

Different Formats of Personal Statement

60 minutes

Strand 1.1: Understanding Myself

Participating

Outcome LCW.M1.S1.PS.2

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Same facts, two readers: reshape one portfolio paragraph for SUSI circumstance-and-need voice and for an apprenticeship employer, after labelling real application sentences by audience.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- Samples mention household income, lone parent, rented housing. Point students who find this raw to the guidance counsellor; Citizens Information and SUSI.ie for factual grant questions.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
LCW.M1.S1.PS.2	recognise different formats and uses of personal statements.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Recognise grant-need, apprenticeship, HE narrative, cover letter, CV-summary and competency formats
- Re-shape the same facts for two contrasting audiences
- Name what each audience needed that the other did not

KEY TERMS

Term	What it means here	For example
Audience	The person or organisation who will read what you write, and the decision they are trying to make about you.	A SUSI officer judging need; an apprenticeship employer judging whether you will turn up and be useful
Format	The shape your writing takes for a particular use: HE narrative personal statement, cover letter, CV summary, grant-need voice, or competency response.	A 300-word narrative for a Higher Education course versus three short STAR boxes on a public-service form
Tailoring	Re-shaping the same true facts so they answer what this audience needs, without inventing a different person.	Keeping your café job in both versions, but leading with hours and reliability for an apprenticeship and with household income pressure for SUSI

BEFORE THE BELL

- Ensure students have access to their Strand 1.1 portfolio containing an existing paragraph.
- Prepare a generic spare paragraph for students who have no saved work, and flag it at the open.
- Students need one existing paragraph in their Strand 1.1 folder. Have a generic spare paragraph ready for anyone who genuinely has nothing saved, and say so at the open.
- On screen this lesson: card sort, document annotator, worked example.

Different Formats of Personal Statement

HOW THE LESSON RUNS		
5 min	introduction	Getting Started
8 min	activity	What Do You Already Believe?
14 min	activity	Sort the Tells
25 min	activity	Rewrite for Two Audiences
8 min	summary	What you covered

STEP BY STEP

5 min Getting Started

Open by asking: *Who has already filled in more than one kind of application form?* Collect three answers fast. Then say plainly what the class is doing today: re-shaping one true paragraph for two different readers, rather than drafting a full personal statement from scratch, so nobody panics about producing a finished application.

Flag that SUSI and apprenticeship are the two readers they will write for later. Each student will need one paragraph of their own earlier writing, saved in the Strand 1.1 folder they have been building all year, which holds their Tell Me About Yourself piece and any later drafts. If anyone has nothing saved yet, say out loud that they will use the spare paragraph you will share in the rewrite step, and have that spare visible from the start so it is not a surprise at minute twenty.

Mention briefly that the real SUSI process is largely forms and evidence, so what they are practising here is the clear circumstance-and-need voice those answers still need, not a full SUSI essay.

8 min What Do You Already Believe? On screen: card sort

The sort accepts any card into either bucket, so the room can talk a placement through and move it again; nothing is marked. Hold the model answers back until after the sentence sort in the next step, because the whole value of this baseline is that they commit before they have seen any evidence. Once everyone has committed, move straight on, and come back to one or two claims at the end of step 3 if time allows.

- Watch for students who treat SUSI as another personal statement about achievements.
- Watch for students who think apprenticeship applications want life story rather than usefulness evidence.
- Watch for students who think tailoring means inventing a different person.

For your own reference, the correct placements are: True for apprenticeship usefulness evidence, for a cover letter naming the role and mirroring the advert, for an HE statement showing course fit, and for the same true facts serving both a grant reader and an employer reader. False for SUSI mainly wanting achievements, for competency boxes wanting a flowing essay, for tailoring meaning inventing a different person, and for a CV summary being a long life story.

14 min Sort the Tells On screen: document annotator

HOW TO RUN IT

Any label can be dropped on any line, so the room can talk a placement through before committing to it. Pause after four or five placements and ask *What word gave that one away?*, because naming the word is what transfers to their own writing.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Each audience has its own giveaway vocabulary, and these are the ones worth naming aloud as they come up.

- A SUSI line usually carries household, means, grant, living costs or circumstance.
- An apprenticeship line talks about the site, the shift, tools, turning up, supervised practice or earning while learning.
- An HE narrative names course content and why this field, in a longer reflective voice.
- A cover letter names the role, mirrors the requirements and closes with an ask.
- A competency response holds a situation, action and result inside a tight box.
- A CV summary is a short scannable pitch with no narrative padding.

After the model reveal, spend two minutes going back to the true/false claims from the previous step that students got wrong, so the evidence they have just seen does the correcting rather than you.

25 min Rewrite for Two Audiences On screen: worked example

TIMING (ABOUT 25 MINUTES)

Three to four minutes to read Cian's case and its annotations. Fifteen to eighteen minutes to write both versions. Two to three minutes for the three lines. Circulate for audience drift: SUSI versions that only list achievements, apprenticeship versions that only list feelings.

DIFFERENTIATION

If a student has no grant-relevant circumstance they are willing to share, they write the SUSI version in the third person for a fictional but realistic applicant, and write the apprenticeship version in their own voice. Never force disclosure of family finances beyond what they choose. If money or home content is raw for anyone, point them privately to the guidance counsellor; Citizens Information and SUSI.ie are the public references for real grant questions.

Portfolio check: document title **Personal Statement Formats** in the Strand 1.1 folder, containing original, Version A, Version B, and three lines. Students will draw on this file when they draft their first Applied Learning Task, ALT 1, in later lessons, so it is worth chasing anyone who has not saved it.

8 min What you covered

Spot-check three portfolios for both versions plus the three-line note. If time remains, ask one pair to read both of their versions aloud and have the class name the audience without being told.

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Card sort: True - An apprenticeship reader wants evidence you will turn up, learn, and be useful on real tasks.; A cover letter should name the role and mirror what the advert asked for.; An HE personal statement should show course fit, often by naming modules or content.; The same true facts can support both a grant-need...
- Document annotator: "household income fell after my father's hours were cut, and without..." - SUSI grant: circumstance and need - Circumstance and need in one breath. A SUSI reader is not hiring Cian; they are testing eligibility and support.
- Document annotator: "open the store, check deliveries, and stay until the floor is reset..." - Apprenticeship: turn up and be useful - Concrete workplace behaviours mapped to the apprenticeship. Usefulness, not life story.
- Document annotator: "watching a six-year-old finally read alone at my after-school..." - HE personal statement: course fit - Reflective scene plus a training ambition. Classic HE narrative voice.
- Document annotator: "apply for the Saturday barista role at Harbour Road Café and believe..." - Cover letter: named role and ask - Names the role and mirrors the advert. Cover letters always point at a specific vacancy.
- Document annotator: "Situation: our Transition Year fundraiser stall was short two people..." - Competency response: STAR evidence - STAR shape in miniature. Competency boxes want this structure, not a flowing essay.
- Document annotator: "Living costs in the city, plus the loss of my part-time hours over..." - SUSI grant: circumstance and need - Money, means test, access to a place already offered. Pure grant language.
- Document annotator: "completed a site safety induction through my uncle's firm and I am..." - Apprenticeship: turn up and be useful - Site readiness and earn-while-you-learn. Signals he knows what the model is.
- Document annotator: "The modules in care practice and child development are what draw me..." - HE personal statement: course fit - Names actual modules. Shows course research, which HE readers look for.
- Document annotator: "Thank you for considering my application; I am available for..." - Cover letter: named role and ask - Polite close plus availability. Letters end with an ask; statements usually do not.
- Document annotator: "When a customer's order was missing two fittings, I rang the..." - Competency response: STAR evidence - One tight incident with verbs. Reads like evidence for problem-solving or customer service.
- Document annotator: "My mother is a lone parent in rented housing, and the grant would..." - SUSI grant: circumstance and need - Household structure and a clear funding gap. Sensitive, factual, grant-relevant.
- Document annotator: "reliable Saturday retail worker, site-induction complete, seeking an..." - Apprenticeship: turn up and be useful - CV-summary pitch: scannable, no narrative padding, aimed at a trade route.
- Worked example: "my household income dropped when my father's hours were cut" - SUSI lead - Leads with circumstance and need. A grant reader is testing support, not hiring him.
- Worked example: "they do not cover travel and course materials for the training place..." - Funding gap - Makes the money gap concrete. SUSI is mostly means-test evidence; this is the circumstance-and-need voice those answers still need.
- Worked example: "I open up, check deliveries, and stay until the floor is reset" - Useful tasks - Apprenticeship version leads with concrete workplace behaviours an employer can picture.
- Worked example: "site safety induction through a family firm and I want an electrical..." - Site readiness - Signals he knows the earn-while-you-learn model and is ready for supervised practice on a SOLAS electrical craft route.

- Worked example: "the job became proof of effort, not proof of skill" - Same job, new angle - The hardware job stays true in both versions; only the reader's question changes what it proves.
- Worked example: "only the reader's question changed" - Tailoring, not inventing - Same person, same facts. Tailoring answers different decisions without becoming two different people.

TEACHING MOVES

- Run the true/false activity in explore/predict mode without revealing answers immediately.
- Use explore mode for sentence sorting to allow class discussion on word choices.
- The rewrite step uses a worked example interactive for Cian's case; the student production (original, Version A, Version B, three lines) happens in the portfolio document Personal Statement Formats.
- Circulate to check that students are keeping facts true in both versions.
- Never force disclosure of family finances; third-person fictional SUSI version is allowed.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students may invent new information instead of reshaping existing facts; remind them to use only true details.
- Confusion between audiences leading to incorrect labels; revisit key terms like audience and format.
- Writing overly similar versions; encourage focus on what each reader specifically needs.
- Treating SUSI practice as a long literary personal statement; keep the focus on circumstance-and-need voice for means-test style answers.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Provide a sample paragraph for students without prior work.
- Support: Offer sentence starters for identifying audience needs.
- Support: Minimum viable output of 4-6 lines per version plus three-line note.
- Extension: Challenge students to rewrite for a third audience type (cover letter or competency box).

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEFT WITH

- Personal Statement Formats: original paragraph, two re-shaped versions, three lines on what changed and why