



The Global Classroom



Thinking Futures Perfecting the Personal Statement



This resource is designed to support your research, and you should always check specific information with individual universities.

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Perfecting the Personal Statement: UK Higher Education

Students who apply to an undergraduate course in the UK make their application via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The service has guidance for all students, and produces [information](#) specifically for international students, their advisors, and parents.

All students' applications to UCAS include:

- **Personal details** – so that UCAS can contact you about your application.
- **Choices** – you can choose up to five courses. You do not rank your choices in order of preference and universities do not see your other selections.
- **Education** – list your current and pending qualifications.
- **Employment** – if you have had a job, provide details.
- **Reference** – Your school will complete the reference once you have submitted your application.
- **Personal statement** – this gives you an opportunity to tell universities why they should select you as a student. It is a critical part of the application, which is why we dedicate this section to it.

Also check with your chosen institutions whether there are any additional application requirements. For example, at the University of Cambridge, students living outside of the EU need to complete the Cambridge Online Preliminary Application (COPA).

The key to a good personal statement is taking the right approach, and being well organised. Approach the personal statement like an academic piece of writing, and ensure you leave yourself plenty of time for multiple edits (even the best writers redraft their work).

The statement can be up to 4,000 characters, or 47 lines of text (including spaces and blank lines) – that is approximately 600 words. It's the most important 'audition' you will ever have, and a unique opportunity to celebrate your abilities and achievements. To prepare for writing your personal statement, make sure that you have explored the resources available to you, and have considered the right questions.

The main purpose of your personal statement is to communicate your ability in, and enthusiasm for, the subject.

Structure your statement effectively, and lead with your strongest points

As with any short story, the opening of your statement should engage the reader, the middle section should expand on these points (including evidence), and you should conclude by reinforcing your commitment, enthusiasm and skills. Ensure your opening paragraph grabs the reader's attention, and open each paragraph with your most important points.



In considering your strengths, you might think about the value of having attended an international school, and the global perspective this gives – socially and in relation to your subject. International students might also like to stress the reasons for wanting to study in the UK.

Be specific and provide evidence to support your statements

Throughout your statement, make sure you are providing the reader with convincing evidence of why you are an ideal candidate for the course. For example; “I have excellent communication skills, and can work in a team” is vague and unverified. Try to provide specific statements about your experiences, to give the reader some evidence of your qualities.

This is especially important when you are writing about your extra-curricular activities and work experience; help the reader to understand how these accomplishments reveal something relevant about why you are a good candidate for your subject.

Explain your reasons for wanting to study the course, and why you are suitable

Admissions tutors really want to hear about what is motivating you to take their course. You could mention how your interest developed (and what you have done to pursue that interest), or how you have drawn inspiration from your current studies.

Help the reader to understand why you are suitable for the course. Think carefully about the range of skills, knowledge and experience that will help you to do well, from your education, work experience, or from hobbies, interests and social activities. Universities also value students who have enquiring minds, and are hungry to study – so you could mention what you hope to learn on course, and write about your ambitions for the future.

Be enthusiastic and concise in the language you use

Your enthusiasm for the subject, and for studying, should come across clearly in your writing, but it is important to use plain English to communicate your message. You need to stand out, so try to avoid lists and overused phrases (many of admissions tutors say that ‘passion’, and statements such as ‘Ever since I was young, I have wanted to be a..’ are clichéd).

Be honest...

The personal statement enables admissions tutors to understand if you will enjoy, and cope with, their course. Do not exaggerate, or lie – you’ll get caught out! Also do not be overly modest: it is important to talk about your strengths and achievements, and to provide evidence of your suitability for the course.

Make sure it is your own work - UCAS uses software to check if students have copied from one another, or from the internet.

Check spelling / grammar and make sure other people read your statement .

Start work on your personal statement early. Make sure you have time for several drafts, and invite friends, teachers and family to proofread your writing. If you are well organised, writing your statement can be an exciting celebration of your achievements, and an opportunity to reflect on your hard work.