



SOUTHBOROUGH
HIGH SCHOOL

UCAS
PERSONAL
STATEMENTS



YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

In your UCAS application, the personal statement is your best chance to sell yourself and really emphasise your strengths.

It is worth spending some time on it, getting it checked by your tutor/parent/carer/Head of 6th Form. Make sure it creates a positive impression of you for the course admissions tutor.

What to Include:

Start by making some notes on the following points:

- Why you have chosen your course (can include career aspirations/interests here if relevant).
- What do you know about the course? Admissions tutors will want to see you have some knowledge of the subject you have chosen to study and an understanding of what the course might entail. You could include relevant work experience here.
- Show you have the necessary skills/qualities needed for higher level study ie. You could mention that you are hard working, self-motivated and determined.
- What other experience/achievements do you have? (from college or activities such as Young Enterprise).
- What are your other interests? (sports/social). Do not be too general here.
- How will you benefit from the course?

A good way of showing that you have the necessary skills/qualities required is by giving **examples** to back up the statements you are making about yourself. For example, if you say that you work well in a team, give an example of when this has happened eg. 'being involved with Young Enterprise helped to develop my communication and teamwork skills or 'being part of the school council enabled me to improve the school ethos, the school environment as well as developing my communication and teamwork skills.'

Some of your experiences may not be directly relevant to your course but can tell the admissions tutor a lot about you and your commitment and reliability eg. If you help run a club or compete in sport. However, there is no need to mention everything you do, especially if you cannot make it relevant to your application in any way.

FIRST DRAFT

Now you have some notes to work from, plan a rough structure for your statement. Then start writing your first draft.

In UCAS Apply there is no spell check - if you prepare your personal statement in Word you will be able to spell check it and then paste it into Apply when you are happy with it.

You have a limit of 4,000 characters of text for your personal statement, including spaces (you can do a character count in Word) but remember you do not have to fill the whole section - if you have written everything you want to say, that is fine.

Most people write their statement in essay style (remember to divide it into paragraphs or sections) but you can lay it out as you wish. You can use bullet points if you want to. Remember to keep it clear and concise.

INTRODUCTORY SENTENCE

It is good to include an introductory sentence - something along the lines of 'my enjoyment of studying History at A Level has led to my decision to study this subject at a higher level.' If you have any career aspirations it can be a good idea to use this as your introductory sentence eg. 'from an early age I have been interested in science and its impact on everyday life.' From here, you can go on to write about the points mentioned above - why you have chosen the course, your experience to date etc.

SECOND/FINAL DRAFT

Once you have a first draft written out, take some time to read it over and think about how it sounds. Now is the best time to ask for advice from other people about it. Good people to ask would be your tutor, friends, parents/carers, Head of 6th Form or Careers Advisor.

A good tip for proof-reading your work is to leave it a few days before re-reading it; mistakes/improvements will be easier to spot. Reading it aloud can also be helpful.

Remember that presentation, grammar and spelling are important and demonstrate to the admissions tutor your accuracy and presentation skills. You can use the spell check/grammar check in Word but it is probably best to get someone to check your statement as well.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

DO

- Look at some example personal statements - but DO NOT copy them.
- Try to **analyse** your experiences and not just describe what you have done. For example, don't just say 'I enjoyed my work experience at the museum and learnt a lot'. An improvement would be 'my experience at the museum introduced me to the work environment and gave me the opportunity to develop my skills in customer care'.
- Get advice on writing your statement.
- Be honest.
- Give yourself and your tutor time to write your statement and get it checked.
- Find out when deadlines are; be ready for this date so your tutor has time to write your reference.

DONT

- Begin every sentence with 'I'.
- Use unrealistic language or words you don't understand.
- Be tempted to make things up - remember you may have to go to an interview and be asked about what you have written.
- Repeat information found elsewhere in your application eg. don't repeat all your grades - use the space available to your best advantage.

FINALLY

When you have uploaded your statement to Apply, check it carefully line by line - make sure no mistakes have crept in during the process and that no bits are missing. The font will be set to 12pt and you cannot change formatting (ie. Changing the font or making the text bold or italic).

Remember you can ask for help for quick questions about grammar or spelling. If you require more help with your personal statement it is a good idea to make an appointment with the Careers Advisor or see your tutor.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND PEOPLE

Use your own ideas to start writing your personal statement but also use the following resources/people for some guidance and advice:

- Prospectuses give you detailed course information. Look at prospectuses for your chosen course/institutions so you can relate your personal statement to your chosen area of study.
- Your Head of 6th Form or your Form Tutor will be able to offer support in constructing your Personal Statement.
- UCAS - the UCAS website has a section on personal statements. Go to their website: www.ucas.ac.uk then click on Students > Starting your application > How to apply.

Be careful if you are looking at other examples of personal statements on websites. Make sure that everything in your statement is in your own words. Do not copy from examples.

A GUIDE FOR STAFF

Some brief pointers to help with writing student UCAS references:

- Firstly, remember that students can ask to see their references under the Data Protection Act.
- Time: Remind your students that you need enough time to complete their reference before their deadline date. Check to see if any students have early deadlines (eg. Medical reasons).
- Support their application without being too specific eg. don't mention specific universities/courses if different courses have been applied to at different institutions.
- Characteristics of student/special circumstances:
 - ⇒ Motivation/commitment
 - ⇒ Suitability for course and for hard work
 - ⇒ Achievement - especially in relation to their chosen subject
 - ⇒ Analytical ability/ability to think for themselves
 - ⇒ Activities and work experience
 - ⇒ Personal qualities
 - ⇒ Level of English if an international student
 - ⇒ Comments from other tutors if applicable (eg. If student is new to you).
 - ⇒ Difficulties faced eg. Teacher absence, personal circumstances

Predicted grades should be shown clearly - perhaps in a small table or at least presented obviously. Indicate whether the student is currently achieving this level or is expected to improve on these grades.

It is a good idea to try to make your reference complement their personal statement and if you can back up their statements, so much the better.

Finally, if you have the time, individual institutions often have a section on the websites saying what they are looking for in the reference eg. A primary education course mentions that having a sense of humour is a bonus.

Close the sentence with a rounding up sentence.