



Groby Community College
Achieving Excellence Together

A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT



Your Personal Statement

Tell the universities and colleges why they should choose you

The personal statement is your opportunity to tell universities and colleges about your suitability for the course(s) that you hope to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd.

Does it matter?

Some course tutors find personal statements crucial when making decisions, whereas others might not put as much emphasis on them. Since you do not know who will be looking at your statement, the safest thing is to do a good job. In many cases, applicants are not interviewed, so this may be your only chance to make the case for you to be offered a place. Remember that the person reading your statement is an expert in your chosen area of interest so they will want to know the reasons why you have chosen the subject.

Make sure that your personal statement is your own work

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 email.

Getting Started

Within your pack you will find a Personal Statement Worksheet. Fill this in first with as much detail as you can fit in. Then read over the information you have put down and start to construct your Personal Statement.

The statement can be split into 3 sections so it is easier for you to build.

Section 1—Your opening statement—this paragraph needs to be eye catching and inviting the reader to read on. It should include the reasons why you want to study the course you have chosen, what it is you hope to learn from the course and your long term goal.

Section 2—Your current courses—This paragraph should include what A levels you are currently studying, what you enjoy about your subjects, why you chose them and how they have helped you make your course choices for university. Include some details on certain modules in your subjects that you really enjoyed and why.

Section 3—Hobbies, Interests and achievements—In this section you need to include things you have done outside of college, hobbies, sports, work experience, part time jobs etc and how these would relate to your University course. Also put in any personal attributes you have that will assist you at university such as team leading, independent study, etc.

Some statements start with quotes, some include jokes, some set out to be unusual or eye-catching. Sometimes it works, but it might have the opposite effect to what you hoped. The admissions decision maker may not share your sense of humour so be careful when trying to make your statement stand out.

What to include

Interests, experiences and abilities that can be included in your statement

Below are some suggestions of what to include in your personal statement. These are guidelines only so don't worry if some of the suggestions do not apply to you.

- why you have chosen the course(s) - this is particularly important when you're applying for a subject that you have not studied before
- the reasons why that subject area interests you
- evidence that you understand what is required to study the course, eg if applying for psychology courses, show that you know how scientific the subject is
- how your current or previous studies relate to the course(s) that you have chosen
- any activities that demonstrate your interest in the course(s)
- why you want to go to university or college
- details of jobs, placements, work experience or voluntary work, particularly if it's relevant to your chosen course(s)
- hobbies, interests and social activities that demonstrate your skills and abilities
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- any other achievements that you are proud of, eg reaching grade three piano or being selected for the county cricket team
- positions of responsibility that you hold / have held both in and out of school, eg form prefect or representative for a local charity
- attributes that make you interesting, special or unique
- whether you have any future plans of how you want to use the knowledge and experience that you gain.

Applying to multiple courses

Remember that you only write one personal statement that should be relevant to all your choices. If you are applying for a joint degree you will need to explain why you are interested in both aspects of this joint programme. If you are applying for contrasting subjects or courses, try to identify the common themes that attract you to both disciplines. For example, both mathematics and law are subjects where you have to apply logic, and where rules or statements exist that are codified. The appeal of these subjects may be that you enjoy testing out the limits or boundaries of the accepted propositions.

If your chosen courses cannot be linked by a common theme, think about your reasons for applying to such varied courses - it might be useful to speak to a careers adviser to get some guidance.

If you mention a subject in your personal statement and are applying to other courses, you may be asked by the university or college for additional information about why you have chosen alternative courses.

Dos and don'ts when constructing your personal statement

Do create a list of your ideas before attempting to write the real thing. Personal Statement Worksheet

Do expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.

Do check university and college prospectuses, websites and entry profiles, as they usually tell you the criteria and qualities that they want their students to demonstrate.

Do be enthusiastic - if you show your interest in the course, it may help you get a place.

Don't feel that you need to use elaborate language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you are not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.

Don't lie - if you exaggerate you may get caught out at an interview when asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement.

Don't leave it to the last minute - your statement will seem rushed and important information could be left out.

Don't expect to be able to write your personal statement whilst watching TV or surfing the internet- this is your future, so make the most of the opportunity to succeed.

Size

You can enter up to 4,000 characters (this includes spaces) or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines), whichever comes first. You do not have to use all the space provided. When you save text, the system will tell you how many characters are still available or if you have used too many characters. You can preview your statement after you have saved it.

When to get your personal statement done.

You should start your statement as soon as possible. Your first draft ideally needs to be given to your tutor by the end of October at the latest. This will give your tutor time to read it and let you know if you need to make any changes to it. It will also give your tutor a starting point for writing you a reference. Keeping in touch with your tutor regarding your statement is very important as they will help you with the statement and also they are the ones who will be writing your reference. Another thing to bear in mind is that you only have 4000 characters and if you want to include some important details that you think will help you with your application you can ask your tutor to include it in their reference. Please **DO NOT** leave it until the last minute as this statement is a very important part of your application and will be read by the admissions staff at the universities you have chosen.

If you need any help with your personal statement or application as well as your tutor, Michelle is on hand to assist you.

Similarity detection

UCAS Similarity Detection Service - guidance for applicants

This guide is designed to help applicants using the UCAS application system to understand our Similarity Detection process. All personal statements received in support of an application are subject to testing. It has been widely broadcast that some example personal statements found on the internet have been used by applicants, in some cases word for word. The system, called Copycatch, is used to identify statements that show similarity, quantify the suspect material and report the findings. It is a tool designed to help the admissions staff at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) judge applications, and it is the universities and colleges who will decide what action, if any, to take regarding notified cases.

Research has shown that 95% of applicants using the UCAS application system did indeed write their own personal statements but the number who made use of other people's material was sufficient to justify the implementation of the Similarity Detection Service.

What the Similarity Detection Service does

The personal statement in each incoming application is checked against a library of all personal statements previously submitted to UCAS and sample statements collected from a variety of web sites and other sources including paper publications. Each personal statement received at UCAS is added to the library of statements after it has been processed.

Any statements showing a level of similarity of 10% or greater will be reviewed by members of the UCAS Similarity Detection Service team. HEIs will be notified on a daily basis of any cases where there are reasonable grounds for suspicion. Applicants will also be notified that the UCAS Similarity Detection service has found that their personal statement merits investigation. The decision about what action, if any, to take regarding notified cases rests with the admissions tutors at individual HEIs.

Verification

Copycatch is a process that identifies sentences in a personal statement that are matched to other personal statements already held in the Copycatch system. Levels of similarity are reviewed by trained staff who decide whether you and the institutions you are applying to need to be notified that similarity has been found. Ultimately it is the institutions you are applying to that decide on the significance of the results and what action, if any, to take.

Notification that a report has been sent to HEIs

If Copycatch identifies a significant level of similarity in your personal statement and the Verification staff decide to inform the HEIs you have applied to, you will be notified by email, if you have a verified email address. This email will include instructions explaining how you can view the output of the detection program by using Track, including access to a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section giving advice and guidance.

The report sent to you is identical to the report sent to the institution.

Please keep this in mind when you are writing your Personal Statement. As the title indicates it is a statement personal to you and about you. Further help on writing your personal statement can be found on the UCAS site and you can also ask your tutor or teaching staff to look over it for you once you have written your first draft.

Examples of Student Personal Statements.

I have chosen to study French at university because I am passionate about learning the language as both a written and verbal communication skill. I also want to gain a deeper insight into French-speaking culture so that I feel comfortable integrating into the societies in which the language is used.

Studying A-Level French has given me the opportunity to develop my language skills significantly and subsequently, having achieved ninety-nine percent in my AS examinations, I have shown my linguistic potential. In particular, I find the study and manipulation of French grammar intriguing, and my enthusiasm for learning grammar precisely and accurately has led to me achieving consistently high marks. For example, in an essay discussing the Internet, which I wrote in controlled conditions, I accurately used complex grammatical structures including the subjunctive mood, therefore receiving full marks. I particularly enjoy comparing French and English grammatical structures. It fascinates me that the French language includes a whole subjunctive mood but there are only rare examples of this in English.

To reinforce my grammatical knowledge, I attended a EuroStars residential this summer where I enjoyed grammar activities based on developing listening skills. I have also organised work experience in Lille for a week, for the end of October. The main purpose of this is to improve my accent and the fluency and spontaneity of my spoken French, but I will also be able to immerse myself in the French culture, which will be an invaluable experience.

I am enthused by studying French and Francophone culture because I find it intriguing how appreciating events from the perspective of Francophone citizens makes me challenge the way that I think about my own culture. Consequently, in my own time, I have begun pursuing cultural interests, focused on literature, art and music. I have enjoyed reading 'L'etranger' by Albert Camus and Anna Gavalda's short story collection 'Je voudrais que quelqu'un m'attende quelque part'. The analytical skills that I have developed whilst studying A-Level English Literature complement my interest in French texts, because I am able to apply these skills to French literature. In addition to literature, because of my personal interest in art I have started researching French artists, such as Paul Cezanne and Edgar Degas. I also regularly enjoy listening to French pop music, which keeps me up to date with modern French tastes and styles.

As well as French and English Literature, I study A-Level Mathematics. Mathematics requires the ability to search logically for patterns and sequences, which is a skill that I find useful when searching for patterns in French verb endings. I have also continued with A-Level Graphic Communication because I enjoy drawing and designing. This is a subject where I set my own targets, which has therefore improved my skills of time management and organisation. I hope to continue designing and studying art in my own time whilst at university. I have also attained an A in A-Level Critical Thinking, a year early. This course developed my critical analysis and reasoning skills, and I am able to use these across my other studies.

Away from academic study, I have had experience teaching French through achieving the Foreign Language Leader Award, a nationally accredited certificate. As part of this, I supported younger language learners and led a range of French-based activities. I developed a lot of confidence by pushing myself out of my comfort zone to become a better leader and team member. I have also worked with children in a local primary school as part of the Right to Read scheme, which I found a challenging but rewarding experience.

I am a hardworking, committed and organised student and I am completely self-motivated because I enjoy what I do. I look forward to the independence of university life and embracing all of the opportunities and challenges that it will offer.

Examples of Student Personal Statements.

General Carl Von Clausewitz, one of my true inspirations, once claimed that "war is the continuation of politics by other means". The world may have changed dramatically since Clausewitz was alive, yet I believe that statement is just as relevant today. The 9/11 attacks, as well as the smaller scale 7/7 attacks on London show this to be true. War and politics cannot be seen as separate subjects, nor should they be studied separately. Few other topics have such an impact on our daily lives, so I believe it paramount that they are fully understood. By studying them at degree level, I hope to achieve that.

Highly ambitious and driven, I spent four years in the Sea Cadet Corps, reaching the rank of Leading Cadet, earning my powerboat planing license and achieving second place at the Area Drill Competition in 2007 as part of the unit's drill team. One of the most fun experiences I ever had was attending the "International Sea Cadet Summer Camp" and meeting cadets from all across the globe. It was the skills of leadership, teamwork, time-keeping, improvisation and remaining calm under pressure which I developed in the corps that lead to me being volunteered to work with the Leicestershire Constabulary on test purchasing operations. Special mention was made by the officers involved about my "professional, confident manner and initiative." In order to further my leadership skills I became a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Leader whilst studying in Year 12, which involved me teaching both Year 10 and primary school students in a range of activities involving French and on one occasion, Italian.

With reference to the political side of the subjects, I have always been involved in the student councils of my schools, such as the "Language College Management Committee Meetings" as a student representative for Post-16 language learners. For a short term I served on the Hinckley and Bosworth Youth Council. I was placed in charge of a small group working on enhancing bus routes through the outlying villages at the fringes of the council's constituency. In order to further my knowledge of how global politics works I attended a Model United Nations General Assembly, representing the sovereign state of Brazil. My role was to represent the country in a debate of the UN's role in peace keeping and peacemaking. All of these posts involved the ability to cooperate and compromise, plus working to deadlines.

I have always had a flair for languages; hence I am studying Spanish at A-level and am experimenting with Russian through an independent language learning system. Whilst Psychology and Biology may not be directly related to the study of international relations and war, they have provided me with skills such as the ability to analyse theories which I will be able to implement on my course. Studying Critical Thinking at AS level has helped improve my debating skills since I can take the same argument and examine it from every angle, as well as identify logical fallacies. I like to travel, since it allows me to explore different cultures and languages, both modern and historical so I can learn from the experiences. I have always been captivated by the legacy of the Romans, perhaps the greatest political and military machine in history. I am an incredibly inquisitive student, and am always prepared to question current knowledge and theories if I believe there may be flaws or perhaps another point of view which has not been explored.

In my opinion I feel that the experiences I have had, as well as the abilities I have developed, give me a firm grounding to study war and international relations; and I believe that I would bring commitment, discipline and most importantly confidence to my studies at university.

Examples of Student Personal Statements.

I have enjoyed working with a variety of individuals in a wide range of situations, confirming my desire to follow a profession that works closely with people. My current studies have reinforced my aspiration to explore the sciences of the body in greater depth; ultimately, this is why I wish to study medicine at university.

I organised work experience at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, where I was fortunate to shadow a consultant anaesthetist for two days. I observed patients being anaesthetised, undergo operations, then taken to the recovery ward. I found good team work to be vital and the collaboration of surgeons, nurses and technicians was evident in the fourteen operations I observed. The consultant warned me that I may feel faint, but I felt completely comfortable and was entirely absorbed in the anaesthetic and surgical procedures. My knowledge of Chemistry enabled me to explore the chemical structures of some of the gases used in the anaesthetic process. My comprehension of anatomy and physiology, from Biology and Sports Science, played a major role when observing the viscera. In a procedure to repair Oesophageal Atresia, I was impressed by the surgeon's precision considering the small scale and complexity involved. I also observed the removal of a tumour, which unfortunately was unsuccessful. Sadly the patient was likely to die within six weeks. This made me consider how a good doctor is not only one that can cure and treat, but one that has compassion and understanding when informing the patient of the prognosis.

By shadowing a General Practitioner for a day, I was able to observe primary care in action through a systematic and thorough approach to consultations. The experience developed my understanding of the importance of clear communication and building a trusting relationship with patients.

I thoroughly enjoy studying Biology, Chemistry and Maths and have developed logical, analytical and problem solving skills. Furthermore they have shown me the benefits of self directed individual study. I have learned from my work experiences that these skills are crucial to succeed in medicine.

This summer I volunteered for one week at the Special Olympics. The athletes had mild to severe learning difficulties, bringing me into contact with various barriers to communication and affording me the experience of adapting my communication skills for people with speech, hearing and learning difficulties. The biggest challenges were to elicit understanding that I would look after them pre and post race and to find a way to offer reassurance to enable individuals to fully enjoy their experience. I built friendships with the athletes and I found the whole week extremely satisfying.

As part of my Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award I volunteered as a Physical Education Assistant for an hour a week, in each of two schools, over a six month period. My role was to support the teacher and take responsibility for groups of students, aged thirteen to fourteen, for specific skills sessions. This was often challenging as many students were uninspired by sport and I had to form a connection with them in order to encourage and motivate. It was fulfilling to watch these challenging students when they did participate and enjoy themselves.

I compete in many sports but mainly football and my passion middle/long distance running, for which I train every day. I have represented my schools, club, and County. I am a team player and was chosen as captain for my football team and led my college running squad to win the County Championships. Running has developed my confidence and self esteem, allowing me to trust and commit to the decisions I make, and has taught me the values of commitment and dedication. Running is a fantastic stress relief and allows me to take a break from studying and return to it reinvigorated. I think I am well suited to a career in medicine and am excited by the prospect of a rewarding career.

Examples of Student Personal Statements.

Every country has a different, rich and fascinating culture. Within that culture there are different beliefs, and within that, there are even more fascinating people. Countries within Africa and other underdeveloped nations have always interested me. News channels and broadsheets frequently report on the problems within these LEDC's and after years of wanting to help I have found this degree offers me the opportunity.

However before embarking on a profession to help others I want to learn why these countries are underdeveloped. I want to research why there has been no support drastic enough to change the political and social problems that lie deep within their culture. It is my eagerness to learn more on this increasingly important matter that has attracted me to a subject that covers such a broad topic. I am passionate about the subjects I study at A level and I feel the skills I have acquired in History, Psychology, Biology and English Literature, such as investigation and essay techniques will enable me to study Development at a high level.

My main hobby is being an Explorer Scout which entails frequent community work and activities that develop my team building skills in a place where logical and social talent is imperative. For six months I volunteered with the 'Right to Read' project. This organisation aims to improve the literacy and communication skills of primary school children who may not receive adequate reading time at home. I found the experience incredibly rewarding and it gave me the chance to communicate with those that I would not necessarily interact with on a day to day basis. Since a young age I have sought out situations in which I can meet and help others, with my social life playing a major role in my lifestyle. It was this trait that led me to want to take a gap year, and join a volunteer group that would let me explore and learn about a less economically developed country first hand. I wanted to make a big difference to a country I found deeply interesting. However, after reading about Development/African Studies I realised that overseas experience is either an integral part of the degree or an opportunity that I can take after my studies.

I have had work experience in various places from working within a warehouse to waiting at a country club. These positions have all varied greatly, yet I believe adjusting to these situations helped me develop my personality by making me a more confident, adaptable and self reliant person. I am sure these attributes will work to my advantage when faced with the unfamiliar environment of university. My compulsory work experience was at a law firm in Leicester named 'Sakhi Solicitors'. At this time I was uncertain of which career path I wanted to pursue, so I chose a placement that would both interest and challenge me. Aside from the office work I had the opportunity to shadow a lawyer within Crown Court on a regular basis. This is an experience I found most enjoyable with the exciting and often tense atmosphere captivating me and furthering my interest in equal rights. This is a subject that is going to be an essential topic within Development Studies

After university I would love to pursue a career in which I am directly helping underdeveloped countries, whether in the UK or with a development agency abroad. Following my degree and several years of work experience in this field, I would like to pass my knowledge and experiences on to others. I have always considered teaching a highly admirable profession and one in which I can educate others about the issues that are of such importance to me.

Examples of Student Personal Statements.

"I've never had a dream in my life, Because a dream is what you wanna do, but still haven't pursued." Aesop Rock

I love films. Other things influence different people, like music or television, but my mind is constantly imagining the cinematic layout of my life. I feel that my creative imagination is the key part of my personality, my outlook on life and my aspirations. These are the main reasons behind the courses I'm studying at A-level. Film Studies because I love the movies and everything about them. English Language and Literature for my creative mind set. And Psychology, to maybe find out why I think in the way I do.

Last Summer I was very proud to receive a grade A in both English and Film. My Film grades were the highest marks in the year and the test had actually been fun our focus genre had been Film Noir and, as this is a key influence of the Coen brothers, I found myself able to spin off on a tangent and write probably more than I needed to. I also studied Media Studies at GCSE and received an A, my Media Studies experience was another reason I chose Film Studies at A-level. My English results at GCSE were two A*s.

I believe I am a leader. At high school I was a house captain for my base, which involved organizing various school events. I have been captain for a former Sunday league team, and I'm vice captain for my current one. As I said before films dominate my mind. When I play football I'm a 300 Spartan or a marine from Jarhead. Playing Rugby for the school team means I can be these characters a lot easier. I'm not afraid to take a fall for the good of the team either, I've been playing in goal this season as our regular Keeper left (I'm usually a centre back). In addition to films, I love music. My band, Kicking Habits, for whom I play bass, recently auditioned for Glastonbudget festival, the biggest unsigned acts festival in Europe. We became only the third band in the history of the venue we played to be announced on the night that we would be playing the festival in 2010.

I have been playing the guitar for nearly 2 years (bass for about 9 months) and I have performed both solo and duet pieces at college concerts with my battered old acoustic, upon which I've inscribed lyrics that inspirer me the most, and my voice.

My heroes are Kurt Cobain, Bob Marley and Aesop Rock. You might notice none of these are actors, due to the fact that my favourite thing about the movies is not the actors themselves, but the characters they play. Brad Pitt as Jesse James. The Dude. Col. Walter E. Kurtz. Vincent Vega. If these guys were real (or if they lived exactly as they were portrayed Jesse) they'd be my heroes.

I have a good work ethic- I've been working since I was 13, as a paper-boy and then as a cleaner for my former high school. I have often been walking my round or cleaning tables with an absent mind as I dream up hypothetical films that encapsulate "the loneliness of the long distance paper round walker", something about a kid who knows what he's doing is completely insignificant and unimportant, something like Fight Club for working teens.

My English coursework for AS was described as "quirky and original". The task was to write the opening chapter of a novel, then a comparison piece of review-style article writing. Obviously I had a film story readily worked out in my mind, changed it to a novel and then wrote the review of the film I eventually made based on my own book. The film was called The Houdou Saints and if I play my cards right, I'd love to make it for real one day. I'm hoping Film Studies at University will be a step on the way to doing something within the film industry. I'll do anything; I'll be a runner, whatever I have to do to get there. But The Houdou Saints That'll always be the dream.