

# WRITING PERSONAL STATEMENTS

## WHAT IS IT?

A Personal Statement is an opportunity to sell yourself in a well ordered way. It is a very important section of the UCAS form as a university may not want to interview you but may make an offer based solely on the basis of your application. Your personal statement gives you a chance to sell yourself.

## WHAT SHOULD GO IN IT?

Your personal statement needs to include the following information about:

- Why you want to study this subject(s)
- What you have done so far (in terms of things experienced and skills gained) and how this has led you to this choice.
- What you hope the course will do for you (you will learn about, experience, it will help you make a career in)
- What you are like as a person – your likes, interests, hobbies, personal qualities, positions of responsibility held, challenges undertaken.

## SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

**Do** give reasons why you want to study the course – more than just enjoying the subject(s). Remember that there will be competition for places so you need to be convincing.

**Do** make a reference to your current studies – what you enjoy and why and the skills that you have gained

**Do** try to make a reference to your long term career plans and make a link to your course choice. You can do this even if you are not studying a vocational degree by talking about the skills that you hope to gain while at university.

**Do** mention positions of responsibility with some examples of duty

**Do** aim to present an image of yourself as an active and well rounded individual – not just an academic

**Do** be reflective. If you make a point like 'I like reading, I travelled abroad' say why and what you get (got) from doing this.

**Do** show your statement to other people – parents, friends, family, teachers, careers advisers, Sixth Form Team so that they can check the spelling and grammar and see if they can think of things to include that you may have forgotten.

**Do** make sure that your statement is neat, well written with a concluding paragraph or statement.

**Don't** mention activities or responsibilities without referring to skills and experience gained. Admission tutors have hundreds of forms to read – they won't have time to read between the lines

**Don't** refer to experiences that are too long ago (eg: Year 9) particularly if you have more recent experience

**Don't** mention interests without being more specific eg: for reading mention authors and genres, likewise with music or art – mention particular artists

**Don't** mention too many likes, interests and hobbies as it might be assumed that you are not very interested in any of them

**Don't** exaggerate or lie!

**Don't** apply for too many very different courses, making it difficult to write a convincing personal statement which supports the application

**Don't** write a statement which makes your choices look random and un-thought-out.

## ANALYSING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

### Application for Archaeology

I have always been interested in studying the past. As a child I loved visiting hill forts and ancient monuments. This interest was further developed when I travelled to Australia and New Zealand and was able to study the ancient cultures of the Aboriginal and Maori peoples. I was fascinated by how their art and spiritual beliefs still influence many aspects of modern life in areas such as architecture and creative arts. I have also been working as a volunteer on a local dig and this has further confirmed my interest in archaeology. *This part clearly shows why this person wants to study archaeology and briefly describes the experiences that have stimulated their interests in this subject.*

I feel that this course would give me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge and understanding of ancient civilisations and their influences on the way the world has developed. *Now saying what they hope to learn from the course. If you are hoping to go into a particular career after the course you need to mention that too.*

My A levels in History, Geography and Information Technology have helped me to develop skills in research, analysis and problem solving. I am a keen user of ICT and am also interested in the role that new technologies can play in helping us to make sense of the past. Throughout my studies I have had to work in teams with other students on a range of projects and make group and individual presentations. These activities have helped me to develop my communication skills and strengthen my ability to work with people. *Although they mention their studies they use them to show the skills gained. You do not need to talk about what you have been studying as this is shown in the rest of the application form.*

I work part time in a bookshop which has also helped me to develop my skills of dealing with people, handling money and sorting, categorising and displaying stock. I really enjoy this as I love working with books. At school I set up and run a thriving chess club, and I was elected to represent the school at a city wide tournament in which I came second. I play in the schools football and cricket teams and also enjoy swimming, cycling and aikido. *Now showing that they are a good all rounder, that likes to get involved in a range of activities, and has been elected into positions of responsibility.*

I am an active, motivated and conscientious student keen to take up the challenge of higher education.

Admissions tutors read lots of these forms, looking for the students they want to teach the following year. They will not want dull people who struggle to express themselves, who might not get actively involved in university life and who might drop out part way through the course. They will want good all rounders, who are really interested in the course they have chosen to study and who will be a positive asset to the university.

## **SAMPLE STATEMENTS**

### **Application for Business Studies**

Reasons for choosing the course and career plan: I wish to study business and management to degree level as I feel that the skills and knowledge I will gain will prepare me for a wide range of careers in the business field. I am particularly interested in the financial and marketing aspects of business studies as sound finances and positive customer perceptions are, in my opinion, vital for any successful organisation. Taking a business related degree at university will give me the opportunity to develop further my knowledge in business studies, maths accounting and law which I have enjoyed studying at 'A' level.

Work experience: As well as my studies I have organised my time so that I can have a part time job. I work in a clothes shop and have developed my communication skills through working with the public. The management value ideas from staff and I regularly contribute ideas at the team meetings. I almost always reach my sales targets and have, on numerous occasions, exceeded them.

Achievements and interests: In my final year I received 3 awards, one of which was for excellence in business studies and during 5 years I received many attendance awards. I was part of a team that produced a yearbook for the school. I enjoyed this activity and was responsible for finding the funding for the publication. This involved contacting companies offering advertising space in the book. I am a keen sportsman participating in football, tennis, rugby and snooker. I am a member of the Students Union, and recently set up a 5-a-side football team. I enjoy going out, mixing with and meeting people and having a good time. I am honest, personable and find it easy to make friends. I believe that I have a lot to offer and I am looking forward to getting involved in university life.

### **Application for German**

I am interested in applying for this course because I want to further develop my German speaking skills and increase my knowledge of the language, people and culture of a country for which I have developed a very strong affinity. Since taking up the language I have participated in two German exchanges when I spent time studying and working abroad. Both these experiences opened my eyes to the warmth and generosity of the German people and I fell in love with them and their language. Winning the prize for top student in German at the end of my GCSE course further fuelled my enthusiasm for the subject. During one summer holiday I also travelled to Switzerland to look after the young daughter of a relative. I gained immense satisfaction from managing my daily life by communicating in 'high' German. I am still unsure about my career goal but know that I want to travel and possibly live abroad after my degree and seek bi-lingual employment of some kind.

I have always enjoyed working with people and my part time jobs as a shop assistant and a waitress have allowed me to develop skills in dealing with people as well as working as part of a team. I have also, on occasion, had to take responsibility for managing the shop and this has taught me how to handle responsibility, staff, stock and visiting sales reps! In new situations I am quietly confident and quickly establish friendships.

I enjoy socialising with friends, dancing, listening to music especially progressive pop and jazz, reading character novels and contemporary fiction, and arts and crafts. I am an intelligent and enthusiastic student with a genuine love of this subject and I would welcome the opportunity to study it further.

Although laid out slightly differently, these statements do try to portray the candidates as good all rounders, with a real interest in the subjects they are applying to study,

### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Before you start to put together your Personal Statement, jot down some notes under the following headings. This is to help you keep your target courses and institutions in mind when thinking about what to include in your statement:

Which universities are you thinking of applying to?

Which courses are you thinking of applying for?

Now use the boxes below to jot down notes and ideas for things you could include in your personal statement.

What are the reasons for wanting to go to university to study this particular subject or subjects?

*Suggestions:*

- *Love of subject and reasons why*
- *To build on previous study and/or experiences and what they were*
- *Work towards a particular career or career area*
- *Social reasons like wanting to stay local or other commitments*

What are your career plans/ambitions?

*Suggestions:*

- *Specific career*
- *Area of work but not career specific*
- *Want to broaden knowledge and learning before deciding*

Do you have any relevant past study or experiences?

*Suggestions:*

- *Links between subjects studied in the past and courses applied for*
- *Links between past experiences like work, hobbies or sports etc (skills and insights gained) and courses applied for*

Do you have hobbies or interests?

*Suggestions:*

- *Part time work, sport, music, travel*
- *Show that you are healthy and active and like to take part in things*
- *Focus on skills gained*

Any positions of responsibility, awards gained or achievements recognised?

*Suggestions:*

- *Elected to represent*
- *Had the position of*
- *Given responsibility for*
- *Won/was awarded*

**Your Personal Statement is a key part of your UCAS application so make sure it's a good one!**

### **CHECKLIST OF 11 THINGS A PERSONAL STATEMENT SHOULD HAVE**

1. How many I's have you got – no more than 8
2. How many sections of white space – at least 4
3. How impressive is your opening – score out of 10
4. How impressive is your ending (for instance what are you going to contribute to University and what will you get out of it) – score out of 10
5. Have you made a convincing case of why you have chosen that particular course
6. At least one piece of evidence of wider reading
7. At least one piece of evidence that researched what the course entails – careers it leads to
8. At least two pieces of evidence of skills picked up in you're a level studies
9. At least one piece of evidence of skills you picked up elsewhere
10. Have you suggested what you might do after University
11. No more than 47 lines (including spacing)