

Personal Statements

Part of the UCAS application process requires students to submit a personal statement about themselves. This is the most important part of the application process and it is vital that you take time to do this properly. Most university courses do not have time to interview prospective students so an impressive personal statement could help make the difference between getting a place and not getting a place. This is especially the case where competition for places is high and prospective students have similar grades. Where interviews are held for courses, such as medicine, the personal statement may help the Admissions Tutors develop their questions.

The personal statement should take up no more than 4000 characters which includes spaces. This equates to 47 lines - roughly a typed A4 page comprising of about five paragraphs. Times New Roman 12 is the default font and font size.

If typing your personal statement in school, do not type it directly into UCAS Apply. If you take some time doing this or are interrupted, the web filtering system may eventually kick in, if you haven't saved your work, you might lose everything you have just typed! A safer approach is to type up your statement in Microsoft Word and copy and paste it into the personal statement box in UCAS Apply.

There is no such thing as an ideal personal statement - Admissions Tutors for different courses will be looking for different things. In general, however, they will be looking for evidence of the following -

What Admissions Tutors are looking for?

Correct spelling and grammatically accurate. Use positive language.

The reason the applicant has chosen a particular subject

Evidence that the applicant has carefully thought about their choice of study.

The applicant has carefully researched their course of study.

The applicant displays a sense of excitement, enthusiasm and curiosity about the subject.

The applicant displays a clear focus of where they see themselves going in future.

The applicant displays a range of transferable skills which will enable them to cope at university.

How things the applicant has done has set them thinking.

The applicant shows evidence of independent thinking.

The applicant conveys something about their personality and character.

Make sure you use positive language throughout the personal statement. An example of how positive language can make a difference can be seen in this article, Say the magic words, published in the Guardian in October 2005. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2005/oct/11/highereducation.uk3>)

A suggested template for a personal statement

Structuring the statement

Your statement should be based on 65% - 75% academic / course choice etc. and 25% - 35% should be extra-curricular both through school and out of school.

Why you have chosen to study a particular course?

e.g. Favourite subject at school, inspired by visit to a workplace, work experience, a careers talk, a visit to university department, a foreign holiday etc.

What you have done to follow up your interest in the subject?

e.g. Relevant work experience, arranged visits, meetings with relevant professionals, attended conferences or summer schools, reading material outwith school reading lists, watched, visited etc.

What aspects of the course you are particularly looking forward to studying?

Research university prospectuses for elements of the course which particularly appeal to you. Why do they appeal to you? This will demonstrate to Admissions Tutors that you have thought carefully about their course.

What you intend to do when you graduate?

Show that your degree will help you achieve your ambition to start a particular career or if unsure what you want to do at this stage, show awareness that a degree in your chosen subject could open several career opportunities.

What attributes do you have which makes you an interesting, responsible and committed person and what skills have you gained from these experiences?

e.g. School responsibilities - Buddy, Prefect, S6 Personal Development.

Sporting activities and achievements.

Musical activities and achievements.

Community and charity work.

Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Involvement in youth organisations.

Part time jobs.

Unusual hobbies

What benefits, experience and attributes have you gained from these activities?

A conclusion looking forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Warning!

Your personal statement must be unique to you. Do not be tempted to copy sections from examples of personal statements you might find elsewhere such as the internet. UCAS maintains a library of all personal statements submitted and adds to this others collected from websites and other sources. UCAS uses sophisticated anti-plagiarism software to scan every new application.

Almost 200 applicants in one year who had been guilty of plagiarising large parts of their personal statements were reported to the universities they were applying for and the applications were declined.

UCAS Statement on copying

Don't copy anyone else's personal statement or from personal statements posted on the internet. Make sure your personal statement is all your own work.

UCAS screen all personal statements across our Copycatch similarity detection system. If you are found to have similarity in your personal statement, your application will be flagged, you, together with your choices will receive an email alert and this could have serious consequences for your application.