

## RESEARCH: THE FOUNDATION OF ANY PERSONAL STATEMENT

### Overall aim of the activities

These 3 sets of lesson activities have been designed to support applicants to research and plan their personal statement. They are flexible and can be incorporated into your current programmes or adapted to suit different cohorts of students. All activities can be completed independently in short 20-minute sessions or be combined across sets to suit your needs.

The aim is to support students in creating a reference bank of examples and evidence. This research can then become a reference point before starting to draft and finalise their personal statement or to support further conversations with students about their progression options.

These activities could also be adapted to support students in thinking about relevant skills and experiences that might be used to write a CV. Students will need to undertake independent research into the courses or subject areas they are interested in to support these activities.

### KEY CONCEPTS

- ▶ Research
- ▶ Skills
- ▶ Experiences
- ▶ Evidence

### KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Research course or subject areas to identify specific subject specific or transferable skills to evidence.
2. Feel confident to adapt personal experiences to use as examples in their personal statement.
3. Build a bank of personal evidence to start drafting their own personal statement.
4. Explain how to use the PEEL method as a structure for writing their personal statement.

### Gatsby Benchmarks

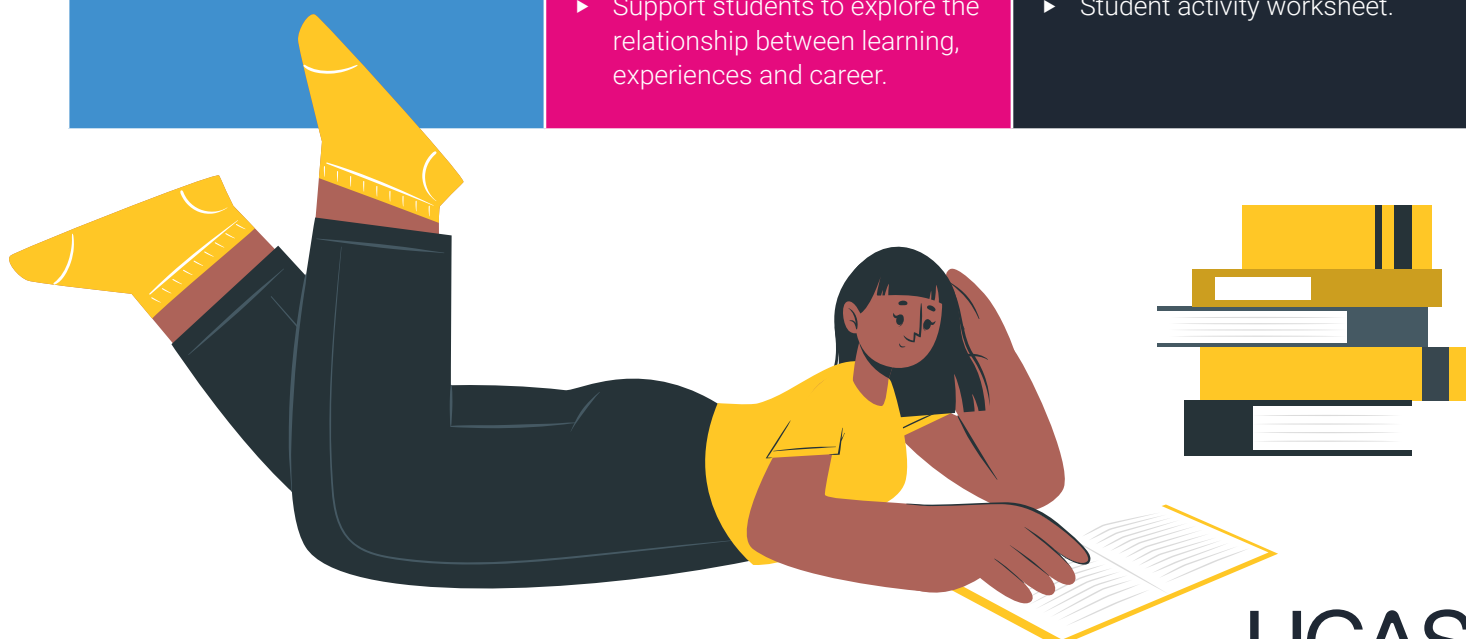
- ▶ Encounters with further and higher education.
- ▶ Personal guidance.

### CDI Framework

- ▶ Grow throughout life.
- ▶ Support student reflection on their experiences, skills and strengths.
- ▶ Support students to explore the relationship between learning, experiences and career.

### Resources

- ▶ Lesson slide decks for the classroom.
- ▶ Lesson plans for you to edit and photocopy.
- ▶ Student activity worksheet.



Lesson	Learning Outcomes	Activity Summary	Suggested time	Resources
<b>Skills Skills Skills</b>	<p>Explain what a skill is.</p> <p>Identify and categorise at least 9 different skills.</p> <p>Reflect on your personal experiences to recognise the skills you have.</p>	<p><b>Activity 1: What is a skill?</b></p> <p>Ask students what they think a skill is. Show the dictionary definitions of the word skill. Do they agree with these definitions?</p> <p><b>In pairs or groups can they write their own definition of what a skill is?</b> Why do they think it's important to think about skills for their personal statement? Explain that it's important to think about skills when planning their personal statement as they will need to use lots of examples.</p>	20 mins	<p>Bingo grid</p> <p>Bingo example cut outs</p> <p>Activity slides</p> <p>Student activity worksheet</p>
		<p><b>Activity 2: Discuss the 3 types of skill categories.</b></p> <p>There are lots of different ways to categorise skills; for simplicity we are exploring it as follows:</p> <p><b>Transferable skills:</b> general skills that are important for many areas of life including our education or job. They are skills you can develop and be transferred across different areas.</p> <p><b>Personal skills:</b> abilities we are born with, our natural talents, or things we develop through our experiences.</p> <p><b>Knowledge based skills:</b> skills that are specific to a subject, areas or topics.</p> <p>Remind students that skills are gained through all experiences (personal, education, training etc).</p> <p><b>Paired or group discussion:</b> students to think of 3 examples of skills that might fall into each group. Feedback and share answers. Show slide with a range of other examples to support discussion if needed.</p>	20 mins	
		<p><b>Activity 3: Skills bingo</b></p> <p>To help start student reflection on their experiences, skills and strengths use the bingo grid to play 'Skills bingo'. Students choose 9 skills off the list of 24 provided and write them on their blank grid. Cut up the skills provided and pull them out randomly. For each skill read out if the student chose to put it on their grid, they need to mark it off. Keep going until someone has 3 in a row, column, or diagonally.</p> <p><b>Extension:</b> for each skill they have on their grid, they must provide an example of when they have used this skill before it can be marked off. Keep going until someone has 3 in a row, column or diagonally.</p>	20 mins	



Lesson	Learning Outcomes	Activity Summary	Suggested time	Resources
<b>Admissible evidence</b>	<p>Explain what evidence is.</p> <p>State examples of subject and experiential evidence.</p>	<p><b>Activity 1: Consequences</b></p> <p>A short little game intended to help students think about subject and experiential evidence. Once students have completed all eight steps of the story, unfold and read out the completed stories. Discussion could then centre on a number of different aspects to suit the cohort, and you could use the following questions to guide students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the examples given link to the subject at the start of the story?</li> <li>Do the examples make sense when read out as a whole?</li> <li>Have any examples others have written surprised or interested them?</li> </ol> <p>Use the game as an introduction to start a conversation that these examples could be 'evidence'. Refer to the dictionary definition and explain that evidence is what helps build a personal statement.</p>	<p>20 mins</p>	<p>Activity ppt slides</p> <p>Student activity worksheet</p>
	<p>Reflect on personal experiences or activities to identify examples of evidence.</p>	<p><b>Activity 2: Evidence jigsaw</b></p> <p>Discussion with students on what different examples of evidence they can think of to highlight their personal experiences, skills or knowledge. This can be done as a whole or small group activity. Encourage them to think outside the box.</p> <p>Show the examples of evidence listed and get them to identify if they have any examples (e.g. podcast titles they currently listen to, books they have read, programmes that have interested them, influencers they follow) that might link to a subject or career they have thought about for the future (even if they are not sure what they want to do next). This is about getting them to think broadly about evidence. Try to get them to think of 5 and see if they can identify any not listed.</p> <p>If they can't think of any this is their chance to start putting together a bank of evidence as they start researching course options and might help them build their evidence jigsaw. Can they list 5 they will look into?</p>	<p>20 mins</p>	<p><b>Springpod teacher and adviser resources</b></p>

Lesson	Learning Outcomes	Activity Summary	Suggested time	Resources
<p><b>Admissible evidence</b></p>	<p>Explain what evidence is.</p> <p>State examples of subject and experiential evidence.</p> <p>Reflect on personal experiences or activities to identify examples of evidence.</p>	<p><b>Activity 3: Browsing history</b></p> <p>Depending on school/college policy on mobile phone access etc this activity may need to be set for homework or as an independent activity.</p> <p>Ask students to start looking at their digital footprint for examples of evidence. Ask them to look at their online history (or YouTube, social accounts, browser history) for the last two weeks (or any set time frame).</p> <p>Make a note of the things they have viewed, watched, read or listened to that link to a subject or career area they might be thinking about for their future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ How many link directly?</li> <li>▶ How many link indirectly?</li> <li>▶ How many are because they've been researching a specific topic in their current studies vs how many are just because they came across it?</li> <li>▶ Get them to start thinking about the most interesting, most surprising or new things they've learnt from this.</li> </ul> <p>If they have none then this is their chance to start building some evidence as they start researching course options and thinking about what might help them build that evidence jigsaw.</p> <p>This is also an opportunity to highlight to students that they can access online subject taster sessions and virtual work experience through UCAS, they just need to register for UCAS to access them.</p> <p>You can find out more about the UCAS collaboration with Springpod and how their Subject Spotlights and Virtual Work Experiences can help students explore their options and access <b>teacher and adviser resources</b> online.</p>	<p>20 mins</p>	<p>Activity ppt slides</p> <p>Student activity worksheet</p> <p><b>Springpod teacher and adviser resources</b></p>



Lesson	Learning Outcomes	Activity Summary	Suggested time	Resources
Building the foundations	<p>Identify preparation activities for the personal statement</p> <p>Explain the purpose of the PEEL structure</p> <p>Reflect on the relevancy of their current experiences, skills or evidence.</p>	<p><b>Activity 1: So what?</b></p> <p>List as many achievements, personal experiences or skills they think would support their university/college application – in 3 minutes!</p> <p>Then, in pairs, one student goes through their list of experiences, while the other says ‘so what?’ until the first student can explain why it might be useful and relevant to their application. This activity is to surface the idea there must be a reason to include information and not just provide a list of achievements, experiences or skills.</p>	20 mins	<p>Activity ppt slides</p> <p>Student activity worksheet</p>
		<p><b>Activity 2: Pick and mix</b></p> <p>Discussion: ask students what skills and experiences they think admissions tutors / employers are looking for when reading a personal statement (or CV) Hardworking? Committed? Motivated?</p> <p>Then ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Is everyone looking for the same skills or experiences?</li> <li>▶ How can you find out what skills or experiences are specifically required?</li> <li>▶ Why would it help to know what each choice wanted?</li> <li>▶ Reflect on activity 1; how did asking ‘So What’ encourage them to expand or add more detail?</li> <li>▶ Do you think admissions tutors might ask ‘So What’?</li> </ul> <p>Propose the idea it’s helpful to think about the personal statement (or CV) as if it was a personal project – all about them! And how would you start any other project? With research! It’s no different for this.</p> <p>You might have already explored skills, experience and evidence with your students. Ask students to now make a list of all the places they could go to find out more about which specific skills, experiences or evidence would be relevant to the course, subject or career they might be interested in.</p> <p>Share and feedback as a class, using the examples given as a starting point; are there any others they’ve thought of? <b>Get students to choose three that they are going to do in the next 4 weeks.</b></p>	20 mins	

Lesson	Learning Outcomes	Activity Summary	Suggested time	Resources
<p><b>Building the foundations</b></p>	<p>Identify preparation activities for the personal statement</p> <p>Explain the purpose of the PEEL structure</p> <p>Reflect on the relevancy of their current experiences, skills or evidence.</p>	<p><b>Activity 3: Practising PEEL</b></p> <p>This activity is to get students practicing the PEEL method which will help them to include examples and evidence in their personal statement and remind them to link it back to the course(s) they are applying to. Get them to practice before you start asking them to draft any statements so they can build confidence in the technique.</p> <p>Ask students to practice the technique by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sharing some paragraphs from example personal statements you might have from previous cohorts. Get them to highlight whenever they can see PEEL is used or could have improved the extracts. NB: remind students of the plagiarism detection process all personal statements go through at UCAS.</li> <li>2. Alternatively ask the students to work through two examples making using PEEL to structure them.</li> </ol> <p>Share through class discussion.</p>	<p>20 mins</p>	<p>Activity ppt slides</p> <p>Student activity worksheet</p>

