

## **Strategic Perspectives on Student Recruitment in a Post-1992 UK University Context**

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### **Abstract**

CU Scarborough (CUS), part of the Coventry University Group (CUG), is a post-1992 UK institution established in 2015 with a mission centred on widening participation in higher education. Despite its contribution, CUS faces persistent challenges in student recruitment within an increasingly competitive and volatile higher education landscape. This study applies the SWOT–TOWS framework to evaluate internal and external factors shaping recruitment performance, alongside the Resource-Based View (RBV) to examine the institution’s strategic capabilities. A VRIO analysis is also employed to assess CUS’s capacity to achieve and sustain competitive advantage. The analysis identifies key internal strengths, including strong student support mechanisms and the advantages associated with membership of a well-established university group. However, it also reveals internal weaknesses, notably limited research activity, absence of postgraduate portfolio and ongoing resource constraints. Externally, the study highlights opportunities arising from the expansion of digital learning and continued demand from international student markets, while also recognising significant threats. These include intense competition across the sector, tightening international visa regulations, rising operational costs, and increasingly demanding student expectations. Such external pressures are examined using Porter’s Five Forces framework. Drawing on the SWOT–TOWS analysis, the study proposes strategic responses focused on enhancing inclusivity, expanding both physical and digital provision, and strengthening academic–industry partnerships. By aligning institutional strengths with emerging opportunities and addressing critical weaknesses, CUS can improve its strategic positioning in student recruitment. The findings and recommendations are also relevant to other post-1992 UK universities facing similar structural and competitive challenges.

**Keywords:** Competitive Advantage, Student Recruitment, Strategy.