



KNOWN, NOT PROCESSED

What global data tells us about modern student engagement, segments, and the consumer expectations reshaping higher education.

Two people. One decision. Two devices. Zero connection.



The Student

Mobile · 9:40pm

Browsing three programmes.
Bookmarks a scholarship page.



The Parent

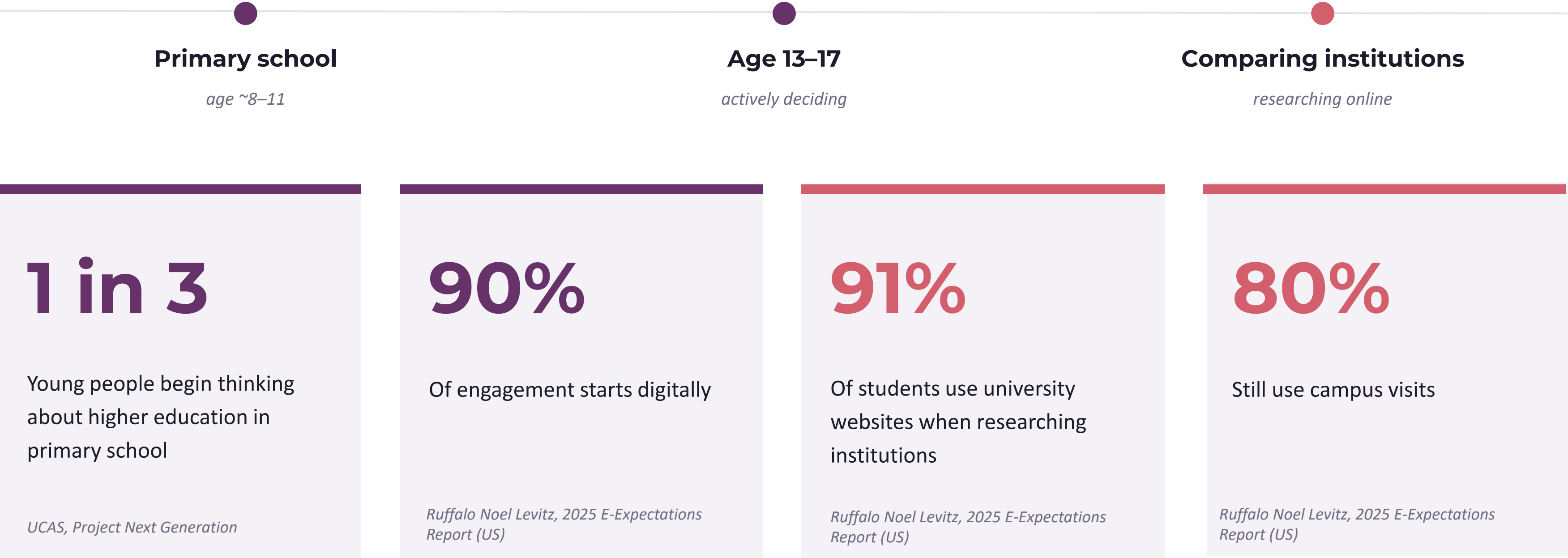
Laptop · weeks later

Looking up tuition fees and
accommodation costs.

18 months to enrolment

Would your institution know these two journeys belong together?

Connection Starts Earlier Than We Think



The challenge isn't generating engagement. It's recognising and connecting engagement across years, devices, and channels.

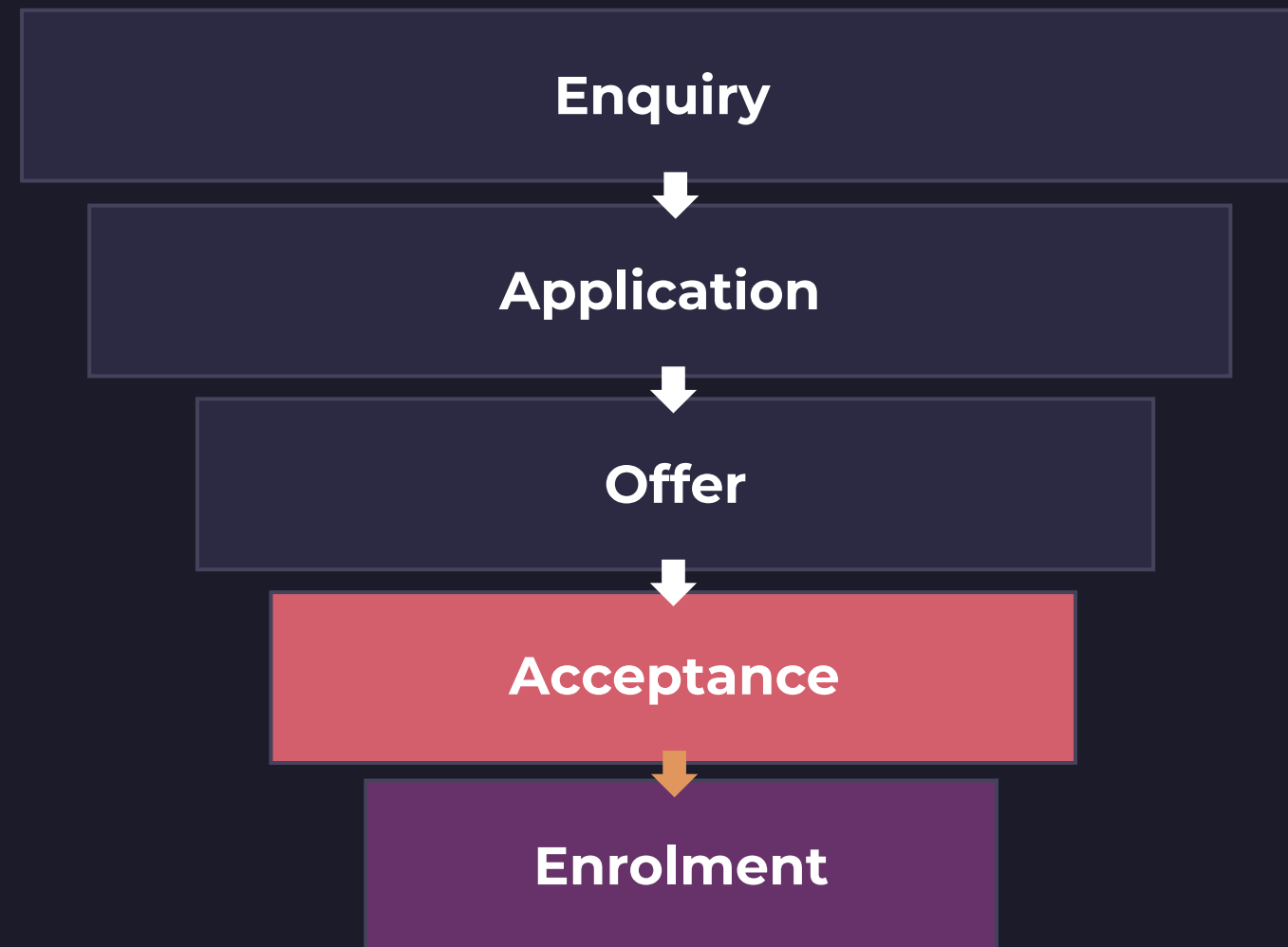
Perspective - The signals students are already sending

What surprised you most about how early students begin engaging with universities, and what challenges does that create for your team?

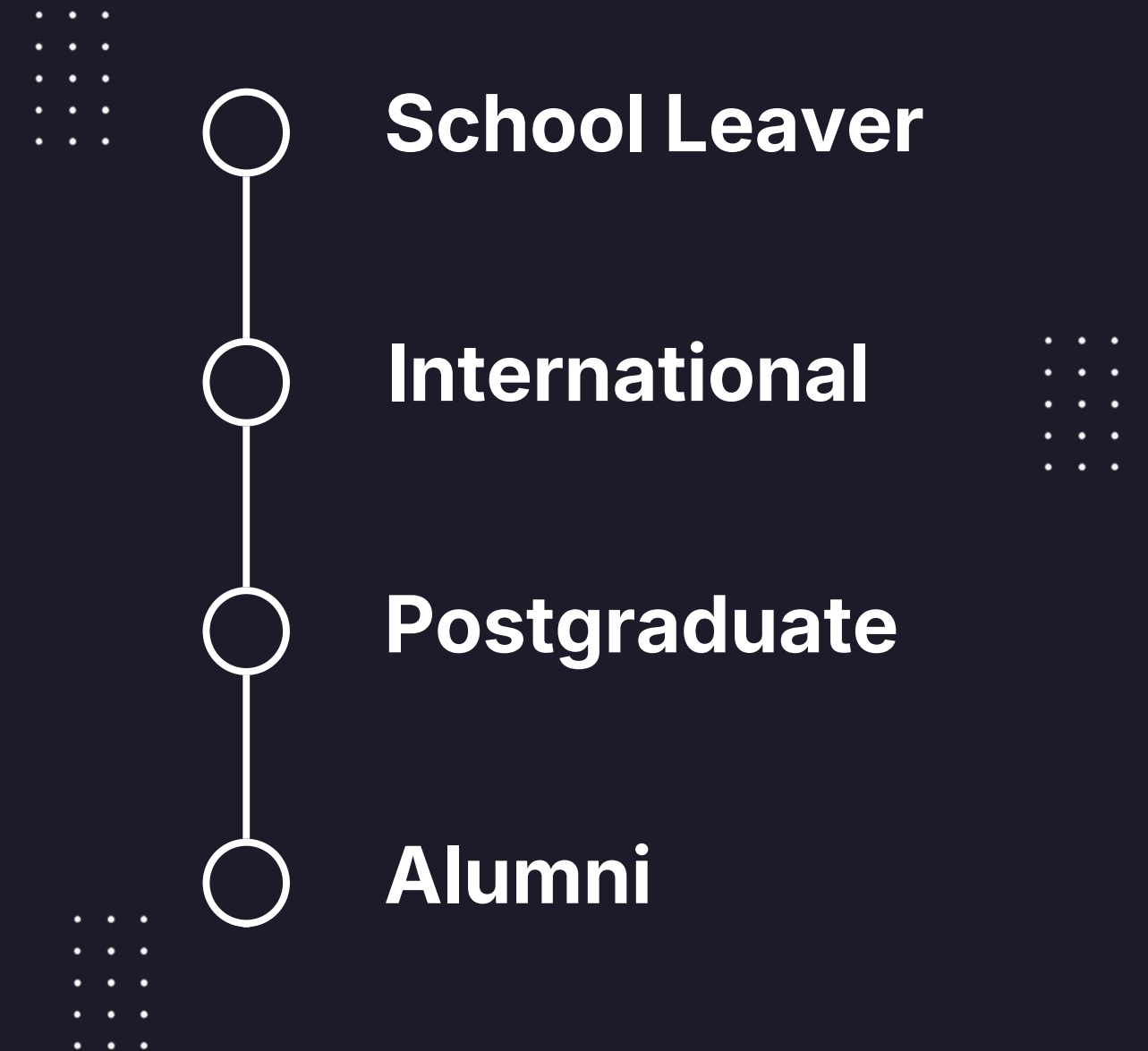
Where do you feel institutions are still underestimating the complexity of the modern student decision-making journey?



The Real Challenge: Engagement Through Change



"Melt": accepted, then never enrolled



Success increasingly depends on recognising where each student is in their journey and responding appropriately.

Perspective – Different people, different expectations

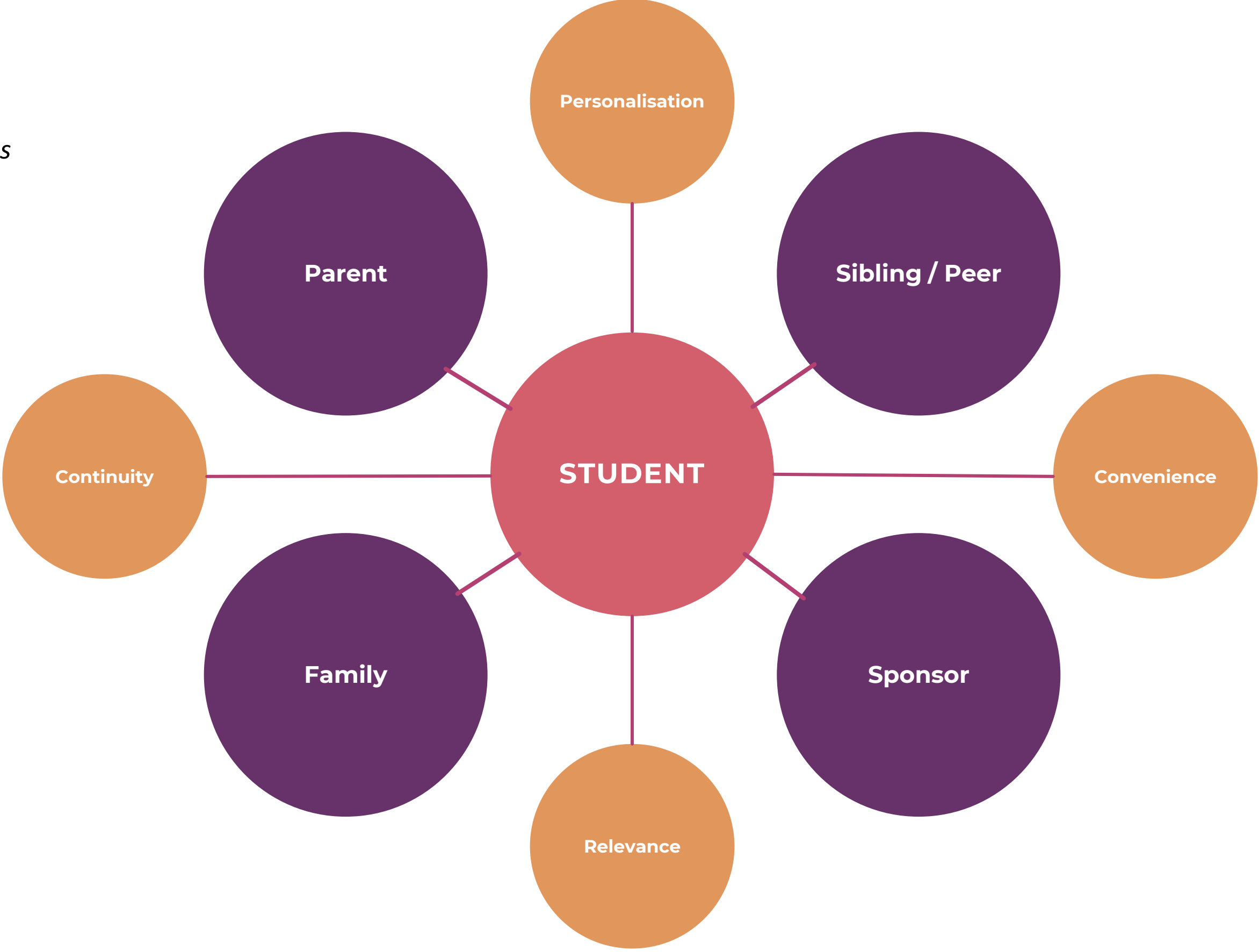
When you look across your student audiences, which segment has seen the most significant shift in expectations, and how has your institution responded?

Which assumptions about student behaviour do you think institutions need to challenge if they want to improve engagement and conversion?



Students Expect Consumer Experiences

● *Infulences*
+
● *Consumer Expectations*



Perspective – The standard has changed

Students are increasingly comparing their digital experience to the experiences they receive from other platforms and media. Where do you think education institutions are doing well, and where do they fall short?

We often talk about personalisation, but there's a fine line between being helpful and being intrusive. How does your institution think about balancing relevance, trust, and privacy?

PROCESSED

Subject: Discover Your Future at Northbridge University

Dear Prospective Student,

Thank you for your interest in Northbridge University. We offer over 200 undergraduate programmes across our vibrant campus, ranked among the top universities in the UK for student satisfaction.

Applications for 2027 entry are now open. To learn more about our courses, accommodation options, and student life, please visit our website or attend one of our upcoming open days.

We look forward to welcoming you to our community.

Best regards, Admissions Team, Northbridge University

"Dear Prospective Student, thank you for your interest..."

KNOWN

Subject: Priya, your Psychology scholarship questions, answered
Hi Priya,

Since you last visited, we've noticed you've been looking closely at our BSc Psychology programme, and you spent some time on our Academic Excellence Scholarship page too, so we wanted to follow up directly.

The scholarship covers up to £3,000 a year and the next application window closes on 15 January. Given the modules you viewed, Cognitive Psychology and Developmental Psychology both came up, you'd be a strong fit for our clinical pathway in Year 2.

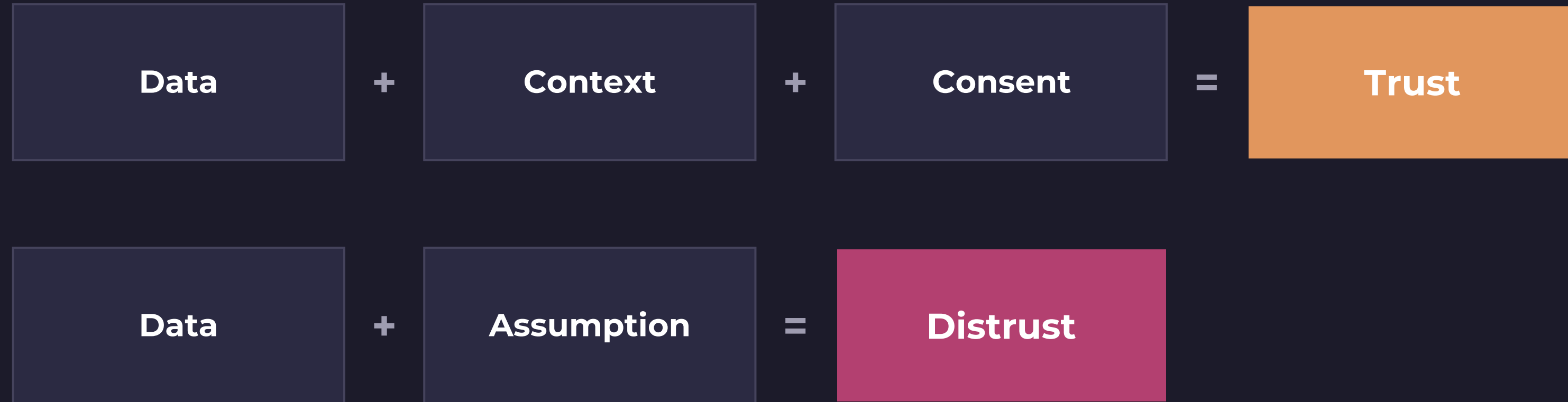
We also remember your mum asked about accommodation costs near campus at our last open day. Our accommodation team has put together a short guide on costs and options within a 15-minute walk of the Psychology building, happy to send that across too if it's useful.

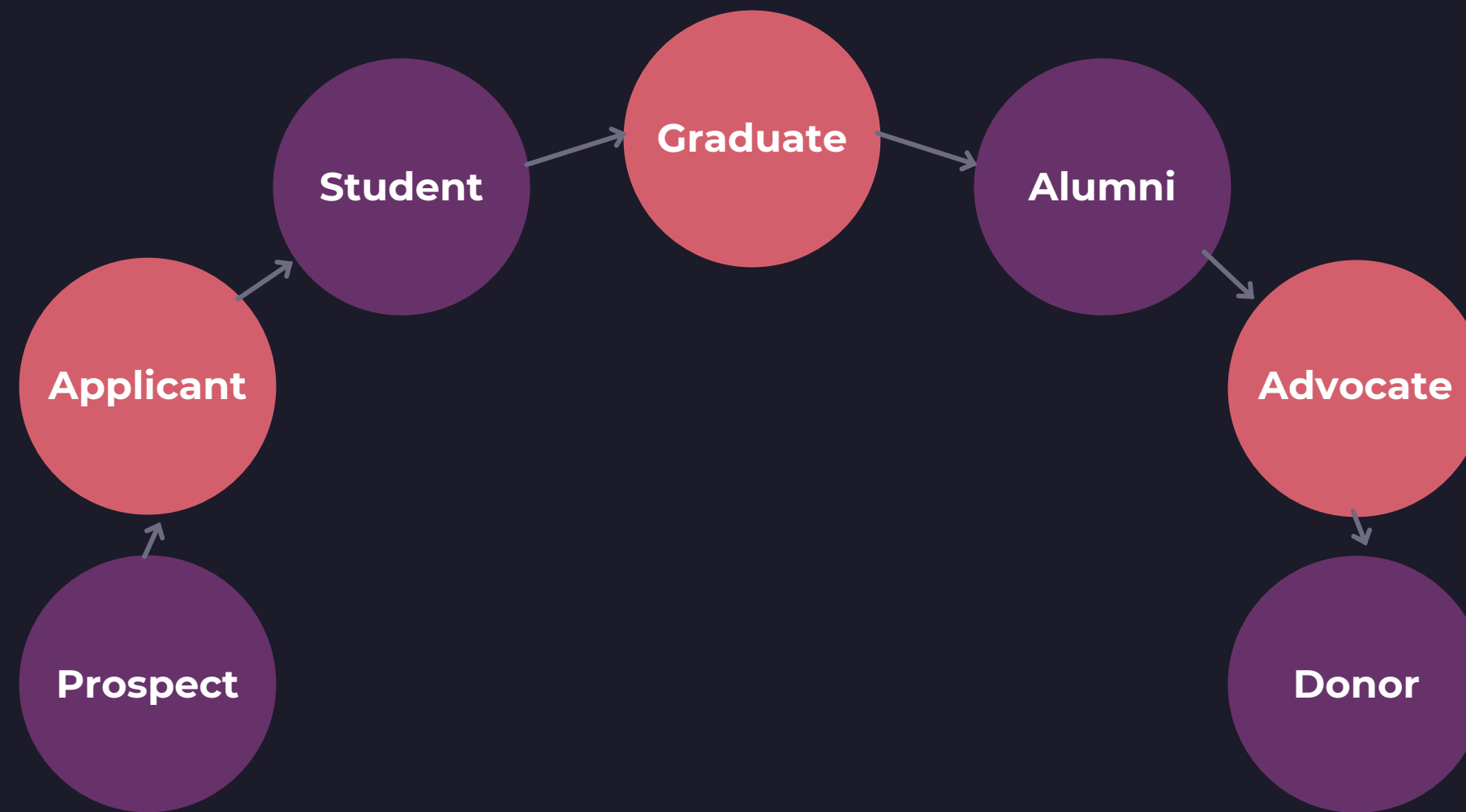
Would a quick call with one of our current Psychology students help with anything else?

Trish Samuels, Psychology Admissions

"Priya, your Psychology scholarship questions, answered..."

Personalisation without trust is surveillance.





The institutions that win the next decade won't be the ones with the most data.

They'll be the ones whose students feel **known instead of **processed**.**



KNOWN, NOT PROCESSED

What global data tells us about modern student engagement, segments, and the consumer expectations reshaping higher education.

Two people. One decision. Two devices. Zero connection.



The Student

Mobile · 9:40pm

Browsing three programmes.
Bookmarks a scholarship page.



The Parent

Laptop · weeks later

Looking up tuition fees and
accommodation costs.

18 months to enrolment

Would your institution know these two journeys belong together?

Student engagement starts earlier than most institutions realise.



→ the timeline stretches years further back than most admissions planning assumes

1 in 3

young people think about higher education as early as primary school

UCAS, Project Next Generation

13–17

the age range UCAS surveyed — 1,000+ students — to understand how they decide their future

UCAS, Project Next Generation

91%

of students use university websites when researching institutions

Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2025 E-Expectations Report (US)

How it happens: blended, not digital-only, and fragmented across channels.

1

DIGITAL IS THE DEFAULT

90%

of initial student engagement now happens digitally

2

IN-PERSON STILL MATTERS

80%

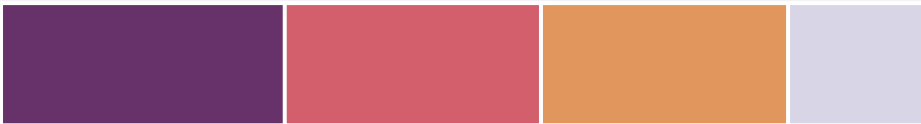
of students use in-person campus visits during their decision journey

3

FRAGMENTED REACH

31/28/27

enquiry forms / email / social media, no single channel dominates



- Enquiry 31%
- Email 28%
- Social 27%
- Other 14%

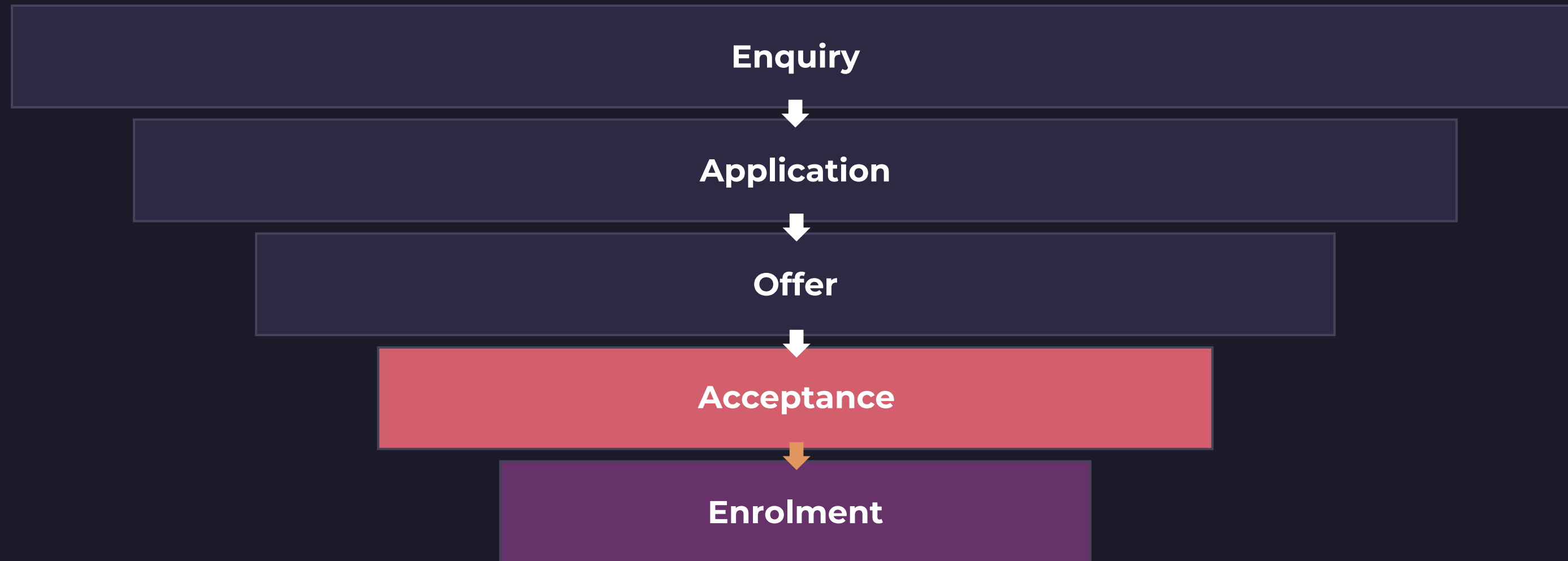
Perspective - The signals students are already sending

What surprised you most about how early students begin engaging with universities, and what challenges does that create for your team?

Where do you feel institutions are still underestimating the complexity of the modern student decision-making journey?



Acceptance is not arrival.



"Melt": accepted, then never enrolled

The structural pressures here aren't a recruitment problem. They're an engagement problem.

US case study, Fort Worth ISD (Texas): 48% district-wide melt rate among students who planned to attend, applied, and were accepted. 56% for free/reduced-lunch students vs 25% for others; 59% Hispanic and 41% African American vs 19% White.

The backdrop is changing.

UNITED KINGDOM

- International enrolments fell 6.1% in 2024/25, to 685,565
- New international entrants down 5.4%, to 404,555



GLOBAL DEMAND

AUSTRALIA

- National Planning Level caps new international commencements at 270,000 (2025)
- From 2026, growth tied to new student housing capacity

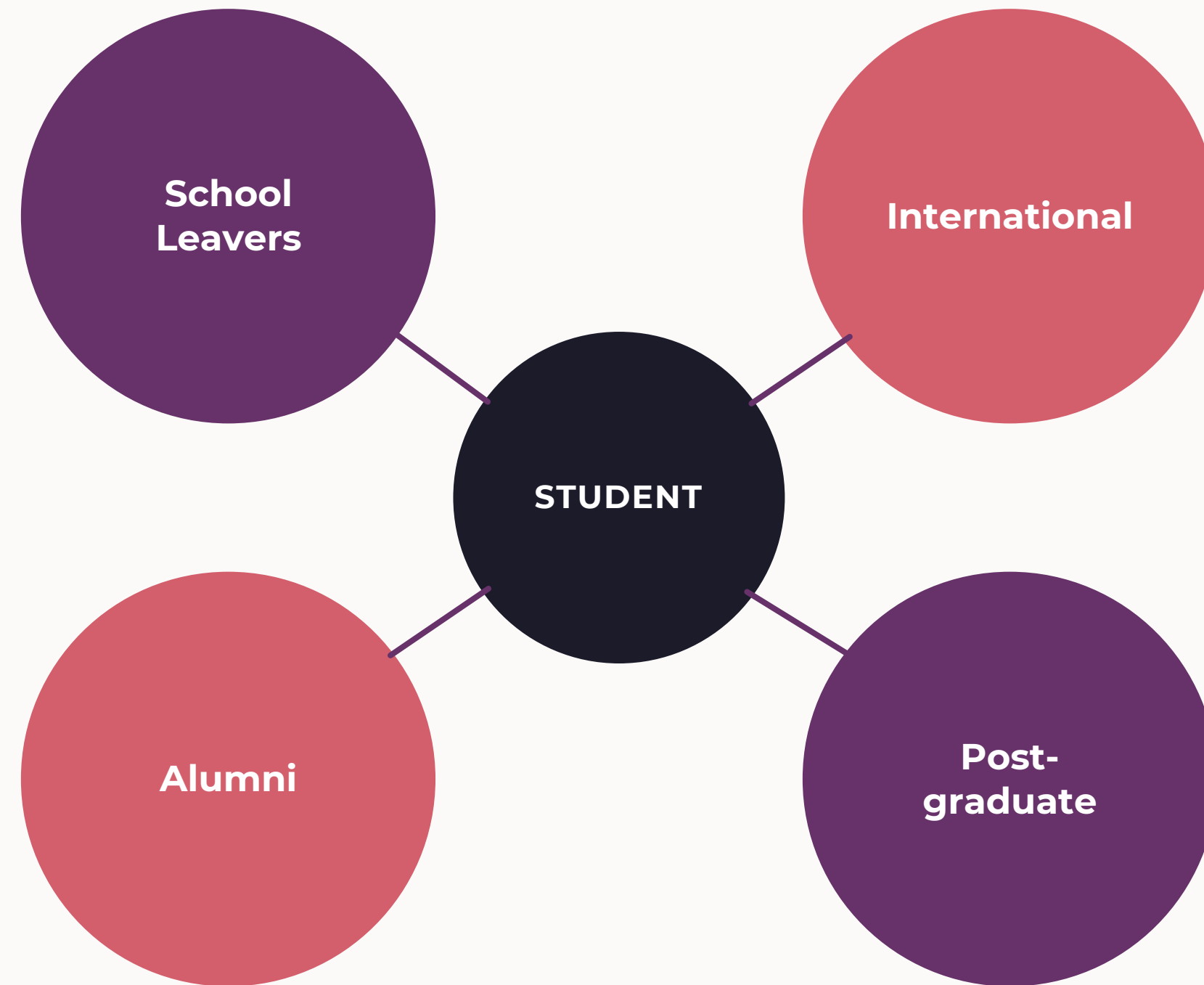
What happens when institutions act on signals?

Georgia State University

BEFORE (2003)	ACTIONS	OUTCOME (2021)
◦32% six-year graduation rate ◦22% Hispanic · 29% African American · 18% African American male ◦Advising was reactive, risk spotted only after a student had disengaged	◦800+ data-based alerts tracking all undergraduates daily ◦135,000+ advisor-student meetings generated in a single year, each tied to a specific alert	◦56% six-year graduation rate, up 24 points ◦Achievement gaps by race, ethnicity and income eliminated ◦Hispanic +35pts to 57% · African American +32pts to 57%

GPS Advising programme (since 2011/12 launch): six-year graduation +7pts, four-year +14pts; BCG found a positive ROI.

Different journeys. Different expectations.



Segment behaviours compared

Segment	Discovery	Decision Driver	Research Window
School Leaver	Social	Peers	Long
International	Family	Risk / Value	Long
Postgrad	Search	Career ROI	Short
Alumni	Relationship	Relevance	Ongoing

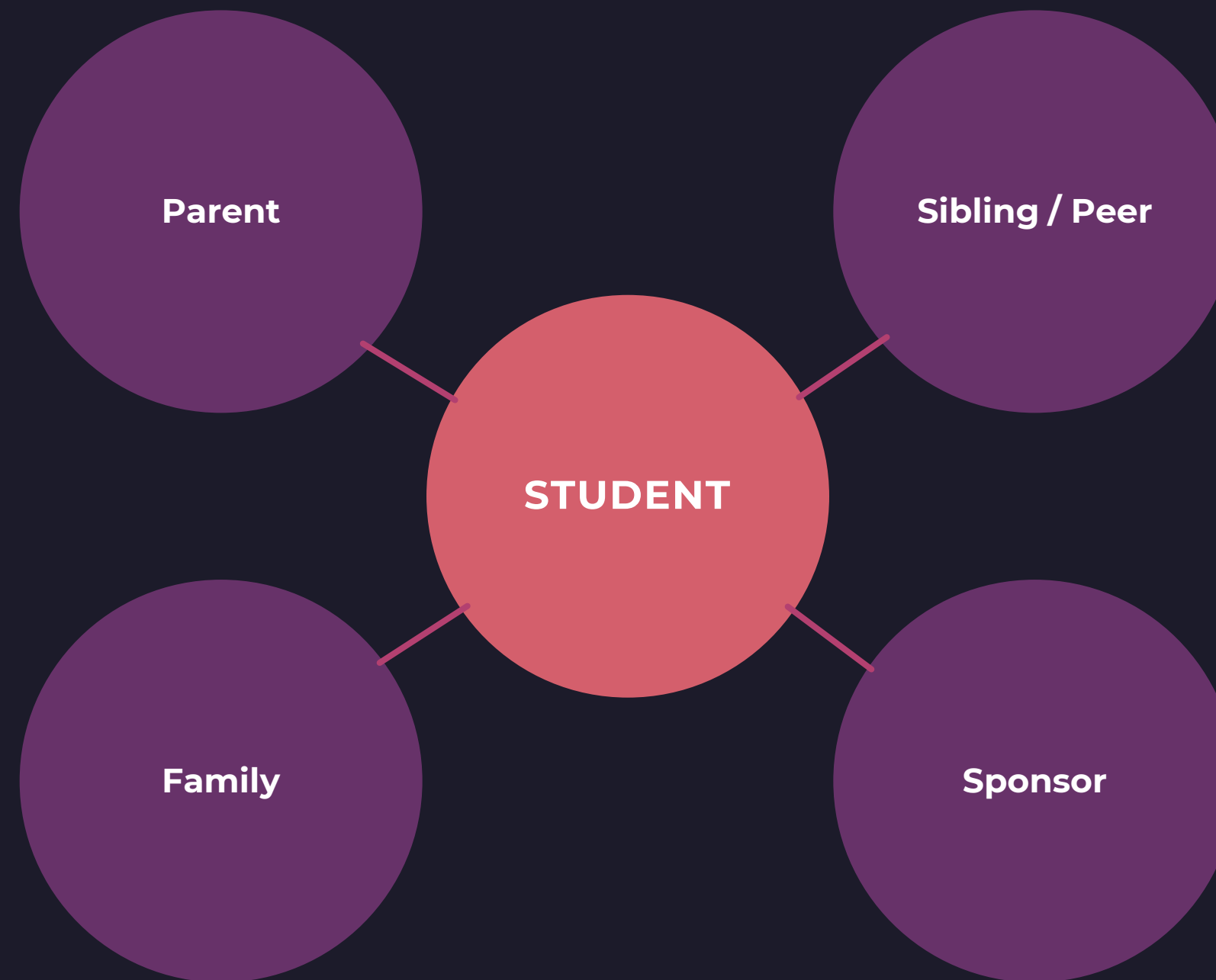
Perspective – Different people, different expectations

When you look across your student audiences, which segment has seen the most significant shift in expectations, and how has your institution responded?

Which assumptions about student behaviour do you think institutions need to challenge if they want to improve engagement and conversion?



Students don't decide alone.



The standard isn't another university.

Netflix

Amazon

Banking Apps

Spotify

ALL CREATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Personalisation

Convenience

Relevance

Continuity

Students expect consumer-grade experiences. Universities are still catching up.

EXPECTED	REALITY
Personalised offers, wherever they interact.	1 in 4 students say platforms and systems need upgrading just to keep pace (25%).
Consistent experience across every touchpoint.	6 in 10 students still report Wi-Fi connectivity issues on or off campus (60%).
Access on whatever device they're using.	More than a third lacked access to a suitable device at some point, rising to almost half among international students (37% / 49%).

Perspective – The standard has changed

Students are increasingly comparing their digital experience to the experiences they receive from other platforms and media. Where do you think education institutions are doing well, and where do they fall short?

We often talk about personalisation, but there's a fine line between being helpful and being intrusive. How does your institution think about balancing relevance, trust, and privacy?

PROCESSED

Subject: Discover Your Future at Northbridge University

Dear Prospective Student,
Thank you for your interest in Northbridge University
We offer over 200 undergraduate programmes across our vibrant campus, ranked among the top universities in the UK for student satisfaction.
Applications for 2027 entry are now open. To learn more about our courses, accommodation options, and student life, please visit our website or attend one of our upcoming open days.
We look forward to welcoming you to our community.
Best regards, Admissions Team, Northbridge University

"Dear Prospective Student, thank you for your interest..."

KNOWN

Subject: Priya, your Psychology scholarship questions, answered
Hi Priya,

Since you last visited, we've noticed you've been looking closely at our BSc Psychology programme, and you spent some time on our Academic Excellence Scholarship page too, so we wanted to follow up directly.

The scholarship covers up to £3,000 a year and the next application window closes on 15 January. Given the modules you viewed, Cognitive Psychology and Developmental Psychology both came up, you'd be a strong fit for our clinical pathway in Year 2.

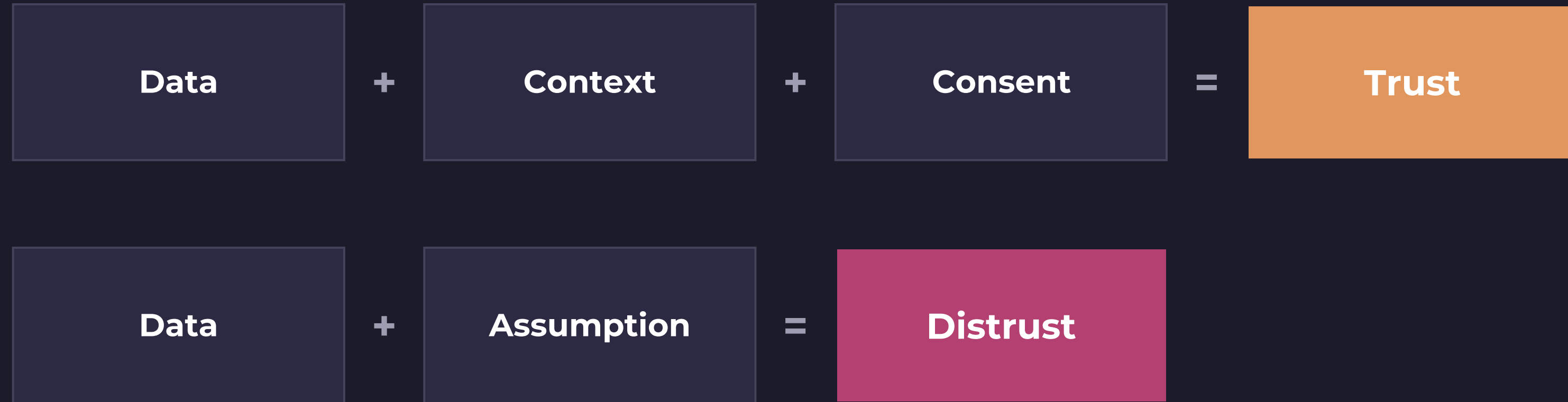
We also remember your mum asked about accommodation costs near campus at our last open day. Our accommodation team has put together a short guide on costs and options within a 15-minute walk of the Psychology building, happy to send that across too if it's useful.

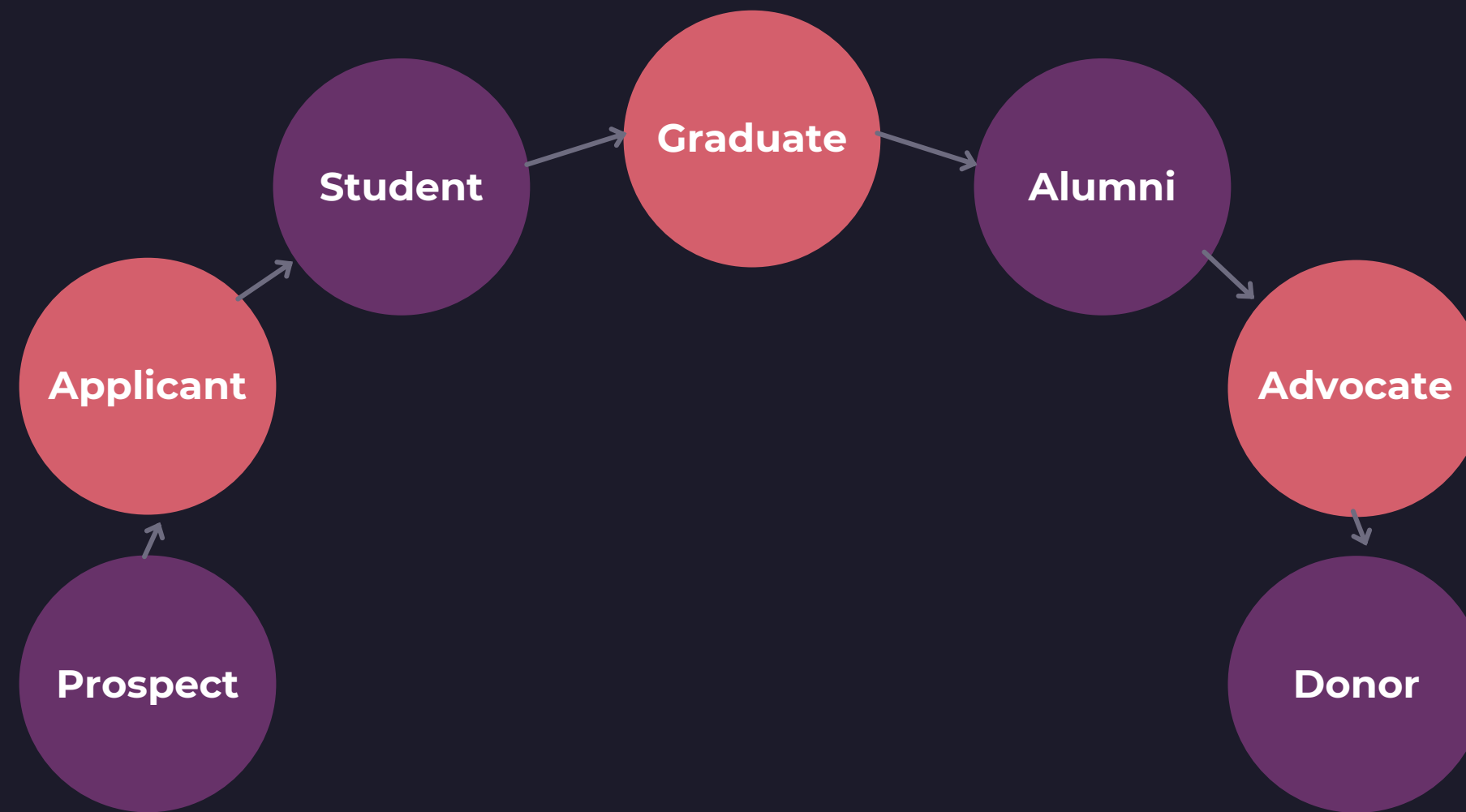
Would a quick call with one of our current Psychology students help with anything else?

Trish Samuels, Psychology Admissions

"Priya, your Psychology scholarship questions, answered..."

Personalisation without trust is surveillance.





The institutions that win the next decade won't be the ones with the most data.

They'll be the ones whose students feel **known instead of **processed**.**