



# Outline

- UCAS Overview
- Context
- What we look for / not looking for
- Personal Statements:
  - role and purpose
  - From the blank page, tool kit.
- Examples
- Resources
- Contact Details

15/10/2016

Medicine,  
Dentistry, Vet  
Med/Sci

2016



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

15/10/2016  
Cambridge &  
Oxford –  
6PM STRICT.

6/9/2016  
UCAS Applications  
Open

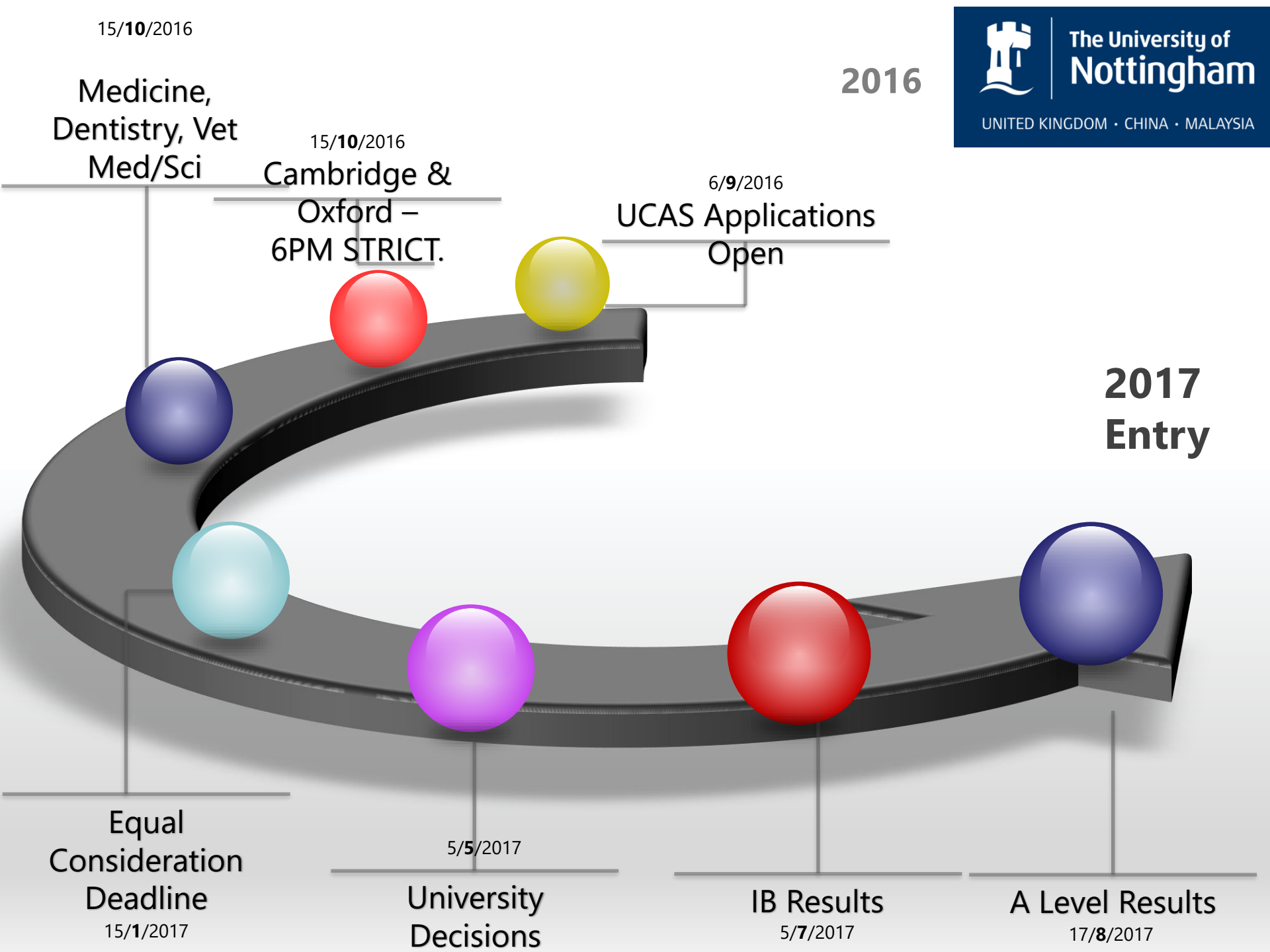
**2017  
Entry**

Equal  
Consideration  
Deadline  
15/1/2017

5/5/2017  
University  
Decisions

IB Results  
5/7/2017

A Level Results  
17/8/2017





The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

# Talent Competing Places



*"Undergraduate applications are up on last year, and up relative to our competitors and the sector as a whole. Moreover, we have more applicants with A\*AA predicted grades than ever before..."*

*Vice-Chancellor Sir David*

*Greenaway*

*The University of Nottingham*

*14 April, 2016*

## UK:

718,500 applicants in the 2015 cycle

18,800 more than in the 2014

Applicants from the EU increased 3,900 (+8.3 per cent) to 50,700

Applicants from countries outside of the EU increased by 1,200 0 (+1.6 per cent) to 75,800

*UCAS End of Cycle Report 2015*

*December, 2015*

Many   ● Applications  
Some   ● Academically able  
Fewer   ● Eligible  
Limited   ● Places available





# We're looking for

## Academic Ability

Grades achieved  
Grades predicted & Context  
Independent & critical thinking  
Intellectual curiosity

## Subject Interest

Subject taken  
Super-curricular engagement

- Wider relevant reading
  - Give your critical views or reflective opinions
- Vacation / online programmes / taster courses / memberships / Olympiads etc.
- Internships / work experience

## Applicant – Course Fit

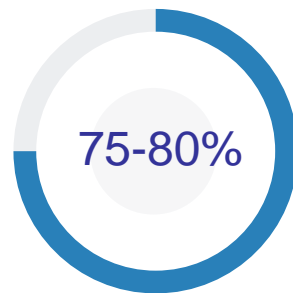
Reasons for wanting to study the programme

- How did your interest develop?
- What have you done to pursue it?
- Demonstrate you've researched the course / profession

## Applicant – Well-rounded

Suitability for course, HE culture, rigorous education programme

- What skills developed
- Qualities, capabilities
- How might these assist with coping, contributing and benefiting from a degree experience?



**20 – 25%**

Relevant Extra-curricular  
Transferable skills, abilities, qualities



# What we're not interested in



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

## SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Not trying to craft a class with particular personalities or backgrounds.

## OTHERS

Family / friends who have previously studied at the University.



## WEALTH

Places on the basis of merit  
Family wealth / privilege / social hierarchy is immaterial  
Donations will not influence the outcome of your application

## TANGENTIALS

Unnecessarily deep focus on extra-curricular activities including athletic achievement, musical accomplishments etc..

# Personal Statements: The Gauge Page



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

- ❑ Brings the application to life
- ❑ Unique insight
- ❑ Differentiate between applicants
- ❑ Underpins interview (where applicable)
- ❑ Can be especially important where no other assessments
- ❑ Transformative. Make a difference.

## Why Pick You

Tell us what is special about you

- Why is your current study relevant?
- What interests and intrigues you? Why?
- How do your personal experiences support your application?
- Is the course a good fit to the student and vice versa?



# Personal Statements: Fundamentals



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

01

- Prepare off-line
- Use paragraphs
- Makes sure sentences make sense
- Be consistent with spelling
- Pay attention to grammar
- Write it yourself



02

- Keep it short and simple
- Don't cram
- Avoid overuse of thesaurus
- Do not use emoticons
- Be careful if quoting
- Edit - include only what's relevant



03

- 4000 characters limit / 47 lines
- Cannot use features such as **bold** and underline
- If writing online, save regularly as times out every 60 mins
- Avoid repetition
- Checked for plagiarism / similarities

04

- Evidence any major claims being made
- Focus on a couple of examples
- Be specific and relate what you learnt and/or any skills to your **course**
- There isn't a template so don't try to write to one.



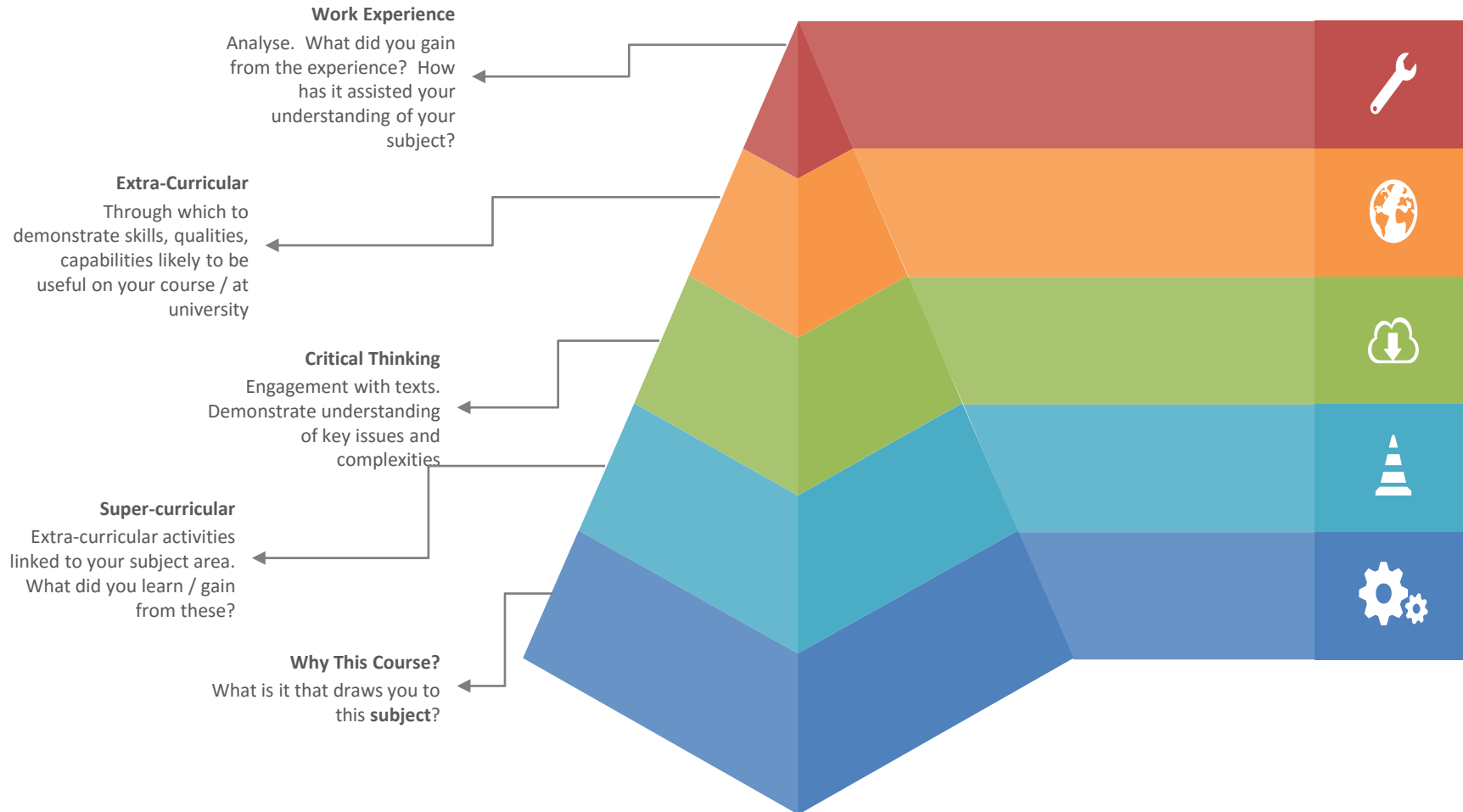


# From Brainstorming to Forming



The University of  
Nottingham

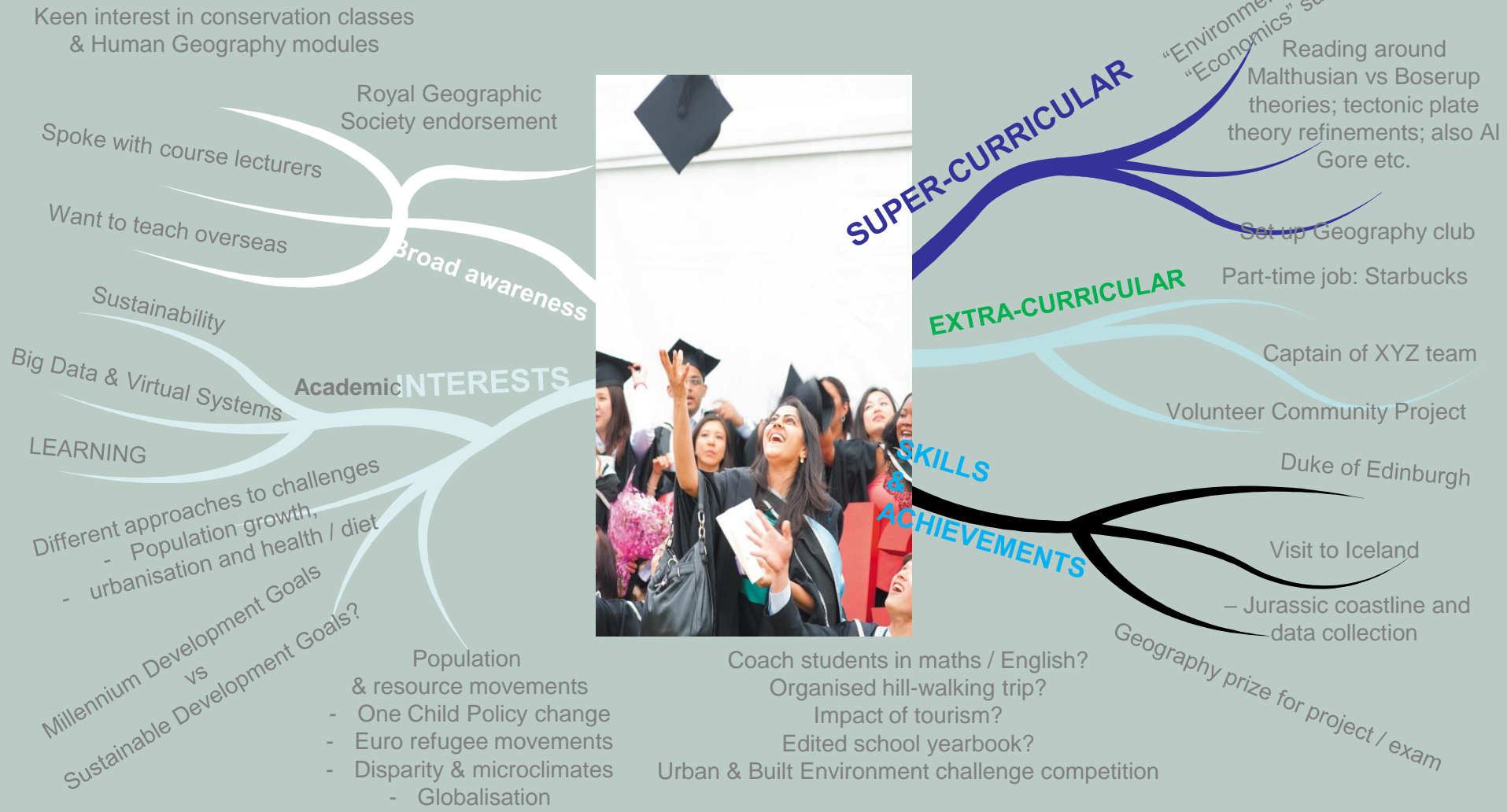
UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA





# Personal Statement: Avoid the Template Fate

Mind Your Map





The University of  
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

# Why This Course?

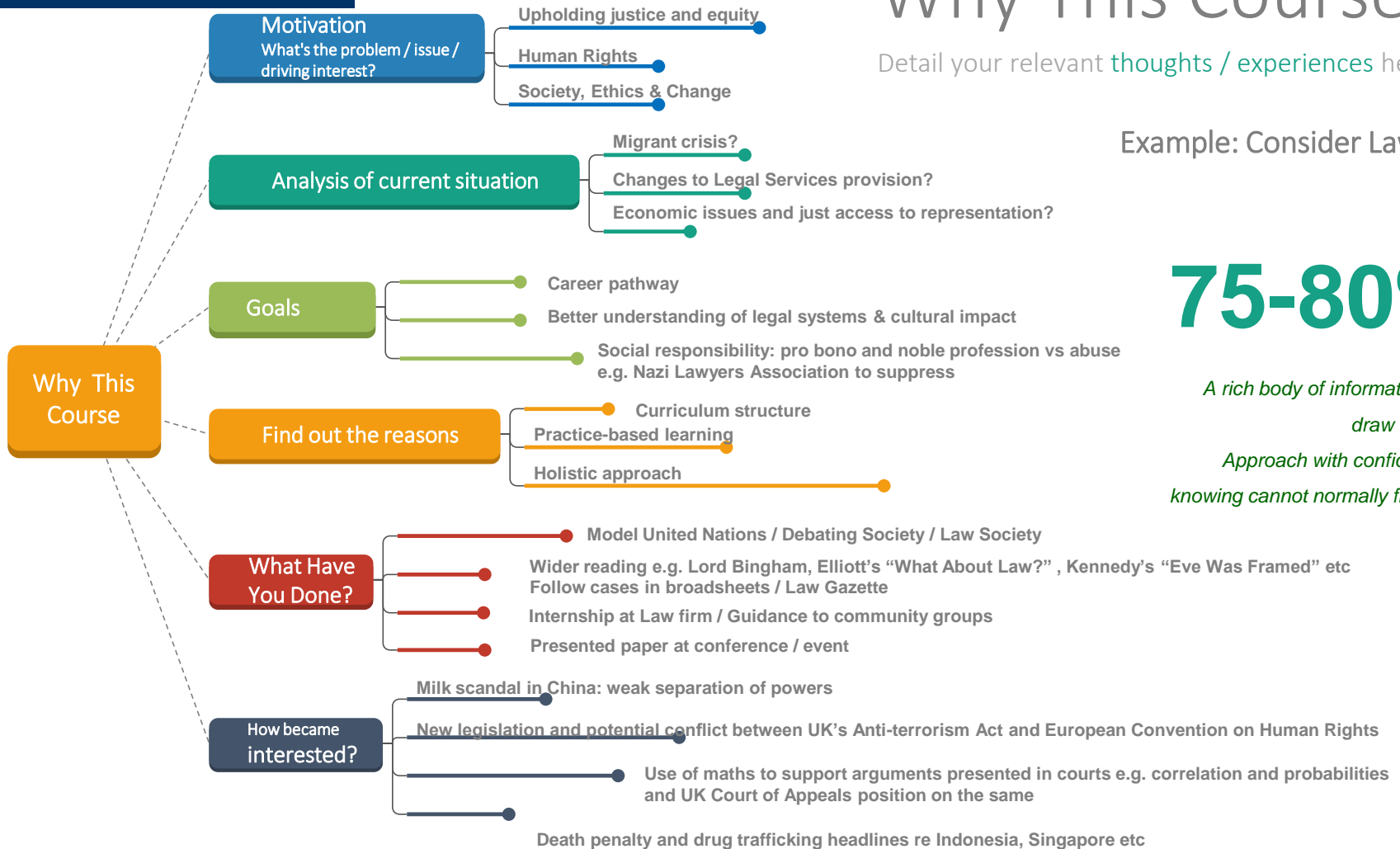
Detail your relevant thoughts / experiences here

Example: Consider Law

## 75-80%

*A rich body of information to  
draw upon.*

*Approach with confidence  
knowing cannot normally fit it all  
in.*





# From Lists to Gist

Overcoming **blank page** syndrome

## Identify subject / activity

List those things you are currently doing.

## Skills

Detail the skills, qualities, capabilities acquired or developing through current or recent experiences

## Relevance

Consider how they might be relevant to your course primarily and/or your University experience more generally .

## Evidence

Where you make a claim, have you provided further details to ensure that your claim is believed to be authentic and plausible.

## Use paragraphs

A concise, convincing narrative

Let it flow



Focus on subject



Avoid unnecessary name dropping.



Avoid duplication



Strong conclusion





# From Thought-Shower to Word Power

Selecting **focused** relevant content

## 100%?

Students will have a vast array of experiences, insights, achievements etc.

Challenge is to be appropriately selective when choosing what to include.

Cannot fit it all in.

Need to move from simply listing to demonstrate motivation, reflection and critical thinking.

Student is empowered to select what they feel best presents why they should be made an offer of a place.





# From Thought-Shower to Word Power

Selecting **focused** relevant content

## Experience

Volunteering for a year at the Riding for Disabled Association in Singapore, I assisted with therapeutic horse riding sessions for mentally and physically disabled people. Establishing close relationships with the riders, taught me the importance of trust and empathy in medicine. Making a positive impact on someone's life was emotionally fulfilling, however, it was tough knowing that not all riders gain from the sessions. I noticed how despite wanting to, doctors cannot always help everyone. Observing a GP for a week highlighted to me how doctors deal with more than just science. I saw the composed nature of the doctor and how this was essential in providing the best care possible. It became apparent how a willingness to listen is often more important than the ability to talk. My most memorable moment was listening to the stories of a patient who was grateful for the doctor's continuous care and compassion over 20 years. As a people-oriented person, this aspect is truly appealing to me..



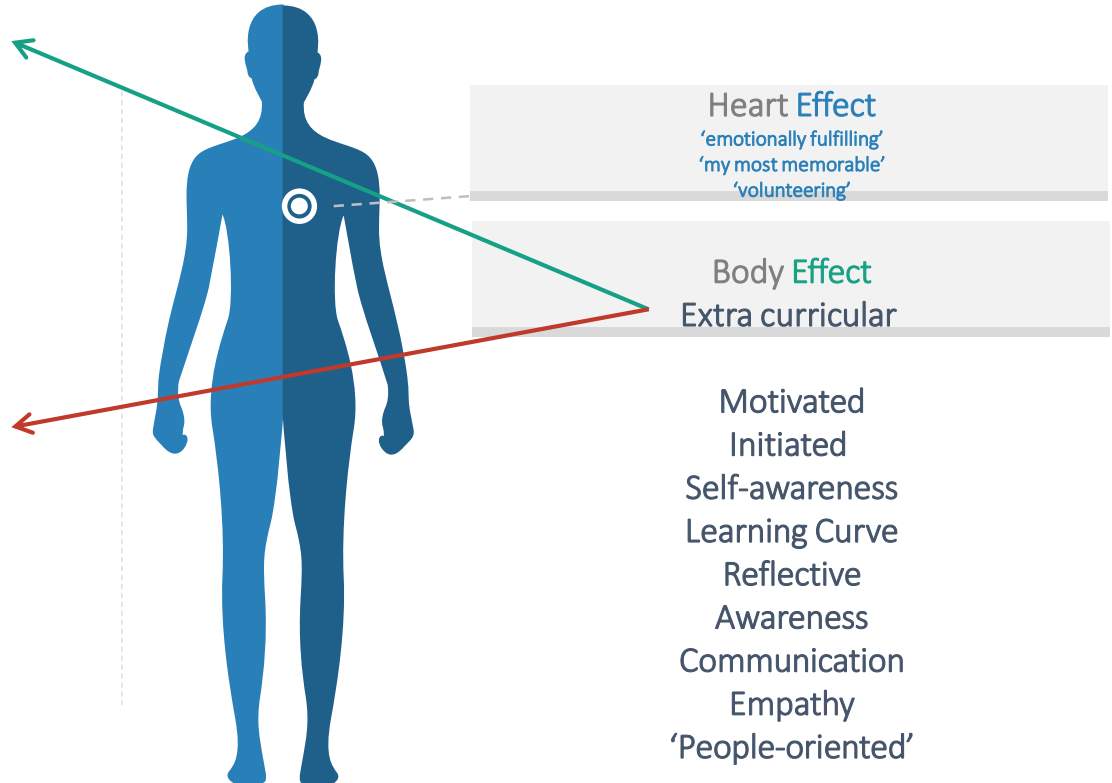


# From Thought-Shower to Word Power

Selecting **focused** relevant content

## Experience

**Volunteering** for a year at the **Riding for Disabled Association in XYZ**, I assisted with **therapeutic horse riding sessions** for mentally and physically disabled people. Establishing close relationships with the riders, **taught me the importance of trust and empathy in medicine**. Making a positive impact on someone's life was **emotionally fulfilling, however, it was tough knowing** that not all riders gain from the sessions. **I noticed** how despite wanting to, doctors cannot always help everyone. **Observing a GP for a week** highlighted to me how doctors deal with **more than just science**. I saw the **composed nature** of the doctor and how this was **essential in providing the best care possible**. It **became apparent** how a **willingness to listen** is often more important than the ability to talk. **My most memorable moment** was listening to the stories of a patient who was grateful for the doctor's continuous care and compassion over 20 years. **As a people-oriented person, this aspect is truly appealing to me..**





# From Thought-Shower to Word Power

Selecting **focused** relevant content

## Experience

I sought an internship at XYZ, one of ABC's largest law firms. While assisting in the criminal litigation department, I had a glimpse into the often **enigmatic workings** of the legal system. A case involving a client accused of assault left a **particularly deep impression** on me. As I listened to the judge's decision and justifications, the level of deliberation **amazed me**, as great consideration was given not only to the severity of the crime, but also to the accused's emotional state and longing to be with his child. **It was a compassionate rationality that I did not expect**, to address the need to safeguard public interests while considering the mitigating circumstances

The experience piqued my interest in criminal law, and **motivated me to read up** more. Defence lawyer Judy Clarke, who represented Boston bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, **offers a view that seems idealistic but with which I agree**; that criminal law deals with human frailty and behaviour, and exists not to punish, but to provide a second chance. **It is this** deep appreciation of human fallibility found in criminal law that I am greatly **fascinated about**. Singaporean lawyer Professor Michael Hors wrote on the levels of mens rea, and the conundrum in finding sufficient grounds to establish a criminal mind. He asserts the impossibility in ascertaining absolutely one's intention do evil, given our unfathomable human minds. Once again, the appreciation of our human nature distills what I find beautiful in criminal law; its intensely humane yet seemingly detached nature, as it strives to preserve order while accommodating our emotional selves. This constant balancing act is something that I wish to study at a higher level at the University.

### Heart Effect

'particularly deep impression'  
'enigmatic'  
'amazed me', 'seems idealistic'

### Body Effect

#### Extra curricular

Self-awareness: identify own learning needs  
(Nascent) Research skills  
Information Literacy

Remember, no such things as a  
perfect personal statement

It would have been nice to have had further insight  
e.g. Why agree with Hors?  
Or,  
What's the counter position?





# Examples

Bringing it all **together**

## Opening Statement

The hook



## Extra-curricular

Accomplishments

Reflection

Transferability



## Super-curricular

Evidencing intellectual  
curiosity, passion for the  
subject, genuine extra-  
curricular engagement in and  
around subject



## Conclusion

Remember it's the last thing  
the assessor reads





**Authentic**

Passionate without  
being crass

Believable

Impresses without  
exaggerating

Realistic view of  
pharmacists career

**Motivation**

# Opening Act

Is it more **draw-in** or gnawing?

The worst time in my life was worrying about the health of my family when SARS reached HK in 2003 causing 28 deaths in 3 months. Now I look back and see its value. Doctors were highly appreciated at that time. However, other professionals, especially pharmacists, contributed despite the risk of infection. People may not remember them as much but they ensured that we had the correct drugs and doses to fight against diseases with optimized efficiency and minimized side effects. They are always the unsung heroes that I respect.



Super-curricular



The University of  
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

# Tale or Detail?

Show don't tell

“...I regularly read pharmaceutical related articles especially about three-dimensional printing on manufacturing medicines, enabling a personalised tablet to be formed by printing layers of polymers mixed with drugs. Referring to the article "3D printing: the future of manufacturing medicine?" by the Pharmaceutical Journal, Steve Tomlin, consultant pharmacist at Evelina London Children's Hospital, states that 3D printing can revolutionise with regards to children's medicines. Certain drugs, such as digitalis drugs have a narrow therapeutic window with a small safety margin. Therefore pharmacists have to carefully calculate the drug concentration without any toxicity. 3D printing can be used wisely on manufacturing medicines, as it is a safe and accurate method to tackle the enormous weight range on children. It is also one of my many ambitions, to unveil the undiscovered areas regarding this topic....”

*Note: 132 words (907 characters including spaces)*



Super-curricular

Believable

**Purposeful**

Relevance

**Focus**

Engaged

**Considered**

Insight

**Evidenced**

Reflective

**Intellectual curiosity**

Motivation

**Independent learning**

# Tale or Detail?

show don't tell

Easy to claim.

Where's the evidence?

Here!

“...I **regularly read** pharmaceutical related articles especially about three-dimensional printing on manufacturing medicines, enabling a personalised tablet to be formed by printing layers of polymers mixed with drugs. Referring to the article "3D printing: the future of manufacturing medicine?" by the Pharmaceutical Journal, Steve Tomlin, consultant pharmacist at Evelina London Children's Hospital, states that 3D printing can revolutionise with regards to children's medicines. Certain drugs, such as digitalis drugs have a narrow therapeutic window with a small safety margin. Therefore pharmacists have to carefully calculate the drug concentration without any toxicity. 3D printing can be used wisely on manufacturing medicines, as it is a safe and accurate method to tackle the enormous weight range on children. It is also one of my many ambitions, to unveil the undiscovered areas regarding this topic....”

*Note: 132 words (907 characters including spaces). Could edit it down to 120 words quite easily.*

*This applicant applied for Pharmacy.*



Super-curricular

Believable

Relevant

Intellectually

challenging

Reflective

# Chain Reaction

The [think](#) link



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

“...Knowing that Pharmacy is strongly related to Chemistry, I participated in two **chemistry competitions** organised by the **Royal Australian Chemical Institute** and the **Hong Kong Polytechnic University**. In these competitions, I had the chance to **solve questions beyond the scope of my course**, in particular organic chemistry, which is important in the synthesis of pharmaceutical drugs. Having studied Chemistry and Biology at AS-level, I have acquired fundamental understanding of chemical structures of different drugs, as well as human physiology. **Through performing and watching chromatography experiments, I have learnt to identify unknown organic compounds. Since these analytical tests can take multiple trials, I have also learnt not to fear failure....**”

*Note: Different candidate  
This applicant applied for Pharmacy.*



Super-curricular

Believable

Relevant

Intellectually

Challenging

Reflective

Forward looking

# Ration The Passion

More [essay](#) than essay



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

“...”The Language of Life” by Francis S. Collins helped me to understand the importance of administering the right dosage of drugs to combat diseases given that the human genome is one of the key factors in the mechanism of drug action. Informed by David E. Newton's "Chemistry of Drugs" I **developed** a **better understanding** of the ways drugs work in the body and **one of them is via drug-receptor interactions**. His vivid illustrations about the drug development process **highlight the importance of identifying a lead compound as a crucial starting point**. In keeping abreast with the **latest happenings** in the medical industry I have been able to gain a **wider perspective** into the important role that pharmaceutical plays in the survival of humanity and their role in modern life. **For instance**, pharmaceutical corporations that are at the frontline of fighting epidemics are often pioneering the development of new medications to treat, if not cure many. The World Health Organization has even predicted that **the next global pandemic will occur at an unprecedented scale**. That being said, it is a clear indication the pivotal role pharmacy plays yet raises questions about ethics, efficacy and economy.



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

# Concise Is Nice

Be **selective** to be effective

*“ ...By taking part in the **Model United Nations**, my **awareness of global issues** has increased through **extensive research** of the issues being **debated**, as well as being exposed to **the ways of writing a resolution**. Through the resolution drafting and debating process, **I learned how to embrace other people’s ideas** as well as to **adjust and integrate my own ideas**. These skills will be crucial because **a lawyer sometimes needs to negotiate with opposing counsel...**”*

Authentic

Believable

Concise

Descriptive

Effective



Extra-curricular

Motivation

Global citizenship

Information literacy

skills

Self-awareness

Self-analysis

Construction of

Argument

New learning &

Development

Intellectual flexibility

Intellectual credibility

Link to chosen career

Transferability

*Note: The student had already broadly established their motivation for and interest in the subject (**Law**) earlier in the Personal Statement*

# If not Cerebral, Try Transferable

Highlighting **strengths** at not great length



Extra-curricular

Public speaking

Team work

Communication

Organisation

Tenacity

Time Management

Problem-solving

Flexible approach

***"I was appointed*** committee head of the School's StageArts Drama club. **We** put on a play through which I gained confidence in **public-speaking and learned teamwork, trust and communication skills**. At the end of the year, I was given the outstanding actor award for my performances and was also recognised for responsible leadership due to my **organisational efforts in raising funds for charity** through several public performances of our play. More recently enlisted into the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) as part of compulsory national service, I attained the rank of a third sergeant, and feel that I have developed physical and mental **resilience, and improved my time-management and self-discipline**. I am confident about exploring various approaches to problems as during my service I had to do precisely this ***when tasked*** with surviving in the wilderness without conventional comforts. "

**BUT**

**"I was appointed"**

**"...when tasked"**

- Is this a genuine reflection of reality or might more proactive words be used to accurately depict the same outcome?

*Note: 138 words (885 characters).*



# Know and Flow

Weave a [story](#)...don't bore me!

"I avidly seek new knowledge about the world of Astrophysics. Fascinating topics at A Level, such as gravitational fields and quantum mechanics, have aided my search, but **never sufficiently** answered the **questions I had**. By **regularly attending public astronomy lectures** on black holes, Seyfert galaxies and the formation of our own Milky Way- just **to name a few** - I have started to engage thoroughly and research in my chosen field, including completing a **short science module on the YASS scheme with the Open University** which I was **delighted to find**. It has allowed me to really **appreciate the beautiful relationship Physics has with Mathematics, including mathematical modelling to study galaxy formation, stellar dynamics and plotting orbits**. The module 'How the Universe Works' has given me a brilliant **insight** into what studying the subject will be like at a degree level – the **challenging concepts** were simply stunning and have **further inspired me to study the skies and delve into the particle physics challenge to** unify all four forces of nature

Being **subscribed to Astronomy Now** and a member of the **SPA (Society for Popular Astronomy)** keeps me **up-to-date** with the most **recent discoveries, gives me access to resources** and reminds me of any upcoming astronomical **events**. The magazines **paired with my telescope** (130mm Newtonian reflector) allow me to regularly take advantage of the skies and satisfy my curiosity..."



Super-curricular



Extra-curricular



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

together  
get  
the best  
results

Which one would you  
rather partner with to  
nurture, teach, inspire  
and be inspired by?





# Wowed! Or Head-In- The-Clouds?

## Use Action Words

Convey a sense of participation, involvement and accomplishment

e.g. - trained, invented, wrote, designed, created, analysed

### Information

Vs

*I played cricket, rugby, tennis, football and most other sports*

Team player  
Gets involved  
Contribute to University  
life experience

### Accomplishment

*I **captained** the school cricket team and **organised** a series of inter-school matches. I **designed** posters for these and **introduced** a ticketing system which **raised** £300 for the team*

Leadership  
Organisation  
Communication  
Creative  
Measurability  
Goal orientation  
PLUS



# Mad, Bad and Dangerous to – Actually, just “No”!



The University of  
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

## No Signal

Telling us about us. *“I want to come to your esteemed university...”*

Disconnect between words and reality.  
*“Being ambitious drives me to perform better.”*  
– yet has average GCSE grades and is predicted poor A-Level / IB / SAT / ACT / ATAR etc scores



## The Passion Fashion

I love [insert course]. I am passionate about [insert course]  
Failing to evidence such a claim or reasonably convince.  
*“My passion of exploration and contribution never end”!*

## Chat. It Ain't All That.

Colloquialisms.  
Chat-like narrative.  
Chat-like vocabulary including informal abbreviations (e.g. ‘vocab’, ‘uni’).  
Waffle.  
Text speak.  
Starting every sentence / paragraph with “I”

## Power? How're...?

Your parents/guardians wealth or position of social significance (royalty; parliamentarian; civic or religious leader etc) won't buy your way in.  
Tell us about YOU and YOUR interests, motivations, achievement not about theirs. How are YOU suitably equipped to cope with and contribute to world-leading higher education programmes?

# Filling space with nothing at all



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

## Top Three

Most **over-used** opening sentences



01

**From a young age I have (always) been [interested in / fascinated by]...**

1779 appearances last year

02

**For as long as I can remember I have...**

1451 appearances last year

03

**I am applying for this course because...**

1,370 appearances last year

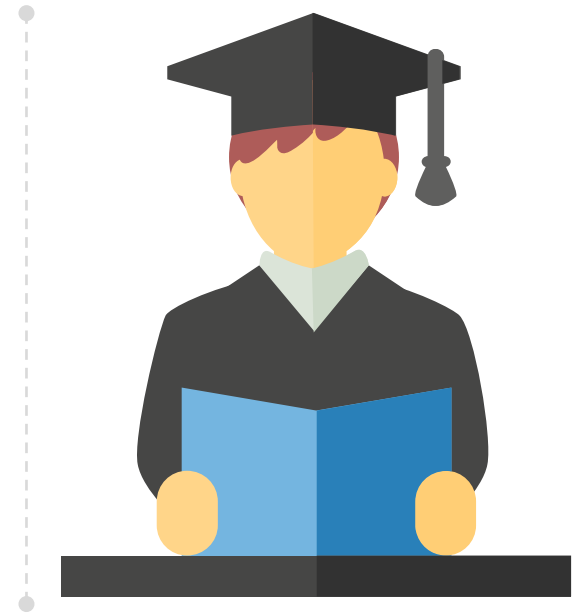
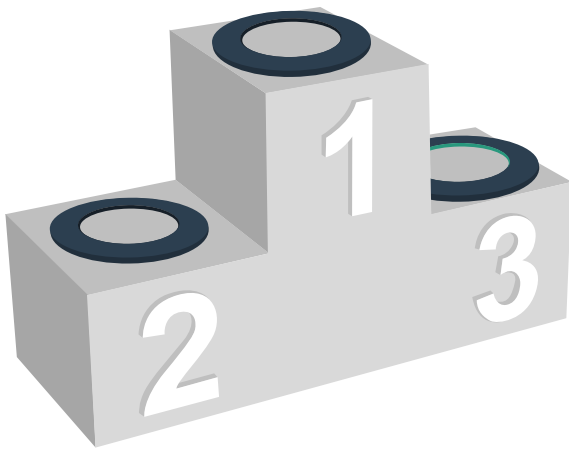


The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

# Rate or Hate?

As **Admissions Tutor** YOU decide





# Rate or Hate?

As Admissions Tutor YOU decide

Opening Paragraph

The question of 'Why does some companies survive, and some always fail to survive?' always pondered upon my mind. Considering that even the type of products or services are similar, this piqued my interest toward a business. I believe by studying business course, it will allow me to further discover the mysteries in business. Business is not just about earning profit itself, but also as to how it benefits both employees and consumers. Building a successful business is always my passion. I believe that pursuing business will allow me to gain knowledge that enlightens the path of my passion, and extend it in the future. I participated in many business inspirational talks; it motivates and increases my enthusiasms toward business. I'm absolutely passionate about business. I always have this inclination of opening the most convenient retailer store just like Tesco, building the retailer store that allows customer to buy the freshest products with just a touch of button at anywhere. Furthermore, I have read several books about that is related to business that has certainly has marked a deep impression for me about business. It has taught me about what happened to United States market in the past century and it certainly excites me about starting a business and to further learn about a business..

# Rate or Hate?

As Admissions Tutor YOU decide  
Opening Paragraph



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

The question of 'Why **does** some companies survive, and some *always* fail *to survive*?' **always** pondered upon my mind. Considering that even the type of products or services are similar, this piqued my interest toward **a business**. I believe by studying **business** course, it will allow me to further discover the mysteries in **business**. **Business** is not just about earning profit itself, but also as to how it benefits both employees and consumers. Building a successful **business** is **always** my **passion**. I believe that pursuing **business** will allow me to gain knowledge that enlightens the **path of my passion**, and extend it in the future. I participated in **many business** inspirational talks; **it** motivates and increases my enthusiasms toward **business**. I'm absolutely **passionate** about **business**. I **always** have this inclination of opening the most convenient retailer store just like Tesco, building the retailer store that allows customer to buy the freshest products with just a touch of button at anywhere. Furthermore, I **have read several books** about that is related to **business** that has certainly has marked a **deep impression** for me about **business**. **It** has taught me about what happened to United States market in the past century and it certainly excites me about starting a **business** and to further learn about a **business**..





# Rate or Hate?

As **Admissions Tutor** YOU decide  
Opening Paragraph

Growing up, I frequently overheard my father, a litigation lawyer, discussing his cases with my mother. It fascinated me that he was so involved in the life of others. As I began to have my own conversations with my father, I became intrigued by the way law is applied to take into account the need to achieve good governance and a stable society, while trying to achieve a just result in individual cases. The law became my desired choice of career and vocation; it would combine my love of arguing a position (a trait that my friends will attest to) and my deep rooted inclination that right is done.



# Rate or Hate?

As **Admissions Tutor** YOU decide  
Opening Paragraph

My interest in law was sparked by a chance attendance of a round of the London Universities Mooting Shield when I was 15. The case had initially seemed an easily resolvable dispute between two parties: one's dog had caused damage on the other's land. However, a closer inspection of arguments put forth by the opposing teams proved otherwise. Both had made convincing cases for their clients, and I observed the law as being interpreted in largely different yet similarly valid ways. The law of tort working as a framework for addressing disputes thus formed my first impression of the function of the law: to govern inter party relations and address any conflicts arising out of differences.

# Rate or Hate?

As **Admissions Tutor** YOU decide  
Opening Paragraph



The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

The disregard for civil rights in cases of police brutality in the United States, particularly the death of Eric Garner, drove me to question the role of authority in relation to the legal system, further inspiring me to seek an understanding of the complexities of law. This led me to the works of Lord Bingham, who in his Eight Principles of the Rule of Law elucidates that power should be used in a fair and reasonable manner by those to whom it has been entrusted. This concept resonated with me, evoking a desire to pursue a degree in law to understand the multifaceted nature of the judicial system. I further explored the importance of legislation and its role in preventing social injustice in 'Eve Was Framed', where Helena Kennedy provides insight into how law has contributed towards the liberation of women with restricted civil liberties.



The University of  
Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA



HE network – US!

Universities

Open Days

Live Chats

School Visits

Fairs / Exhibitions

UCAS Events

Books

HEAP

Tefler's Personal Statements



Resources

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/writing-personal-statement>

Universities' own web pages e.g.:

[Nottingham](#)

[Oxford](#)

[Durham](#)

# UCAS





The University of  
**Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA



**Jeremy Burgess**

**Associate Director - International Student Recruitment & Marketing**

E: [jeremy.burgess@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:jeremy.burgess@nottingham.ac.uk)

LinkedIn: <https://uk.linkedin.com/in/jeremyspburgess>