

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

What you write in your Personal Statement is likely to have a decisive bearing on whether you receive conditional offers from your chosen universities. It may be your only opportunity to 'sell yourself' as increasing numbers of universities do not interview for the majority of courses on offer.

The purpose of a Personal Statement is to convey your enthusiasm for studying your chosen subject(s), to provide talking points for any interviews you are asked to attend and to allow you to advertise your strengths, qualities and interests.

Many universities now list in their Admissions Criteria Profiles the sort of attributes they are looking for in successful applicants (this is particularly so for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science). **If any of your chosen universities/courses publishes an Admission Criteria Profile then you must give examples of the attributes they are looking for in your Personal Statement.** Such attributes may include: leadership and team work skills; problem solving; ability to cope with a busy lifestyle; empathy; integrity; relevant work experience; resourcefulness; etc.

Construct your Personal Statement using three or four paragraphs as follows:

1. Your choice of course(s)

Outline the reasons for selecting your courses/subject(s). Explain exactly what it is that excites you about them, and make **explicit reference** to examples of topics, lessons, practicals, research, fieldwork, projects or reading outside the syllabus. If you are applying for a joint degree, explain your enthusiasm for both subjects – don't come across as someone who is undecided or hedging their bets! If you have not studied your proposed degree subject at school, explain what has attracted you to it and offer details of research you have done. You could link your degree subject to one or more of your A-level subjects. Also make it clear that you understand the course content.

2. Relevant work experience and long term career plan.

Give some indication of your career aspirations (if you have any) and, where possible, establish links between your degree course and career choice. Relevant work experience should also be described here and is especially important if you are applying for courses in Medicine, Vet. Science, Dentistry or Law. You need to explain how you benefited from this work experience, the skills you developed and what you learned. If you are planning a Gap Year that will involve an activity that will develop your wider skills or give you further insight and understanding of your chosen career, it would be worthwhile mentioning what you are planning in this paragraph. Also include details of any sponsorship you have secured.

3. The person behind the form. (This could be two paragraphs)

Use the last paragraph to impress the selectors with your likely contributions to university life. Give examples which demonstrate your leadership skills, your capacity for teamwork, your enterprise or originality, your sensitivity to the needs of others, contribution to the community and determination to stick to a task. Select three or four activities which bring out these qualities. They do not have to be school based and could include team membership, direction of a play, posts of responsibility, community service, musical activities or unusual hobbies. Do not include long lists of clubs, sports team representations or foreign countries visited. The aim is to establish that you are an interesting individual in your own right. You could conclude by saying how you expect to benefit from both the course and university life.

Key points to remember

- Your Personal Statement must be word processed (min. font size 12). I would strongly recommend using a word document and then pasting it into the personal statement box when your mentor has approved what you have written.
- Write in complete sentences and use paragraphs. Put a blank line between each paragraph and do not indent.
- Use interesting and positive language.
- Good, clear English is needed – some applications are rejected because of poor spelling or punctuation. Use spellcheck!
- Avoid any information that is misleading or untrue. Also don't over-exaggerate.
- Do not try to cram too much into the space provided – a maximum of 300 words should be sufficient.
- Ask your mentor and subject staff to comment on what you have written, but don't expect them to write it for you.
- Be prepared to write several drafts.

Good luck!