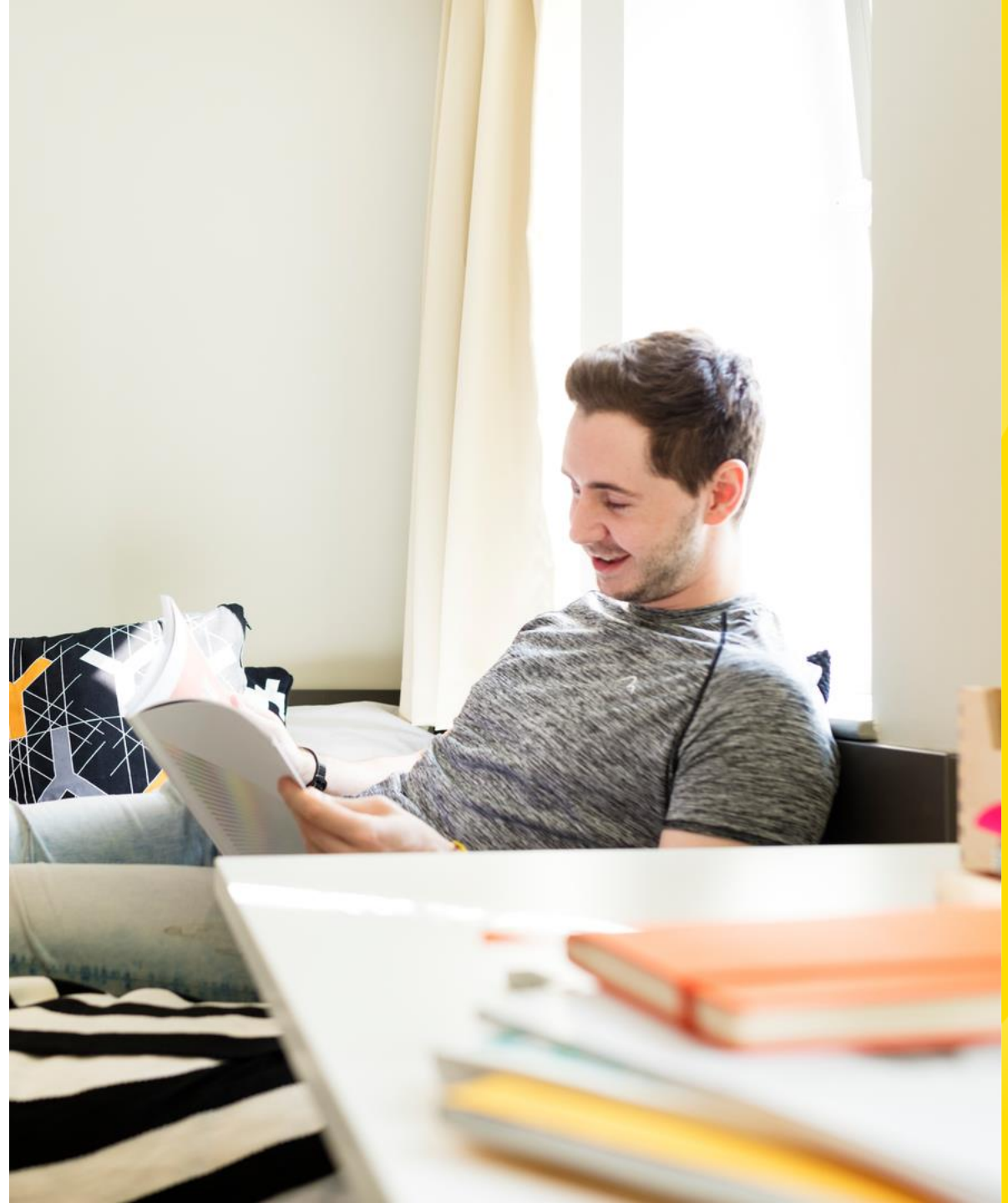
Reassuring students before check-in

Incoming students feel less ready than before – so our aim is to prepare them as much as possible before arrival. That includes:

- Pre-arrival comms for students and their parents so they know what to expect
- Updated property & 'Living with uS' guides on our student website, as well as a comprehensive new check-in section
- Introducing students to their flatmates via our MyUnite app (see next slide)
- Encouraging students to get vaccinated ahead of arrival



Explore the check-in section of our [student website](#) to see what we're sharing with students.



MyUnite and uChat

Creating community ahead of arrival

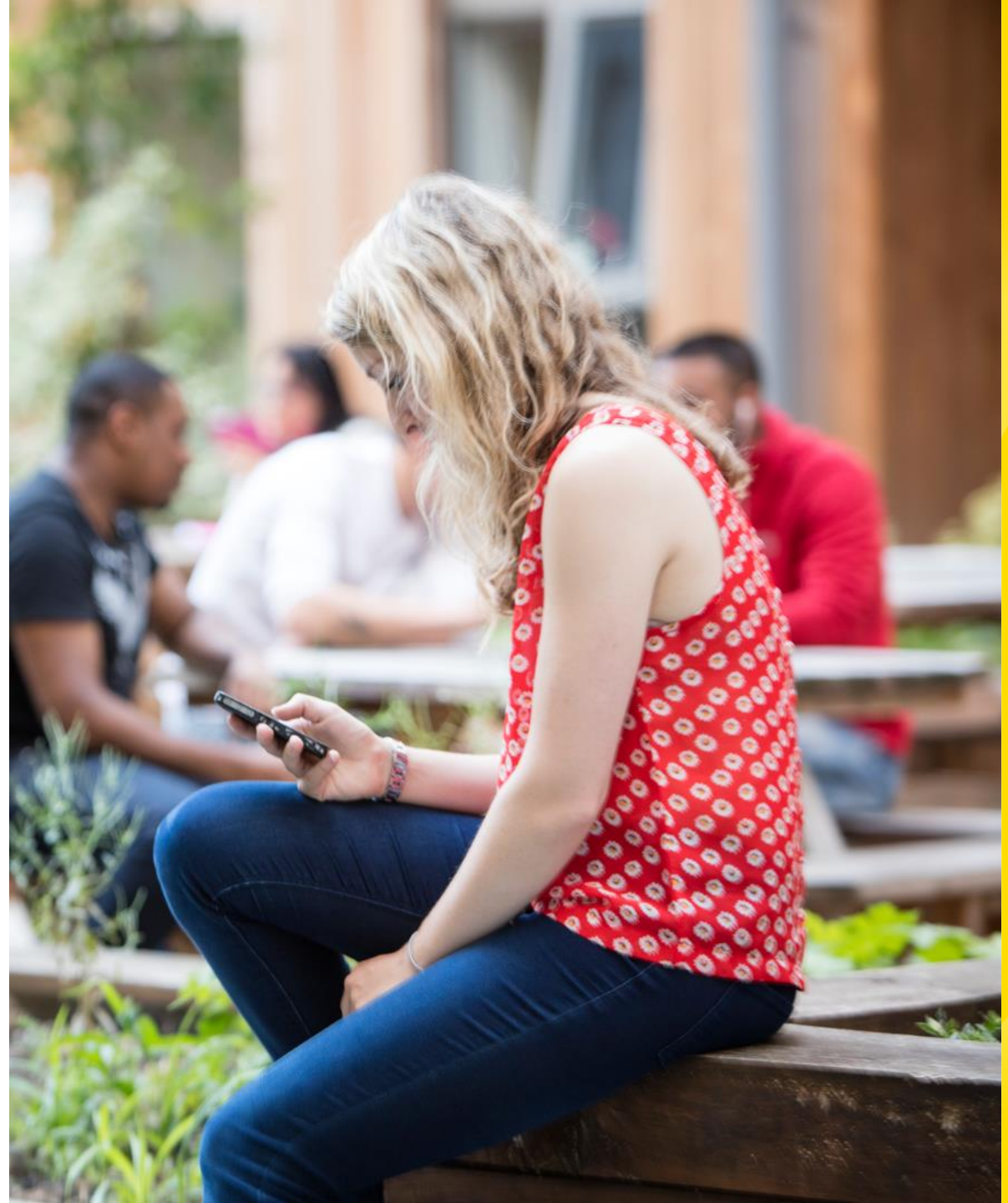
In our applicant survey, we found that 73% of this year's applicants wanted to contact flatmates prior to arrival; up from 55% in 2017. The uChat function on our MyUnite app allows students to do just that.

We expanded this in 2020, allowing students to meet their neighbours on different floors for the first time, and making it available to students in studio flats.

The app also supports our digital check-in service, as well as allowing students to notify our teams when they're self-isolating – making our properties safer for all.



Learn more about MyUnite and what it can do in our attached 'MyUnite information deck'.



International students

Supporting arrivals from all over the world

We're offering students from countries on the UK government's **amber list** an additional 3 weeks free at the start of their tenancy. This means arrivals from these countries can quarantine in the UK fuss-free.

We're currently updating our self-isolation guidance for students. This includes:

- What is required of students in isolation
- How we're supporting isolating students
- How to order food
- Key contact information



Self-isolation guidance is also available through our student blog, [The Common Room](#).

Students arriving out of hours will receive the same personalised welcome as those arriving in hours, thanks to our digital check-in capability. (See next slide)

Our international student orientation is being developed at present, and includes:

- Helping international students to find other residents from their country
- International Resident Ambassadors to provide support in settling in
- Longer city orientations to ensure students feel fully comfortable in their new city
- Events tailored to each property and its international cohort

Digital check-in

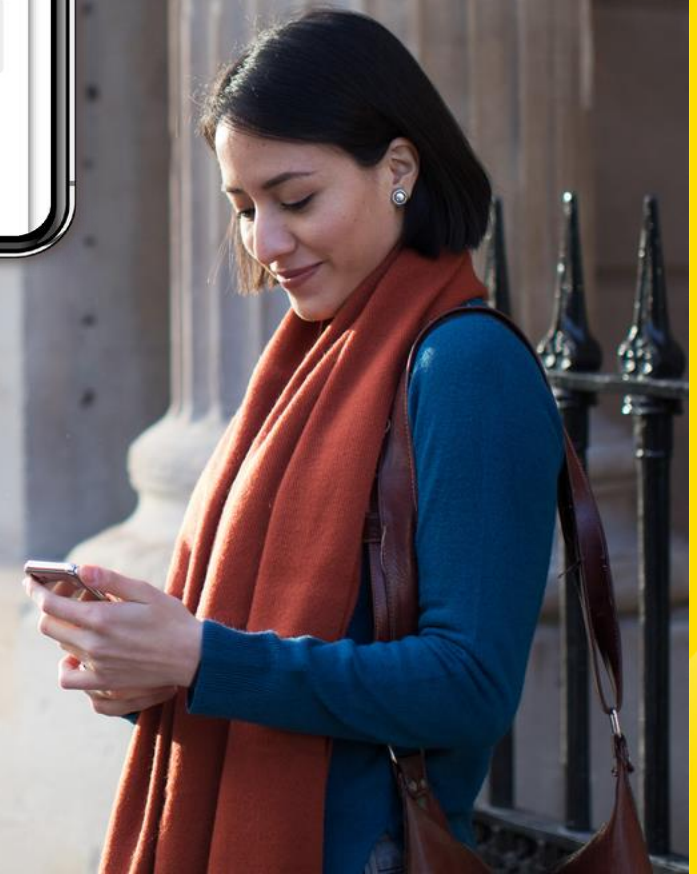
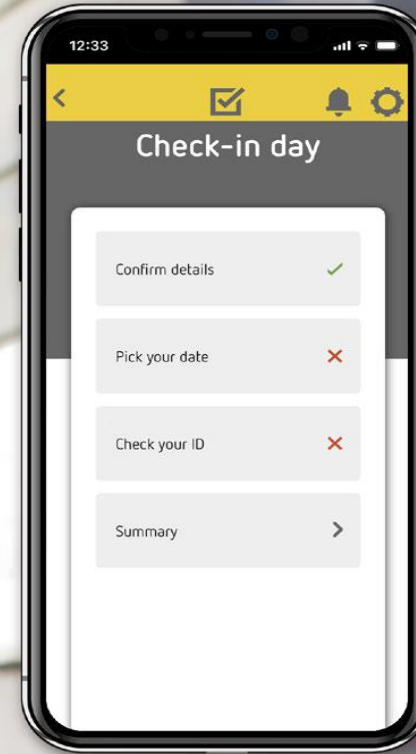
Welcoming students safely

Reducing the volume of customers at reception, our digital check-in was a huge success last year – so we're doing it again.

Students can check in via the MyUnite app, booking a check-in slot and uploading ID up to 24 hours ahead of arrival.

City teams will follow up with students who haven't booked a slot, and if they are unable to do this themselves, our teams can now book a slot on their behalf.

This functionality is also open to students arriving out of hours. This allows us to prepare for their arrival, ensure a safe number of arrivals at any one time, and offer them the same personalised welcome experience as everyone else.



Welcome Week

Welcoming students safely

A successful Welcome Week is essential in providing students with a Home for Success, and includes:

- Welcome events led by our trained Resident Ambassadors, so that students can start building their community as soon as they arrive
- Introducing the team so that students feel comfortable in their new home
- City and local area orientation, including helping them find their university campus
- Dig-in Welcome Boxes with goodies, offers from well-known brands, and Unite Students welcome flyer
- Post-arrival customer comms to share Health & Safety information and any opportunities on offer



Resident Ambassadors

Student-led support and guidance

Our student ambassador scheme has evolved! Now the Resident Ambassador Programme, we're doing more to create an experience led **by students, for students.**

RAs have been a friendly face for fellow students since 2016 – but now they will be working more closely than ever with our employees and other students to deliver the voice of the student community. We'll share more detailed plans with you soon.

Resident Ambassadors are paid a National Living Wage, have total flexibility over their hours, and can use the skills and experience they gain to boost their employability.



Read our 2020/21 ambassadors' experience on our [website](#).



Covid safety measures

Keeping students safe into 2021/22

Over the summer, we will continue to stay up to date with the latest government guidance for Higher Education and adapt our operating practices in line with these.

However, our current plan is to continue with many of our existing measures, including:

- Self-isolation notification on MyUnite app
- Floor markers to encourage social distancing
- Perspex screens at reception
- Widely available hand sanitizer
- Staff wearing PPE to enter student flats

Unite Students was the first PBSA provider to be recognised as a Covid-19 assured workplace by the British Safety Council. We have 15 qualified Health & Safety and Fire Safety professionals working across the business to continually ensure high standards of safety.



COVID-19
Assurance
Statement

We will additionally be supporting efforts to combat Covid by:

- Following **Public Health England** university guidance, as well as the recommendations in **Scotland and Wales**
- Encouraging students to register with a GP on arrival and regularly test for Covid
- Recommending all students get vaccinated
- Clear, easily accessible local information on GPs, vaccine centres and rapid testing
- Revising our Home Charter, outlining how we expect students to behave in our buildings
- Refreshing our teams on our Covid safe measures



More information is available in the latest update of our 'Operating Safely with Covid' handbook. We will share any major changes to this in the coming months.

Living with us

Settling students into their new home

After welcome week, we'll continue to support our new residents – including:

1. Resident ambassadors in every city
2. A national calendar of events to keep students engaged and connected all year – regardless of Covid
3. Life skills support to bridge any gaps and pre-empt any embarrassing questions
4. Online and in-person wellbeing support and signposting
5. A quick and easy digital process for switching rooms if things aren't working out



We regularly share updates to our service and support offer on our [Higher Education website](#).



Student support

A helping hand

Unite Students has led the PBSA student wellbeing conversation since 2015. Our improvements for 21/22 are as follows:

- A national training plan to ensure every student-facing member of staff has an appropriate understanding of student welfare
- An updated safeguarding policy
- Improvements to our disability adjustment procedures and 'early leave' policies
- A new case conferencing approach and risk assessment tool, with updated policies and clearer protocols around high-risk or high-complexity cases
- A new Head of Student Support to oversee the service, ensure student welfare considerations are embedded in our service, and to develop a proactive wellbeing offer



Sustainability

A model that's built to last

Positive Impact is our sustainability and social responsibility programme. This supports students and employees to make a difference, and ensures that sustainability practices are consistent and embedded across Unite Students.

We have supported the National Union of Students' award-winning Green Impact programme for 7 years, and all of our buildings are now required to meet at least the bronze award criteria for sustainability. This includes:

- Recycling correctly
- Ensuring health and safety drills are completed
- Signposting to the correct support services



Unite Students launched its five new sustainability commitments in March 2021.

These are:

1. Targeting net-zero carbon operations and construction from 2030
2. Creating resilient, resource-efficient assets and operations
3. Enhancing the health and wellbeing of our employees and students
4. Providing opportunities for all
5. Leading the student housing sector



Read more about our sustainability commitments [here](#).

We'll be in touch soon with more information about our updated Covid measures, Resident Ambassador scheme, and more.

We look forward to working with you over the course of the next academic year.

**UNITE
STUDENTS**

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