

PERSONAL STATEMENT GUIDE



Barton Peveril
Sixth Form College

WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

The UCAS Personal Statement is your opportunity to demonstrate your passion, desire and suitability for the course(s) that you have decided to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and, above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd.

What is its purpose?

Your Personal Statement should aim to explain three key ideas:

- Why you want to study a particular course
 - You should cover your reasons and motivations for applying for this course. Think about your chosen subject, the specific areas within it that you are interested in, your reasons why you have chosen that subject, and finally, any experiences you have which relate to it.
 - What you have done to demonstrate your interest in the subject. - For less practical courses, the emphasis must be on proving that your intellectual curiosity extends **beyond** the A-Level syllabus. Talk about the books and journals you enjoy reading, TED talks, tv programmes or lectures you have seen; think about which articles have influenced you and discuss developments in the field which have intrigued and challenged you.
- Why you will excel at the course
- (where possible) how your other interests support and complement your study - This is particularly important for practical/vocational courses (medicine, engineering etc) as you need to convince tutors that you really have gone out of your way to find out what your chosen career entails in practice as well as in theory. You must also use the Personal Statement to reflect on how these placements developed your skills in a way that is of direct relevance to the course for which you are applying.
 - If you are applying to the most competitive universities (Oxbridge etc), you would reduce the proportion of time you spend on extra-curricular interests to about 15%

You have **4,000 characters** (or 47 lines) to do this in - this is not a lot! The limit is a key test to check whether you are able to convey your reasons for wanting to study in a clear and succinct way. Make the most of the space and try to use all characters available -being too brief may make you sound uninteresting but NEVER use unnecessary words or sentences. 5 or 6 paragraphs are about right.

MAKING THE BEST IMPRESSION

- Show your motivation and genuine enthusiasm for your chosen course.
- Show academic enthusiasm
- Universities want to know what kind of person you are, so you need to show them you have done more than just A-Levels/ diplomas
- Give them insights into your super-curricular activities, personality, interests, achievements and relevant work experience

REMEMBER

You can only write one Personal Statement, so consider this when choosing courses. If you are applying for different subjects, try to choose similar or allied subjects as this will make it easier to write a personal statement which is relevant to both courses.

If you are applying for a joint course, you will need to explain why you are interested in both aspects of the joint programme.

STRUCTURING YOUR P

WHY

Why have you chosen to study this?

Ask yourself what inspires you about your chosen course and dig a little deeper.

- WHAT sparked your interest?
- WHAT did you do as a result?
- WHICH particular aspects do you enjoy?
- HOW did work experience help?
- WHAT skills do you possess?

It is always better to imply rather than state your passion. This can be done by using anecdotes, examples of elements of the subject which interest you, reference to experts in the field or something from your life experience which has led to your interest in this field. The intro is about what SPARKED your interest - it's not like an essay introduction

Examples:

"I want to be at the forefront of..."

"Emile Durkheim's concept of 'Collective Conscience'..."

Avoid "I have always been passionate about..."

"From a young age..."

ACADEMIC

How do your other courses relate to your chosen course?

Relate your chosen course to your full range of studies, but be tactful when doing so! Creates bridges from your chosen subject to your other courses by finding links between them. Though this only makes up a small part of your statement, it is crucial to do so!



WHAT

What have you done to demonstrate your passionate interest in the course?

Here you are demonstrating your enthusiastic interest in your chosen subject (and in academic study generally) and how your academic experience had urged you to discover more.

You can always start with something from your syllabus, but be sure to take it a stage further. This can be done through discussing your EPQ and any wider reading or any subject specific talks, courses or conferences you have attended. Think of themes that show that you have really engaged with your subject and that you can demonstrate a learning journey.

Clearly relevant work experience can demonstrate certain qualities required by particular courses. However, don't talk about work experience just for the sake of it. Make sure it has a purpose! Work experience is only a requirement for courses like Medicine and Nursing; For other courses your reading and super-curricular learning are much more important.

Examples:

"Having been inspired by the A Level syllabus, I have attempted to broaden my knowledge..."

"I attended a talk by a University of Southampton Lecturer..."



PERSONAL STATEMENT

INTERESTS

What have you learned from your activities that is relevant to your chosen subject and to university life?

Now it is time to tell them a little bit about you! Universities and colleges want to see you relate your school/college activities and general experiences outside of education to your suitability to living and working independently at university. You want to show that you are an interesting and mature personality who will thrive and benefit from life at university. However, make sure what you mention is recent and relevant! Pick a couple of recent experiences then describe the activity and the skills you have learnt from it. **Remember to always keep your chosen course in mind! For Oxbridge and top Russell Groups this section should be a maximum of 20% of the statement**

“A regular period of voluntary work with...has provided me with...”

CONCLUSION

What personal experience or ambitions can you link to your chosen course to give the statement a sense of completion?

The purpose of your conclusion is to remind the reader that your prime objective is to study your chosen course. You can return the reader to the beginning of your personal statement and create a circular structure which will give your statement authority and a sense of completion. Alternatively, you can construct a bridge from the end of your final section.

VOCATIONAL PERSONAL STATEMENTS

If you are planning to study a vocational subject, you are expected to have demonstrated a specific interest in your chosen career. If you want to be a Medic, a Nurse or Vet, then it is essential to demonstrate that you have first hand experience and knowledge of your chosen career

You should demonstrate in this section your awareness of the demands of your chosen subject beyond the academic syllabus. Make sure your enthusiasm and work ethic shine. Write your experience and pair it with your knowledge, understanding and insight gained throughout this time

For other vocational courses, such as Business Studies, this section should be more focused on the skills and knowledge acquired through your work experience.

DOs and DON'Ts

DOs:

- Research your chosen subject(s) and providers
- Be specific, enthusiastic and tell them something about yourself
- Write what comes naturally
- Ensure it flows and has a good structure
- Check it is free of grammar and spelling mistakes
- Get it proof-read - either by friends, family, teachers, your tutor or pop in to see someone in the careers department.

DON'Ts:

- Include misleading information or lie
- Take risks with what you include
- Plagiarise
- Swallow Google Thesaurus!
- Be obvious, cliché, or dull
- Waffle or have a lack of structure
- Undersell yourself!
- Use bullet points or lists
- Leave it to the last minute
- Submit without checking it

Top Tips:

- Remember admissions staff have all the facts about you on other parts of your UCAS or application forms (including details of what you are studying and your predicted grades). Therefore the Personal Statement should be used to show them your wider knowledge, interests and skills. It must not repeat information they already have.
- Start your statement with an opening paragraph which grabs the reader's interest and shows your enthusiasm.
- Don't be too vague or generic. Use your Personal Statement to give them a sense of who you are as an individual, and what kind of student you will be.
- If you are doing an EPQ, write about your EPQ! Universities want to hear about the wider reading and work you are doing, and it is a great way of demonstrating your ability to work independently and show intellectual curiosity beyond your A Levels
- Always keep your course choice in mind!
- Some universities or colleges may use your personal statement as the basis for an interview, so be prepared to answer questions on it.

REMEMBER...

Nothing is set in stone until you submit your personal statement, do don't be afraid of drafting and redrafting. Your personal statement will not be perfect on the first draft, therefore you need to take your time and create several drafts until you are happy with the final product!

For help please see your Tutor, you can also drop into the Progress Zone to see the Careers Team any lunchtime.

More resources are available on the Progress Zone site, accessible from the studio homepage.

Contact: careers@barton.ac.uk