

# STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

Supporting your students with their Personal Statement

- Why is it so important
- What to include in the Personal Statement
- Enhancing the Personal Statement
- Writing the Personal Statement

## Why the Personal Statement is important?

Their 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 them 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 they 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

Motivation and commitment

Gap year plans

Transferable skills

Extra-curricular hobbies and interests

Why you? What can you offer?

# Getting started - 47 lines, approx. 500 words

70% Academic

Additional Experience and Skills

Hobbies and Interests

Summarise why you 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?



# 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...)

Do they have a career aspiration?

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



# What about the structure?

## Paragraph 3: Wider skills

Give an account of their non-academic achievements

Gap Year or deferred year – are they taking a year out?

If so, why – what are the benefits?

# Additional experience and skills

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

Student  
paper

Student Union

Prefect

For each one consider:

What did you learn?

Does it relate to your subject in some way?

What transferable skills did you gain?

Can they be useful to you in university life?

SELF-AWARENESS

PRESENTING

RESPONSE TO A CHALLENGE

PROACTIVITY

COMMUNICATION

TIME MANAGEMENT

DECISION MAKING

INTELLECTUAL FLEXIBILITY

ENTHUSIASM

TEAM WORK

INITIATIVE

**TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

INDEPENDENT THINKING

ANALYSIS

RESEARCH SKILLS

COMMITMENT

PROBLEM SOLVING

LEADERSHIP

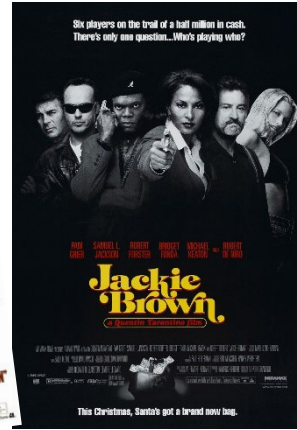
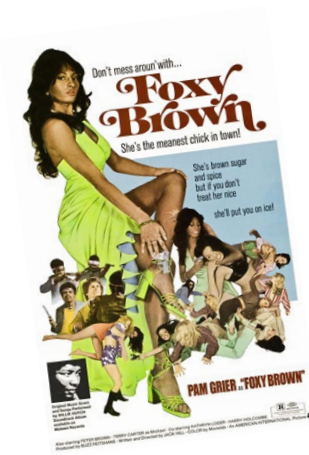
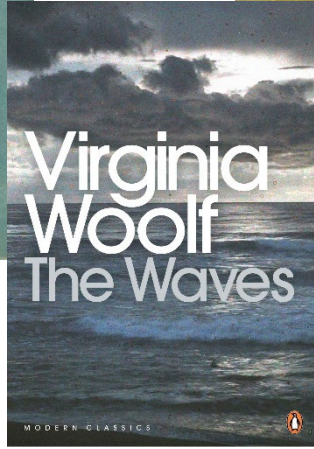
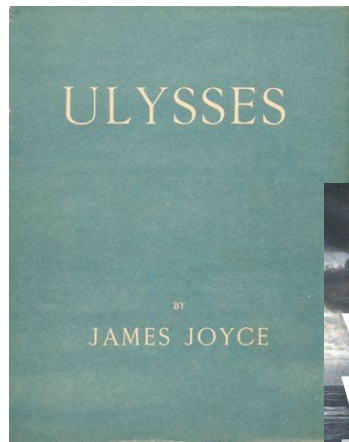
FLEXIBILITY

MOTIVATION

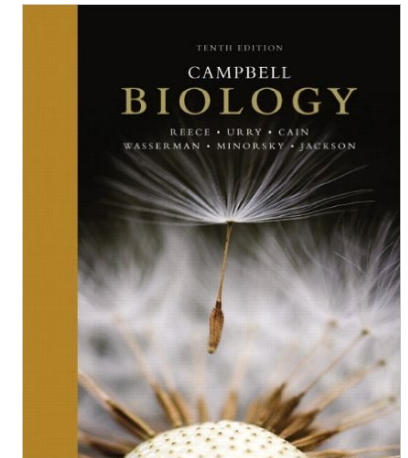
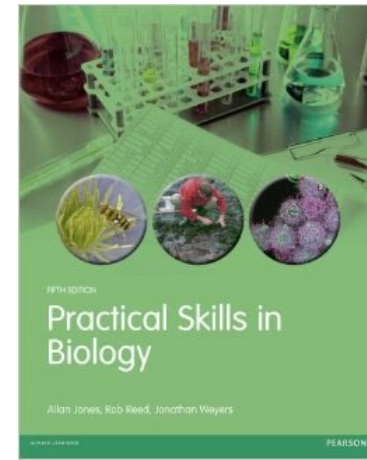
NUMERACY

CRITICAL THINKING

FOREIGN LANGUAGE



Mention genres, authors, artists and why they interest you. Does it relate to the course in any way?





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 would be great on the course?

Conclude their 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?

Why wait?

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

Public lectures

Extended  
Project/Essay

MOOCs

Student magazines

The 'Visual CV'

**INSIDE  
THE GUARDIAN  
BLOG**

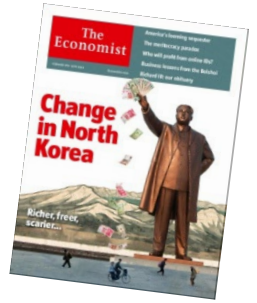
Creative writing



Websites

Political thoughts

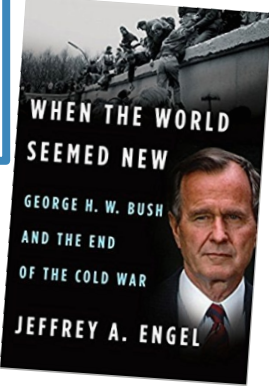
# Interest



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



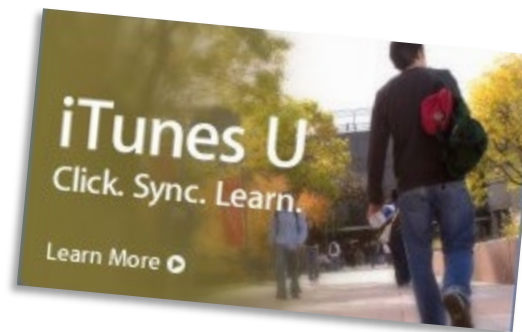
# Immerse



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

# Further Reading

- Reading outside the syllabus
- University Websites
- Newspapers
- Journals
- Podcasts
- Recorded Lectures
- Documentaries



# Enhancing Your Application



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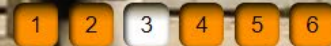


Search Tips

Celebrating 20 years  
of OCW

» [Learn more about OCW's impact](#)

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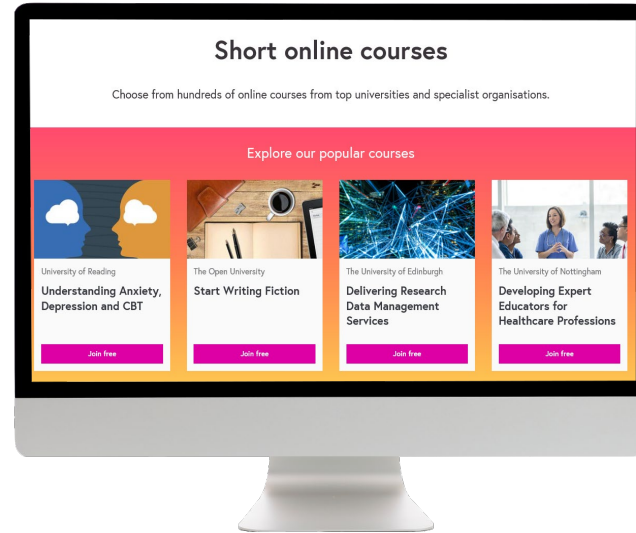
[News](#)

# EVENTS

**KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST  
ENGINEERING IDEAS,  
INVENTIONS AND THOUGHT  
LEADERSHIP AT OUR WORLD-  
CLASS EVENTS.**



# MOOCs



Web Science: How the Web is changing the World

Exploring our Oceans

Understanding Insulin

The Mind is Flat: The shocking shallowness of human psychology

Developing your research project

Shipwrecks and submerged worlds: Maritime Archaeology

Secure Android App Development

Contract Management: Building relationships in Business

# Writing your Personal Statement



# Writing your 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 your 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

“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

# 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 reading it before you paste it into UCAS
- Keep a copy in case you are called to interview
- DO NOT plagiarise

# and remember...Its Personal!

- Its about you – use your voice and be persuasive
- There's no such thing as the perfect statement
- Show an interest, Personal insight, Sell yourself