

Applying to University and Personal Statements

Applying

- You have up to five choices and it is recommended that you use all five
- It is a good idea to look at the entry requirements and select a range of options – at least one top, middle and a lower entry requirement option

The Course

- The most important thing to think about is what does the course offer
- Check the details of the courses - All are different and you need to decide which is best for you (This is not just based on location)
- What content does the course cover?
- How is it examined?
- Is there the opportunity to study abroad/choose your modules?
- Check whether there are any additional requirements such as entry tests, work experience etc.

Personal Statement

Your personal statement is your chance to shine, show your qualities and convince admissions tutors why you should be offered a place.

For some courses, you may be interviewed and your personal statement can make the difference between you being invited for interview or not

For courses without an interview your personal statement is crucial in the decision to give you a place

This is your first impression and opportunity to show that you are a strong candidate

You need to make your skills and qualities explicit and provide examples of how you have achieved each one

Follow the rule that when you say you have a skill or quality you must demonstrate how, when and where you acquired it

Key Skill	Example
Organisation skills	Social events, holiday, event at school, raising funds for world challenge etc
Speaking	Presentations, drama, part-time job, customer service, prefect, peer mentoring, anti-bullying
Listening	Part-time job, care roles, prefect, peer mentoring, anti-bullying
Working independently	Part-time job, independent research, Duke of Edinburgh or similar, voluntary work,
Working to deadlines	Part-time job, coursework, other extra-curricular activities
Team Working	Sports teams, group work at school, Duke of Edinburgh or similar, drama production, music event
Using initiatives or problem solving	Extra-curricular activities, World Challenge
IT skills	Research, essays etc

Advice on how to write your personal statement

Your statement should:

- Discuss your choice of course
- Show real interest and enthusiasm for the course
- Show you have the skills suited to university life (e.g self discipline, self motivation, hard work and determination, commitment and sociability)
- Show you are somebody who will benefit from the course and university life
- Show yourself to be an interesting personality

Therefore do not describe yourself, but interests and experiences **but** show how they relate to the course and your suitability for university/college

Stage 1

State your reason for your choice of course

Reasons	Explanation
Enjoy the subject	Why?
Enjoy particular aspects of the subject	Which aspects?
Look forward to studying in greater depth	State specific aspects
Look forward to putting theory in practice	What in particular?
Developing skills required for the course	Which skills?
Work experience has confirmed interest	How?
Specific career in mind	Which career and why?
Other	Explanation

Stage 2

Show the course interests you

Interest	Details
<p>How do your A Levels/ Advanced courses relate to the course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-What relevant topics have interested you?-What relevant skills have you learned?	
<p>What relevant books or articles have you read?</p>	
<p>Who have you talked to about the course?</p>	
<p>What relevant experience have you had?</p> <p><i>Conferences, visits, speakers, exchanges, interests etc</i></p>	
<p>What specific aspects about the course you have applied for interest you?</p>	

Stage 3

How have your experiences of work/work experience helped you to become a more suitable candidate for your chosen course? (vital for some courses e.g. medicine, teaching) – content can vary from a sentence to paragraph

Skill developed	Specific activities that have developed that skills
Communication - Listening - Speaking	
Working independently	
Computer literacy	
Team work	
Managing others	
Working to deadlines	
Problem solving	
Using initiative	
Other	

Stage 4

How do your recent school experiences show that you will cope with your course and survive in an independent environment?

List experiences/responsibilities	What have you gained that shows you are suitable for the course/institution?
Union, music, drama, ICT, charity work, debating, event organising, sports/sports teams, school visits/exchanges etc	Self motivation, working on own, organisation, meeting deadlines, working well with others, self discipline, a balanced life, communication skills, problem solving, determination etc

Stage 5

How do experiences outside of school support your application?

Interests/experience	Details	Relevance
E.g. Reading	Science fiction (give author example)	Enjoy a wide range of literature
E.g. (holidays, visits, reading, theatre, music, concerts, films, cooking, museum, hobbies, clubs/societies)		

Stage 6

Conclusion

A brief final section that refers to your choice of course and/or your ability to be successful at university/college

Think of an experience, not already mentioned, that relates to your course

Think of a experience, not already mentioned, that relates to your suitability for your college/university

What have you already mentioned that you could use again to show your suitability for the course and/or college/university?

You could use one of these to write your conclusion

E.g

My work experience at... makes me confident that I am suitable...

It is because of my experience with.... that I believe I will make a successful student...

Having a long term goal of being... I believe I am partially suited to...

My experience during my studies... should prove ...

I am looking forward to building on my experience...

Structure

1. Your reasons for choosing the course
2. Any experience relevant to your application (roles and responsibilities)
3. Your outside interests (use these to substantiate your key skills and qualities)
4. If applicable , your plans for a year out travelling or working (point out the relevant skills, experience and knowledge you intend to acquire during this time)
5. Conclusion (Be persuasive! Clearly identify all of the reasons why you think you are an ideal candidate for the course. Keep it short and to the point)

Final Words

- Saying why you want to take your course is the most important part of your personal statement. You can have perfect grades, great extra-curricular activities and be a really great person but if the admission tutors feel that you aren't committed to your course, you won't get a place
- Use confident and direct language. Try to add variety to your writing while keeping your statement positive. Terms such as *in addition*, *strengthen*, *opportunity*, *furthermore etc*
- Try to avoid starting lots of sentences with I. For example, instead of writing "I am captain of the football team," you could use "Being captain of the football team... has enabled me to..."
- Read your statement out loud to ensure that it flows and that your use of language isn't repetitive

Final Words

- Use plain English and ensure your sentences are no more than 25-30 word. Remember long sentences can tire the reader and lose their impact.
- Be enthusiastic!
- Don't tailor your personal statement to just one of your choices
- Check you haven't contradicted yourself
- Remember to stick to the word/ character limit. Be prepared to trim your statement down if you need to.
- It is best to write it and edit it in a word document rather than straight onto your application

Final Words

Look at university websites to see if they have any advice about writing personal statements as these are probably written by admissions tutors

Proof read your personal statement! Ask a tutor, parent or teacher to read it and proof read it - particularly someone who knows something about your course. Avoid asking friends as sometimes you can subconsciously copy ideas without realising.

Don't

- Leave it to the last minute
- Dwell on the negatives or shortcomings
- Be overconfident
- Be biased towards a particular university
- Copy a statement from elsewhere or plagiarise
- Provide an inappropriate email address
- Lie

Advice from an admissions tutor:

- Students need to be fully engaged in the course they're applying for.
- If it's a course that requires work experience before applying/starting the course, students definitely need to include that in their personal statement.
- Also, try to bring out your own personality. Most personal statements start the same way, with a quote from Nelson Mandela or someone like that and it's very boring. Be original!
- Also, if the students have faced any hardship or struggles in life, they could include it in their statement. There's not usually enough questions asked by UCAS about Young Carers or someone that's been in care, so if they put it in their personal statement, universities can flag it and they'll get support once they start studying with us.