Rhodes Scholarship Event
74.75 minutes

Tamsin Pietsch: We're recording this for people who can't be here and also [~it's a mic]. So, thank you for coming everyone – hi. It's a great turnout. You've all been contacted because you've got excellent marks, for which [applauds]. Well done! No, seriously, that's a big deal. And I'm, my name is Tamsin Peach and I run the Centre for Public History here at UTS, and I grew up in Adelaide and I was very fortunate to get a Rhodes Scholarship back in the dim, dark days of 2003.

But I grew up in the country, I was the first in my family to go to university, I had no frigging idea what the Rhodes Scholarship was at all until – but I really, you know, I was a bit of a nerd and I did really well in my undergraduate degree, and one of my professors tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'You should really think about this thing called the Rhodes Scholarship. Have you ever thought of studying abroad?' And it was only that that made me start to think about what opportunities there would be beyond Adelaide. And it was the thing that changed my life.

So, when I moved back to Australia – and I did that about three or four years ago – one of the things I wanted to do was to help broaden the profile of the Rhodes Scholarships, because for 100 years the scholarship office has been based at University of Sydney and, not surprisingly, for 100 years, University of Sydney have absolutely dominated the selection process of successful candidates. Really, 80 per cent of applicants were from University of Sydney and NSW and I think there's only a handful of people who, until recently, who weren't from the University of Sydney winning.

And I think that's largely to do with who knows about it and the kind of support you get in applying for it. So, I've taken on the role of the NSW Honorary Secretary, which means I manage the whole scholarship scheme and organise the selection process, convene the selection committee, and at UTS, I'm available to answer questions and help people learn a bit more about what the process involves. If you've got a dad who's a judge or you went to Sydney Grammar, chances are you know somebody who's won the scholarship and that they're going to be fine.

So, this is one of a series of talks we're doing at universities all over NSW. Now, hopefully some of you have looked up either this site, which is on the UTS website, or if you're especially clever, but I know you all are because you all did very well, you scrolled down and you clicked on this document here, which takes you to the Rhodes House website and you can select your region, which is Australia, and then you click through to the information for candidates' document.

There may be students here from other universities than UTS – are there? If there are, put your hands up. Welcome; excellent. You can come and talk to me but there are also contacts here – where are they? There are contacts; come and see me at the end because there's a contact at your university to support you as well. So, I can't – it should be on this website somewhere, but we can talk about that later.

So, who's seen this document? Okay. This is absolutely your first port of call for thinking about what the scholarship involves. So, go home tonight and look at this document, but I'll talk you through it anyway. One reason – but let me give you a bit of a background for the Rhodes Scholarships and why I think they're an amazing way to think through what you're going to do with your life.

A hundred years ago, Cecil Rhodes, he was a big, fat racist, really …

[Laughter]

… earned all his money exploiting black [inaudible] in South Africa, mining diamonds, invaded a country, thought that was a really good idea. Founded a scholarship which was to bring people from all over the world – then it was the British Empire, but it has broadened significantly in the last 50 years – to Oxford. And initially, of course, it was men, but since the 1970s it's included women, to undertake two or three years of graduate study at Oxford.

Oxford is one of the most remarkable universities in the world. Everybody lives within a small radius, you're based in these communities called colleges, and it is the world-class institution with incredible lecturers. So, half of what's incredible about Oxford is the education you receive – it's the content of what you learn – but the other half is the people that you meet and the experience that you have and the chance to get involved in a whole set of things which will extend who you think you are and what you think you can do with your life. So, it's that dual package of benefits, I suppose, that the Rhodes offers you.

And the second part includes meeting Rhodes scholars from all over the world, and 100 Rhodes scholars every year are selected from everywhere, from China to Namibia, Palestine and, of course, Australia, the US and elsewhere. So, that – it's a really rich experience.

But in the years since the Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1903, a whole set of other scholarship schemes have been instituted, many of which are modelled explicitly on the Rhodes. So, the Fulbright is one of these; Senator Fulbright himself, after the Second World War, was a Rhodes scholar and he set up a scholarships scheme directly modelled on the Rhodes.

More recently, the Monash Scholarship, which is based out of Australia, which is only for Australians, is also modelled on the Rhodes criteria. So, if you're thinking about the Rhodes Scholarships, what you're doing is you're thinking about all those other ones as well. Because the Rhodes has some weird eligibility criteria which is not applicable in those other scholarship schemes, and there are more. So, if you don't meet the age criteria, don't worry – you should listen to what I'm saying anyway, because it's directly applicable to the Monash, which has exactly the same selection criteria without the age exclusion.

So, and I can talk to you about all those other scholarships as well. So, let us turn to the eligibility – does anyone have any questions at this point? No? Closing date is 13th of September – that is very important – at midnight, or one minute before midnight. And I highly recommend that you submit it before then, because the website has – it's only so good at dealing with lots of traffic and you don't want to be panicking.

So, eligibility criteria – these are these four point at the top here, which you probably can't read, because it's … okay. So, you must be an Australian citizen who's been resident in Australia for at least two of the last 10 years. If you're a citizen of a different country, you'll be eligible to apply in a different Rhodes constituency, which is great. So, go to the other bit of Rhodes website that's relevant to you.

You must have completed at least two years of schooling at an Australian secondary school. If there's anybody that completed two years of schooling at an Australian secondary school overseas, for whatever reason, that should make you eligible to apply in Australia. If you haven't done that, then again, send an email to Simone and we'll assess your case.

This is the tricky bit: you must have reached your 19th birthday, which I think everyone is probably fine for that, but not passed your 26th birthday by the 1st of October 2020, which is when you'll start in Oxford. Which means you must have been born after the 30th of September 1994 and before the 1st of October 2001. So, if you were born on the 1st of October 2001, you're not eligible. If you're born on the 2nd of October 2001, you're not eligible. It's a hard and fast rule. That's why I say the Monash just doesn't have that rule, so you should apply for the Monash instead.

Now, some of you might have two or three years of eligibility left based on your age. I highly recommend you come and talk to me if you're serious about this now, because thinking about this in a two- or three-year time horizon is a really good thing to do. So, I'll be hosting one-on-one sessions on the 31st of July, which is I think next Wednesday, so you can come and see me after the session or email me and we can make a time or you can just drop in and we can talk about that.

And then the fourth criteria, eligibility criteria, is academic achievement. And this is a bit complicated. You've all done really well, but the requirement is that you need to have an Australian honours degree, which is an AQF framework level 8, or a master's level degree, which is a level 9 or [~9E] – there's no one here doing medicine, I don't think? Some of the outside UTS people? No? So, with a proficiency of first-class honours or a 6.75 grade point average in your master's degree and you only, you only need to have completed that degree by the 15th of June 2020.

So, that means if you're currently enrolled in like a two-year master's program and you're in the final year of the two-year master's program that will finish at the end of this year, you will be eligible because you'll have that degree before the 15th of June 2020. You won't have your marks yet, but you should have marks from last year and there are ways we can deal with that situation of not having your marks. But you will have to have done well in your undergraduate degree with a grade point average of 6.75. So, if you're doing honours this year, that means you're eligible this year for the same reasons.

Does anyone have any questions out of that? Because that can get a bit complicated. Yep.

Audience member: I'm doing a master's right now, but I'll finish in December next year.

Tamsin Pietsch: Next year?

Audience member: Yeah, December next year.

Tasmin Pietsch: So 2020. So, you wouldn't be eligible to apply this year, but you would be eligible to apply next year, as long as you meet the age criteria. Yep.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Audience member: Do you know what [inaudible]?

Tasmin Pietsch: Yeah. It's a complicated formula, but there is one, so we can work that out for you. It's about 3.7-ish.

Audience member: So, I'm doing my honours at the moment, but we wouldn't really get the revisions [inaudible], like whether it's first class, until after we apply. So, how does that work?

Tasmin Pietsch: Yeah, so a lot of people will be in that situation, and what they do is they ask – so, we'll come to referees a bit later. You'll have a proficiency level for your undergraduate degree, which will matter, but they'll ask your referees, one of whom should be either the dean of your faculty or somebody who can speak with knowledge based on your expected performance.

Audience member: Right.

Tasmin Pietsch: So, you'll ask your referee to write that in the reference that they write, and that will be taken as a predicted mark. So, a lot of people will be in that situation, but if you have two or three years left of eligibility, it might make sense to think about applying next year or the year after instead. You're only allowed two applications for the Rhodes; a lot of people apply twice because you learn a lot from the process. But you might want to think about the strategy if you've got some time up your belt, because you might also do some things in the next year that would strengthen your application.

So, answers to questions like this are on this page, which you will have got in your email, in the FAQs section. There's millions of them; we've been asked every question under the sun, so have a look at that as well.

So, that's the eligibility criteria, so any other questions about eligibility? Which just means if you don't meet those four criteria, no one will ever – I will take your application out of the pile and it won't be read, because you're not eligible to apply. Yep?

Audience member: With the master's and the equivalent mark of a distinction, does that mean a bare minimum of 75 for every class you do?

Tamsin Pietsch: It would turn into your GPA. So, yeah. I mean, distinction is different marks, isn't it? And that's actually for this reason, because it's about – you've got to get in to Oxford. So, we'll award you the scholarship but it's terrible to be awarded the scholarship and then

not be admitted to Oxford. That very rarely happens – I mean, it hasn't happened in my memory because of these conditions.

Okay, any other questions? We can come back to anything – hi, take a seat.

And there's the fifth – you must not apply for the Rhodes more than twice.

So, we'll scoot down to – you have to submit all this stuff, which is pretty self-evident. You need a copy of your passport, your birth certificate, to prove your nationality; a transcript from your university. It's sometimes important if you don't have one of them to start now, because it can take a little – UTS is pretty good, but sometimes it can take a while to get that out of a university.

Proof … yeah. I think it asks you for proof of schooling, which is your [inaudible]. I went to school in Adelaide; it's called [inaudible]. What's it called here? HSC certificate. You don't need to worry about language proficiency because you've got a degree from a NSW institution. Okay. A curriculum vitae, head and shoulders photograph and a personal statement. So, it's these two – the CV and the personal statement – that will take up most of your time and that I'm going to talk to you about now. They're really important – like, really important.

Now, before we return to them, I'm going to scoot down to the selection criteria, which should be here somewhere. Sorry; this is probably making you all sick. It's making me sick. Here. Right at the top. So, selection is based on these four criteria: academic excellence, which we've discussed that as part of your eligibility. But if you've won things like the University Medal or the Dean's Prize or any other academic awards or recognitions, that makes you a very strong candidate and you should absolutely highlight them on your CV.

These three criteria are expressed in the terms of the will, so they require a bit of translation. 'Energy to use your talents to the full, as demonstrated by mastery in areas such as sport, music, debate, dance, theatre, artistic pursuit or anywhere, anything where teamwork is involved.' This used to be sport, in the olden days – you were like, when I got to Oxford my supervisor said, 'So, are you a sporty one or a clever one?' What do you say to that?

So, it's not sport anymore, but it's all of these things that I like to think of as extracurricular activities. The actual terms of the will, which can't be changed, says show you're not a brain on a stick; you're more than a mere bookworm, is the term. You're more than a mere bookworm. And the [inaudible] is important, that you've dedicated time, real time, and mastery to those pursuits. Now, they do not have to be sport, but what is interesting about sport is that it shows the following things: that you can work with other people, in team sports particularly; that you've got discipline and dedication – that you can get up in the morning and go to training, even when it's cold; you can lose and do it again; and you've got passion; and you've got physical stamina, but you can demonstrate physical stamina through all those [inaudible] things I just mentioned.

So, if you've been in – if you've played music in a band or an orchestra, if you've, I don't know, written stuff in a creative writing context, artistic pursuits, all of this counts as

extracurricular activities. So, this is the kind of stuff that you should think about but also come and talk to me about if you're unsure what something adds up to.

Audience member: How is that stuff submitted?

Tamsin Pietsch: It's all evidenced in your personal statement and your CV, so I'll talk about what you make that look like once I've gone through this criteria. Any questions about that?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: Yep. So, on the one hand, you can go back to high school, but on the one hand you've got to show dedication, which means it doesn't just last for one year – you didn't just take it up for the last 12 months; you didn't do it five years ago when you were in high school. Often people do really well for a time and then they continue the sport, perhaps, but at a different level, because it's the final year of your exams or something. But it's that evidence of performance at a high level, but also dedication. Is that an answer to your question? Okay.

'Truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection for the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship.' This I think of – I think it's helpful to think of this as the community service criteria. So, this shows that you have been involved in doing things for the public, for your community, could be local, could be much bigger than that, that are not just about your own self-interest. It's not just about fostering your career development or [inaudible].

So, people do all sorts of things in this category, and often they do overlap with their academic expertise, so you might be president of Engineers Without Borders, the university chapter of Engineers Without Borders, and doing an engineering degree. So, it's not that it can't be complementing your academic pursuits, but it's much broader than that.

Last year, a student came up to me and she said, 'I think I meet these other three criteria but I just don't think I've got any community service.' And I said, 'Well, what did you do last weekend?' She said, 'I don't really have time to do anything at the moment because I'm basically running the re-building of my mosque.' I went, 'What?' She said, 'People don't really speak that much English and I'm having to do the liaising with the contractors and organising all the site development stuff.' I'm like, 'Lady, that counts.'

[Laughter]

So, community activities, church activities, whatever you do that is not extracurricular activities and academic activities can count in there, including paid work. If the paid work is working at McDonalds, it's probably not going to fit that criteria though, so we're also talking about what a strong application is. So, again, these are things we can talk about after I've done number four.

Number four is instincts to lead; leadership. And I kind of think this has got two elements. One is doing these three things in a leadership capacity – you're captain of your sports team,

you're running the Film Society, you're starting up a new enterprise for the homeless kids to do community gardening in your suburb, something like that. That's leadership. That's one element of that.

The other element of the leadership is that you've got a vision, and this is the thing that will play a really big role in your personal statement, so it's really worth listening to: you've done a whole lot of stuff in your life up until now, including your degree and including all of this other stuff. How does that form part of a story that keeps going? So, what are the challenges? What you need to be able to articulate are the challenges facing our communities at a local level, at an Australian level and at an international level, and how are you going to be part of meeting those challenges? How is everything you've done up until this point in time evident to the selection committee that they should invest this enormous amount of money and opportunity in you because you have got a vision for what you're going to do with it.

And that does not mean that you need to have a year-by-year career plan and know what job you're going to do, because you know, life happens and stuff changes. But it does mean that you can articulate big questions and articulate your relationship to them – that you're doing stuff for a reason, rather than sort of responsively.

So, before we go and talk about how you might evidence all of this in your personal statement and CV, does anyone have any questions about those four selection criteria? Yep?

Audience member: [Inaudible], aside from the whole everything must be [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: So, I think the – look, academic excellence is a necessary but not sufficient criteria, so they'll tend to look at your marks and you don't all have to be, you know, you can be standout in the other three and meet the eligibility criteria in it, but the marks are important, because that's what will get you into Oxford at some level.

But these are all really equally important, and part of the difficulties of the Rhodes is that committees are balancing them against each other, so I can't answer that question. Yep.

Audience member: I don't know if this is the question that was just asked, but what is the definition of mastery for those?

Tamsin Pietsch: Which one was that in? 'As demonstrated by mastery in areas such as sport.' Yeah, I mean, that's a good question. I mean, obviously it depends on what you're talking about, but have you played sport at a representative level, at a state or national representative level? Yeah? So, the top? Have you – now, I know many of you may not have played sport at a representative level, but this is where the balance question is really important, because you might [~not] have had extended sport participation and be kicking it out of the ballpark on the other three criteria, and that's probably good, yeah? But that's what mastery would be. Like, have you played in the NSW Children's Orchestra – I don't know what that's called; youth orchestra? Were you selected by competitive bodies to be a [inaudible, coughing] of some kind? Did you run seven marathons in a year and come in the eto p10, beating your personal best every time? Yeah?

But as I say, not everyone will have done that, but they might be really exceeding in the other three criteria. So, don't feel, 'I haven't done that! I've got to leave!' But you can leave if you like.

Audience member: [Inaudible] current point, but you mentioned that the level of attainment must be significant because they're going to invest all the money. How financially [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: Okay, so, what a Rhodes Scholarship covers is international student fees plus living expenses for three years in Oxford. Now, that's quite a lot of money; I think that's probably $100,000 a year, maybe? Depends what degree you're doing; the degrees all cost different amounts. Depends what college you live in; the college fees are all different. And it depends what the exchange rate is, but it's quite a lot of money for up to three years. And if you've got a partner, your partner can go too. And there's a visa – sorry, and your student visa expenses.

So, it covers all the expenses of life and study in the UK for – now, don't quote me on that figure, please, because that is just a total guesstimation. But it's a not-insignificant amount of money and it's also a significant opportunity.

The selection committee is …

Audience member: I'm staying here.

Tamsin Pietsch: You're staying here? The selection committee is made up by the Governor of NSW – chaired by the Governor of NSW – and six or seven community leaders from across the state. So, there's a lot of people with serious jobs spending time thinking about your applications. So, it's serious.

But UTS had never had any applications, let alone a scholarship, until two years ago. And two years ago, a UTS student won the Rhodes Scholarship. So, I think our students are as good as any students from any other university. It's just that I think probably we haven't been used to think about ourselves in these terms, so that's the point of this whole exercise. And last year we had four students in the finals, so were interviewed. Four students. That's well above the percentage of students that UTS educates – that graduate from UTS.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

There's one for NSW, there's 9 for Australia, so there's one from each state and three federally, so what that means is each of the states select one scholar and then they recommend a second, sometimes they recommend two additionals, to go to Canberra where there's a second interview process. So, this …

Audience member: One from NSW?

Tamsin Pietsch: One is selected and then one or two, depending on what the committees think, who they think are competitive, get sent to Canberra and there's another application

process in which the numbers two and three from across Australia come together for an additional three scholarships. So that's a pretty good chance – no, it is! Fifty people from NSW applied last year. That's a pretty good chance.

Audience member: Yeah, it's true.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: Well, not if you count the other two. So, NSW also won the national scholarship last year and the year before, because we have a lot of universities. So, it does tend to be Victoria and NSW that dominate in the national competition, because there's a lot of strong candidates and there's more students than come from Tasmania.

So, any more questions before I talk about the personal statement and the CV? Yep?

Audience member: What if the course you want to go to is less than two or three years?

Tamsin Pietsch: Oh, good question. Yep. I mean, Oxford teaches a lot of things, and I know you've looked at some of the courses. Many of the graduate-level programs are one-year master's degrees. Is that what you were thinking of? Yep. Often students do one of two things: what I did is I did a one-year master's and then I enrolled in the PhD program, which takes three years, so you'll know that one plus three equals four and the scholarship only covers three years, but Rhodes have an arrangement with Oxford in which you don't pay student fees in your fourth year and there are quite a lot of scholarship schemes that are really available to support your living expenses in that fourth year. So you can make it work and Rhodes will help you make it work – Rhodes and us.

So, that's one option: you do a one-year master's degree and you do well in that master's degree, so you decide, 'I'm going to continue on to do a PhD.' Or, and a lot of people do this, you do two one-year master's degrees, which is also really great, because there are a lot of very interesting master's degrees, and if you come to me, 'Oh, I'm doing this thing; I'm interested in this but I don't think Oxford teaches it,' I bet I'll find you a one-year master's degree that meets your needs.

And it might be that you've got to think a little bit creatively about that, because what is the point of – how does Oxford fit as part of that narrative about what you want to do with your life and what challenges you want to meet? It might be that by doing something a little bit broader than you initially thought and matching it with something specific, that makes you someone quite special to meet these community public challenges that we've been talking about. So that's a good question.

There are one or two restrictions on degrees you can't do because they're really, really expensive, and they're all answered here, somewhere here, anyway. There'll be a question about what you're not allowed to study. It's the MBA and the MM, MME. You can't do them together, but check that out. Any other questions before we talk about the personal statements? Yeah?

Audience member: Would somebody be able to go and study something that they've never studied before at Oxford?

Tamsin Pietsch: Potentially, yeah. You've got to make a good case.

Audience member: What was the question?

Tamsin Pietsch: Can somebody study something they've not studied before? So, that's not totally out of the question. A lot of people, particularly from India and also from Australia, historically, went and re-did a second BA. And there's one second BA at Oxford that's very, very famous and it's called the PPE – the politics, philosophy and economics degree and basically everybody in the Tory Party covenant has done the PPE. And if you've done a bachelor's degree in anywhere and you've done well, you get to take off one year of that degree, so it's a two-year degree, and that's very popular. So, often people have got no background in that and they go and do that, but it's also possible in the master's degree as you long as you meet the eligibility – you know, the eligibility criteria; you don't need specialised knowledge. Economics is sometimes hard because there needs a maths proficiency, but yeah.

Audience member: [Inaudible] I have another question. Is it full-time study?

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah, only full-time study.

Audience member: So if someone studies here and works here and [inaudible] and there's opportunity to work in the UK as well while studying …

Tamsin Pietsch: No, it's only full-time study. Yep. People obviously work in the summer, right, when university stops, but it's only full-time. Sorry, there was a question behind.

Audience member: If 50 people apply, how many [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: Ah, yes, good question. So, there's two rounds of interviews; there's a first round and a second round. Four people are at the second round, but because – it's sort of up to the selection committee how many make the long list, make the first round. It's usually between eight and 12. It depends on the Governor's schedule too; they've only got one day.

Audience member: Are there any trends in terms of the subject areas that tend to get awarded with scholarships?

Tamsin Pietsch: There are, but that's mostly because of the applicant pool. So, the applicant pool from NSW – I only know the NSW data. The applicant pool has been – well, can anyone guess what two degree programs, courses, made up 70 per cent of the applicant pool until last year?

[Audience mumbling]

Medicine and law. Medicine and law make up 70 per cent of the applicant pool. So, they have dominated the people awarded because that's the kind of people who've been coming to interview. But part of this whole process is to change that – to change those stats and widen them, and there's nothing in the selection committee that necessarily want to select people in medicine and law; god knows we've got enough of them, right? So, I think if anything, there's a desire to elect other kinds of scholars.

So, you know, we don't teach medicine at UTS – rules that out. We do teach law, but a lot of our law do joint degrees, so yep. So, good question. There was another question … okay. So, we can come back to all of that. Just shoot your hand up if you've got any questions.

Now, the – I'm just going to go back here to the three selection criteria. CVs – very important. Do not include a picture of yourself; you've sent that in anyway. What needs to happen in your CV is that you make it as easy as possible for the selection committee, who are reading an enormous number of applications, to assess you against the selection criteria. Which means put them as major headings on your CV. I cannot emphasise this enough. I don't really – well, I don't want the same CV that you submit for work, for example, or for internship. This is a different kind of CV that you need to remake for this purpose.

So, at the top we want your academic achievements – that means the degrees you've done, the dates from which you graduated, any awards you've got, GPA, put them all up front so it's very easy for the selection committee to see, tick, you're stellar. Then I would literally put three headings: one which you might call energy and extracurricular activities, the second heading, the third heading, would be community service – see where I'm going here? – and the third might be leadership. But what you would need to do under these two headings is show leadership.

And then list it in reverse date order, so that your most recent experience is at the top and put your dates down the left-hand side and then the information that follows. Captain Under 21s NSW hockey team, and the date might be 2017-2018 because you were for two years. Now, under those major three headings – one, two, three – you might have subheadings. You might have sport, artistic pursuits, right? Music. You might have done more than – you should lay that out so it's really clear for your selection committee. And of course you can put other stuff in there, but make sure you've got those three headings, clearly definable, and that you've got something in each of them.

Audience member: [Inaudible] in a lot of resumes for normal CVs [inaudible], high school doesn't count [inaudible]. On the Rhodes, would you say [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: Definitely put it on there. Say again?

Audience member: It was mentioned as a criteria that [inaudible].

Tamsin Pietsch: Yep, exactly. It's an eligibility criteria that you've been to an Australian high school. Put it on there, but also include the stuff you've done at high school in those lists. It really helps to know what school you went to. It's not a selection – it's not [inaudible] which

school you went to, but until this year, your school principal used to be mandated as a referee, so that's not, that's just to say that they're interested in what you did at high school.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: Um, if you have – if you think that's a particularly meaningful relationship, potentially yes. But you've got, I think you've got five referees – we'll come to that – and it specifies how many academic and how many speak to your character, your other pursuits, so you've got to use them quite carefully, to think about who's going to speak to which bits of your profile. And a school principal's a hard one, because they're not really academic and they're not really character. They're probably character. So you've used up one of your character references on your school principal. Does that make sense?

So, I don't know, if you've been going back and coaching the rowing club at your high school or you've been running a tutorial program at your high school in your spare time as a volunteering thing, then it would make a lot of sense to talk – yeah. But, yep?

Audience member: When we're writing the actual content under each of these headings, how detailed and what kind of language should we use?

Tamsin Pietsch: You don't want it to be a whole paragraph, but you sometimes need to give one sentence of context. Someone got to the final round when they played in the Australian league, it's called ultimate frisbee, but the governor, the head of the Australian Army, has no idea what ultimate frisbee is. So you know, you need to kind of put a sentence in there explaining that a little bit. And the names of the ultimate frisbee teams are kind of weird and don't reflect that you're actually playing for NSW, right? So, stuff like that is important.

But you know, you also …

Audience member: But also is there a page limit on it?

Tamsin Pietsch: There is a page limit. I can't remember what it is; it's on here somewhere. So yeah. There's a page limit on the personal statement I don't think there's a page limit on the CV, but you also don't want to piss your selection committee off. Right? It's like essays – some of you have probably been assessed by essays; you kind of want to make it easy for your marker to give you a high distinction. They're al lreading it three glases of wine in on a Friday night when they'd rather the watching Netflix.

Audience member: I think it's three pages for the CV.

Tamsin Pietsch: Three pages? See, she's read …

Audience member: I think.

Tamsin Pietsch: Straight to the finals for you.

[Laughter]

Okay. Does it say it there? Three pages. Do not include a photograph. Um, okay. Personal statement. This is the really important thing. You can read all this; it's on the website. Address your general interests, what inspires you, discuss your aims and priorities, tell us your reasons for studying at Oxford and what you want to do, demonstrate your eligibility criteria. If you want to do a PhD, you have to submit an additional brief of your proposal, of your research proposal. Does anybody want to do a PhD? Yeah?

Audience member: What if you're already accepted into a PhD?

Tamsin Pietsch: It's fine. [Inaudible]. Yeah? We need to talk about the PhD in a minute, so remind me to talk about that. It's a bit, doing the master's first and transferring to the PhD sort of solves a lot of problems on one level, but a lot of people do go straight to the PhD, so that's fine.

So, there's this. Your personal statement has to do a lot of work. It's got to convince the committee of this story I talked about and it's also got to brag like crazy, but you've got to do a bit of humble bragging, but it's still bragging, yeah? So, we need to know how amazing you are academically, but we need to know how that sits within the broader picture. So, what are your passions? What is motivating you to apply for this scholarship? What are those challenges, those big, public challenges that you think we all face, and why are you impassioned to do something about them? That's a great way to start.

And then you want to sort of zoom back and talk about how all those things that appear on your CV, how that evidences your passion for this thing. Now, of course, you don't have to have known since you were six that you wanted to be a cardiac surgeon and change the world by doing heart operations in, you know. Right? There's lots of circuitous routes, but you've got to tell the story of those circuitous routes. Sometimes we do something and it's a really transformative experience and we learn something from it and it causes us to change tack. So if that's happened in your life, tell that story. It's persuasive, it's real, it's not confected, and that's also how the people on the committee have lived, you know? And that might have occurred during your time at UTS, that might have occurred in your high school years, that might have occurred in your personal or family life.

And then situate the sorts of things you've done with your time, the commitments you've made, in the context of that story. Telling us what you learned by leading, what you learned by captaining, what you learned in the orchestra, what you learned setting up a film society at UTS, why you thought that was important. And then make sure on the second, you know, the last page of your, what's it called, the personal statement, you might have, like three paragraphs to do these jobs, tell us how Oxford fits in that story, so what degree you're going to do. If you're doing a PhD, you might have made contact with your department already – you might say that, you might name drop somebody you really want to work with. Say how and why that's an impressive and important part of your story, what it will change, and then what you want to do with it. Right?

So, why do you want to do, I don't know, having done a health degree at UTS, why do you want to do an MBA? It might be that you've got a vision for developing a new product that

you've been working on in your honours project that – there might be a reason for that story, but it's got to be a story. And end on something that's a bit bigger, right? It's your vision for the future. And I say that in a kind of – it's a concrete, it's concrete. It's not like I'm going to save all the whales, but you might want to be a marine biologist, or you might think that what climate change needs is somebody that can make persuasive cases in particular communities. So, you might have a sort of specific version of the save the whales.

So, does anybody have any questions about [inaudible]?

Audience member: Is there an element that they want to get the most influential people to qualify so that later on, Rhodes scholars have a high [inaudible]? Is there something about that in this process?

Tamsin Pietsch: Look, I think probably historically that has been the case, right? If you go to St Paul's College up at the University of Sydney, there's an honour board that's a mile long and it's got Malcolm Turnbull on it and a bunch of others, but the scholarship is really trying not to do – like, what, well, I certainly don't fit that profile. What I think it does is it gives you the opportunity to be influential, which is why they want really to invest in somebody with integrity, with passion, with a public spirit and vision – and of course achievement, can do all the stuff.

So, I really don't think committees think like that anymore. And I know because I'm picking the people that serve on the selection committees. So, not anymore. But you're right; you're not silly to come to this with that set of assumptions.

There were some other hands.

Audience member: What was your story? I'm curious

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah, that's okay! So, I grew up in the country in Australia as part of a very small German religious community, and I went to Adelaide University, which meant moving out to Adelaide, the big city of Adelaide where I lived in the seminary, because that's the only place my parents would let me do. And I did an arts degree because I really loved history and literature and I guess I did well at that because I really loved it, really. I was a massive nerd.

But I was very involved in the student society while I was at university, so ran it, and I played sport – I played hockey for South Australia. And then I went to Melbourne, got the University Medal, which some of you, I had no idea what the University Medal was. I was living in Melbourne and I got this letter and I opened it and I had to ring up the university and say, 'What's the University Medal? I can't be at the ceremony to accept it – does it mean I don't get it?'

And I was working, so I took a job – because I love books, I thought I'll take a job as a saleswoman for a publishing company. So, they gave me a big Ford and I drove around Australia selling books on frogs to Dymocks Wodonga, which was very dispiriting, because you might as well be selling toothpaste, you know? It was not fun. And I thought, oh my gosh, I probably can do better. So I wasn't very happy.

And I saw an ad in the newspaper, *The Age* newspaper, in the time when jobs were still advertised in newspapers, to be aide to the Governor of Victoria. And that was usually a job that was done by military, but it was the first year they were opening it to civilians. And what the aide did was organised everything the Governor did – wrote the Governor's speeches, lived in Government House with him, at the time it was a him, organised every event, including the visit of the President of Greece to the opening of Sunshine TAFE. It was an amazing job. And as this girl from the country – I think I got it; I think 500 people applied for that job, which is why 50 to 1 odds is good.

I think I got it because I was interested in the world and I was really engaged in ideas, and that's ultimately what they wanted. And in that job, one of my jobs was to run the Rhodes Scholarships selection process, and my professor had mentioned it to me back in the day and I'd kind of forgotten it. Nd then I got to Government House and I was writing the selection process. And all these people apply, and I had to read their applications and I was like, I'm as good as these people!

So, I put an application in in Adelaide, not in Victoria where I was working, because that would have been a conflict of interest. And I didn't get it in Adelaide; I got sent to Canberra, where all the good people get selected.

[Laughter]

And I was lucky to get it in Canberra. So, that time at Government House totally changed my life, because it made me realise how the world worked. And I was like this tiny little hick from the country. It was wonderful. But what I said in my application, which is maybe what you were actually asking, was that I wanted to run a museum or a cultural institution, because I thought the ways that we make meaning about the world around us were absolutely integral to the kinds of societies that we build. And that shouldn't just be something that people can do in universities; that should be something done in public, accessible to everyone.

So, I went to Oxford and I did a master's in history – I said, 'What I want to do is a master's in history and a PhD in history,' and they thought that was good, and I wanted to come back and run a museum. I still might do that. What happened was I did a PhD in Oxford, I did really well in my PhD and I got a postdoc there, which is also very hard to get, and so I stayed on for another three years. Then I got an academic job working in London, and then 10 years passed and I won a grant from Sydney University to come back and spend three years here – I still had my job in London – and while I was back in Australia, I fell in love. So I decided to stay.

So, now I'm back running the Australian Centre for Public History, which does a lot of work with museums and art galleries and public cultural institutions and I get to do a lot of work I said I thought was important.

So, that was my personal narrative. It had quite a few circuitous turns. And one question I got asked in the selection committee – I'll never forget this, in the interviews; this is a classic interview question, so write this down. I reckon 50 per cent of interviews you get asked this question: What's the best mistake you've ever made? And I said, 'Taking the job for the

publishing company.' Because although I spent two years driving around Australian in a Ford Falco, which was pretty dispiriting, I learnt a lot about Australia, but I also learnt my own value. And that has been a real grounding for the decision to do other things.

Anyway, that's my gig. Any other questions? Yep?

Audience member: [Inaudible] accepting the fact that the odds are fairly decent, what can we do to prepare for the interview?

Tamsin Pietsch: If you get longlisted – if you get to the first round of interviews – myself, together with a few other people who have run scholarships and done these sorts of things, will do a mock interview with you. So, let that be a problem for then. Yep? What I'm here to help you do at this stage is to prepare your CV and your personal narrative as well as you possibly can and after you've done that, once you've got longlisted, then we'll get to the next stage.

But I said I would talk about PhDs. So, with the PhD, you've got to provide an additional proposal for your research, and this will be used not – well, it's used by selection committee to assess your cred, basically, like if you're serious. But they're not able to make very specific judgements, but it will be used on the basis of entry to Oxford.

And one of the things you can do there to help the selection committee is to show that you've been in touch with the potential supervisor you want to work with at Oxford. So, it does pay to make contact, or attempt to make contact, and if you've got a professor here who knows someone there, that's a really good route in. And often what they'll say is, 'Yes, if you get the scholarship,' because they're not going to pay for you out of their funds. But then you can say, 'I have made contact with Professor Important Face …

[Laughter]

… who is the leader in microbiology blah blah blah [inaudible], and I'm really interested in his research team.' It's good to do some showing in this bit here that you have a specific knowledge of what you want to do at Oxford.

Any other questions at this stage? Who's feeling good about this? [Laughs] Yep, good. It's – look, this is a very wonderful and difficult thing to write, is a personal statement, but have a go at it, because it will really help you concentrate your mind on what your life's about. And that's what's really beneficial about it, and come and talk to me about what your life is about. That's what I'm here to do.

And I also want to say some other things that are very important, and that's about people who have more than two years of eligibility – more than one year of eligibility. So, if you are eligible to apply next year, it really makes a lot of sense, and you'll see this already, I hope, to think about it now. So, think, because there might be some things that you could add. You know, you could use your time differently. Often I've said to people, 'Go away and, I don't know, you're into water conservation? Go away and join the Landcare [inaduibel – coughing].'

So, there might be bits of your CV that are really good and bits that could be strengthened, and if you've got two or three years, now's the time to do that. And if you want to have a chat about what would be best to invest your time in, come and have a talk to me. If you need to work to earn money, also come and have a talk to me because there might be some jobs that can fit this story better than others, and just because you get paid for it doesn't mean it's not part of the story, but as I said, McDonalds is pretty hard to fit into the story.

So, that's something also to think about, and think seriously about, at this stage. Maybe you even get to interview, and you get some feedback from that interview process and you can go away and do something about that in the years to come. But at the same time, if all your activities start in 2019, the committee's going to go, 'That's a bit odd.' So, it's also about linking it to an ongoing story, the new investments that you make. Yep?

Audience member: [Inaudible] referees.

Tamsin Pietsch: Oh, referees. Yep.

Audience member: How much does the, I suppose, status of the referee matter?

Tamsin Pietsch: Um, I mean, medium to – sometimes yes, sometimes no. What really matters is that the person knows you well. You're not allowed to have anyone who's related to your write a reference, right? That's stipulated on that form. What you should all have is the dean of your faculty write a reference or the head of your school.

Now, the deans – oh, thank you. The deans have all be clued up about this, so it's [~not that] – you should approach your supervisor or your head of department or your head of school and say you're applying for the Rhodes Scholarship, and in effect, what might happen is that someone who you know really well, one of your lecturers, would maybe help the dean write the reference, but you should also have in addition to the dean or the head of school or your supervisor of your honours project or somebody that knows, that's working with you on an extended basis on a research project, and maybe somebody else. But you need usually three academic references. You've read the details more closely than I have recently – is it three academic references? And two character, yep.

So, thinking about who those referees are is also, there's a whole nother document in her [inaudible] about referees. That's really important, and the reason that the dean or the head of school has to be there is because they can do these things we were talking about. They can say – and they will explicitly be asked these questions by the reference process. Does this student appear in the top one per cent, five per cent, 10 per cent of their cohort? Does this student appear in the top one per cent, five per cent, 10 per cent of all the students you have ever taught? So – and they are the people that say, 'I expect this student to get the top honours in his year.'

I'm just going to ask this guy a question first – yeah, do you have one?

Audience member: I was just going to ask [inaudible]. I found that [inaudible].

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah. I mean, come and chat to me, because there might be some options there. If you've started a company with somebody or something then you might have a co-founder and it might be that that person's appropriate to write a reference, but it might also be that there's somebody else that we can find that can speak to that work by thinking a bit creatively.

But if it's your sport coach for the – sport is always an example – or the head of the, I don't know, I always make this crap up, but the head of the orchestra, the head of the NSW Writers Association or something – someone applied last year and they'd written a novel; they got the person who'd awarded them a scholarship ,the sort of prize for writing a novel, to write a reference. That was really good. Community service, it could be the pastor of the church or sometimes people have worked or volunteered for their local member of parliament.

But it could be something quite small fry. You might run your – you might be really involved in the community garden and it's the person who runs a community, runs the chair of the community garden committee, or Climate Change Balmain, the guy that runs Climate Change Balmain who's just Joe Bloggs, really. But they're somebody that knows you and the work you've done and can write fulsomely about it. It might your school principal if you've done a lot of, I don't know, coaching or something for the school.

Yep? Yep, I'll just – you've had a good go; we'll come back to you.

Audience member: Is everyone here invited to attend this meeting?

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah.

Audience member: Who [inaudible] and who selected [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: Are you here applying on behalf of a student? What …?

Audience member: Yes, honours student. [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: Okay, so you're not a journalist. That's good.

[Laughter]

So, because I think one of the bigger problems that places like UTS and other universities, and I've recommended that all universities do this, so this is not specific to UTS, is that our students don't know about the scholarship and if they do know about it, they don't think they're eligible. They rule themselves out.

So, what we did was we worked with the data from the Graduate Research School and we contacted everyone who got first class honours, so everybody who met the academic criteria that we had information for, we contacted them and wrote to them and then we wrote specifically to people who won the university medal.

Now, there might be some of you here in your second year, but you appeared on that list because the deans nominated you or there was some other process by which you were selected for your academic achievement, precisely because we think you should know about this and you should start thinking about yourselves as eligible for it. Now. Yep?

Audience member: Based on UTS?

Tamsin Pietsch: Based on your UTS results. You had a question?

Audience member: I was actually going to ask the same question.

Tamsin Pietsch: Oh, good. But you were at a different university. Yep. Well, same thing would have happened there.

Audience member: Are there similar programs like this one for the Fulbright and Monash or could we also do that through [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: You can come and talk to me about that, particularly the Monash. The Fulbright has – actually, the Fulbright Office for NSW is also based at UTS so I can put you in touch with that person, because the Fulbright – but I can also talk to you about the Fulbright. The Fulbrights are slightly different because you've got to kind of match with a specific institution to work with them, they have to agree to work with you and it's just a slightly different setup, but yes. I mean, it's an interesting – sorry?

Audience member: I think I might be in the same boat as that guy who left quite early, but I figured I'll stay around.

Tamsin Pietsch: I think it – it's good, and the Fulbright has come – the Rhodes secretariat came to UTS last year; the Fulbright's come this year; these are not coincidental things. So, there is an effort by UTS to invest in the academic excellence and it as a home for academic – these things were previously at the University of Sydney.

So, this process is designed to capture all of you and funnel you all towards those scholarships, so I'm really glad that you've stayed, because a lot of this is exactly relevant for the Fulbright. You have to tell a story.

Audience member: Because we don't have to have principals a a reference anymore and because you emailed out everyone who got a certain mark, do you think you're going to have way more than 50 applicants this year?

Tamsin Pietsch: Well, we emailed everyone last year and so the applicant rate went up – well, it nearly doubled last year. I think that there might be a few more than 50, but probably less than 70. I'd like there to be a lot more; I know that reduces your chances, but then, you wouldn't be here if I hadn't done this process so, you know, six of one, half a dozen of the other.

And I'd also love the applicant rates to go up for those other scholarship schemes. And there's others too – there's the Schwarzman that takes you to China, and there's others. So don't – this is part of a package of scholarships and it's really time that we stormed them. Yep?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: You have to have five.

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: That's correct, and then you need to have three academic. And there are some people who maybe crossover. You might have, I don't know, done something with one of your professors that might also count as extracurricular service. They're really great people, because they can speak about both. If you're, like, president of something at university, you've run a club or society or something, it's quite nice – sometimes you can get your professors to speak about that. It's quite good.

Audience member: I think you mentioned something earlier about spouses coming with you. What's the view of that? Is that [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: They are allowed to go. They'll get a visa that means they can work and they, there are some colleges that have couples accommodation, so they essentially get free accommodation. They don't [inaudible]. But that doesn't mean that you need to – the college stuff, just don't worry about that, because that all comes after you've been awarded it. It's really not – but there are some colleges that you should apply to rather than others, because some colleges don't have couples accommodation or [inaudible].

Audience member: It's going to sound really dumb, but the honours component, does it have to be based off research or could it be subjects or – because you can get your honours here through doing subjects.

Tamsin Pietsch: I think you came – no, it could be – whatever way you get your – I think you came late and we answered the question whereby some people might still be doing their honours thesis here so they don't have their marks yet, but that's where you get your referee to predict your mark. It still makes you eligible as long as you have it before July next year in hand. Yep?

Audience member: [Inaudible]

Tamsin Pietsch: Well, it depends how iffy, but look, they should be okay, because again it might depend a little bit on what your story is. Some people have really bad shit that happens to them, right? And then you turn it around, and that's part of …

Audience member: And that's maybe your strength.

Tamsin Pietsch: And that might be your strength, yeah. It's part of who you are. But you've got to have an explanation for that – you wouldn't just pretend it hadn't happened in your personal statement. You would talk about it specifically. So, failure can be okay, but you've got to accept – not an actual failure, because then your GPA tanks, but you know, what that would show to me is that you either were doing the wrong subject or something happened but you've had the real dedication and passion to take off once you hit your straps. Yep?

Audience member: Yep, so just asking [inaudible]?

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah. Yeah. Are you in your second year?

Audience member: No, I'm in a master's, so [inaudible].

Tamsin Pietsch: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Look, it's not going to – don't take this as an indication of your predicted marks. It's based on marks awarded. So, you probably did quite well in your undergrad degree or your entrance marks or your entrance marks for the master's were good, or you were nominated by somebody or your dean or somebody put your name on this list.

So, some of this is based on – fascinating why you care about that. The reason you're here is either because someone nominated you and if you don't have a mark yet from UTS, that will be the reason; because you got a good mark from UTS. Yep?

Audience member: So if you get [inaudible] so you would assume [inaudible] criteria?

Tamsin Pietsch: You'd assume that your predicted marks do.

Audience member: But if you've already completed the degree?

Tamsin Pietsch: If you've completed the degree, yes.

Audience member: Right. I was trying to work out that [inaudible].

Tamsin Pietsch: Look, they haven't done the calculation for every student in the university to convert it from four to the six-point, seven-point GPA. So, it's in the ballpark, yes. You'll be in the ballpark, but you would need to check specifically that you would meet those eligibility criteria. I know this is a bit hard, but because there's 40,000 students at UTS, what they did was they took the top cohort from all the degree programs with a degree as a proxy for people who have done well. Right? So, that was first class honours or other measures, GPA measures.

But because the GPAs are before, I think the people with 3.7 above, I can't remember what the conversion is because it's a weird algorithm based on your subject rating. So, you're in the area. Yes. The lights have gone out. Any other questions?

Audience member: You mentioned [inaudible] advantages?

Tamsin Pietsch: Massive. I mean, look, it's not going to guarantee that you get it. If you don't get the university medal, you're not going to not be in with a chance. But it really makes you stand out, so that's a great thing and you should be proud, getting the university medal.

Audience member: I feel like there's a trend of people who apply for these are more interested in public policy, human rights and culturalism and all that. I'm in IT. Will that still …

Tamsin Pietsch: A guy last year that won it did IT. So, you just, you know, you can still care about the world. IT for good, I don't know. But come – I know some of you are getting a bit ready to go, but before you go, just to reiterate, I'm available to talk to people one-on-one next week on Wednesday 31st. I think 31st is a Wednesday. Email me, Tasmin Pietsch, it's at the bottom of that email, or email Simone, Rhodes NSW, to make an appointment. You can try just rocking up, but I think there'll be people with appointments [inaudible]. But also feel free to come and talk to me now. Is there any other questions before we call it quits? Well done for being here. It's really good.