

## 1. Capitalise on your own experience to date

Not all of you will have had work experience yet, but for those of you that have, capitalise on it! Don't worry if your placement did not match your career goal or degree subject choice, and all you did was wipe tables at a restaurant or shadow the reception staff at the **Premier Inn**. If Law interests you, consider the health and safety legislation you had to adhere to at the restaurant or if you want to study Computer Science, what kind of IT systems did the reception staff use in the workplace? In other words, find a way of making your experience relevant to what you are applying for. If this is too challenging, consider the key skills that you gained instead, such as: following instructions, customer service, working in a team and managing your time effectively. All of this enhances a personal statement and tells the Admissions Tutor (the person who reads it!) a bit more about you.

If you haven't had work experience yet, try reflecting on any enrichment activities you've undertaken instead. You may have sold cakes or collected money for the homeless. If considering a healthcare degree, would this not show a sense of care, commitment and compassion – three of the 6 C's and values of the NHS? Or, better yet, selling cakes for charity evidences business acumen and entrepreneurial skills which would enhance the personal statements for Business Management, Accounting and Finance degrees.

## 2. Use your own networks

Some of you would have had to find your own work experience this summer or maybe your school already arranged this for you. With more people working from home now or socially distancing, the likelihood of obtaining it this year is low, so why not contact the work experience placement or a company of interest and ask to interview a professional about their career over the phone instead? Perhaps there are other people in your network already working in an interesting profession who you could interview by phone, such as family members, friends, or friends-of-friends? Interviewing a professional to find out more about their job takes the place of shadowing them in the workplace and, if evidenced well in a personal statement, shows an Admissions Tutor that you have taken the initiative to find an opportunity despite the challenge of being in lockdown. You could also try asking for virtual work experience or ask an employer to set you a project to do in the safety of your own home.

Another idea is to seek out volunteering opportunities. If interested in teaching or a helping profession, volunteer to help your teachers as a virtual classroom assistant online for younger students at your school or offer the same service to your own primary school. If considering Performing Arts, Social Work or Healthcare degrees, try contacting care homes in your local area. Could you offer to play an instrument, sing for or befriend an elderly resident via online platforms? You could also try the **Adopt a Grandparent** scheme through the **CHD Living** charity. This could really lift the spirits of people in isolation as well as giving you some experience to write about. **Child.org** is currently running **Indoor Corps** and **Quarantine Quests**, both schemes to get people involved in projects at home. You could also try the **Do-it** volunteering website or the **Girls Friendly Society** for any remote opportunities.

### 3. Get your online taster on!

Describing your experience of a taster day in a personal statement is a great way to show your interest in your chosen subject. Ok, so universities are shut for now, but all is not lost as many taster days have now moved online. Just check out individual university websites for further information.

There are also free courses available online through the **Open University**, and platforms such as **Coursera** and **FutureLearn** all covering various subjects such as Criminology, Psychology, Business, Economics, History, Politics, Maths and much more. If Engineering and STEM are more your thing, listen to the Science and Technology podcasts available through the **BBC**. These all make great taster day and summer school substitutes and demonstrate your ability to study independently and learn beyond your textbooks – a skill looked upon favourably by Admissions Tutors.

### 4. Share your views

Finally, another extra-curricular activity you can document in a personal statement is your involvement with youth forums or other opportunities to voice your opinion about matters that concern you, all accessible online! The charities **Mind** and **Young Minds** both have a youth panel which look for participation and feedback from young people on subjects related to mental health and wellbeing. Your teachers at school may also know of forums related to the environment, youth parliament or any other subjects that interest you – even better if it relates to your chosen degree in some way! You could also write your own blog about your interests or start up a debating club with your classmates on Skype, Zoom or other platforms. This illustrates your ability to share your views, work in a team and make a contribution, all skills that will serve you well within the higher education community.

Understandably, this is a challenging time and circumstances are beyond your control, but as the comedian Milton Berle once said, **“If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.”** And by doing all, or at least some of the above, just remember, you are doing just that!

*By Maz Mullarkey, Careers Adviser*

**For further advice on your personal statement, email:**  
**wpcareersadvice.1@city.ac.uk**

**\*Always be cautious and check any online forum or employer with your teacher or people at home first, as your safety is paramount!**

### Useful websites

<b>Open University</b> <a href="https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue">https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue</a> <b>FutureLearn</b> <a href="https://www.futurelearn.com/">https://www.futurelearn.com/</a> <b>Coursera</b> <a href="https://www.coursera.org/">https://www.coursera.org/</a> <b>BBC Science and Technology Podcasts</b> <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/">https://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/</a> <b>Mind</b> <a href="https://www.mind.org.uk/">https://www.mind.org.uk/</a>	<b>Young Minds</b> <a href="https://youngminds.org.uk/">https://youngminds.org.uk/</a> <b>Do-it</b> <a href="https://do-it.org/">https://do-it.org/</a> <b>Girls Friendly Society</b> <a href="https://girlsfriendlyandsociety.org.uk">girlsfriendlyandsociety.org.uk</a> <b>Adopt a Grandparent</b> <a href="https://chdliving.co.uk/adopt-grandparent">https://chdliving.co.uk/adopt-grandparent</a> <b>Indoor Corps – Volunteer from home</b> <a href="https://child.org/indoor-corps">https://child.org/indoor-corps</a>
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