

## Showcasing your skills transcript

In this video University of Birmingham staff discuss the importance of demonstrating skills you have developed at school or college in your university application.

Title: [Showcasing your skills \(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJAo3rDQFFU\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJAo3rDQFFU)

Duration: 4.43 mins

### Speaker Names (if given):

- S1 Michael Collie, BBC presenter and former student
- S2 Marcus Williams, Deputy Director of Student Recruitment
- S3 Dr Ian Gameson, Admissions Tutor, Chemistry
- S4 Professor Susan Hunston, Head of English
- S5 Dr Mike Ward, Senior Lecturer, Engineering
- S6 Dr Craig Blunt, Admissions Tutor, Modern Languages and Joint Honours Programmes
- S7 Jo Thacker, Admissions Officer, Law

S1 Showcasing your skills. At school or college you develop a vast range of skills that you can then use at university, such as communication, teamworking, IT or presentation skills. What some students fail to do on their UCAS forms is to explain to universities how the skills that they've developed are relevant to the course they want to do. Experiences and opportunities such as a gap year, participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award or in the school sports team can all be valuable. Students need to demonstrate how these experiences have helped them to develop their skills. The University of Birmingham's admissions tutors can offer some useful tips on how students can showcase their skills.

S2 Showcasing your skills on your personal statement is really important because academics want to know whether you're suitably equipped to succeed on their course. Birmingham's had a long tradition of encouraging enquiry and academics here really like students who are going to question and engage with the course of study. Now you might sit down and think actually, I don't really have any skills, but the more that you think about it and you reflect on your experience in Year 12 and 13, the more you'll realise you've actually developed quite a number of soft transferable skills that are really important to higher education and also to your future career. They may be skills like research skills, managing your time that you've had to manage three or four different A-level subjects for example and it's these sorts of skills we want to see evidence of in your personal statement.

S3 The skills we're looking for if someone's applying to do Chemistry is enthusiasm; it's drive, it's curiosity. They should be the sort of people that if I went to a parent's evening and they say 'ah, little Johnny, very keen, very dedicated but asks far too many questions'. You need to know why things work, you don't want to be put off with 'don't worry, you'll do it next module'. So you need to have a sort of inner confidence that you can deal with all the things that are being thrown at you because chemistry is a very broad subject, we go right from quite complicated mathematical ideas almost overlapping with physics right the way through inorganic chemistry to almost the life sciences with very large organic molecules. So there's a whole range of skills required; some bits you're going to love, some bits you're going to be less pleased with; so you have to deal with everything that's there. You also need to see that somebody wants to do chemistry because they like it as opposed to be they couldn't think of something else to do.

S4 To do well on our courses students need to be able to manage their own time, be able to manage their own learning. They need to be curious and able to investigate beyond what they're told in the classroom.

S5 When we look at the personal statements of students we're very often looking for examples of leadership or free thinkers, people that can actually do things for themselves. So when we see that people have maybe done the Duke of Edinburgh's Award; that gives us some confidence: when they've taken on a leadership role in some local society or club, that also gives us confidence. We like to see people that have interests beyond just reading and walking and swimming and can actually tell us a bit about themselves and the things they actually really enjoy doing.

S6 In terms of the skills that we look for from our applicants, one of the key elements is obviously sophistication at using the language both in their written language, their spoken language, their aural comprehension and their reading skills – and that is really at the heart of all the modern language degree programmes. Now we're looking for students who are willing to engage in a debate and with the lectures and really to participate in an intellectual discussion.

S7 The skills that we like to see from Law applicants are very good levels of English, a good ability to look at text and take it apart and good levels of comprehension. The best way of practising these skills is to read a quality newspaper from cover to cover on a daily basis.

S2 In terms of providing students with additional advice as to what skills Admissions Tutors are actually looking for then one bit of advice I'd always give is for students to have a look on the UCAS course search database. Now most students will be familiar with this. If for example you wanted to study Politics at Birmingham you'll notice on the course search next to Politics at Birmingham you'll see a little 'EP'. That stands for Entry Profile. Entry profiles are really, really useful and they're particularly useful because it will set out what grades you need but crucially, what skills you need to showcase on your personal statement to succeed on the course. So if you want to get ahead of the game, my advice would be have a look at those entry profiles.

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