

UCAS applications

Why is the Personal Statement so important?

- The Personal Statement is the most important part of your UCAS application. University Admissions Tutors rely on the information you write here to make their decisions as to whether to offer you a place on their course.
- Many people with good grade predictions and good GCSE's will be applying for the same course as you, so you need to use this space to show why you deserve to be offered a place – it's your big chance to impress.

Most admission tutors will want to read about your

- Reasons for choosing the course
- Enthusiasm for your subject(s) and particular areas of interest
- Motivation and commitment to study
- Reasons for wanting to go to university
- Academic achievements (e.g. course prize, distinctions)
- Other personal achievements (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award)
- Extra-curricular hobbies and interests (especially if relevant to your course)
- Work experience, placements or voluntary work and skills gained from this
- Possible career plans
- Gap year plans
- Unique Selling Point! What can you offer? What makes you stand out from the crowd?

Admissions tutors want to read a statement that quickly gives them a rounded picture of you and helps them decide whether you'll make an interesting member of the university both academically and socially.

Top Tip

Check out Entry Profiles for the courses you are interested in on www.ucas.com and use your personal statement to demonstrate how you meet the entry criteria.

UCAS Entry Profiles

- Are written by admission tutors
- Give you specific information about a course
- Detail the formal entry requirements
- List the qualities and experiences admission tutors are looking for
- Can really help you structure your Personal Statement
- Are still quite a new idea so not all courses have one on the UCAS website but it's definitely worth looking!

Do your planning

Admissions tutors will probably see hundreds, if not thousands of UCAS forms, so the best thing you can do is not stick to a formula. Get ideas from teachers, parents, friends and websites, but make sure that the personal statement you submit is your own – remember it is supposed to be personal!

Try writing down everything you've done (from stacking shelves to starring in the school play) and work out what would be good to talk about.

Make sure your Personal Statement answers these questions

1. Why do you want to study the subject(s)?
2. What have you done in the recent past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject?
3. What else have you done that would contribute to the course and makes you interesting and unique?

Don't exaggerate!

While you should try to make your application as impressive as possible, never lie. Admissions tutors see lots of UCAS forms and they are not easily fooled!

Practical tips

- Start early
- Check your school's internal deadlines
- Read the UCAS 'How to apply booklet'
- Do several drafts – it's not something you can write in one attempt
- Start with key headings and make bullet points
- Turn these into strong sentences and clear paragraphs
- Avoid starting too many sentences with 'I'
- Make sure there is a logical 'flow' throughout
- Write a good ending paragraph that brings attention back to choice of degree and your potential to be successful
- Be concise (47 lines 500 words approx)
- Read the statement aloud
- Get someone reliable to read and comment
- Spell check and proof read
- Keep a copy (will be vital if you are interviewed!)

Common mistakes

- Putting it off!
- Rushing / not checking
- Wrong UCAS university and course codes
- Not completing all the sections
- Repetition and irrelevant statements
- Making generalisations
- Long lists
- Not backing up claims made
- Spelling and grammar mistakes

- Flowery language
- Pretentiousness, e.g. 'I was totally encapsulated by To Kill a Mockingbird.'
- Trying to be humorous – can be irritating rather than amusing!
- Frantic self advertising, e.g. 'My achievements at school were vast.'
- Stating a preferred university
- Conformity – be yourself
- Exaggeration (at best) or dishonesty (at worst!)