

The Hidden Signals in Student Conversations



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Chat with Amy

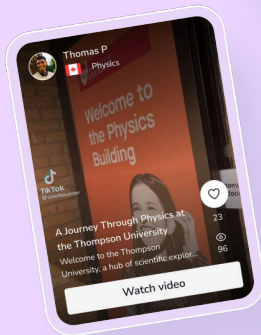


Emma Froud
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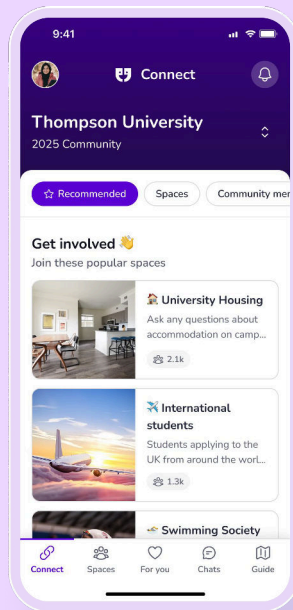
Chat with Emma

A Unibuddy Overview

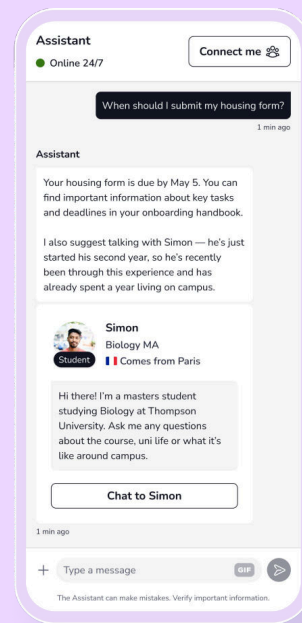
Peer-to-peer chat & content



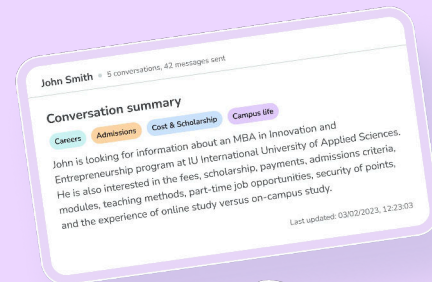
Student-led communities



AI Assistant that understands student needs



Real-time recruitment signals

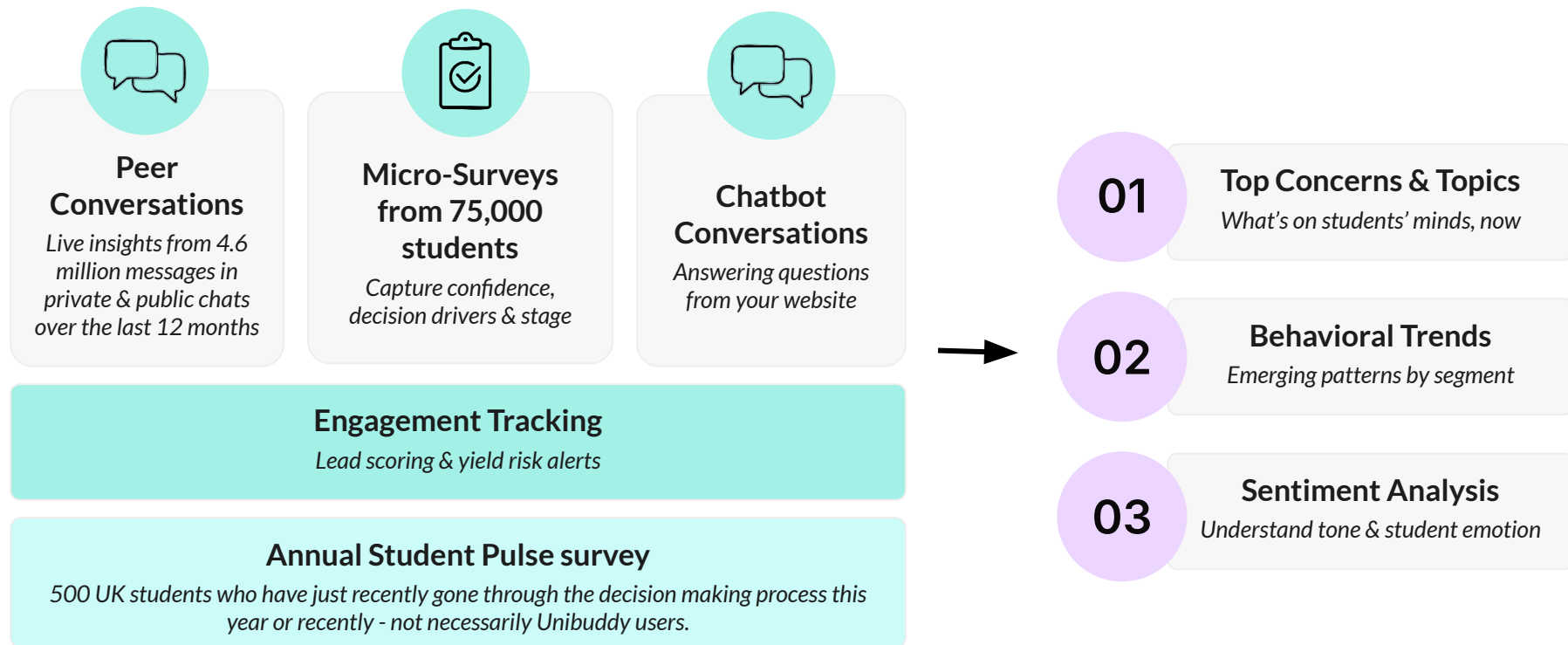


To **empower every student** to make the right choice about their higher education journey.

**So what are your
prospects thinking and
feeling right now?**

Social Listening:

What have over 23 million messages taught us?



Choice is increasingly complex, not linear

Rising consideration and uncertainty across the student journey

93%

of students consider
multiple institutions

Up from 91% in 2025

70%

still had doubts after
submitting application

Reduces to 56% after final
'firm' decision

48%

seriously considered an
alternative to HE

(FE, work, etc.)



Fewer students believe HE is essential

16%

**believe Higher Education
is essential**

Down from 25% in 2025

Are we surprised by this shift?

Given the current market context; uncertainty with future careers, the rise of AI, geopolitical shifts, and the increased cost of living, the answer is **No**.

The implication for institutions?

Do we need to work even harder to engage and support these students? **Yes**.



Uncertainty starts early

1 in 3

conversations are about
basic eligibility and
application routes

It's not about campus life, scholarships, or career outcomes yet.

The Core Challenge

Students are arriving at the funnel already unsure whether they belong in it. **If that anxiety is left unresolved, then it becomes a reason not to apply.**



Finance is a deciding factor, not a late-stage concern

Across every UK institution in the dataset, the single most-asked question from international prospects was some variation of: **"Are there scholarships available for me?"**

Without a credible affordability answer, the application doesn't progress.

But even for domestic prospects, finance remains a key factor, supported by figures released by UCAS in late 2025.

31%

of UK 18-year-olds
planning to live at home

UCAS, 2025

89%

of applicants expect to
work during their program



Confidence Falls at the Most Critical Transition Point

Confidence drops sharply at entry point, with over a third of students considering drop out during welcome week.

91%

felt unsure during welcome
week / orientation

>50%

said this affected
confidence in continuing
their degree

38%

considered dropping out
due to confusion or
uncertainty



Marketing reach is high, impact is low

62% said universities kept them engaged during application process, up significantly from 14% in 2024. Students also showed an increase in satisfaction with the volume of comms they're receiving.

But are your efforts helping you to stand out from the crowd? What do your prospective students think of your marketing?



We want to see the 'very impressed' bar moving to the right.



Peer connection is a powerful influence

Student-to-student connection builds confidence - and in an AI-driven world, authenticity stands out more than ever.

50%

spoke to a current student during their journey

98%

of those found it helpful

50%

of those who didn't, wished they had

95%

valued connecting with students at the same stage as them



Recruitment, conversion,
and personalised applicant
support **must be** an
institutional effort.



01 Remove Risk

"Am I good enough and will I succeed?"

They are not yet imagining themselves thriving.

Conversation topic: Academic Experience and Expectations

- Largest Domestic student driver of doubt (~20% of messages).
- **41% of students** fear they will struggle to succeed in a graduate environment.

Common Student Questions

"How many courses to you take each semester?"

"How is the program structured?"

"Who will help me stay successful?"

"How intense are exams?"

02 Enable Belonging

Students picturing themselves at your institution.

Core Indicators:

- Financial concerns stabilise, but social interest increases meaningfully
- Low → Medium confidence students, **18% increase** in the need to understand student life.

"A 'vibe check' - What would this actually be like? Would I enjoy it?"

1 in 4

semi-confident students **stress test**
social interests leading up to the
start of their program

03 Unlock Ambition

They can see themselves there, they just need confidence it's worth the investment and that the career outcomes justify the stretch.

Conversion Indicators:

- **Nearly 2 in 3 students** requested careers info to finalise their decision.
- Applicants engaging heavily with curriculum and career outcomes have a **15-20% higher enrolment rate** than those asking about finances.

Outcomes Matter

Careers & Work Experience are vital, but only after building confidence around **admissibility, academics, and finance.**

Recruitment is no longer a marketing campaign; it is also not a task to be left for automated AI tools.

It is a **comprehensive, institutional experience and coordinated behavioural strategy** - spanning *academics, finance, careers, student services and alumni* - designed to meet students where they are, not where we assume them to be...

...Because enrolment is everyone's job.

Access the whitepaper!

