



**What has psychological distance got to do with the student journey?**



📍 SANTORINI, GREECE

# Dream views. Unforgettable stays.

Book handpicked stays in the world's  
most inspiring destinations.

Explore Santorini



Where to?

Santorini, Greece



Check-in

Jun 15, 2025



Check-out

Jun 19, 2025



Guests

2 guests



Search stays



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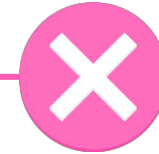


24/7 Support

# “I want to study law”



- Courtrooms
- Debating
- Arguing cases
- High salary
- Helping people



- Module choices
- Assessments
- Entry reqs
- Student finance
- Accommodation





**Jess Graham**

Head of HE  
Partnerships



**Megan Soley**

HE Partnerships  
Engagement Lead

# The psychology behind decision making

## Construal-Level Theory (CLT)

explains how psychological distance shapes the way we think

**Psychological distance** is how far away something **feels** from us, in time, place, social connection, or likelihood

### Temporal

*This afternoon*  
vs  
*Ten years from now*

### Spatial

*Your local shop*  
vs  
*A city across the world*

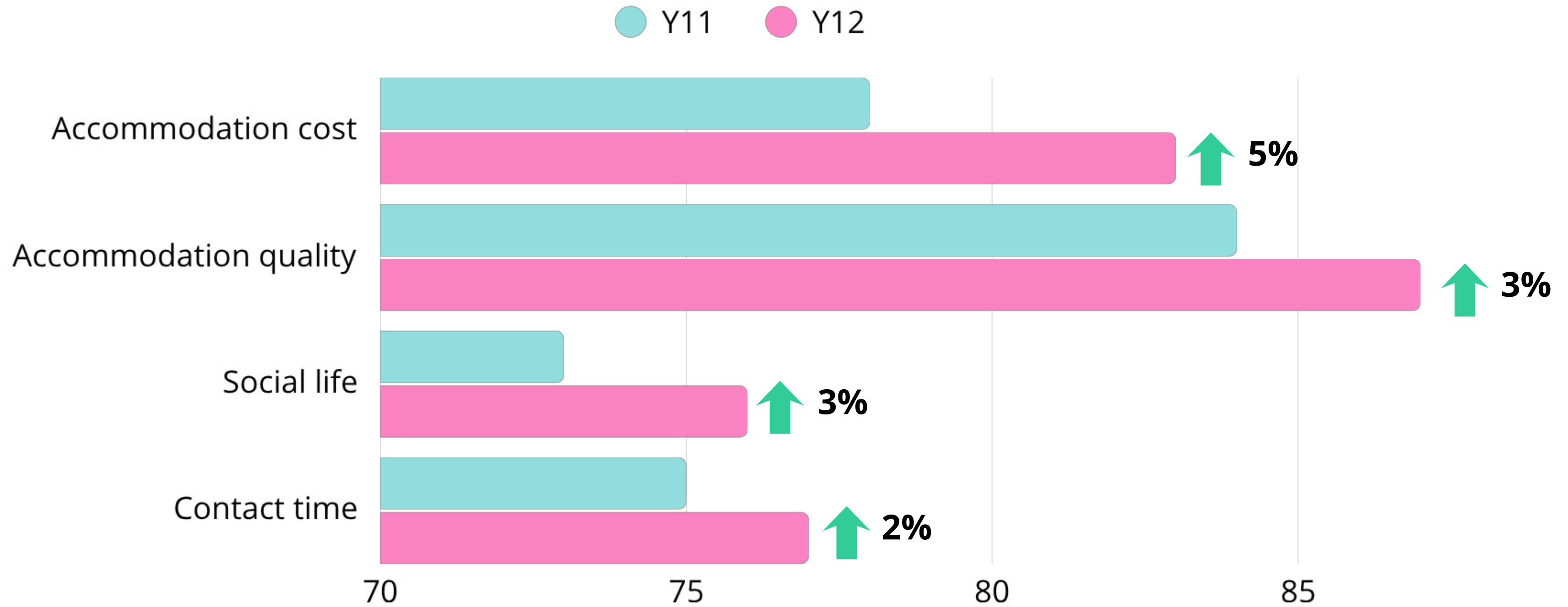
### Social

*Your best friend*  
vs  
*A complete stranger*

### Hypothetical

*Your commute*  
vs  
*Winning the lottery*

# The closer university feels, the more the details matter



*\*from the 2026 Unifrog Student Survey*

# Abstract thinking feels safer



**Removes detail**

simple and idealised



**Removes risk**

no commitment



**Reduces anxiety**

comfortable exploration

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**The trade off:**

abstract thinking is safe, but concrete thinking drives  
action

# The marketing gap

*“Study at one of the  
UK’s top institutions”*

# The marketing gap

most university marketing is abstract...

## ***Rankings***

*“Study at one of the UK’s  
top institutions”*

## ***Reputation***

*“A university students will  
be proud of”*

## ***Outcomes***

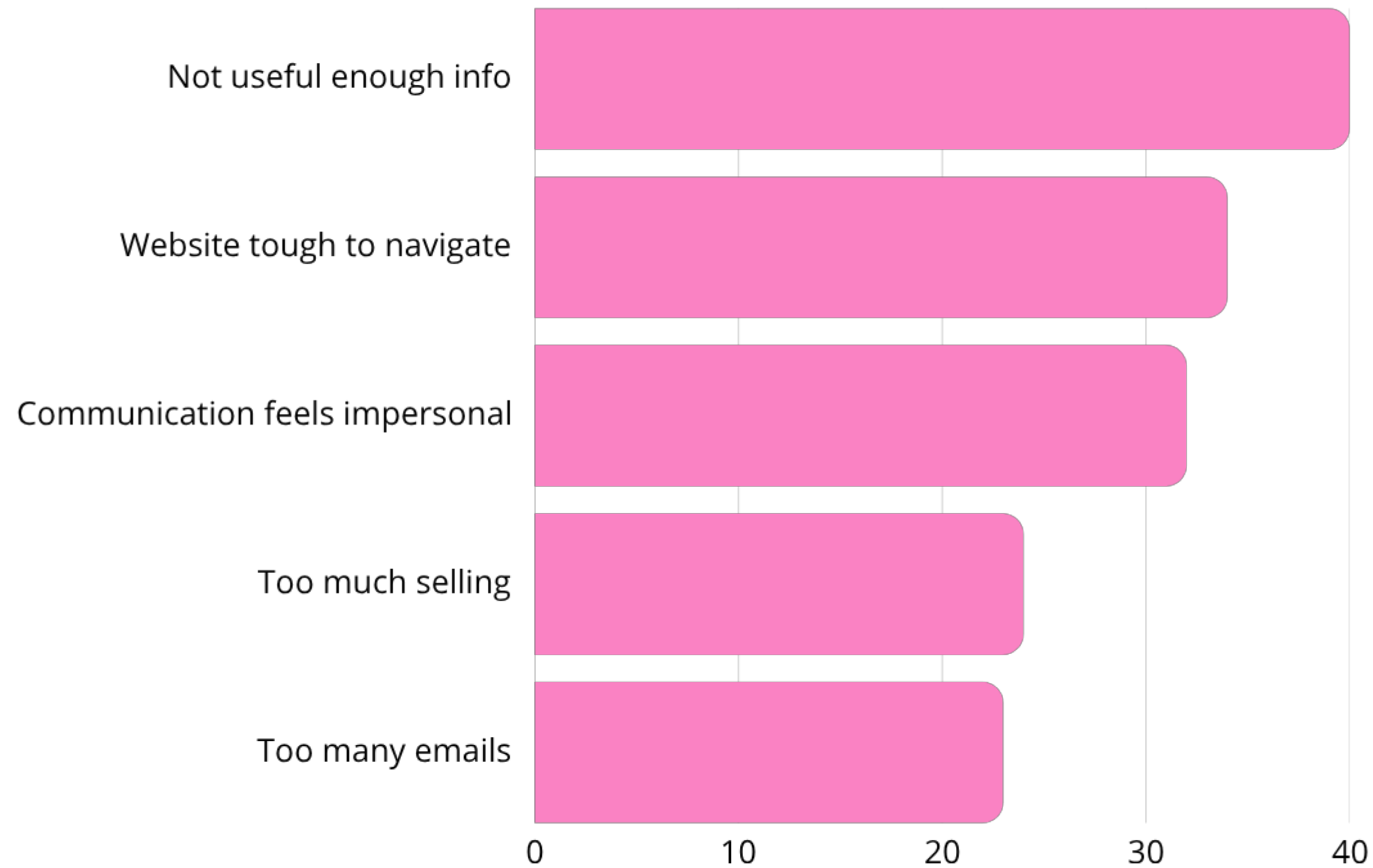
*“Helping students achieve  
their potential”*

## ***Facilities***

*“A campus built for  
creativity and discovery”*

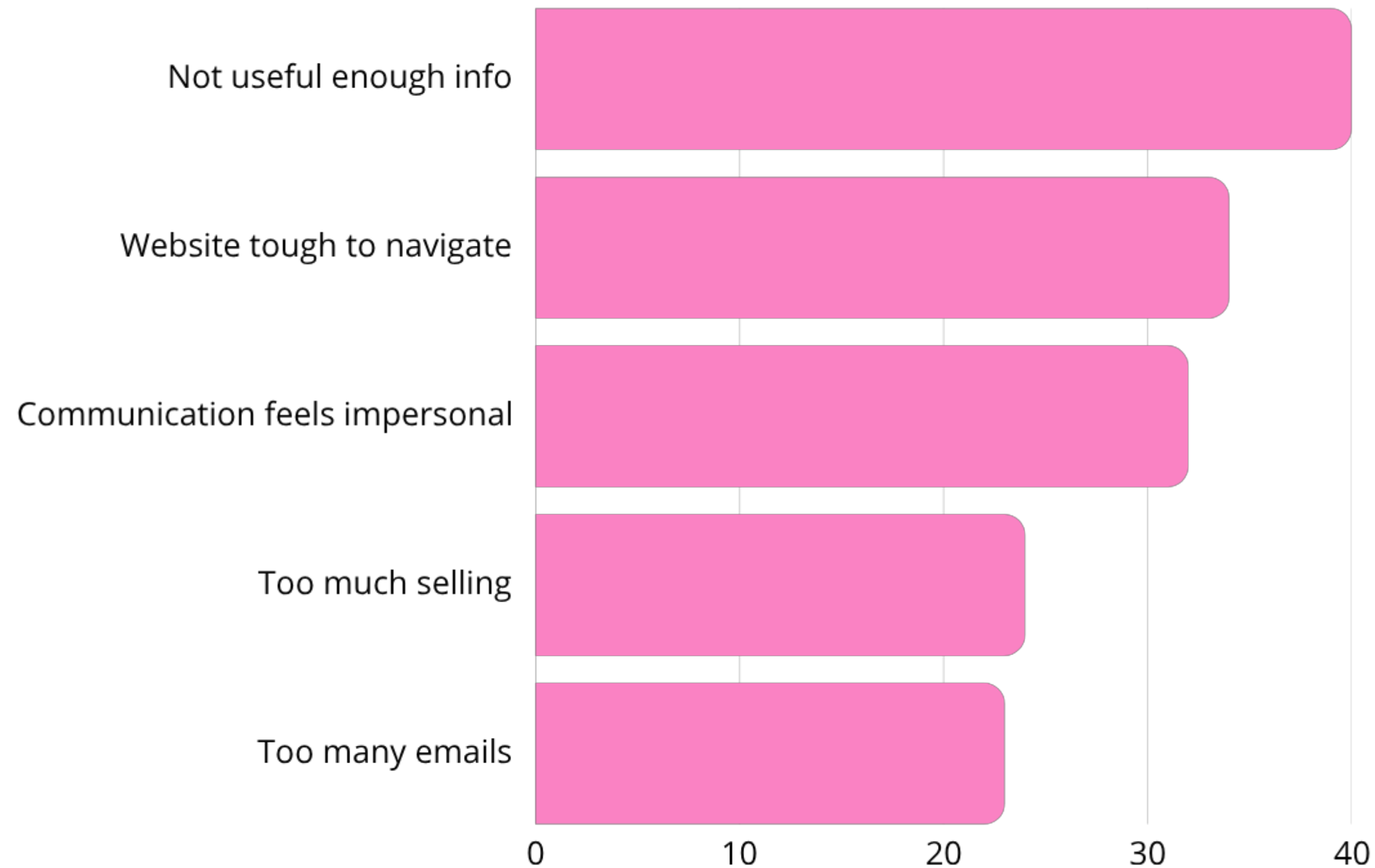
... reducing the distance is how you convert students

# What students want from university communications



*\*from the 2026 Unifrog Student Survey*

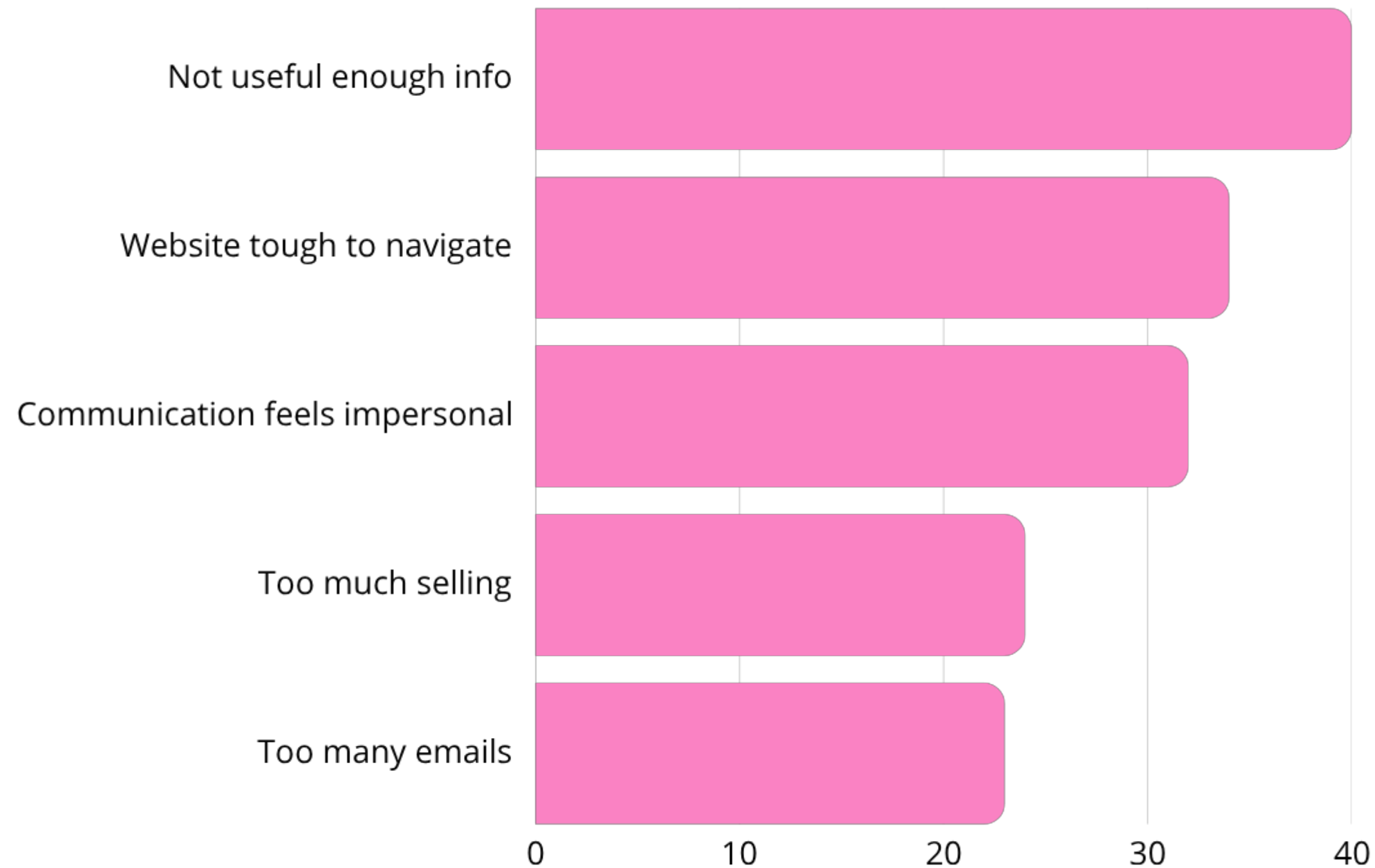
# What students want from university communications



**40%**

said that lack of useful information in university comms would put them off applying

# What students want from university communications



**40%**

said that lack of useful information in university comms would put them off applying

**32%**

told us that impersonal and generic comms would be a barrier to them applying

How do you reduce **psychological distance**?

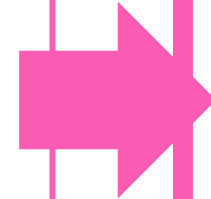
**Abstract Subject**

**Maybe  
Psychology?**

*“Psychology seems  
interesting and I really  
enjoy my school  
lessons”*

Abstract Subject

Maybe  
Psychology?



Experience

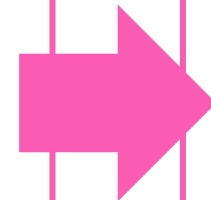
**Webinar about  
eyewitness bias**

*"Psychology seems  
interesting and I really  
enjoy my school  
lessons"*

*"I like how that was  
taught, I can see  
myself learning from  
lectures like this. This  
feels like me."*

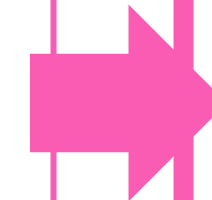
## Abstract Subject

Maybe  
Psychology?



## Experience

Webinar about  
eyewitness bias



## Real Course

**Forensic  
Psychology!**

*"Psychology seems  
interesting and I really  
enjoy my school  
lessons"*

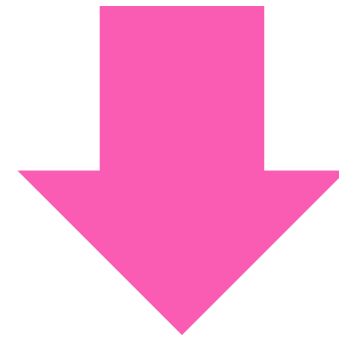
*"I like how that was  
taught, I can see  
myself learning from  
lectures like this. This  
feels like me."*

*"I want to study  
Forensic Psychology  
BSc and I know that  
Kingston and Coventry  
offer this"*

# Subject experiences

Subject tasters reduce psychological distance by moving from **abstract identity** to **concrete experience**, reducing cognitive vagueness

**Abstract identity**



**Concrete experience**

# What do subject experiences look like?



**Thu 22 May 2026**  
16:30 (UK time)

45 mins • Live webinar

Hosted by  
University of Southampton



**Taking a bite of Milton's 'Paradise Lost':  
an interactive English webinar**

Dive into Milton's epic poem and discover how it explores free will, temptation and what it means to be human.

[More](#) ▾

[Sign up](#) 



**Thu 22 May 2026**  
17:30 (UK time)

45 mins • Live webinar

Hosted by  
University of Chester



**How does the law deal with con artists?**

Examine real-life cases of fraud and deception, and explore how the law protects people and delivers justice.

[More](#) ▾

[Sign up](#) 



**Mon 2 June 2026**  
16:30 (UK time)

45 mins • Live webinar

Hosted by  
Lancaster University



**Inside the mRNA vaccines: science that saves lives**

Discover how mRNA vaccines work, their role in the COVID-19 pandemic, and how science is shaping the future of medicine.

[More](#) ▾

[Sign up](#) 

# The impact of subject experiences

**90%** rated their subject taster session a 4 or 5

**86%** were more likely to apply to that university

# The impact of subject experiences



It was very informative yet not overwhelming, and I got my question answered :>



Loved the enthusiasm of the lecturer, made me feel more into the subject

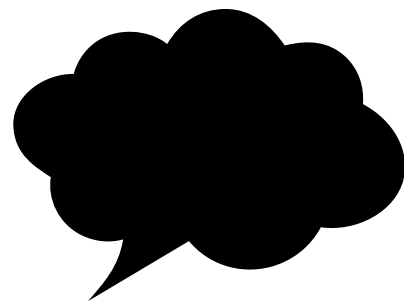


Introduced to a career option I have never heard of and I will now do further research on it!

So where do these types of activity sit in the student journey?

## Imagining

*"Maybe I'll go to  
university one day"*



## Subject Taster Experiences



## Reality

*"I can see myself  
here"*



---

Real enough to **engage**  
Safe enough to **explore**

Taking advantage of this shift in **momentum**

# Let's go back to Greece...



Eden Roc Resort Hotel - Rhodes,...

YouTube



Rhodes Vlog: Day Four Boat Trip and...

TikTok



Rhodes Holiday Vlog 2025: Yacht &...

YouTube

Destination Rhodes

Dates Sun 28 Jun → Mon 29 Jun

Rooms/Guests 1 Room, 2 Gue

Filters

Price

Amenities

Pool

5 Star

4.0+

All inclusive

2. Port Royal Villas & Spa

4.7 (2,524)

Mentions: Great View • Luxury • Modern

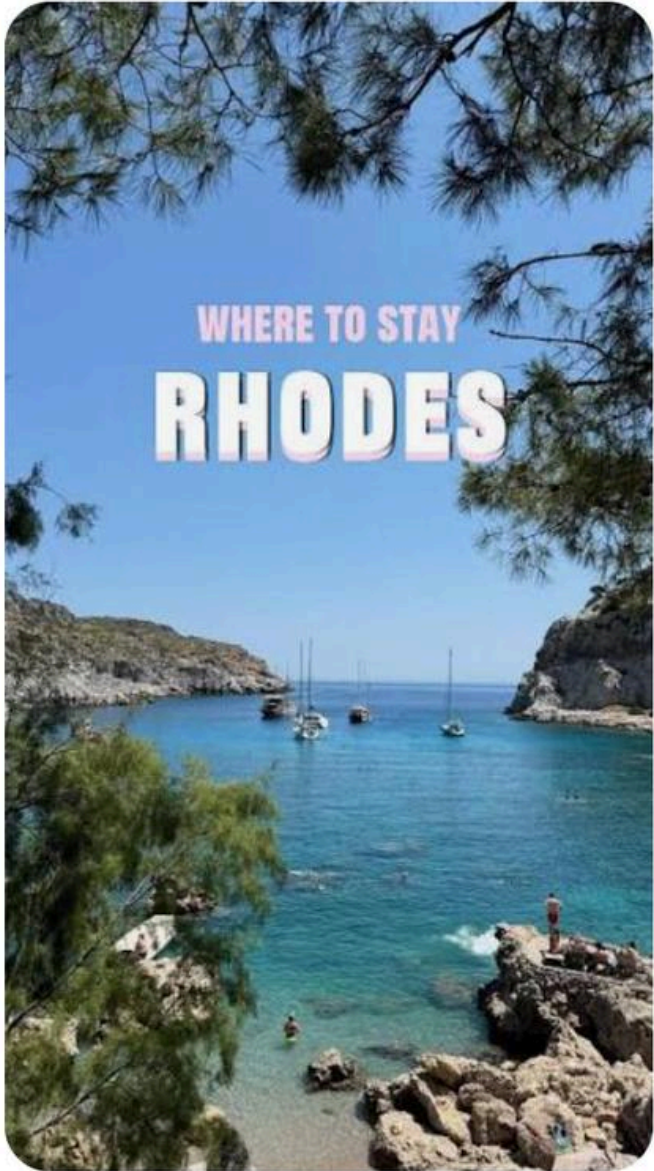
Special offer

Check

All inclusive

3. Mitsis Rodos Village

4.2 (5,164)



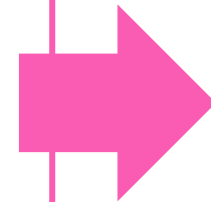
Rhodes Where to Stay | TikTok

TikTok

Momentum needs to be **sustained**...

# The experience isn't the finish line

**Experience**  
make it feel real



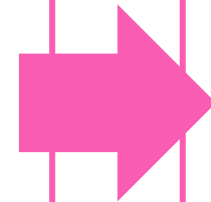
- Webinar
- Subject Taster
- Short Course
- Mock lecture

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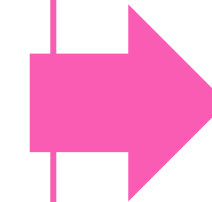
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## Reinforce

don't lose connection

- **Lecturer follows up**
- Subject specific resources
- Student stories
- One clear next step

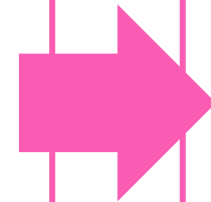


# The experience isn't the finish line

## Experience

make it feel real

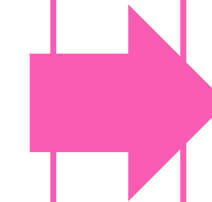
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## Reinforce

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## Convert

remove friction

- Course-specific application guide
- Direct link to apply
- Deadline reminders

# If you change **one thing** after today...

...make every email feel like a continuation of the conversation, not the start of a new one



Letting the connection you've built during a subject experience disappear into generic marketing campaigns



Protecting that connection with timely, personal follow-up from the academics and subject experts who inspired the student in the first place



Students feel more confident in their decision, more connected to your subject and much more able to picture themselves at your university

# More insights from 60,000 students

The complete 2026 Unifrog Student Survey will include:

- Demographic breakdowns
- Year group comparisons
- Regional analysis
- Additional questions not covered today
- Practical recommendations for universities

**Come and find us afterwards to join the release list!**

### Student survey

Your answers will help us improve Unifrog and support you and other students on your journey.

- 1 After school/college, what next steps are you considering? (select all that apply) >
- 2 Which of these had you heard of before today? (select all that apply) >
- 3 Who/what do you rely on most for advice about your next steps? (select up to three) >
- 4 How do you rate the following for researching your next steps after school? >
- 5 How much do you agree with these statements about work experience? >
- 6 Which statement best describes what most motivates you when choosing post-school/college options? (select one) >
- 7 When it comes to a university communicating with you, which of the following potential problems would most put you off from applying to them? (select up to three) >
- 8 Which of the following is most likely to put you off applying for an apprenticeship or job? (select up to three) >
- 9 How important are the following to you when choosing a university? >
- 10 When researching jobs or apprenticeships, what information matters most to you? (select up to three) >
- 11 For which of the following have you used AI? (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) (select all that apply) >
- 12 How much do you trust AI tools to give you accurate information or advice about your future? (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) (select one) >
- 13 Which best describes how you feel about the impact of AI and automation on your future career? (select one) >

**Thanks so much for listening**

Want to win a subject taster for  
your university worth over £2,000?

Come and find us at stand 10

