

Creating a
Curriculum
Vitae (CV)

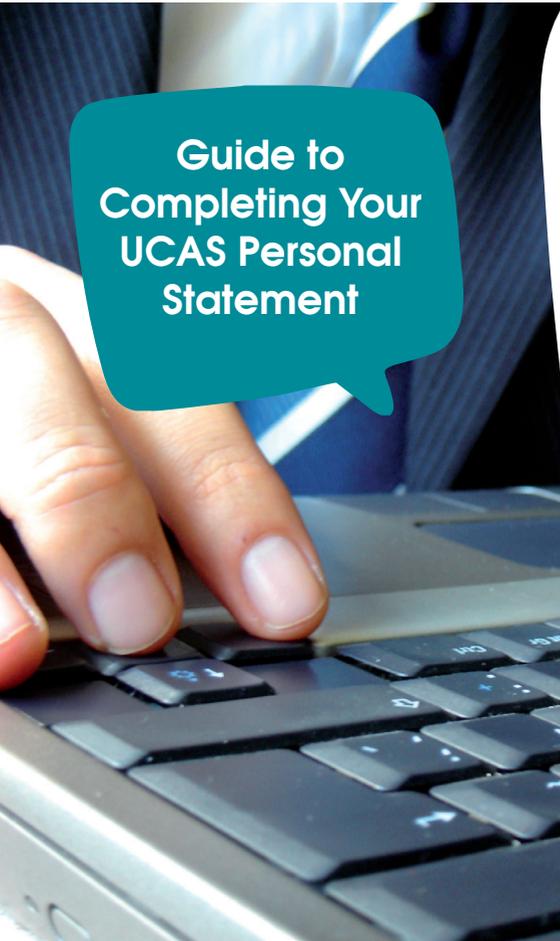
Guide to
Completing
Your UCAS
Personal
Statement

Guide to
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Guide to Completing Your UCAS Personal Statement

Taking time to write a high quality personal statement will help you stand out from the crowd and increase your chances of being offered a place on your course.

This guide has been written to help you make the most of the UCAS application processes.



Hugh Baird
COLLEGE 

Your Personal Statement

Your personal statement should be either 47 lines or 4000 characters long, whichever comes first.

In order to ensure you include the type of information that university admissions staff are looking for, it is wise to write your statement in 5 different sections:

1. **Introduction**
2. **Research**
3. **Study Skills**
4. **Extra Curricula Activities**
5. **Conclusion**

Use this space to write some initial ideas for your introduction

In this section you could talk about:

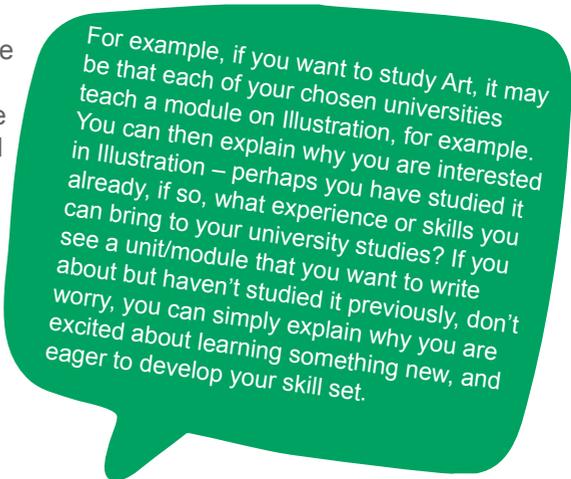
- What you like about the subject?
- Why will you be good at this subject?
- The first time you can remember thinking 'I want to study...'
- What skills and experiences have you got that will help you to study this subject?
- What do you hope to do with your degree, once you have graduated?

Section 2: Research

This section should look at the reasons why you are interested in the course you are applying for. This is an opportunity to show that you have researched the modules that you will study, particularly in year one of your degree.

To do this, you will need to check the course content on the websites of all of the universities/courses that you are applying for and then see what modules/units each university have in common.

Use this space to write some initial ideas for your research



For example, if you want to study Art, it may be that each of your chosen universities teach a module on Illustration, for example. You can then explain why you are interested in Illustration – perhaps you have studied it already, if so, what experience or skills you can bring to your university studies? If you see a unit/module that you want to write about but haven't studied it previously, don't worry, you can simply explain why you are excited about learning something new, and eager to develop your skill set.

Section 3: Study Skills

What study skills have you developed during your time at school/college/elsewhere. Show how you have developed/used your study skills in your subject areas. An example might be that studying for your GCSEs or BTECs helped to develop your writing skills, improved on your ICT and mental maths.

Remember, these are only examples and it is wise to consider the specific requirements of your chosen course and write about **RELEVANT** skills, rather than simply using generic ones.

Use this space to write some initial ideas on study skills

Section 4: Extra Curricula Activities

Take this paragraph to tell the tutor what you have LEARNED from activities you take part in in your own time. Examples could include a volunteering position or paid employment but again REMEMBER: Talk about WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED not just what you have done. Again, link your skills to the requirements of the course and avoid generalisations.

Using the STAR
method to Explain Your
Skills

S Situation

T Task

A Action

R Results

Situation: 'I have the role of a course representative.'

Task: To represent student opinion at college meetings.

Action: Gather and relay opinion and information accurately and appropriately and follow up on outcomes.

Results: ...from this role, I have developed my verbal and written communication skills. I

have gained confidence in dealing face to face with people. I have learned to organise my time effectively and to plan to be available for people to meet me at specific times of the day. I have also become excellent at organising paperwork and now have a better understanding the importance of confidentiality.

Use this space to write some initial ideas about extracurricular activities

Section 5: Conclusion

Your statement should begin with why you would make a good student and why YOU would be successful on THIS COURSE. Your conclusion should aim to convince tutors that you will make a great, potential university student. Read back over the whole of your Personal Statement and pick out what you feel your best characteristics are. Try not to repeat anything that you have already said but sell yourself on your strongest attributes.



Remind the tutors of your best qualities, skills and experiences and link these to the course and your future intentions.

Use this space to write some initial ideas for your conclusion

21 UCAS Personal Statement Mistakes

1 Plagiarism

It is very unwise to copy or closely imitate a personal statement that you have read elsewhere.

UCAS (Universities & Colleges Admissions Service) and some universities now use software to detect plagiarised applications. Admissions tutors are also likely to be adept at recognising duplicated content due to the large number of applications they read in their work. The risk of being caught is high and the resultant penalties severe.

It can be helpful to read example personal statements in books and on-line but please be careful not to plagiarise work, either unintentionally or otherwise.

2 Lying

As with plagiarism, if you are caught lying, at interview or later in the course, the consequences are likely to be serious.

You should present yourself in the best possible light. Emphasising your positive attributes, what you have learnt, the skills you have acquired and perhaps obstacles you have overcome.

But over exaggerating or even fabricating your achievements is not recommended.

3 Applying late

A statement written in a hurry, without proper research, is unlikely to communicate real enthusiasm and more likely to contain grammatical

and spelling errors.

Avoid unnecessary stress and send your application early.

4 Lack of clarity

Not giving concise and convincing reasons for applying is an elementary error.

During each redraft, scrutinise each sentence, in turn, assessing whether what you are saying might be said more succinctly or persuasively.

The sentence with fewer words, is often the more effective and elegant one.

5 Lack of enthusiasm

Do take care to get the tone of your personal statement right.

Whilst keeping a formal tone, you should try to adopt an engaging style that injects your passion and enthusiasm for the subject. Avoid the use of clichés (such as, 'I have always wanted to study' 'I have always loved' 'made a big impression on me' etc.)

Don't recount what is self-evident from elsewhere on your application. Repeating the names of your school/college and how many GCSE's you got wastes space. It is information admissions tutors will already have.

Do plenty of research and indicate that you are aware of the demands of the course and the topical or significant issues within your subject.

Read the statement aloud to yourself. Do you sound like an inspiring, motivated candidate?

If you are not sure, take advice from someone with the appropriate skill set, then refine what you have already written.

Your goal should be to present yourself as someone committed, confident and enthused based upon style and content.

Simply stating that you are enthusiastic or committed is no substitute for an engagingly written piece full of supporting evidence.

6 Not enough research

Think carefully about what and where you want to study over an extended period of time.

Ensure that your academic profile complements your choice of course. Attend open days, lectures, read books, websites and of course the UCAS website.

Admissions tutors will want to hear that you are aware of the demands of the course; the teaching and learning styles you will be expected to adapt to.

If you do plenty of research it will be evident in what you write. The reverse is also true.

To write a successful personal statement may take three to four months.

7 Lack of evidence

The UCAS personal statement needs to persuade admissions tutors that you have a genuine and long standing interest in your chosen subject. To do so you will need to provide evidence.

Highlight relevant activities you

have taken part in, lectures you have attended, authors you have read or significant events that engendered your interest. There are many reasons why students chose particular courses. Your task is to highlight some specific and credible factors that are particular to you.

8 Poor attributes

Your personal statement shouldn't hint at any undesirable personal or academic features.

If you do think it would be in your favour, do so only after advice from tutors, with an explanation of how you overcame any bad habits.

9 Previous education

You should draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills that you have developed during your previous studies.

Many undergraduate courses have a 'student centred learning' approach in which you are responsible for the organisation and direction of your studies to a significant degree.

Therefore mentioning a project, extended essay or presentation in which you carried out research on your own may well pay dividends.

10 No extracurricular activities

Talking a little about what you do outside of formal education is not the most important part of your personal statement.

Yet omitting this part robs applicants of the opportunity to personalise their application and emphasise elements

of their personal development that admissions tutors will want to hear about.

Do not say your main interest is watching television, socialising, using YouTube or Facebook or any other pastime which does not involve a significant element of personal development.

Such activities are irrelevant in this context.

11 Lack of relevant work experience

Many medically based courses will expect you to have arranged or completed relevant work experience.

It is an absolute requirement in some subjects that you have completed some relevant work experience. If you are applying for many veterinary or medical courses, for example, admissions tutors will expect you to state what work experience you have before they will consider your application.

Moreover your application is also strengthened if you have had the initiative to obtain relevant experience in subjects such as law, and education.

12 Under selling yourself

Don't be reticent about promoting yourself and your achievements effectively and confidently. Whilst remaining ethical you should emphasise what you can offer in an engaging, persuasive manner and underplay your shortcomings. Write down a list, perhaps with the help of a friend, family member or teacher to

get you started.

13 Grammatical and spelling errors

The personal statement gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your writing ability. A high level of competency in written communication is a prerequisite in most subjects, many of which assess students in this way. Therefore, poor sentence construction and spelling errors can only give a bad impression.

Don't just rely on the spelling checking facility of whatever word processing software you use. Whilst convenient they do not always spot words spelt correctly but out of place.

Also proofread each draft a few days after writing, with fresh eyes. If at all possible, get your work proofread by someone with an excellent command of written English.

Finding and fixing errors can be time consuming, so start the writing process as soon as possible.

14 Factual errors

Getting the name of authors, books, or places wrong indicates that you have not taken time or care. It will only be to your disadvantage.

15 No evidence of wider interest/reading

If you do not provide evidence that you have read or expanded your experience beyond the academic curriculum you are likely to sound less enthused about your chosen subject than if you had done so.

16 Previous education

Simply listing each of your subjects without providing an analysis of how they complement your choice of subject is a major error.

You should give careful consideration to the emphasise you choose to give to your previous education.

Take care to give greater weight to those subjects which have most relevance to your chosen subject.

17 Misjudged humour

Your personal statement is a piece of written English, which is expected to be formal in tone.

So humour is best avoided. The use of even extremely witty humour will not count hugely in your favour. Whilst at the same time it can easily be misinterpreted in manner that may harm your prospects.

18 Too short

Not using all or nearly all the space available will count against you. It will not impress admissions tutors if the material you use to justify your application, does not fill the available space. They may infer that you have not put the required effort in, or are unable to write able about yourself persuasively.

Use as much as you can of the maximum amount of space available, of 4000 characters (including spaces) or 47 lines of text (including blank lines) (Usually equating to a little over 500 words)

19 Omitting relevant material

Do your best to ensure that you

include all the material possible that will benefit your application. It's easy not to mention key points especially when not getting support and advice.

Where possible get help from a tutor or career advisor. If this is not possible, there is plenty of excellent help featured on the UCAS website "<http://www.ucas.ac.uk>" Also use information on-line and books at your local library. Try not to rely upon just one source, but on a wide collection.

20 Weak conclusion

Think carefully about how you should conclude your personal statement.

Consider writing one or two sentences that affirm the main points, together with some insightful supporting comments.

21 Qualifications

Applying for a course in which you will not hold the requisite exam passes is a waste of time.

Do the proper research so that your application will not fall at the first hurdle.

The ideas presented here are not new, but the writing is. Please consider helping to improve the quality of this article and give other readers the benefits of your wisdom by leaving a comment.

Sourced from: <http://www.essayzone.co.uk/blog/21-ucas-personal-statement-mistakes/>

Further information

For further information or advice speak to one of the Retention & Progression Coordinators in The Pod.

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