

Summer School Feedback for June / July 2016

1. Application Process

- The applications were reviewed by a panel after which the nominations were send to our management for further review. After we have received confirmations from management we nominated the selected students to the respective summer schools. The applications were then accepted or rejected by the host institution.

Feedback from Panel:

- The application process was generally understood.
- Online applications were completed fully.
- The academic records of students was very good. Some students fell out automatically due to failing modules and not meeting the minimum average of 60%.
- Although complete, students duplicated answers from the written applications in their video – which might have been put to better use if ideas expressed in written application were expanded on in video (and not “read” off).

Some tips for applying:

1. It is important to approach the application in the correct manner; the best way of doing this would be to see it as part of a learning process. With every application you complete you will only get better - if you revisit what you have done and reflect on potential future improvements. Reflective iteration is key!

2. Online Application & Written Motivation

- In the context of this application - your online application is like a CV.
- Your motivation needs to be relevant or applicable, meaning you should be weary of general or vague motivations, and rather focus on specific motivations. For example, a good motivation would be where you explain how the course links with what you are studying. Or if there is not a direct link, how it fits in with you future study or career plans.

Feedback from Panel:

- Most students misinterpreted the instructions: Wrote 2000 words instead of

2000 characters.

- Motivations were generally vague and irrelevant. Good motivations referred to the courses and how it links up with the student's field of study.
- Students did not draw clear links between how the summer school they wish to attend benefits their own studies at SU.
- The need to travel abroad and experience a new culture is not a good enough motivation.

Some tips on writing a motivation:

1. http://www.daad.tj/how_to_write_a_letter_of_motivation.pdf

3. Video Clip

- The students that did well in this section had video clips that **were well structured** and they **communicated their ideas and arguments clearly**. Creative videos are great, but videos that lack good content normally did not perform well.

Feedback from Panel:

- Students did not stick to the prompt.
- Videos were either below the minimum amount of time, or grossly over the maximum time.
- Some students did not answer all three sections as per the video prompt.
- Too little time spent on answering the last section of the video prompt. Some answers were also very general and plain. Deeper and more holistic reflection is needed.
- It should be remembered that the video clip replaces your interview, and it is the only "contact" the panel has with you to hear your opinions. So make full use if the 5 minutes that is provided to you.
- Important thing to remember: "...a video allows us to get a more dynamic sense of someone than the written word allows. It's difficult to get a feel for someone's personality and creativity from a stack of resumes and cover letters – which are meant to be standardized – whereas videos bring our applicants off the page and give a more holistic picture of why they're great."
(<https://www.themuse.com/advice/7-steps-to-a-killer-video-application>)

Some tips on making an interview video:

1. <https://www.themuse.com/advice/7-steps-to-a-killer-video-application>
(Although aimed at a job application, it is still applicable.)

4. Reference Letters

- As in the past we would recommend that students request reference letters well in advance. In some cases we received references that were very general and not necessarily to the benefit of the student.
- Therefore, it is important to brief the person giving the reference beforehand, so that they draw a link between the current summer school application and the student personally or the student's field of study. General references about students attending class and doing well academically is not sufficient enough. We can see that from your academic record if you are doing well or not; also, merely stating that a student is attending a course, is not a sufficient reference. If possible ask the reference to send a copy of the reference letter to you as well.
- Some reference letters submitted reflected on the CV-attributes of candidates, often re-listing societies and committees.
- Good reference letter shows the referee knew of the importance / relevance of the letter, what the student wishes to apply for and speaks to academic and/or personal conduct in addition to listing marks obtained (which are evident from academic transcripts).

Some tips for identifying proper references:

1. The Do's and Don'ts of Job References:
<http://www.fastcompany.com/3042723/hit-the-ground-running/the-dos-and-donts-of-job-references>
2. <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/Verba-recs.html> (This is advice provided to Harvard lecturers, but it gives you good information about things that lecturers need to consider - and therefore students need to keep in mind.)
3. How to ask a reference letter: <https://hbr.org/2010/04/how-to-ask-for-a-reference-let-1-2>
4. How to ask for a reference letter: <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/career-advice-article/how-to-ask-for-a-reference-letter/>

Just something to think about - The Surprising Habits of Original Thinkers

https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_grant_the_surprising_habits_of_original_thinkers/transcript?language=en