

Planning and writing an effective personal statement





Applying to University

- All applications must go through UCAS
- UCAS allows students to make up to five university/course choices
- Apply online at www.ucas.com





Personal Statements as part of the UCAS application

1

**Personal
information**

- School details
- Support needs
- Contact details

2

Qualifications

3

Work history

Jobs, part-time
or full-time

4

**Course
Choices**

- Up to 5 courses

5

**Personal
statement**

6

**Teacher/
Tutor
reference**



The structure of the personal statement:

The personal statement is split into 3 questions:

1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

Made up of:

- 4000 characters including spaces
- A minimum character count of 350 characters including spaces for each question

Character minimums are clearly labelled on the question boxes, along with an overall character counter, to ensure students know if they're on track.



What do admissions staff want to see?





Admissions tutors aren't looking for

Someone who has:

Strong grades alongside..

- Leadership
- Sport
- Work experience
- Volunteering
- A whole host of healthy habits, hobbies and interests



Admissions tutors are looking for

Someone who has:

- already engaged with topics taught on the course
- started developing and applying skills as they are applied on the course
- consistently explored the kinds of ideas, resources, and practices they will encounter on the course

General vs Course Specific

General

Course Specific

Teamwork

Titration

Leadership (Netball captain)

Solution preparation

Communication

VS

Observation & recording of
results

Dedication

Balancing complex equations

Likes the gym

Reads academic journals

Grade 8 piano

	Knowledge	Skills	Qualities/Behaviours
CHOICE 1			
CHOICE 2			
CHOICE 3			
CHOICE 4			
CHOICE 5			



Research tips

1. Try to narrow down your course choices as much as possible before engaging in the research.
2. Find knowledge and skills that are common to as many of the courses you are applying to as possible.
3. Look for topics that you know something about or would like to know more about.
4. Have the websites for each course open at the same time as separate tabs.

Table 2:

In column 1 - Put the topics and skills you identified in your research

In column 2 – Put examples from your studies and wider life experiences that have involved you developing the knowledge, skills, qualities or behaviours.

Skill/Knowledge/Quality/Behaviour	Example experience
Mathematics for economics Quantitative economic analysis	Pathway to Bath, A level Maths, A level Economics,
Microeconomics Game theoretic concepts	A level Maths, A level Economics, EPQ, A book (put the title)
Professional skills Quantitative skills to apply to real-world economic challenges	A level Maths, A level Economics, work experience, TED talks, MOOC



Question 1:

Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Explain what it is about the subject that really excites you and why.

And/or describe a moment when your excitement about the subject was ignited or cemented and explain why.

You could also explain what your future plans are and how studying this course is going to help you or explain how the course is going to help you in your personal development.



Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Tip 

Imagine someone came up to you and asked conversationally 'Why do you want to study ****?'

Whatever your verbal answer to this would be, write it down as an answer to this question.



Why are we different? I am fascinated by how one can think so differently to another (despite similar upbringing and cultural influence), from moral principles to the order in which you pour cereal or milk. I often wonder how preferences are developed – if they are learnt through peer influence, or individual to our very nature. Simply, I am interested in discovering, not what makes us individual, but why we are so. Pursuing psychological research will help me understand this.



Question 2:

How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

You need to:

Show how your current studies have helped you to build on/develop the themes you mentioned in Question 1.



Question 3:

What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

You need to:

Show how you have explored the themes you mentioned in question 1 in activities beyond the classroom.



You could use:

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCS)

Wider Reading – Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Books

Volunteering experience

Jobs

Work experience

Clubs

Societies

Social Media

Online resources - TED talks, Podcasts, Audiobooks,

Documentaries

Responsibilities – Leadership roles, Care roles

Engagement with universities – Summer Schools, Programmes, Workshops, Lectures



Use The PEEL Method

P = Point

E = Evidence

E = Explanation

L = Link



P

E

E

L

I actively seek to deepen my understanding of current affairs, key political debates, and the complex dilemmas facing policymakers. My day begins with Radio 4's Today programme and I keep track of breaking news via the BBC News app. I regularly read 'The Week' to explore diverse viewpoints on pressing issues. Podcasts such as 'The Political Party' by Matt Forde and documentaries like 'Blair and Brown: The New Labour Revolution' enrich my understanding and provide historical context. This practice has given me a good grounding and awareness of key debates and global issues, and how they shape domestic politics. I am able to explore different media and alternative views, which allows me to analyse these issues from different perspectives. These skills will allow me to contribute and explore these issues further through the debate, case studies and comparative analysis involved in the study of politics.



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Point

A statement at the beginning of a paragraph which:

- Tells us something personal about you
- May refer to knowledge, skills or behaviours identified in your research
- Is proactive and reflective to reveal passion/opinions/likes or dislikes, or skills/knowledge abilities you have gained and like.

‘I actively seek to deepen my understanding of current affairs, key political debates, and the complex dilemmas facing policymakers.’

‘I am fascinated by the relationship between maths and economics.’

‘My current studies have given me a good understanding of writing, directing and performing’



Why is the point so effective?

- *It reveals something personal yet course relevant*
- *It will be different from the 1000's of people starting with an example (which is what most other people will do)*
- *It allows you to further show off your understanding of, and passion for, the subject*



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Evidence

These are the experiences from your life (either from your studies or experiences outside of the classroom depending on the question) that you are going to use as examples to demonstrate/prove your point.

(These are what you identify in table 2)

Make them as detailed as possible.

‘I took part a research study at the University of Bath. I was tasked to **evaluate** three anti-cancer medications and a controlled placebo drug made up of glucose using **qualitative methods** gathered from cell-grown models. I **assessed** their performance on HeLa Cancer cells and **chose the best drug for clinical trials** using methods like **MTT assay** and studying the **morphology of the cells under an Evos Microscope.**’



How to decide between which examples to use 🤔

1. If it was part of a course or project you did in school (EPQ, IPQ, Skills challenge cert) or extra Maths study (Further Maths, STEP, MAT, TMUA) use them to support question 2.
2. For question 3 support your answers with experiences from **anywhere** else.

TIP 💡 If an experience helped you develop knowledge and skills that will be useful on the course, **then it is relevant**.

Experiences are more valuable if:

- They took time and effort
- You produced something or made an impact
- They link together to show interest in a topic or skill from multiple experiences.
- They mirror the experience you will have on the course



How to decide between which examples to use 🤔

If you are trying to prove you have knowledge, then more 'academic' sources are generally better.

If you are trying to prove you have skills:

If they are study/research based, then study/research examples are probably better.

If they are creative then any creative experience is valuable, think about which took time/effort/produced something.

If they are communication based, then think which are similar to how they will be applied on the course (presentations or working with people)

If you are trying to prove experience, then any experience is okay but the more in depth, professional, and applied the better.



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Explanation

Explains what you think or value about what you did or learnt in the example you have just given.

‘This gave me a perspective I hadn’t previously considered for example....’

‘This has really helped me to....’

‘I have found this particularly helpful to my understanding of’

‘I disagree with her perspective because I feel that....’

‘This deepened my understanding, allowing me to....’

‘This serious improved my ***** skills which in turn has allowed me to....’



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Link

At the end of the paragraph use **an explicit link back to the question** to show how your point, evidence and explanation answer the specific question.

Point:

‘I actively seek to deepen my understanding of current affairs, key political debates, and the complex dilemmas facing policymakers.’

Link:

‘These skills will allow me to contribute and explore these issues further through the debate, case studies and comparative analysis involved in the study of politics.’



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Point

- A statement at the beginning of a paragraph which:
- I actively seek to deepen my understanding of current affairs, key political debates, and the complex dilemmas facing policymakers identified in your research
 - Tells us something personal about you
 - May refer to knowledge, skills or behaviours
 - Is proactive and reflective to reveal passion/opinions/likes or dislikes, or skills/knowledge abilities you have gained and like.

Evidence

This is a radio programme (either from the BBC or a local radio station) which provides a good grounding in the current affairs. The programme is a regular series of breaking news and analysis. The programme is a regular series of breaking news and analysis. The programme is a regular series of breaking news and analysis.

Explanation

Explains what your standpoint is. Shows your understanding of the issues. The example you have just given. and provides historical context. This practice has given me a good grounding and awareness of key debates and global issues, and how they shape domestic politics. I am able to explore different media and alternative views, which allows me to analyse these issues from different perspectives.

Link

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An aerial photograph of the University of Bath campus. The image shows a mix of modern and traditional architecture, including a large glass-fronted building on the right and older stone buildings in the center. The campus is surrounded by lush green trees, some with autumn foliage. In the foreground, there's a large green lawn with a circular pattern and a small pond. In the background, a river and rolling hills are visible under a clear sky.

Thank you for listening!

#BelongatBath

