

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

MAKE YOUR APPLICATION STAND OUT

**Top tips for your
UCAS application**





UCAS PERSONAL STATEMENT

For the vast majority of courses, admissions officers do not interview. So with many students applying with very similar grades, the personal statement is one of the main tools universities use to make offers on their courses. In conjunction with an academic reference from your teacher or tutor, you need to use the personal statement to show us why you deserve a place. Here are some tips on structure, ways to enhance your understanding of your chosen subject and advice on writing your personal statement.



STRUCTURE

1. Introduction

Don't sit there with the cursor flashing trying to think of how to begin. Many students find that a good introduction will emerge from another part of their statement. Some students use quotes, which are fine if it truly reflects how you feel about your subject. Try thinking about your own personal trigger. Where did the curiosity and enthusiasm for the subject come from?

2. Your interest in the subject

What have you done to develop this curiosity? Have you done more than show an interest in the subject? Can you show ways in which you have started to engage and immerse yourself in the subject? What have you done outside of school or college? Why was this useful and can you link it back to the subject .

3. Wider skills

Give an account of your non academic achievements. What have you done over the last couple of years?

- Paid employment
- Volunteering
- Travel
- Student Union
- Groups & Clubs
- Prefect

You won't be able to mention everything. Pick two or three key points and reflect on

- What did you learn?
- Does it relate to the subject in any way?
- What are the skills you gained?
- Can they be useful to you at University?

4. Summary

Finish with a one or two line summary recapping:

- Why you want to go to university and study the course?
- Why you deserve to be offered a place?

Conclude your personal statement by briefly and concisely bringing it back to why you are a good choice for the course and university.

Highlight how you are prepared both **academically** and **socially** for the challenge of Higher Education.

WORK EXPERIENCE AND ENHANCING YOUR APPLICATION

Rather than spend two weeks in an office (probably filing and making cups of tea!) there are arguably better ways to enhance your personal statement. Don't be passive with your subject. Draw your own conclusions, follow up stories and links, are they reliable, what's an alternative point of view? You will be expected to do this on your degree programme, so why not start now. Consider:

- Reading outside the school and college syllabus
- University Websites – - also check our calendars of events
- Newspapers – comment on stories, or write a blog
- Academics Journals – great sources of primary information
- Follow academics on twitter
- Try a MOOC – a free, massive open online course
www.futurelearn.com



WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Redraft, redraft and redraft! It won't get written in a week or two. You will need to keep coming back to make it as good as it can possibly be. You never know who will be reading it, so it does not need to be clever, witty or funny. It should be well evidenced, have a good structure (paragraphs!) and be easy to read.

- **Don't** repeat information
- **Don't** offer undeveloped lists or use clichés
- Avoid unintentional humour, waffle or bluff!
- **Do** think about spelling, grammar, vocabulary
- **Do** add comments, views, explanations
- **Do** use your own experiences

TOP TIPS

- Plan out the structure with bullet points and headings, then turn these into full sentences and paragraphs .
- Use Microsoft Word, spell checking AND proof reading it before you paste it into UCAS
- Keep a copy in case you are called to interview (many courses have informal interviews/chats as well)
- DO NOT plagiarise (copy and paste) – you should be able to come up with 500 original words that can describe with some passion, as to why you want to spend three or more years studying a subject!

And remember....

- This is a personal statement after all, it's your voice we want to hear.
- There is no such thing as a perfect personal statement
- Show an interest, give us some personal insight and use it as an opportunity to sell yourself



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