

THE PERSUASIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Marketing,
Recruitment,
Admissions and
Outreach

The personal statement is your chance to make the best impression you can on the universities you are applying to, and for highly competitive courses, could make all the difference to your application. You can only write one personal statement, so you really need to use the opportunity to write passionately about your ambition, skills and experience to really convince the admissions selector to make you an offer!

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Admissions selectors are looking for information on your current studies, why you're applying for the course, and why you think you're suitable. They'll also want to know about your work experience, extracurricular activities and transferable skills (as these are important too), as well as about you as a person.

The course

Ask yourself: why do I want to study this subject? It's really useful to know why you're interested in the course, and what ambitions you have for the future. You could tell us about how your interest in the subject has developed, and any work or additional reading you've done to go 'above and beyond' your current studies that will evidence your commitment. This is especially important for competitive courses. Make sure you've done your research into the courses you're applying for, and identify the skills, qualities and experience they require – how can you demonstrate that you fit the bill?

Work experience

For some courses – such as medicine, nursing, midwifery, teaching – work experience is really important, and can enhance your application. It's important to remember that any work experience

can give you transferable skills – for example, in communication and team working – that will be really useful while at university. It is important to always check individual course pages for any work-experience requirements.

About you

Each of us is an individual, so admissions selectors are also looking for the real you. Have you been involved in any extracurricular activities that will help your application? These might be clubs or societies – sporting, creative, and so on. Have you done any volunteering work or developed skills through Duke of Edinburgh or the National Citizen Service? Have you taken part in any higher-education taster courses, summer schools or widening-participation schemes? Have you taken part in any Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)? Think about things you have learned, and skills you've gained from these, that would be useful to tell us about.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your personal statement needs to be unique and personal to you. A persuasive personal statement will take time, so make sure you don't leave it until the last minute. Think about the impression you want to give. Try to be enthusiastic, and use a concise and natural style. When you start your personal statement, you might worry that you have too much to say. It's important that what you say is relevant – so don't just say what you've done, but also what you've learned, the skills you've acquired, and how these are relevant to the course you're applying for. Give examples, take time to reflect and organise your statement logically, and don't forget that you'll need to be careful with your grammar, punctuation and spelling.

“The key to a good personal statement is to always sound like yourself. If there are museums you've been to, galleries you've volunteered or worked in, books you've read, or exhibitions or artists that you just love, even if you can't explain it, talk about that, because that's how we'll get to know you best, and realise that you'll bring something specific, exciting and new to the discipline.”

Professor Jason Edwards,
Admissions Tutor, Department of
History of Art

It's a good idea to write a few drafts, then cut and paste the statement into UCAS Apply when you're happy with it. You've got 4,000 characters and 47 lines, so check your character and line limit.

Allow time for proofreading and editing. Asking other people you trust to read your work is a good way to get feedback and ideas – and they may spot a spelling mistake you've missed!

If you need help to get started, then UCAS has lots of advice and resources available you might find useful.

Your personal statement should be all your own work. UCAS uses the Similarity Detection Service, which means they scan through your personal statement to spot anything which has been submitted before.

Remember, the personal statement may be the only piece of your written work that the University sees. If you're interviewed, the personal statement can help set the agenda for the interview discussion, so do the very best you can to make it stand out!

