FOCUS ON...

Writing your Personal Statement

5 Fundamentals

1 The Personal statement is the only place on the UCAS application to show relevant skills, achievements, and work experience. Demonstrate very specifically how these and your qualifications are relevant to your choice of study.

2 It is a maximum of 4000 characters, or around 47 lines. To make it reader friendly you should use paragraphs (even if this sacrifices a few characters), 4-6 paragraphs should work. Read it aloud to yourself to check how it sounds.

3 At University of Bath at least 2 university staff will read your personal statement. Ask your teacher, tutor, careers adviser, and parents to read it. The statement should make sense to everyone.

4 Answer the question "Why have I chosen this course?"

5 Your statement should capture the enthusiasm you felt when you chose your course. Start early, making notes as you make your course choices

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proved experienced
discovered
focused prepared
designed
experimented
influenced
explored

identified researched convinced
determined
won utilised
gathered

innovated
analysed
realised balanced
encouraged
secured invigorating
specialised
marketed
formulated

delivered
oversaw
critiqued
inspired

surpassed
created
pioneered
resolved
generated
specialised

gained
collaborated advanced
accomplished
strengthened
motivated
targeted emphasised

appealing
led built

undertook overcame
compelled strengthened
contributed provoked
fulfilled introduced questioned
implemented reshaped
organised absorbed
imagined compared
challenged

captured participated
expressed fascinated
refreshing improved
performed
oversaw transformed
provided
thought-provoking appreciated perceived
decided

Make every paragraph count!

Start by using our planner. Once you have noted down all your skills, activities, achievements and academic interests, you will need to focus on what is most relevant to the application. Your first draft will probably be too long. You can then edit out anything vague or irrelevant. Remember to structure in paragraphs and for each ask yourself.

Interviews

If you are interviewed, you will need to expand on your statement, e.g. on any academic research or work experience you mention, so be prepared.

Vocational courses require a different approach, writing about work experience may be essential.

Look beyond the academic entry requirements and your academic achievements. These are important but you will also need to communicate your understanding of the job role for degrees that train you to become a Doctor, Social Worker, Nurse, Vet, Teacher, Architect etc... Understanding how, for example, a nurse interacts with other NHS workers, patients, health visitors etc. as well as NHS policy issues is integral to that specific job role alongside day to day nursing duties. Imagine a day in the life of that professional. Try and shadow or observe someone in the role if possible.

Skills, activities, knowledge

Skills, activities, knowledge	How did you gain this and how will you reflect on this?	How is it directly relevant to the course you are applying for?	How else might you use these skills at university?	Is this something that you hope to gain or develop during the course?
Managing your own project	EPQ planning			
Team work				
Creativity				
Supporting others				
Analysing data				
Problem solving				
Managing your time				
Planning ahead				
Speaking in public				
Engaging in extra independent study e.g. MOOC				
Leadership skills				
IT capabilities				
Knowledge and research				
Working to deadlines/under pressure				
Insight into why you love your subject				
Creative process				
Critical thinking				
Contextualising				
Taking the initiative				
Working with younger/older people/the public				
Sensitivity				
Working with animals				

Do:

Do get straight to the point
A chronological approach can be dull to read. Think about what is most relevant and start there.

Do relate everything in the statement to your chosen course
This will include current study, study skills, extra project work, relevant work experience. Think hard about other achievements, will elements of Duke of Edinburgh be specifically relevant to your course? If not leave it out.

Do include extra-curricular projects
Devote a good paragraph to your independent study such as an EPQ, Project or MOOC. Demonstrate what you learnt from your independent personal study and reflect on the methodology and any course related content.

Do include any career aspirations, or further plans that relate to your choice of course
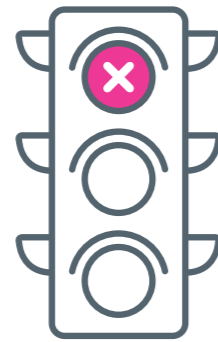This can be a nice way to conclude the statement.

Do talk about your gap year
IF you can make it relevant (even if you haven't been yet) e.g. "as part of my gap year in Spain I will work as an intern in Banco Santander in Madrid to develop my Spanish language skills and understanding of International Management"

Do some further reading
This should be outside your current curriculum. Explore recommended texts or journals for the course you are applying for, or read about the current departmental research topics online. Articulate your opinion about them, rather than just listing them.

Don't:

Don't be negative
It is not that unusual to switch A levels, or even struggle academically. But try to keep your statement focused on the positive at all times. If you have faced significant personal difficulties that have affected your academic progress, it can help to share this with school. Your teacher can include this on your UCAS reference to allow universities to consider you fairly in the light of past mitigating circumstances. Your personal statement should be where you look positively to the future.

Don't over exaggerate
Be genuine, it probably isn't true that you wanted to study Physics since you were a 4 years old. But a personal experience of something that sparked your interest may be a good starting point e.g. a public lecture, a book or an experiment.

Don't make jokes
They will probably fall flat as humour is so personal.

Don't have all the answers
Questions on your mind can help us see how you think, even if you don't have an answer. *Example: "Can computer hacking ever be ethical is a question that intrigues me. It encapsulates the fascinatingly diverse roles that have developed in response to rapid technological and digital change..."*

Don't list qualifications that you are taking
They are already on the UCAS form.
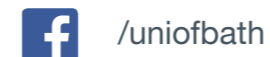
Don't forget to check the character count
It may not be the same on UCAS apply online as on your draft document.

Don't be shy
Let others read your draft to check it makes sense. It can be hard to check your own work for errors when you have reworked it several times. Be open to suggestions, you may change the whole structure around as another reader may identify a gem hidden away towards the end of your statement that actually works as a strong opening.

Don't use a quote UNLESS..
You can intelligently express your thoughts about it and link it directly to the course. A short quote will not take up valuable space, but you will need to add who it is from.

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Wise words from our students…

Stand out, talk about something you've done outside of school - a book you've read, or a course you attended. Convince the reader you want to go to university, and that you'd be an asset to their institution. Start it as soon as you can, it might take you hours to perfect, but it's worth it."

Psychology is such a broad course that I didn't struggle to find links to my other studies such as History and Religious Studies. They weren't always obvious links but I think that showed that I was really applying the theory of psychology to the real world."

Just write, more words is easier to work with than nothing. If you aren't good at selling yourself, get someone who knows you really well to tell you what you're best at. It's easier to sell someone else than yourself."

Online help and guidance:

Guides and top tips from other students
university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statements

All the rules plus films and guides
www.ucas.com

Downloadable guides for students and teachers plus the HE skills map can help your planning
www.careerpilot.org.uk

Personal statement planning app
www.perfectstatements.co.uk

MOOCs:

Enrol on a MOOC on any subject that interests you to add some extracurricular study to your application. They are all here at:
www.futurelearn.com

At University of bath we even have a MOOC to support your EPQ!
How to succeed in your EPQ:
The nuts and bolts of completing your project
go.bath.ac.uk/EPQ-success

About Bath

The University of Bath is a world class university in a world heritage city - a nurturing environment for enterprising minds.

Our courses are designed to provide both rigorous intellectual challenge and real-world relevance, giving our students the opportunity to study with researchers who are leaders in their field.

Our vibrant campus - and location right on the edge of Bath - provide our community of over 17,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students with superb sporting, social and cultural opportunities.

Join our close-knit, high achieving community to gain the knowledge, skills and experience you'll need to thrive in a world of global networks.

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TOP 5
UK UNIVERSITY
The Guardian 2018

TEF Gold

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