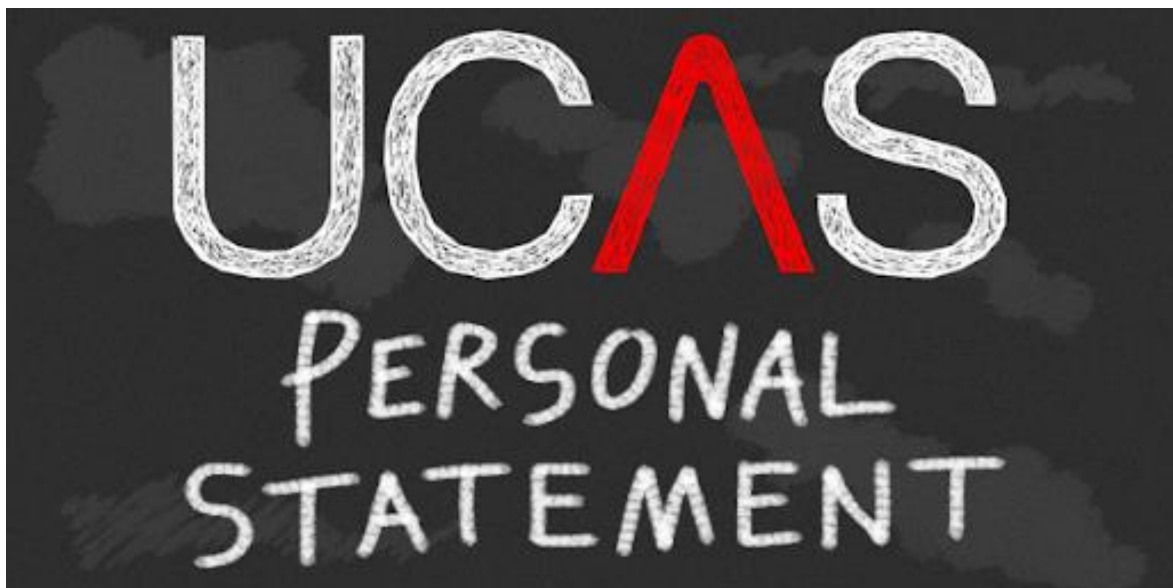


# **GUIDE TO COMPLETING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT – 2021**



## **STUDENT SERVICES INFORMATION BOOKLET**

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## What is a personal statement?

With approximately 600,000 people applying for university each year, admissions officers need a way to filter stronger candidates from the rest of the pool. Your personal statement acts as a filter. Therefore, you should demonstrate; why you want to do the course, what you hope to achieve, the attributes you have that would help you on the course and what you hope to do after the course. In essence, it is more a 'supporting' than 'personal' statement.

It is the focal point of your application and may take you many hours, and several drafts, before you have the finished article. In the end, you have just 4,000 characters (including spaces) to demonstrate you are the person for the course.

Each admissions tutor will only see their own course and university on their application, not your other choices. Therefore, make sure your personal statement does not mention individual course titles or universities but refers to courses using generic terms, i.e. 'My interest in Geology started when .....

A personal statement should be built up of Academic (approximately 2/3rds) and Personal (approximately 1/3rd) information.

## How do I write my personal statement?

This may differ from person to person, some may start doing a 'Mind Map' others just jotting down notes or making bullet points. However you initially approach it, remember:

- Complete as a Word document (**save regularly**) – transfer onto your application only when you have completed your personal statement.
- **Write like you.** Don't get caught up in trying to become a human thesaurus. ...
- Break it down. The whole personal statement may look like a mammoth task right now, so start off by **breaking it into more manageable chunks.** ... Use the Starting your personal statement form on page 10.
- Take your time – but this means planning your time and **starting early.**
- Be prepared to **draft and re-draft.**
- Use examples – back yourself up and **demonstrate your strengths!** Use the **ABC Method (explained at end of this leaflet).**
- Make it **your own work**, voice and ideas
- Be honest.
- Must be written in prose, with full sentences and paragraphs. Use formal, plain English, with no slang or abbreviations.
- Don't get hung up on the character count when you first start out. However, your end goal is a maximum of **47 lines** and **4,000 characters** (including spaces and blank lines).
- Check, check, and check again and get someone to proofread your statement!

# Layout

There is a variety of advice and tool kits across several websites, the UCAS website being the main one, advising on layout. However, breaking it down you should have:

- **Strong starting line.** Something punchy, this draws in the reader and peaks their interest so that want to read on.

**Academic Section (2/3<sup>rd</sup>):** This is where you explain **why** you want to study the subject.

- **First paragraph.** This should flow from the first line and clearly demonstrate your passion and suitability for the course. Why are you interested in the course subject, what do you hope to achieve by completing the course.
- **Main Body.** Write about:
  - Detail your experience, insight and understanding of the field that you are applying for, demonstrating technical / industry knowledge.
  - What academic skills do you have and explain how you have used them to good effect, i.e.; researching, presenting, Harvard referencing etc. Perhaps refer to a unit of your current studies that relates – what was it, why did it interest you, what did you learn from it and how will it help you.
  - Work experience / NCS / paid work (as applicable). Demonstrate any; skills, commitment and adaptability, responsibility, team work/leading you gained through undertaking any or all of these.

**Personal Section (1/3<sup>rd</sup>).** This is where you can show yourself as a rounded person.

- **Hobbies and interest.** What do you do in your spare time, how do you manage work / life balance. What is your outside passion – it does not have to be related to the course? If there is a hobby or interest you want to pursue at University mention it. Try to link you interests and hobbies to personal traits that an admissions tutor will be interested in.
- **Strengths & Qualities.** Soft skills, such as communication, team working, problem solving. How did you gain these skills and how will they benefit you during your course and/or career beyond.

**and finally,**

- **Last paragraph.** This is your opportunity to summarise and add a personal touch – detail what your aspirations are. Recap your suitability for the course, potentially revisit and example. Remind them on how you will fit in with the course but don't be arrogant or show off.

- **Last line.** Something bold to show your passion for the course and how the course will enable you to reach your ambitions.

**Top Tip.** Always make sure you are asking yourself ‘why this is being mentioned – what does it add?’ What is the relevance to your application? If it is not relevant, remove!

## What makes a good personal statement?

- Having a clear reason for your course choice. A ‘defining moment’ – a specific event or experience which led to the development of a strong interest in your topic.
- Enthusiasm for the course that you are applying for.
- Information on any roles and responsibilities you have had and what you’ve gained from them.
- Examples of work experience or relevant experience and details of what you learnt from these experiences.
- Straightforward language that states what you want to convey in a direct way only using use advanced terms relevant to your particular discipline.
- Work experience clearly and reflectively described with clear links made between what has been learnt and course / future career choices.
- Key words and phrases relevant to the subject.
- Career aspirations and how they are linked to the course.
- A strong opening and concluding paragraph.
- A sense of personality.

## What makes a bad personal statement?

**Lethargy.** In the personal statement, it's crucial to portray yourself as an energetic, engaged individual who deserves an opportunity to shine in a given role. Make sure your writing reflects the energy and optimism you'll bring to an academic position.

**Spelling or grammatical errors.** Typically academic positions are very competitive. Why, then, should evaluators select someone who doesn't bother to proofread an application? They won't, but will instead choose a more conscientious candidate.

**Humour.** Humour is often an effective communication tool. However, with a personal statement, it's difficult to know your audience (i.e. who will be evaluating your essay). Attempts at humour can easily fall flat or even offend so avoid.

**Platitudes.** Writing that you want to 'save the world' or 'make a difference' is not compelling messaging in the personal statement. Provide specific detailed information on your educational and professional goals.

**Lack of detail.** Specifically in regard to work experience or by not reflecting on what you have gained from your work and life experiences.

**Application information.** In the personal statement, there's no need to include your grade-point average or other information asked for elsewhere. Avoid repeating any answers requested on application forms.

**Exaggeration.** Unfortunately, some students feel the need to exaggerate or lie in a personal statement. Even if falsifications aren't caught during review of an application, they're likely to be discovered in an interview process.

**Repetition.** In crafting your personal statement, it's important to avoid repeating information. Poorly organised essays won't find favour among evaluators. Instead reinforce important themes in unique, strategic ways.

**Academic discrepancies.** Don't use the personal statement to address any potential problem areas in your application, for instance, a low GPA. Instead focus on the positive in the essay, leaving explanations for the interview process.

## What University Admissions Tutors will look for?

- For you to get their attention. This is your chance to **speak** to the admissions tutor and stand out.
- They are looking for statements where the applicant's **own voice** comes over clearly.
- **Why** you want to study the subject and for you to show that you have some of the skills to be successful.
- That you have conveyed **enthusiasm** about the subject.
- **What you think**, not just what you do.
- That **work experience** is clearly and reflectively described and demonstrates sufficient experience and interest linked to your chosen field.
- That you have demonstrated that you are **well-motivated**, have an understanding of what's involved and the level of commitment required.
- That you have the right level of **intellectual ability** to cope with the academic demands of the course.
- That you have **demonstrated** that you have considered your career aspirations and link them to the course.

- **How** you will get involved with university life and maximise the experience.
- **Reflection** on what you have learnt from **relevant** experience.
- Substantiated statements. They don't want to know that, for example, you are a 'highly-motivated person', they want you to give examples and **prove** how you are a 'highly-motivated person'.
- They want you to '**show, don't tell**' by explaining and giving examples on **how**, for example, your job improved your communication skills or how playing football has improved your team working skills.
- They will want to know about **both** subjects if you are applying for a **joint** or **combined** course.
- If you want a **gap year**, they will want to know what your plans are and how your plans **strengthen your application** – academically and personally.

## What do University Admissions Tutors use a personal statement for?

- To check that the course is appropriate for you.
- To check that you are appropriate for the course.
- To check that you fully understand the nature of the course – particularly if you haven't studied the subject at school or college.
- To get a bigger picture of you as a person.
- To help select a shortlist for interview (for some courses only).
- To develop questions for use at interview.

## Work experience

UCAS Track allows students to see feedback from Admissions Tutors about why their applications may have been unsuccessful. Often, a reason for rejection is insufficient work experience.

## Plagiarism

**Make sure that your personal statement is your own work.** UCAS puts all applications through their **Copypatch similarity detection** system, which identifies statements that have been copied from another source. Don't be tempted to copy another person's application materials or download your personal statement from a website. If any part of your personal statement appears to have been copied, UCAS will inform all the

universities and colleges that you have applied to. They will then take the action they consider to be appropriate. UCAS will also contact you by email.

**What the Similarity Detention Service does.** It checks each personal statement against:

- A library of personal statements previously submitted to UCAS.
- Sample statements collected from a variety of websites, and;
- Other sources including paper publications.

Each personal statement received by UCAS is added to the library of statements after it has been processed.

**What if there are similarities?**

- Any statements showing a level of similarity of 10% or more are reviewed by members of UCAS similarity Detention Service Team.
- Applicants, universities and colleges are notified at the same time by email when an application has similarities confirmed.
- Admissions tutors at individual universities and colleges decide what action, if any, to take regarding reported cases.

**Can anyone in the College check my personal statement?**

Yes, your tutor, PAT or Student Services.

You can book a 1:1 with Student Services by calling 01536 413232 or emailing [studentservices@tresham.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@tresham.ac.uk), attach your personal statement and ask for it to be reviewed. **However, please don't leave this until the last minute. The earlier you book the more support Student Services can provide.**

**Note:** whilst Student Services are happy to review personal statements, make comments and suggest amendments the decision as to whether you accept any or all of their comments or suggestions is yours and yours alone.

**Where can I get further advice?**

**Student Services.** If you are struggling, book a 1:1 through calling 01536 413232 or emailing [studentservices@tresham.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@tresham.ac.uk), Also check out Student Services on Moodle where there will be a range of information applying to University.

**Your Tutor or PAT.** Speak to them if you are struggling. They know your course content and you so perhaps could offer up some ideas.

**UCAS (<https://www.ucas.com/>).** UCAS has a variety of online advice, writing guide toolkits and videos that hopefully will help inspire you.



**Studential** (<https://www.studential.com/>). Here you can find a writing guide and rated examples of previous personal statements in relation to a wide range of courses. However, be careful of plagiarism. Algorithms will pick up plagiarisms in personal statements and, if they do, any potential offer may be withdrawn.

**Which? University** (<https://university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statements>). Their website has information and a personal statement builder.

## Draft your personal statement

Reasons for going to university and choosing your course – link to your interests and career aims:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Current studies – be positive and mention areas of particular interest.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Work experience – don't forget transferable skills! Link to your course.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Hobbies and interests – sound enthusiastic and be specific. Any specific achievements you are proud of?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Summary of you as a person and why you would be an asset to any university (but don't brag)

## The ABC Method

**Activity - What did I do?**

**Benefit - What skills have I gained?**

**Course - How does this show my suitability for the course?**

Look at our example below, then have a go for yourself.



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**A** Captain of the netball team

**B** Communication and team work skills

**C** When studying Business Management, you need to be able to communicate on group projects.

**A + B + C =** As captain of the school netball team, I have a have developed the ability to communicate and inspire my team mates, leading us to victory in the 2018 South West Schools' League. These skills will be useful in the collaborative business world where teams mainly work together on projects.

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**A**

**B**

**C**

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**A**

**B**

**C**

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**A**

**B**

**C**