

Standing out from the crowd: Top tips for your students on the Personal Statement

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Schools Liaison Officer

- The application process
- Why is it so important?
- What to include in your Personal Statement
- Enhancing your Personal Statement
- Writing your Personal Statement

The Application Process

UCAS application deadlines:

Medicine / Veterinary / Dentistry / Oxbridge **15 October**

Most others **15 January**

Can apply for up to five choices

Entrance tests? LNAT / UKCAT / BMAT

The Application Process

End March

Deadline for replies from universities

End April

Deadline for student choices

Choose 1st and 2nd choice

End August

Results, Confirmation and Clearing

The Application Process

All institutions treat statements and references in different ways

Practices can vary within institutions and departments

The personal statement and references are used in conjunction with a whole range of other factors

Contextual Admissions:

- School performance data

- Socio-economic markers

Why is the Personal Statement important?

A student's first and perhaps only chance to 'talk' directly with admissions staff

If called to interview their statement will form the core of the questioning

Many applicants will have good predicted grades. Their PS gives you a chance to stand out from the competition

They may not be called to interview. The PS is in effect their 'electronic' interview

The School or College Reference

An informed and academic assessment of:

Their academic performance in their post-16 education

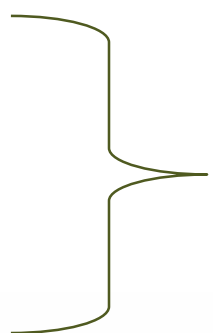
Their potential for academic success in higher education

Why the course they have chosen is suited to them

Any personal qualities which will benefit them at university

What they can bring to the university, such as extracurricular activities and interests

What do admissions tutors look for in applications?

- Accuracy
 - Exam results – GCSEs, AS Levels
 - Choice of A-Levels
 - Predicted grades
 - Academic reference from school/college
 - Personal statement
 - Motivation and commitment to the subject
 - Suitability to the course/institution
 - Nature of the competition – how do you compare?
- 
- Careful research to make sure the right courses are chosen is vital...

What admissions tutors look for

A rounded picture to show that they are a suitable candidate for the university both academically and socially

Reasons for
choosing the course

Subject specific
skills

Enthusiasm for their
subject

Any work
experience,
placement or
voluntary work

Career plans

Gap year plans

Motivation and
commitment

Transferable skills

Extra-curricular
hobbies and
interests

Why them? What
can they offer?

Getting started - 47 lines, approx. 500 words

70% Academic

Additional Experience and Skills

Hobbies and Interests

A summary of why they will be a good choice

What about the structure?

Paragraph 1: Introduction

What was their personal trigger?

How does their subject relate to society or current affairs?



Which aspects of the course are they really looking forward to studying in more detail and why?

Name dropping & personal insight

Having spent some time travelling in America, I find the literary expression of their culture and history of the country to be most absorbing. I particularly enjoyed 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J.D. Salinger and 'On the Road' by Jack Kerouac. These novels capture the disaffection many people experience with their society. Earlier American writers that I have read, including Hemingway, Lee and Fitzgerald, also convey this sense of social dislocation.

What about the structure?

Paragraph 2: Their interest in the subject

What have they done in school/college to develop their interest in the subject? (trips/books/wider reading/documentaries...)

What have they done outside school or college that they can **link** to their subject? (work experience, volunteering, part-time job...)



Do they have a career aspiration?

What about the structure?

Paragraph 3: **Wider skills**

Give an account of their non-academic achievements

Gap Year – are they taking a year out?

If so, why – what are the benefits?

Additional experience and skills UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Write a list of everything they have done over the last two or three years including:

Paid
employment

Volunteering

Work
experience

Travel

Extra curricular
groups

For each one consider:

What did they learn?

Student Union

Student
paper

Does it relate to their subject in some way?

Prefect

What transferable skills did they gain?

Can they be useful to them in university life?



Self-awareness

Communication

Presenting

Business
acumen

Networking

Proactivity

Intellectual
flexibility

Time
management

Response to a
challenge

Flexibility

Initiative

Commitment

Decision
making

Enthusiasm

Team work

Research Skills

Attention
to detail

Independence
thinking

Problem
solving

Analysis

Critical
thinking

Foreign
language

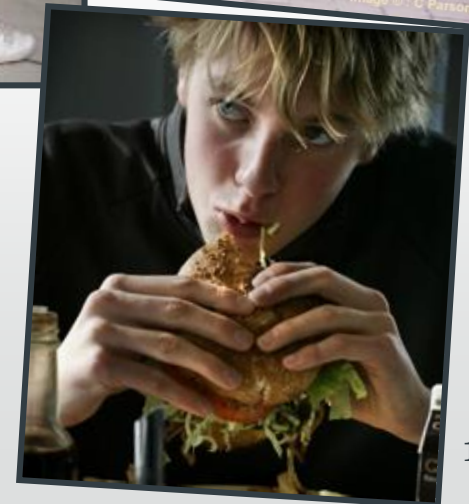
Leadership

Motivation

Numeracy

Hobbies and interests

Avoid a list of hobbies, e.g. 'reading', 'socialising with friends', 'going to the cinema', 'hanging out in town'



Work Experience

International
Baccalaureate

Engagement

Employment

Sports

Extra
curricular
activities

Travel

Academic
attainment

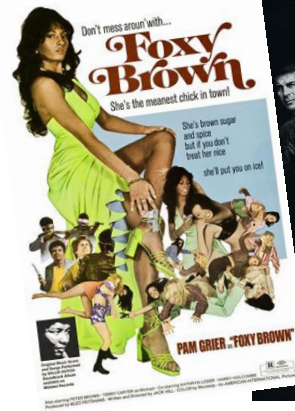
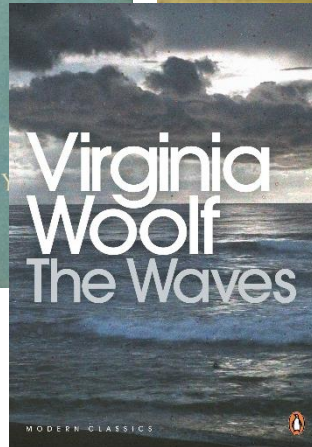
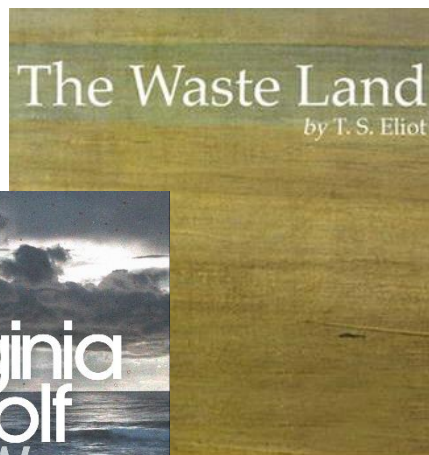
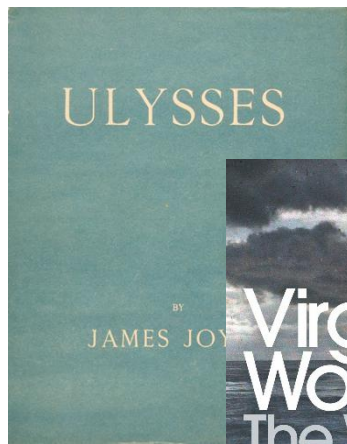
| 10. PERSONAL STATEMENT |
|--|
| <p>Name of applicant (first, middle or last):</p> <p>I've been fascinated by the sea since I was small. As part of my examination course, I'm studying the effects of pollution on marine life in Tokyo Bay. I've had to analyse water samples continually over a period of six months, write up the results and come to conclusions based upon my findings. Biology has always been my best subject at school and I feel that there is such a comprehensive range of courses on offer in the UK for someone with my interests. I have thoroughly researched the courses and institutions of my choice to ensure that I get the most from the subject and my time in the UK.</p> <p>My English exchange partner works for the Environment Agency in Bangor and specialises in hydrology. I have learnt a great deal from accompanying her on field trips on two recent visits to Wales. Through my time in Bangor, I have also found out more about oceanography which is an area I would like to develop further. I have organised a three month period helping a PhD student with their research in this field over the summer. The level of expertise, the dedicated approach towards learning and the encouraging atmosphere in the UK are the main reasons I would like to study here.</p> <p>In order to help me make the most of my studies, I have recently successfully completed an advanced Excel course for scientists in Cambridge. This has increased my technical confidence and also gave me the chance to meet interesting people from all around the world. The course was taught in English which allowed me to enhance my listening and speaking skills.</p> <p>For the past two years, I have been a student representative on the staff/student council. This position has mainly entailed voicing concerns on many issues from a student perspective. This has meant strong communication skills and the need for tact and diplomacy. I have learnt how to strike the balance between standing firm and remaining true to those whom I represent yet, at the same time, maintaining a flexible and deferential attitude towards other council members.</p> <p>Out of college, I really enjoy playing tennis and am a member of my local club. I like singles but get most satisfaction from playing doubles and helping with the training of more junior players. I also seem regularly go to the theatre and am an avid reader of 20th-century French literature which I read in the original language.</p> |

A-Levels

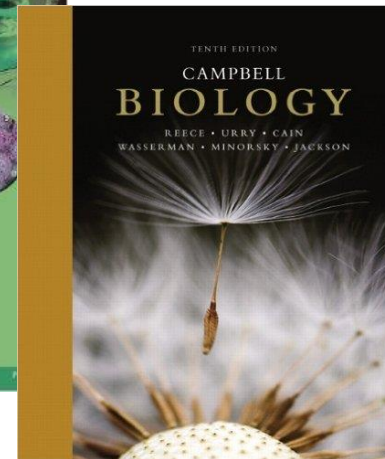
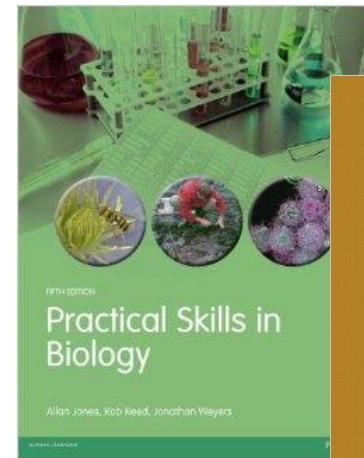
Extended Project
Qualification

Responsibilities

Academic skills



Mention genres, authors, artists and why they are of interest. Try to make it relevant





Activity (what have they done)



Benefit (skills its given them)



Course (how it relates to the course)

What about the structure?

Paragraph 4: Summary

Finish with a one or two line summary recapping:

- Why they want to go to university and study the course?
- Why they deserve to be offered a place?

Conclude the personal statement by briefly and concisely bringing it back to why they are a good choice for the course and the university.

Highlight how they are prepared both **academically** and **socially** for the challenge of Higher Education.

Enhancing your Personal Statement

Is work the only valuable experience? UNIVERSITY OF Southampton

Why wait?

Students should use their initiative to begin getting involved in what they love...

Public lectures

MOOCs

The 'Visual CV'

Student magazines

Extended
Project/Essay

INSIDE
THE GUARDIAN
BLOG



Creative writing



Political thoughts



Websites

How Israel Caught Russian Hackers Scouring the World for U.S. Secrets

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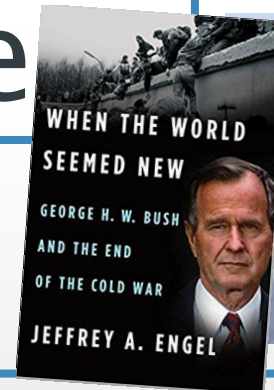
Interest



Sally Jones and Britons who fight for Isis are a 'legitimate target', says Fallon

The Guardian view of medals for drone pilots: morally ambiguous

Engage



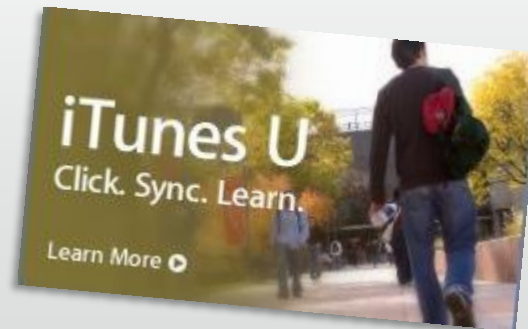
Immerse



HD| Syrian Army In Action | Military Operation to Liberate Aleppo

Further Reading

- Reading outside the syllabus
- University websites
- Newspapers
- Journals



Enhancing Your Application

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton





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A bank vault at Washington Trust Company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. (Image courtesy of [Brook Ward](#). CC BY-NC.)

Instructor(s)

Prof. Francesco Giavazzi

MIT Course Number

14.02

As Taught In

Spring 2014

Level

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ETH Zurich wins Formula Student 2013

Out of 100 teams, the Swiss students triumphed in this year's competition.

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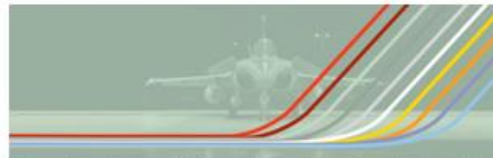
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| | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Tuesday 17th September 2019 | | 22.5°C, 13mph wind, few clouds. |
| » Fourth Conference of Research Software Engineers (08:00) | | Read more View event |
| » Master of Music Performance Recital (17:00) | | Read more View event |
| Wednesday 18th September 2019 | | 22°C, 8mph wind, overcast clouds. |
| » 8 Weeks of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Course (14:00) | | Read more View event |
| » Master of Music Performance Recital (18:30) | | Read more View event |
| Friday 20th September 2019 | | |
| » Enabling Services - Student Support Appointment Day () | | Read more View event |
| » The Craft of Wellbeing (Pilot) (09:30) | | Read more View event |
| Saturday 21st September 2019 | | |
| » Enabling Services - Student Support Appointment Day () | | Read more View event |
| Wednesday 25th September 2019 | | |
| » Does 'the real living wage' really matter? (18:00) | | Read more View event |
| Friday 4th October 2019 | | |
| » Mindful Friday (13:00) | | Read more View event |
| Tuesday 8th October 2019 | | |

MOOCs



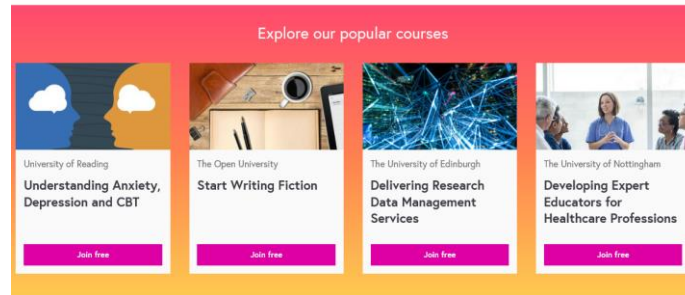
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Writing the Personal Statement

Writing the Personal Statement takes time...

Rule One: draft and redraft. Then...

redraft, redraft, redraft, redraft, redraft, redraft, redraft, ...

Keep editing until it is as **good** as it possibly can be.

Remember: they can't rely on being interviewed – the Personal Statement is their only chance to say **something!**

Personal Statements: a checklist

Don't repeat information

Don't offer undeveloped lists or use clichés

Avoid unintentional humour, waffle or bluff!

Do think about spelling, grammar, vocabulary

Do add comments, views, explanations

Do use their own experiences



Positive phrasing

"At present, I am studying A2s in English Literature, French and Media Studies. I cope with the work quite well and meet the deadlines. I have learnt a variety of skills – French language skills, and English has honed my analytical skills in analysing poetry and prose."

Furthermore

Use my initiative

Enhance

Participated

Furthered

Efficiently

Acquired

Passion

Enabled me

Thrive

Explored

Learnt from

Commitment

Hard work

Broadening

Developed

In addition

Strengthen

Gained

Reinforced

Taking part

Interested

Improved

Rewarding

Be original...

“I want you to tell me about **you** as a real, three-dimensional person.”

Dr Jon Scott, University of Leicester

“**Be yourself**; it's a pleasure (though a surprisingly rare one) to read a statement where the candidate's **own voice** comes over clearly.”

University of Southampton English Department

http://www.southampton.ac.uk/english/undergraduate/ucas_application.page

“It is important that you write it in your own style rather than **trying to conform** to what someone else thinks is right.”

University of Bristol UCAS application dos and don'ts

www.bristol.ac.uk/study/schools/factsheets

But don't go overboard..

"I tackle the tasks presented to me with wisdom and sincerity"

"In my part time job – everything I touch turns to SOLD"

They are applying for university, not the Apprentice!!



Final tips

- Plan out the structure with bullet points and headings, then turn these into full sentences and paragraphs – redraft, redraft, redraft!
- Use Microsoft Word spell checking AND proof read it before you paste it into UCAS
- Keep a copy in case you are called to interview
- DO NOT plagiarise

and remember...it's Personal!

- It's about the student – they should use their voice and be persuasive
- There's no such thing as the perfect statement
- Show an interest, personal insight, sell themselves

Thanks for listening

Paul Drinkwater