

Supporting your students through their UCAS Application

The following notes will highlight the talking points that surrounded the slides available.

Slides 1-7

As well as the content included in the slides, the presenter highlighted how students seem to be leaving it much later now before they are researching their options and making their final choices – it's more important now to start the UCAS process earlier to allow them this extra time, especially with the new early application deadline. Students hold such importance on employability now when thinking about HE choices, but teachers should still be encouraging them to consider interest and passion. Students have so many resources to access now when doing their research, and UCAS as now partnered up with Springpod to support students in getting virtual work experience.

Slides 8-10

The admissions process at EHU may work differently to other universities. At EHU there is a central admissions team who deal with every application that comes to the University, and each course area has its own admissions officer. These admissions officers have strong links with academic departments and will often lean on those links when needed for some applications. The admissions officers will read every application, but the importance of the statements will depend on the course area.

For example: Medicine - other factors such as predicted grades and UCAT score hold more importance than the statement. For Health courses the statement is extremely important to showcase suitability for the courses. For other areas where numbers aren't capped, the statement is less important if required grades are met, but every statement will still be read for well-being reasons.

Fair Entry Criteria is EHU's contextual offer – this allows the admissions team to see the student's educational achievement in the context of their full journey. Students don't need to do anything extra to be considered for the fair entry criteria, but students should be encouraged to provide UCAS with honest information about themselves so the University can apply fair entry criteria to their offer. At EHU, once these students have enrolled, they will also be placed onto the THRIVE programme, which will allow them to access extra support during their time at university.

Slides 11-23

Research has shown that there is a large disparity in how teachers and admissions tutors view the quality of Personal Statements. When supporting students with their personal statements, it is recommended to encourage the students to try and link everything back to what they're applying to and make this clear.

With the previous structure of the Personal Statement, it was common for students to struggle with getting started and creating a plan for their statement. The new structure aims to relieve this struggle and keep students focused on what they should be writing about.

The 3 questions on the statement now focus on the areas that universities have always wanted to hear about and makes this clearer to the students.

Question 1 – Very similar to the initial section where students would put across their motivation for applying to university, whether this be a passion or part of a career goal plan.

Questions 2 – How have their current studies prepared them? Whether this is specific topics linking to the degree or academic skills, it's important for the student to link their writing back to the question every time.

Questions 3 - The final question focuses on the activities students take part in outside of school, whether this be part time work, volunteering or extracurricular activities.

It is always encouraged for students to use specific examples throughout their work, to give that real justification to the admissions tutors. The STAR technique is a brilliant way students can do this in their writing, as well as CV writing and interview preparation.

Further Personal Statement writing advice can be found here - [Personal statement | News | Edge Hill University](#)

Slides 24-29

The importance of the teacher's reference is becoming growing as time goes on. The reference allows universities to see the full story of a student and where they have come from so teachers are advised to include as much as they can about a student, with the student's consent. It's important for teachers to know that a student won't ever be rejected based on the information given in a reference, but it could allow a student to be given an offer they may not otherwise have had, without the reference information. The information provided could include policy/curriculum information about the college, achievements made by the student, as well as any extenuating circumstances.

The reference will allow the University to consider well-being risks and offer support to the student if needed and at EHU the admissions team will never say there is too much information – they can work out which is the most relevant and take it from there. When teachers are including extenuating circumstances, it's always good to include what the actual impact has been from these circumstances, again to get a full picture of the student.

If circumstances change in any way after the student's application has been sent off, it's still important to update the University about these changes in case there is

anything they can do on their end. The aim is for the student to feel supported throughout the whole process. The University will receive Level 3 results the week before students, so offers etc can be reviewed if needed based on any updates received regarding the student's application. It's important to note that updates can be given by the student or teachers, but consent must always be given by the student first.

In terms of achievements made by the student, this can still go in the reference even if included in the statement as it will allow the admissions tutor to get a good understanding of the students from the teacher's perspective.

Teachers shouldn't worry about the format of the reference. The structure is there to support teachers in their writing, but the text still comes through to universities as one block of text.

Slides 30-31

Key take aways from the group were:

- One teacher plans to take some of the activities done in the session back to school for her students.
- One is going to build the STAR technique into their careers support
- Another member of the group had discussed with others how they will plan on setting much stronger deadline in college, in reflection of the earlier deadline.