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Writing the UCAS Personal Statement

Successful Personal Statements

- ☆ Give specific evidence and examples of areas of interest and achievement.
- ☆ Show that the student has thought about the course and what it will require.
- ☆ Are generally two thirds subject based.
- ☆ Have been checked for spelling and grammar.
- ☆ Use extra-curricular activities to evidence skills

Guidelines for Writing

- ☆ 4,000 characters, including blank spaces.
- ☆ 47 lines including blank lines.
- ☆ Verdana font type size 10.
- ☆ A chance to tell universities why the student wants to read their subject of choice, and why they would be good at it.

Advice on Personal Statements is also available on the UCAS website:

www.ucas.com

Seek and listen to advice from your tutor, teachers, family, the Sixth Form team and our Outreach Officer Adele Rushton who runs personal statement workshops and can be contacted on 0116 250 6177 or by e-mail at armston@dmu.ac.uk.

Writing personal statements

Your personal statement is one of the most important elements of your application. It is your opportunity to sell yourself and secure an offer of a place. It's crucial that your statement reflects your personality, as well as showing your motivation and commitment to your chosen course.

What do I write?

There are no right or wrong formats. Here are just some suggestions.

☆ **Your course**

Show you've researched your chosen course. Why are you interested? What sparked your interest? What specific topics do you enjoy? If you're applying for more than one course try to identify common factors.

☆ **Career path**

If you have an idea of the career path you would like to follow, explain how the course fits.

☆ **Work experience**

Both related and unrelated to your course choice. Be specific about what you learned. Refer to transferable skills gained, for example, communication, planning, time management and problem solving.

☆ **Personal achievements**

Include any personal achievements and what they demonstrate, for example, participation in a fund raising event may have involved: teamwork, research and organisational skills, commitment and perseverance. Describe any positions of responsibility you've held, such as student mentor or team leader.

☆ **Extra-curricular activities**

You should include activities that support your course choice, describe any visits you have made; for example visits to art galleries for art courses or hospitals for nursing. Even if your interests aren't directly relevant it's important to give an impression of your personality, so mention any hobbies or gap year plans.

Top tips

- ☆ Aim to get your applications in as close to the start of the UCAS application cycle (beginning of September) as possible.
- ☆ Start thinking about personal statements weeks in advance—you'll need to write several drafts.
- ☆ As a rough guide, use half the space to write about your chosen course. Use the other half to write about your chosen career path, work experience, achievements and extra-curricular activities.
- ☆ Write in a positive style that you feel comfortable with, using simple words and clear sentence structures. Don't try to be funny as other may not share your sense of humour. Be analytical about yourself and the subject, rather than descriptive. Never start your personal statement, "I have always been interested in ...".
- ☆ Be honest! You may be asked questions on your personal statement at university interviews.
- ☆ Word-processed statements should be in 12-point type size as UCAS reduces the forms before sending them to universities. Hand written forms should be clear, legible and in black ink.
- ☆ Don't rely on a spellchecker, proof read as many times as possible. It can be helpful to leave a few days between drafts, as it's often easier to pick up spelling and grammar mistakes after distancing yourself. Ask your teachers, parents and friends to make final checks.

| DO NOT WRITE | INSTEAD WRITE |
|----------------------------------|--|
| I am captain of the hockey team | Being a captain of the hockey team |
| I enjoy playing sport | Having enjoyed playing football ... |
| I am studying A levels in ... | My A level subjects have ... |
| I enjoy socialising | Socialising is important to me because ... |
| I have taken part in ... | Taking part in ... |
| I have gained a number of skills | The skills I have gained from ... |

Personal achievements and responsibilities *(Add any relevant details)*

Have you been a prefect?

Have you been a member of your school council?

Are you involved in peer counselling or mentoring?

Have you completed the Duke of Edinburgh Award?

Have you helped to organise any events e.g. a fundraising event?

Have you taken part in school assemblies or helped with open days?

Extra-curricular activities *(Add any relevant details)*

Do you play a musical instrument?

Are you a member of a choir , an orchestra or a band?

Do you play any sports? _____

Have you represented your school or other organisation in a sport?

Have you represented your school in any other way?

Have you been involved with any dramatic productions?

Are you involved in any charity or volunteer work?

Do you have any other hobbies? _____

Have you been on any relevant visits, e.g. to art galleries for art courses or hospitals for nursing?

Anything else? _____

Your skills

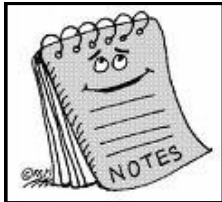
It is a good idea to mention any skills that you have gained through work experience or extra-curricular activities and give examples of when you have used them. Your work experience or hobbies may not seem directly relevant at first, but you will have used and developed important skills that will be valued by universities. You should mention skills that are relevant to the course, in addition to more general skills.

Use the section below to note the skills you have and examples of where you have used them. To help start you off an example is provided.

| Skill | Example(s) |
|--|--|
| Communication skills | <i>Dealing with customers face to face and by telephone when working weekends at M&S</i> |
| Organisational skills | <hr/> <hr/> |
| Working as part of a team | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Leadership skills | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Using information technology | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Creativity | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Problem solving | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Communication in another language | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Negotiation skills | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Anything else? | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| Consider specific skills relevant to your course | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |

Opening paragraphs of personal statements

Average:



'I want to study for a degree in Psychology; it is a subject which I find both intriguing and challenging. Eventually I wish to have a career that is related to Psychology ...'

These state the obvious and repeat information already in the UCAS form

'University has always appealed to me because of the wealth of experiences it has to offer as a student. Although I enjoy English Literature and Chemistry:

'I currently attend Ashby School. During Year 12 I gained 5 grade A As levels in geography, computing, business studies, maths and biology. I chose these as they

Good:

AV broadcast and production holds an immense passion for me, and I watch television and listen to radio broadcasts with increasing technical interest—it amazes me the effect that radio and music have on people's lives. My introduction to radio broadcasting

The crucial importance and relevance of politics, philosophy and their related disciplines to the modern world have led me to want to pursue the study of these social sciences at a higher

I am applying for English Literature first and foremost because I very much enjoy reading and look forward to extending my knowledge and my understanding of a wide range of texts: What attracts me to the subject ...



These are more interesting and demonstrate why the candidate is interested in the subject. There is still some evidence of cliché and obvious information.

Excellent:

These demonstrate personal and specific interests. They have a dynamic turn of phrase that shows the candidate has thought about issues around their chosen subject.

'JK Rowling had her midnight cafes; Roald Dahl's garden shed has produced wheelbarrows of children's literature and the Bronte sisters roamed the vast expanse of the Yorkshire moors. I personally retreat to ..



"Rule or body of rules established in a community and enjoining or prohibiting certain actions." In my opinion, this definition of Law could not be any clearer. However, many people still see the need to ignore these rules; whether they are ...

'Today the Middle East and Islam are in the spotlight at an unprecedented level. Nevertheless, it is true to say that it is not always represented in the most positive of ways. While we will all too often hear of a

Since each person is unique, from DNA to fingerprints, it's reasonable to believe that each of us also has a purpose, a reason for being that is uniquely personal.

Key Points:

Perhaps the most important part of the Personal Statement is evidence of your ability to persuade an Admissions Tutor of your suitability, commitment and enthusiasm to study a particular subject or course. Fill in the following boxes in as much detail as possible in order to help you do this.

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Give four fully developed reasons, in complete sentences, for choosing the course | |
| 1a | 1b |
| 1c | 1d |
| 2. What is the background of your interest in the course/subject? Write about your aims—what you expect to gain from the course | |
| 3. Indicate that you have thought about the demands of the course and that you have the skills to match | |
| 4. Write about any employment, work experience, voluntary work or responsibilities in school (e.g House Captain/ Senior Prefect) that is relevant to the course/subject | |
| 5. How was it relevant? (Working to deadlines, diplomacy, problem solving, using initiative, communication skills.) | |

6. List four areas of your academic work which particularly interest you.

6a

6b

6c

6d

7. Discuss resources or books read—be truthful, emphasise you enjoy reading and give examples.

8. Include a relevant reference to ICT at some stage.

9. Comment on your career plan.

10. Conclude with a statement linked to the degree course chosen.

11. Impress that you will take advantage of the opportunities offered by life at university.

Evidence of Research

At the beginning of your Personal Statement it is important to comment about your choice of subject and the specific course that appeals to you.

For courses which require top grades and for those universities which declare a large number of applicants for each place on offer you should consider writing in some detail about your choices.

How do I find out about courses?

There is no shortage of information to help you decide.

- ☆ UCAS website (www.ucas.com).
- ☆ University websites.
- ☆ University prospectuses and course leaflets.
- ☆ Higher education fairs.
- ☆ Quality Assurance Agency for teaching and institution ratings. (www.qaa.ac.uk)
- ☆ Higher Education Access agreements (www.offa.org.uk)
- ☆ Speak to your teachers, career advisers, family, friends and other students.

Points to remember when researching courses

- ☆ What are the course options? Look at the course content/modules as this will vary between universities.
- ☆ How long is the course?
- ☆ How is the course assessed? How much of the course is assessed by final exam, coursework or ongoing assessment?
- ☆ How is the course taught? What is the ratio of formal lectures and seminar versus independent study? Is there a final year dissertation/ research project?
- ☆ Are there opportunities to do a work placement or study abroad for part of your course?
- ☆ Can you study more than one subject?
- ☆ What sorts of jobs do graduates from the course go on to do?
- ☆ Are the entry requirements in line with your predicted grades?