

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

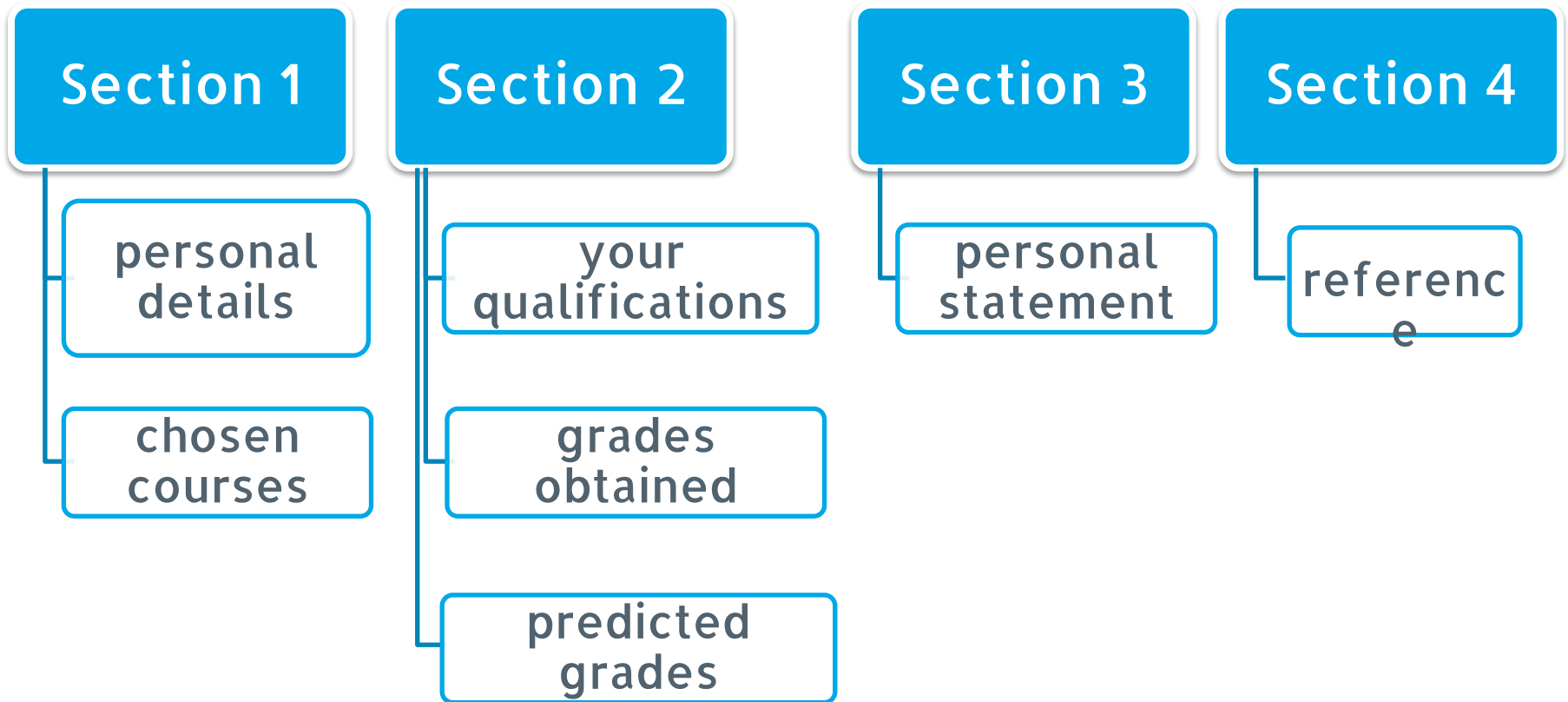
AMBITION

WELCOME

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD: WRITING SUCCESSFUL STATEMENTS

Fred Binley, Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer

What do Admissions Tutors look for ?



Focusing on the Personal Statement

Two questions...

What is a Personal Statement?

What should a successful
Personal Statement be?

PERSUASIVE !

Only chance to 'talk'
directly with admissions
staff?

Your 'electronic'
interview?

Why the Personal Statement IS important

Standing out from the
competition

Will form the core of
questioning if
interviewed

Personal Statements

It's talking about yourself and being **persuasive**.

What do **you** really want to say?

What do **lots** of students say?

Is there a problem of sounding like everyone else...

The risk of being formulaic ?

From a young age I've enjoyed studying my [subject]

I liked AS and I'm doing okay in A2s My teacher told me to say this...

I enjoy socialising with my friends ... and I can't think of anything else to say...

I sometimes go to the theatre or a concert Basically, I have no friends...I'm #tragic...

I've had a part-time job for 2 years My teacher said I have to sound sophisticated...

I like reading This is really why I have no time for anything else in life...

I have an elder brother at University ...I've never read a book but I promise I will if you'll just give me a place at uni...

I hate him. He's the real reason I have to apply, the swot!

Imagine you're being interviewed

*“So: why do **you** want to study this subject,
and what makes **you** the right person for
the course.”*

Your personal statement **should** answer this question.

NB; you can't guarantee getting an interview – your Personal Statement is your chance to say something

So say **something!**

LET'S LOOK AT SOME PERSONAL STATEMENT EXAMPLES ...

The bad ...

I want to do English Lit because I enjoy it at school and I think I will be able to do it in my chosen carrerr even tho this is not yet quiet settled. Moreover, I have visited universities and think I will enjoy it as a place.

I have 7 GCSEs at grade A and B and 2 at C. I also have 2Bs C and D at AS. I am taking ICT so I'm good with MS Word which I know will be useful to me in English. I enjoy reading books and watching TV and sometimes go to the theatre with friends. I have worked in the holidays at the market bookstall in my local town centre. I am finishing my Gold Award soon and play basketball and football for the school in my spare time, and for local teams.

Personal Statements: a checklist

Don't repeat information -
wastes space and suggests
you have nothing new
to say...?



Don't offer an undeveloped list or use clichés

Do think about spelling, grammar, vocabulary
choices

Do add comments, views, explanations where
helpful

HINTS AND TIPS TO MAKE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT PERSUASIVE

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.

Positive phrasing

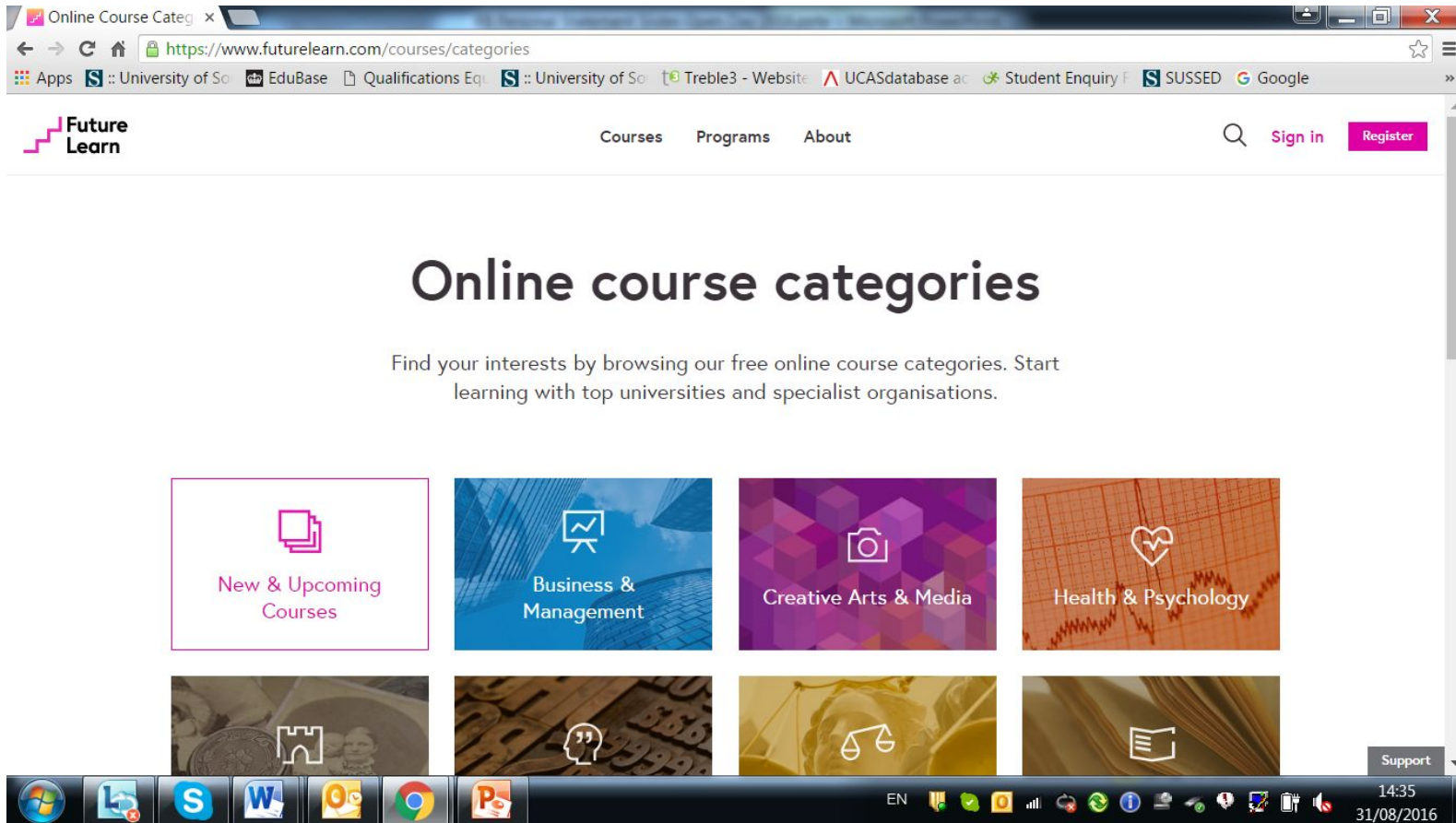
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Furthermore	Enabled me	In addition
Use my initiative	Thrive	Strengthen
Enhance	Explored	Gained
Participated	Learnt from	Reinforced
Furthered	Commitment	Taking part
Efficiently	Hard work	Interested
Acquired	Broadening	Improved
Passion	Developed	Rewarding

Show wider reading/interest around your subject area of choice ...



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Future Learn website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories>. The website's navigation menu includes 'Courses', 'Programs', and 'About', along with 'Sign in' and 'Register' buttons. The main heading is 'Online course categories', followed by the text: 'Find your interests by browsing our free online course categories. Start learning with top universities and specialist organisations.' Below this, there are eight category tiles arranged in two rows of four. The first row includes 'New & Upcoming Courses', 'Business & Management', 'Creative Arts & Media', and 'Health & Psychology'. The second row includes 'History', 'Law', 'Science', and 'Social Sciences'. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the time as 14:35 on 31/08/2016.

Online Course Cate

← → ↻ 🏠 <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/categories> ☆ ☰

Apps S :: University of So EduBase Qualifications Equ S :: University of So Treble3 - Website UCASdatabase ac Student Enquiry F SUSSED Google >>

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Online course categories

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- Law
- Science
- Social Sciences


Support


EN 14:35 31/08/2016


Show wider reading/interest around your subject area of choice ...



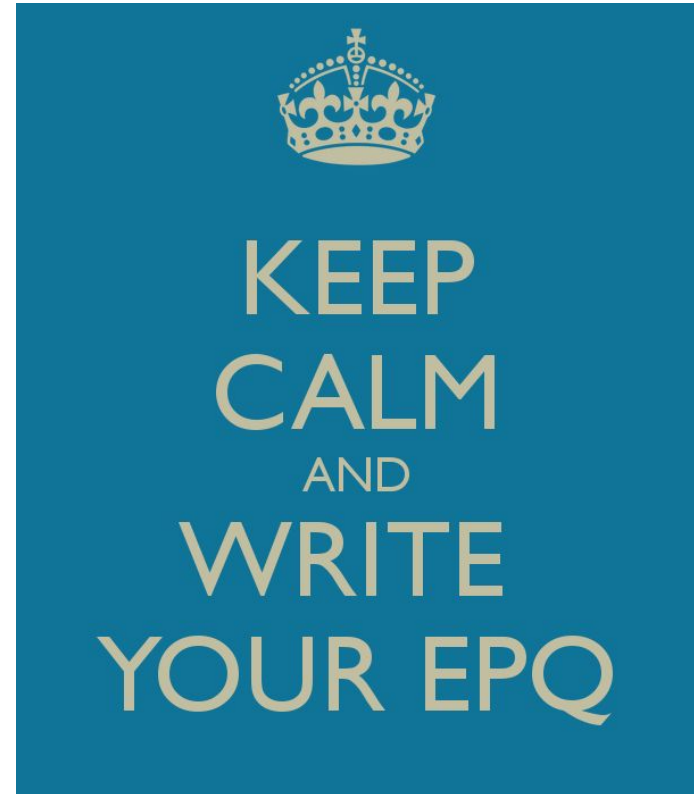
Tweets Follow @twitterapi

 **Twitter API** @twitterapi 11 Jun
As part of the retirement plan today, we're also about to discontinue Basic Auth support for unelevated Streaming API roles. Use OAuth 1.0A.
Expand

 **Twitter API** @twitterapi 11 Jun
The retirement of API v1 continues. Most inbound requests should now see HTTP 410, including to the old Search API. dev.twitter.com/docs/faq#17750
Expand

 **Twitter API** @twitterapi 11 Jun
If you were using a legacy widget that no longer functions after API v1 retirement, we suggest using dev.twitter.com/docs/embedded-... instead.
Show Summary

Tweet to @twitterapi



Show wider reading/interest around your subject area of choice ...

I am very health conscious and go to the gym at least twice every week. I particularly enjoy weight lifting to improve my strength, which will be useful as a Geologist.

I first became interested in Philosophy when I read Sophie's World. Then I read Bertram Russell's History of Western Philosophy, then Descarte's Meditations and Plato's Republic.

Now, when I read the theories of Anaximander and Anaximenes, I find the philosophical theories of antiquity somewhat naïve. I cannot profess to understand or even remember half of the things I have read, but this does partly explain my love of Maths.

Personal Statements: a checklist

Don't repeat information

Don't offer undeveloped lists or use clichés

Avoid unintentional humour or ambiguity...

Do think about spelling, grammar, vocabulary

Do add comments, views, explanations

Do use your own experiences and reflect



Making connections (1)

Whilst shadowing in GI surgery, I observed a necrotic pancreatitis patient in severe septic shock who required a pancreatectomy. Communication skills were crucial when conversing with relatives as the doctor had to pitch an explanation of the treatment suitably with regard to the 50% survival prognosis and the implication of diabetes.

During the operation, a pseudocyst ruptured excreting 4000ml of pus; effective cooperation was paramount as the surgeon delegated roles to ensure minimal invasive damage was caused.

Making connections (2)

Encountering both clinical and social challenges of the treatment prompted me to research alternatives including autologous pancreatic islet cell transplantation. Although APICCT data boasts 69% of patients gain insulin independence, NICE predominantly recommends the “enforcement of life change programmes”, from this I realised the crucial role of primary care services in promoting healthy lifestyles to prevent the onset of disease.

Comments from Admissions Tutor

“Excellent analysis of a complex case. The student actually shows their understanding of communication skills rather than simply stating how important they are. The reflection at the end shows their maturity.”

“This Personal Statement strongly increases the likelihood that the applicant would be offered an interview.”

Making connections (1) - 432 words

On starting secondary school I discovered my perpetual passion for science. This passion has been increased furthermore by the dissection of the broad science spectrum into three more concentrated and enjoyable areas.

From the moment biology was unveiled to me I was enthralled. The new found knowledge and understanding of the tertiary structure of enzymes, the ventilation mechanisms of bony fish and other engaging life processes, has given me a new found perspective and curiosity of the biological occurrences that I had grown accustomed to.

This new understanding compelled me to gain further insight by indulging in my already keen interest in the written word. **Wider reading** of this varied and interesting subject has ranged from **“Lucy’s Child” by Donald Johanson** ; I found this to be engrossing when concerning the evolution of man, to the **1958 Stork and Renouf’s “Fundamentals of Biology”** ; providing further awareness of the purely elementary concepts of the subject as a whole.

I feel that a degree in biological sciences will be highly enjoyable and both intellectually **stimulating** and **rewarding** . This will also act as a strong basis for my **future career** as a secondary schools **science teacher** , with a subject specialism in biology, after completing as Secondary Science PGCE.

As part of a volunteering programme, I committed one free lesson a week assisting Year Eight science lessons. I thoroughly enjoyed explaining some of the more basic scientific concepts to children especially developing my communication skills.

As part of a **volunteering programme** , I committed one free lesson a week assisting Year Eight science lessons. I thoroughly enjoyed **explaining some of the more basic scientific concepts to children** especially developing **my communication skills** .

HOW SHOULD YOU STRUCTURE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT ?

Writing your Personal Statement takes time ...

Rule One: draft and redraft. Then...

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

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

Stop procrastinating and start writing

You only write 1
statement for up to five
courses

UCAS limit the length of
text you can submit – 47
lines of text, approx.600
words

You're aiming for 1 side of
typed A4



Personal Statement structure

65– 70% Academic

Additional Experience and Skills

Hobbies and Interests

Summary – i.e. why you'd be a good choice

What about the structure?

Paragraph 1: Introduction

What was your personal trigger?

How does your subject relate to society or current affairs?

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

What about the structure?

Paragraph 2: **Your interest in the subject**

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

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

Do you have a career aspiration?

What about the structure?

Paragraph 3: **Wider skills**

Give an account of your non-academic achievements

Talk about what skills you've gained (team building, leadership, MOOC, EPQ, research skills, confidence)

Gap Year – are you taking a year out? If so, why –
what
are the benefits?

What about the structure?

Paragraph 4: Summary

Finish with a one or two line summary recapping:

Why you want to go to university and study the course

Why you deserve to be offered a place

Some final advice ...

Start early

Make use of the resources: UCAS/Student Room

Plan out the structure with bullet points and headings, then turn these into full sentences and paragraphs

Draft in Microsoft Word, spell checking AND proof reading it before you paste it into UCAS

Keep a copy in case you are called to interview

DON'T plagiarise

THANK YOU!