

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

What is it?

The personal statement is an opportunity to demonstrate your suitability for university and the course for which you are applying. You need to highlight what makes you a thoughtful, conscientious student who has a real flair / passion for your chosen course. It is an opportunity to 'sell yourself' and make you stand out from other applicants. It is 4000 characters long including spaces.

SIMILARITY DETECTION TESTS

“We will subject applications to similarity detection tests designed to identify work copied from another source. Do not be tempted to copy another person’s application materials, or download your personal statement off the web. There could be serious consequences to using other people’s work. If we have cause to question your application, we will inform all the universities and colleges to which you have applied. They will then take the action they consider to be appropriate. We will also contact you by e-mail. Click on the detection similarity link to find out more.”

UCAS, 2014

A Plan for your Personal Statement

Introduce yourself – where and what you are studying.

- Do **NOT** start with ‘My name is ..’.

Describe/name the degree courses you are applying for and try to add a sentence at this point to connect your choices with your keen interest in that area and/or possible plans for the future.

- **Be careful if you are applying for different subjects, the same statement has to cover all courses applied for.**
- **You may want to include any career intention you may have**

Write a couple of sentences on each of your AS/A2s, your interest in it and any interesting details, special subjects, personal study themes, titles of books, blogs, field research, experiences abroad, your strengths such as ability to research independently, coursework, hitting of deadlines.(A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT WILL BE 75-80% BASED ON YOUR ACADEMIC STUDIES)

- **Do this for each subject and write a bit more if one or two of them are particularly relevant to your choice of degree course. This will probably be the case.**
- **Remember you are trying to show evidence that you can cope and benefit from the course for which you are applying**

Write about other achievements and interests in school – D of E, Sports, Peer Counselling and other enrichment activities, Heads of House, Music, Charity Committee etc. Make sure to emphasise relevant transferable skills – commitment, organisation, ability to work independently, leadership skills, project management, ability to communicate, maturity etc.

Write about experiences / interests / hobbies out of school. Mention any work experience or work if you exercise responsibility and can make it relevant. Remember that even mundane work can show you have a range of skills – commitment, communication, dealing with the public etc. If you are planning to take a gap year give your reasons why / what you are going to do

Try to finish off by re-emphasising the mature choice you have made in making this application and be confident enough to describe yourself as a good applicant.

Introduction

In-school evidence of your interest in the subject and discussion of transferable skills from your Sixth Form study.

Outside-school evidence of your passion for the subject (wider academic reading, blogs, voluntary work etc

Wider skills you have developed

Summary of why they should pick you

You have to show you are the kind of person that can motivate yourself to do things outside the classroom or lecture theatre. One excellent way of demonstrating this is through wider reading, and admissions tutors are looking for students who are willing to read around the subject in their own time. One of the best places to look for reading lists is on the university website. They usually have a list of suggested books for undergraduates. Ask teachers or even call the university department you want to apply for – they'll be happy to recommend a book or two.

List all extra-curricular activities you may have done and crucially those specifically relevant to the course you have chosen.

ACTIVITY	TICK	DESCRIPTION	WHY HAS IT MADE YOU MORE SUITABLE?
Outside Reading		Read the Economist regularly	Understanding economic concepts and keeping up to date with current affairs
Outside Reading			
Theatre Trips			
Exhibitions			
School Clubs			
Clubs outside school			
Voluntary Work			
Museum Trips / Historical Sites			
Trips Abroad			
Community Activities			
Documentaries			
Articles			
Hobbies			
Work Experience			
Competitions/Prizes/ Awards			
Workshops/Programmes			
Summer School			

WIDER SKILLS

This is where you will give an account of your non-academic achievement and skills either in or out of school and your interests and hobbies. Cover any extra-curricular activities not necessarily related to your course and give the admissions tutor a glimpse of the kind of person you are outside the classroom and most importantly what skills you've developed through those interests, hobbies, sports, work experience, or a part time job.

Fill in examples of how you've developed some key skills.

SKILL	ACTIVITY
Communication Discussion	
Commitment Motivation	
Time Management Ability to Meet deadlines Hard-Working	
Teamwork Reliability	
Initiative Independence	
Public Speaking Presentation skills	
Sense of Responsibility Determination	
Adaptability Creativity	
Organisation Confidence	
Leadership Problem-Solving	
Research & Analysis Evaluation	

Extra Curricular Activities by Subject

For any student taking any subject you must call your chosen universities and find out if they are running any summer schools, access programmes or open days for your subject. They will give you the chance to really see what the course is like, and conveniently boosts your personal statement too. For more subject specific tips, read on:

Accounting

Attend insight days head by accountancy firms such as Grant Thornton. Demonstrate how you have applied maths to a real situation. Show awareness of why accounting is so crucial to business and economics.

Useful resource: www.accountancyage.com

Architecture

Visit inspiring buildings and make notes on why you find them interesting. Keep up to date with new architectural developments and techniques. Study the work of famous architects. Useful resources: The Architects Journal, Architectural Review and The RIBA Journal

Art & Design

Visit art exhibitions and design shows. Choose a few favourite artists and designers both past and present and familiarise yourself with their body of work. Devise extra-curricular projects. Learn how to use programmes such as InDesign and Photoshop. Useful resource: www.creativereview.co.uk

Business Management

Read the Economist and the FT regularly; follow 2 or 3 stories in detail. Participate in business challenges such as Young Enterprise, or the ICAEW BASE competition. Apply for placements and get experience in a range of fields within a business. Useful resource: www.managementtoday.co.uk

Chemistry

Check the Royal Society of Chemistry website for updates on events you could attend. Discuss how advances in Chemistry affect our day to day life. Read Chemical Week for day to day news. Useful resources: www.rsc.org/chemistryworld and www.chem-ilp.net/labtechniques/labtechtechniques.htm

Classics

Read books such as The Iliad by Homer and the Aeneid by Virgil. Learn basic Greek and Latin in your spare time. Visit Hadrian's Wall or a similar historical site. BBC Radio 4 has some interesting programmes on Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome. Useful resource: classics.mit.edu/

Computer Science

Set up your own website – even it is just for fun. Read Computational Fairy Tales by Jeremy Kubica. Research a famous computer scientist such as Alan Turing and discuss their influence on the world today. Look up and understand the four main concepts of computer science. Useful resource: www.livescience.com and www.cs.ox.ac.uk/geomlab/home.html

Drama & Performing Arts

Get a role in your school productions, whether on or off stage. Visit the theatre frequently, and compare productions. Read different plays and make notes on how you would direct key scenes. Ensure you have knowledge of all genres, eras and styles of theatre. Read reviews. Useful resource: www.the-stage.co.uk

Economics

Make notes on stories about the economy, both national and global, that interest you. Ensure that you fully understand the current recession and the Eurozone. Try to get work experience or attend an insight day at a leading financial firm. Read the Financial Times and the Economist. Useful resource: www.res.org.uk

Engineering

Study structures that you admire in great detail and ensure you fully understand how and why they work. Think about your favourite gadgets – what problem do they solve? Try and invent something that solves a problem, however small. Have an understanding of the different areas of engineering. Useful resource: 'Engineering or Education' or 'Applied Sciences, Engineering & Technology' publications

English Literature

Read, read and read! And not just novels, read plays and poetry too of all eras and genres.

Geography

Research current global issues such as the environment and population – be able to discuss your findings in depth. Become a member of the Royal Geographical Society. Useful resources: 'National Geographic', 'Geographical Association' and www.rgs.org/geography

History

Visit historical sites, museums and exhibitions. Read books, watch documentaries and even films set in historical times. Demonstrate your understanding of biased and flawed evidence. Carefully read the course syllabus: will you be studying ancient or modern, British or International, or a bit of everything? Useful resources: www.historytoday.com and www.royalhistoricalsociety.org

History of Art

Read *Critical Terms for Art History* by Nelson and Shiff. Listen to BBC Radio 4's 'In our Time' Culture Archive online. Visit art galleries, make notes on the artists and their place in history. Useful resource: www.metmuseum.org/toah/

Law

Attend insight days run by law firms. Volunteer to help out at your local solicitor's office. Follow cases in the news of high profile cases in a variety of areas (criminal, commercial, property, family etc). Useful resources: 'The Lawyer', 'Lawyer 2b' and 'The Law Journal UK'

Linguistics

Ensure that you understand the difference between linguistics and languages. Read Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* and Steve Pinker's *The Language Instinct*. Practice some basic phonetics by writing down sentences in the phonetic alphabet. Useful resource: www.lingforum.com/forum/

Mathematics

Research mathematical theory that is outside the A-Level curriculum, e.g. Fermat's Last Theorem, Euclid's Proof of the Infinitude of Primes, Pythagorean Triplets and Jordan Normal Form Theorem. Make notes on the ways in which mathematics can be applied in society such as engineering, economics and computer science. Useful resources: www.lms.ac.uk and www.plus.maths.org.uk

Medicine

Attend a summer school for budding medics at any Top 50 university, even if you don't plan to apply there. Volunteer for work experience at a hospital, GP's surgery, hospice for the elderly or school for disabled children. Discuss: NHS vs private hospitals. Following interesting cases and scientific breakthroughs. Useful resources: www.bma.org.uk and www.bmj.com

Music

Read Marcus Du Sautoy's *The Music of Primes*. Research how music relates to mathematics – BBC Radio 4 has an archive programme on this. Read *Scales, Intervals, Keys, Triads, Rhythm and Meter* by John Clough. Useful resource: www.musictheory.net/

Pharmacy

Get work experience at your local pharmacy or GP's surgery. Keep up to date on new drugs and developments in the industry. Read articles in titles such as *The Pharmaceutical Journal* and the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*. Useful resource: www.careers.abpi.org.uk

Philosophy

Read *Think* by Simon Blackburn and the *Problems of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell. Watch TED talks online on the subject of philosophy. Read up on the history of philosophy and the great philosophers. Useful resource: pfa.london.org/

Politics

Read articles from *Politics Review* and *Talking Politics*. Show interest in local politics by volunteering at your local assembly and join your local Youth Parliament. Set up a debating society at school. Get a global perspective by reading international newspapers. Keep up to date with global current affairs on a daily basis. Useful resources: www.spectator.co.uk and www.theweek.co.uk

Psychology

Read articles from the *British Journal of Social Psychology* and *The Psychologist*. Join the British Psychological Society's Student Members Group. Attend lectures such as 'Psychology 4 Students' or attend a Psychology summer school at a leading university. Useful resource: www.bps.org.uk

Religious Studies

Watch TED talks online on the subject of religion. Ensure you can fluently discuss the beliefs and practices of all the main world religions. Stay up to date on current affairs and how new stories have been affected by religious beliefs. Useful resource: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/religion

Sociology

Wider reading on theories such as Marxism, Functionalism and Postmodernism. Attend student lectures organised by the British Sociological Association. Read articles from the *British Journal of Sociology*, as well as journals which related directly to your interests. Useful resources: www.sociologyonline.co.uk and www.britisoc.co.uk

Veterinary Medicine

Read *Eckert Animal Physiology: mechanisms and adaptations* by David Randall. Attend events such as the London Vet Show or RCVS Question Time. Volunteer for work experience with animals at your local vet or pet shop. Useful resource: www.rcvs.org.uk and www.vetnetlln.ac.uk