

GUIDE TO COMPLETING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT – 2024/25



STUDENT SERVICES INFORMATION BOOKLET

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Struggling? Speak to Student Services.

Contents

What is a personal statement?

Important deadlines

What University Admissions Tutors will look for?

How do I write my personal statement?

5 paragraph layout – completing your personal statement.

Paragraph 1 – Why?

Paragraph 2 – Academic knowledge.

Paragraph 3 – Work experience and employment.

Paragraph 4 – Interests and responsibilities.

Paragraph 5 – Conclusion.

What makes a good personal statement?

What makes a bad personal statement?

What do University Admissions Tutors use a personal statement for?

Work experience

Plagiarism

Where can I get further advice and support?

External support.

What is a personal statement?

Personal statements are probably the single most important part of a UCAS application. They provide a way for universities to sift out stronger candidates from the rest of the pool. It acts as a filter and is normally the deciding factor as to whether you are offered an interview or a place on your chosen course.

For you to stand the best chance possible your personal statement 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
- What you hope to do after the course.

Also, make sure that at least 70% is subject and course based and approximately 30% relevant wider interests.

Being the focal point of your application, it can take you many hours, and several drafts, before you have the finished article and 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

Important deadlines

Closing date for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine Applications:

College advisory deadline: 9 October 2024

UCAS deadline: 15 October 2024

All other UCAS applications:

UCAS deadline: 29 January 2025

Universities and colleges **DO NOT** have to consider applications received after the deadline, although they can if they have spaces available once the on-time applications have been considered.

UCAS Conservatoires (music, art, drama, dance, musical theatre, film and production courses):

Conservatoires can have different deadlines, please check the conservatoire's website: <https://www.ucas.com/conservatoires>.

If you are applying to a conservatoire via UCAS Conservatoires, please contact the relevant Head of Department for a reference.

What University Admissions Tutors will look for?

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- 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.

How do I write my personal statement?

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

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- Complete as a Word document (**save regularly**)– transfer on to 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 notes sections.
- Take your time – 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!**

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!

Common Mistakes – Things not to add.

- Put your name on your personal statement.
- Create a heading of personal statement.
- Mention a specific university.
- List the course and place you are studying (they can see this on the form)
- End with - Thank you for reading.

5 Paragraph Layout – Completing your Personal Statement

Breaking your personal statement into 5 specific paragraphs may help you focus. You do not have to write these in order.

Paragraph 1 – Why?

Here is where you demonstrate your passion about your course and potential career choice. Be enthusiastic, honest. **Never** use statements such as ‘I have always been passionate about’, or ‘I have always wanted to...’ because you haven’t and it will devalue your personal statement.

Alternatively, have a **strong starting line**; something punchy. This draws in the reader and piques their interest so they want to read on.

In this paragraph you must make the following clear:

- Why this subject? What motivates you to complete this degree.
- Demonstrate your passion.
- What value do you see in studying this degree, both individually and to society?

Write some notes here:

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Paragraph 2 – Academic knowledge

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How do your current studies relate to your course choice? How have they prepared you for this type of further study?

- Always keep your chosen course in mind and find links (even obscure ones) between your current studies and your chosen degree subject;

‘Studying Biology alongside Psychology has helped me understand the links between physiological and neurological systems and behaviour; for example, how reduced levels of serotonin contribute to the onset of Seasonal Affective Disorder’.

Ensure you have written about all of your subjects, and how the skills you have acquired support your application.

- 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.

What additional academic work have you done? For example:

- What have you recently read (books, articles etc.) about this subject? What did you find interesting and why?
- Which podcasts do you listen to relevant to your subject choice?
- Have you visited any galleries, museums or exhibitions? What did you find thought provoking about them?
- Have you attended a relevant summer school or lecture series, including online?
- Have you completed any relevant MOOCs, TED Talks, Future Learn courses, Masterclasses, Taster Days?
- What is in the news, fashionable and/or new in this subject?
- Where might this course lead you?
- Write about what you have learned.

Write some notes here:

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for taking notes.

Paragraph 3 – Work Experience and Employment

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Here you need to demonstrate your 'soft/transferable skills' gained through work experience and, if appropriate, employment. Here are some examples, which can be used here and potentially also in paragraphs 2 and 4

ACTIVITY	EXAMPLES OF SKILLS/QUALITIES DEVELOPED
Work Experience	Responsibility, punctuality, team work, enthusiasm, ideas person, communication
D of E, Mentor, Prefect, Ten Tors	Communication, confidence, leadership, reliability, motivation, problem solving, decision making
Relevant recent study	Subject knowledge, passion for subject, enthusiasm, willingness to learn
Hobbies and volunteering	Commitment, motivation, sense of achievement, time management, social skills
Travel and holidays	Research, planning, budgeting, organisation, patience, independence

However, it is not enough to just list the skill, you need to demonstrate how you acquired or developed the skill and then link it as to why this skill may help you during your chosen course and career. Think ABC

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 developed the ability to communicate and inspire my team mates, leading us to victory in the 2023 South West Schools' League. These skills will benefit me during this course and later in the collaborative business world where teams mainly work together on projects.

Some useful buzzwords are:

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Confident | Dependable | Efficient | Empathetic |
| Approachable | Independent | Proactive | Organiser |
| Problem solver | Punctual | Sensitive | Team worker |
| Honest | Time management | | |

Write some notes here:

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- what are your outside passions – it does not have to be related to the course, and;
- mention any hobbies or interests you want to pursue at University.

Things to include, provided you make them **relevant** to your application are: voluntary work, independent travel, Prefect roles, clubs, sports, societies, conservation work, part-time employment, DofE, Cadets, Scouts, Subject Coaching, Peer Mentoring, dance, fitness and anything you have organised.

Use the ABC Method, detailed above.

Write some notes here:

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Paragraph 5 – Conclusion

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

Remind the Admissions Tutor that the study of your chosen course is your prime objective. Refer back or make a link to your opening statement. Make sure that the concluding paragraph has an air of finality:

'I look forward to the challenge of working in one of the fastest developing global industries and feel that I have the ambition and drive to succeed'.

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

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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 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 have not 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.

Plagiarism

Make sure that your personal statement is your own work: UCAS puts all applications through their **Copycatch 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.

Struggling? Speak to Student Services.

- 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.

Where can I get further advice and support?

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, 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.

External Support

[How and what to write](#)

[Personal statement FAQs](#)

[Preparing your Personal Statement](#)

[Personal Statement worksheet](#)

[Top Universities: How to write a UCAS Personal Statement](#)

[How to structure your Personal Statement](#)