

METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST
UCAS STUDENT'S GUIDE
WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

2021 ENTRY



NAME.....

Introduction

The UCAS personal statement is a 47 line (or 4,000 character) piece of writing that allows you to tell the universities and colleges you are applying to, why they should offer you a place on the course. In order to do this successfully, you need to convey your enthusiasm for the subject to the admissions tutors, as well as demonstrate your academic suitability to the course. There is no requirement that you fill the entire space, but it's better to have a short and well written personal statement than a long and irrelevant one.

To help you get started read the UCAS advice online.

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate-personal-statement>

In the '*Your personal statement*' section at the UCAS website, you are given a brief introduction to personal statements, and then a list of links to other sections to help you write your statement.

Now consider the following points:

- Many universities don't interview applicants, so the only information they have about you is on your UCAS form.
- Your UCAS form contains your details - the bits the universities are interested in are your grades, your reference and your personal statement.
- The personal statement is the only part you really have full control over, so this is your chance to present a good image to the admissions tutor, even if your grades don't really seem to reflect this.
- If you are applying to an oversubscribed university course, e.g. Physiotherapy, Medicine, etc. and everyone applying is likely to have good grades, the personal statement is the only thing that will set you apart from other applicants, so you want to try and make yours as good as possible.
- When the admissions and subject tutors look at your personal statement, they want to know the following:
 - Is the student suited to the course that they are applying for?
 - Does the student have the necessary qualifications and qualities for the course?
 - Is the student conscientious, hardworking and unlikely to drop out?
 - Will the student do their best and cope with the demands of the course?
 - Can the student work under pressure?
 - Will the student be able to adjust to their new environment at university?
 - What are their communication skills like?
 - Are they dedicated to this course and have they researched it well?
 - Do they have a genuine interest in the subject and a desire to learn more about it?

Remember, you cannot answer these questions directly with a simple 'yes' or 'no' - you need to provide evidence and make it sound believable.

University admissions tutors may well have hundreds of personal statements to read through, so even if you think you've answered all these questions really well you may still be unlucky.

Use a set of headings and write bullet points about how you relate to these headings. Here are some example headings you should think about.

COURSE CHOICE AND WORK EXPERIENCE

- What you want to study at university and why
- Specific aspects of the courses that interest you (read the information on universities' websites about the courses)
- Examples of coursework you have completed in your relevant AS/A Level subjects and how it relates to your chosen course
- Practical work you have enjoyed in your relevant AS/A Level subjects and what you have learnt from it
- Books, articles, etc. you have read related to the subject area
- Work experience or voluntary work in this area
- Conferences/Talks/Summer Schools you have attended
- Personal experiences that lead to the decision to take this subject
- Where you hope a degree in this subject will take you in the future

YOUR INTERESTS AND SKILLS /ACTIVITIES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOL

- Experiences that show you are a reliable and responsible person, e.g. part-time job, regular competitions in individual/team sports, charity work, Sixth Form Committee, Duke of Edinburgh Award, debating societies, and what you have gained from these experiences.
- State constructive activities that you do in your free time
- Sports competitions and training
- Subjects you study that are not examined
- Musical instrument(s) you play
- Languages you speak/learn
- Prizes you have won or positions achieved in your interests

Gap year (if applicable)

- Why you want to take a Gap year
- What you plan to do
- How this may relate to your course

Obviously, if you're not taking a Gap year, you can avoid this section.

The important thing is that you have a good reason for why you want to study the course.

If you're choosing this course just because you can't think of anything better to do, that's not a good enough reason, and maybe you should consider looking for a course you would enjoy more.

Saying why you want to take your course is possibly the most important part of your personal statement. You can have perfect grades, great extra-curricular activities and be a really wonderful person, but if admissions tutors feel you aren't committed to your course, you won't get a place. If they accept you, you are going to be studying this course for at least the next three years, and you need to convince them that you are committed to it.

Have a think about exactly why the subject appeals to you, and write down as much as you can about it, following the advice given above. Remember - if you can't think of any good reasons - should you really be taking that subject?

What if I want to do a joint degree?

There are two options you can use to tailor your personal statement to joint degrees (a degree where you take two subjects e.g. Economics and Politics).

- a) You can talk about the subject you feel is most important, and not mention the other. This has the advantage that you can apply for two different joint degrees and only talk about the common element e.g. for Economics and Politics and Law and Politics, you would only talk about politics. If you decide to do this, make sure you talk about the qualities you have which show you are suitable for the other half of your joint degree.
- b) Alternatively, you can just talk about why you want to do both subjects, although the approach you choose will probably depend on how closely related your subjects are.

What if I want to apply for different subjects?

There is no easy way to write a personal statement for various unrelated subjects.

If the subjects are similar, such as Accounting and Finance, Languages and International Studies or Philosophy, Politics and Economics you may find you can write a general personal statement that applies equally to all of them.

If this is the case you may not want to mention either of the subjects by name, and instead talk about the related academic work that you've already done and why you have enjoyed it.

If your subjects are totally unrelated, it is very difficult to write a personal statement that will cover all of them. You need to come up with a statement that gives you the best chance of being accepted. Universities that normally make lower offers are less likely to be concerned about a badly targeted personal statement, whereas for universities that make high offers, the personal statement will be much more important.

Read example personal statements

Even though you now know what you're going to put in your statement, do you know how to make it read well? The best way to get an idea of how to go about producing your personal statement is to look at other people's personal statements.

This gives you a chance to see the sort of structure and language other people use, how they explained why they wanted to study their chosen course, as well as their own interests and abilities.

When you read through sample personal statements, have your own notes from the section above ready. If you find anything you've done but haven't already thought about, make a note of it.

BELOW ARE THE EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL STATEMENTS OF MCB PAST PUPILS.

History and Languages

History enables me to reflect on current affairs with enhanced understanding and awareness of the world. It intertwines the past and present to influence the decisions of tomorrow. Thus, I wish to further explore and study History. The analytical nature of this subject allows me to dissect the reliability and usefulness of various sources and I particularly enjoy evaluating their validity. My study of Russian complements my interest in History. In Russian class, my study of the film, "Burnt by the Sun", prompted me to research the Stalinist regime and its impact on modern Russian society. This led me to reflect on the role of Soviet leaders and the public perception of them in modern Russia and beyond. In History class, we studied the years of political instability after Lenin's death and the attitudes of subsequent Soviet leaders towards Europe. I researched policies of the Soviet government as well as their relations with Western Europe and I noticed that Putin's political agenda is still aiming to destabilise Europe. This urged me to ponder on Britain's role in Europe and the reduction of our political engagement with the European Union after Brexit. I

enjoy studying History as analysing the mistakes of the past provides me with a better insight of current events. My knowledge of Russian language deepens my understanding of Russian society and adds another dimension to my appreciation of this nation's history and culture. In 2019, I undertook work experience shadowing a barrister. In court, the oral interactions with each witness varied slightly. However, my linguistic expertise enabled me to detect these subtle nuances because I know that language is not only a tool for communication, but also a vessel for relating to individuals. Furthermore, I observed how the History skills of analysis and debating are prevalent in the legal profession. This display of source analysis in real-life inspired me to further pursue my study of History. I enjoy the challenges of learning and consistently set and achieve high standards for myself. As Deputy Head Girl, Vice President of the Music Society and Head of the Russian Club, I have developed my communication skills and become aware of the importance of patience and empathy when working with others. Music plays an extremely significant role in my life. I have achieved Grade 8 clarinet and am working towards my Grade 8 in piano and saxophone. I am the leader of the City of Belfast Youth Concert Band and a dedicated member of the Ulster Youth Jazz Orchestra. I appreciate all genres of music, but find it particularly satisfying to research the backgrounds of various composers and explore the influences on their writing. In band last year, we played, "Ruslan and Lyudmila" by the Russian composer Glinka. It is an overture to an opera inspired by a poem by Pushkin. Further research of Pushkin led me to read "Queen of Spades" which I admired due to its concise depiction of 1830s Russian society. In July, I volunteered with Habitat for Humanity to work on a building site in Romania. My interactions with local builders made me value the power of language. On a day of cultural exploration, we toured the Polovragi Monastery. The visit was stimulating as an area of History that intrigues me is the role of religion and how it varies across cultures. I find it particularly pertinent, given its significance in Northern Ireland. In 2019, I participated in HE+ Corpus Christi College, Cambridge programme and attended lectures on English Literature, which allowed me to engage in group debates. I am a keen follower of the historian R. Service who comments on Russian history. His book, "The Last of the Tsars", analyses the significant consequences that the actions of Tsar Nicholas II had on Russia. It was a compelling read which challenged my interpretation of that era and it has inspired me to delve further into the academic subjects of both Russian and History.

Computer Science

Compared to some of my peers, I am discovering my interest in Computer Science relatively late. While I have always had computers in my life, the what, where when and why of how it all works has only recently sparked my curiosity.

Like many people my age all I ever saw a computer as was a device for browsing the internet and playing games until I decided to build a computer of my own from scratch, mainly just to get a better computer for my money. I was fascinated by all the different parts that made up the computer and how they all worked together, and I realised that it could be used for so much more. This newly found fascination inspired me to start teaching myself to code using python and to choose Computer Science as one of my A Levels.

The A Level courses I have chosen to study have all helped me to develop the necessary skills to pursue this subject. Computer Science has helped me understand how a computer functions and has helped me further develop my programming skills. Both Chemistry and Physics have helped to enhance my ability to think logically, understand complex issues and taught me to solve problems with a pragmatic and analytical approach.

I took part in a week-long work experience placement at Kainos, a Belfast based international company that develops technological solutions for business across the globe. Here I was able to shadow software engineers and programmers and experience the real-world working environment there. At Kainos I was tasked to work with a partner to identify a problem in the financial sector and to program a solution for it during our time there; at the end of the week we had finished and presented our solution which was a website in which a person would be able to apply for disability allowances online, and received a prize for our proposed solution this helped me improve my team working skills as well as decision making skills

I chose to do another week-long work experience where I worked alongside the lead developer to help make a virtual reality game for an award-winning games studio, italic pig. I spent my time with him sharpening my skills in programming with C#. It was great to understand and appreciate how my work could contribute to the overall feel of a game and to see how important it is that graphic designers and writers work closely with programmers.

I rowed both for school and for clubs outside of school where I have competed in many regattas and developed important skills like teamwork and communication. It taught me the importance of being able to rely on other people and to have them rely on me. It taught me to keep going even when things were not going well for the team or when it was wet and freezing.

Outside of school I was a member of the army cadets where I made good friends and grew in confidence. I learned many valuable life lessons, discovering better ways to lead, the importance of self-discipline as well as much more practical skills.

Over the last few years I have also worked my way up to a senior leader for a summer camp where I was responsible for Key Stage 1 and 2 children and helped to develop and deliver arts, science and craft activities.

When asked why I wanted to study Computer Science my first response was "because it's cool". That's not the whole story but it is true. What Computer Science has contributed to society, especially in the last couple of decades, is amazing. Current developments in quantum computers and artificial intelligence are amazing but it's the future of computing that really excites me. That's where I want to be in my future, maybe working on something that will change the way we all live.

Politics

I have long been interested in Politics and my study of the Northern Irish and British political processes at AS Level have only developed this passion. I had the pleasure of attending an event with the then House of Commons Speaker John Bercow as guest speaker. Following his speech, I had the chance to ask Mr Bercow a question directly and chose to inquire as to whether he felt his constituents suffered from a lack of representation in Parliament due to his position as Speaker. I have followed the whole Brexit process with great interest and have a passionate and informed view on the subject. The outcome of the Brexit process will have profound consequences for the economic and political future of the UK, especially Northern Ireland. The economic consequences of Brexit, be they positive or negative, are often discussed and as such I have a greater interest in the subject than ever before. This is also due to our study of the economic systems and fortunes of 1914-41 Russia and 1919-1945 Germany in our AS History course, this involved assessing the effectiveness of the various economic policies enacted in challenging circumstances during these periods. I find the links between Politics, Philosophy and Economics relevant to many issues in the world today, such as how wealth should be distributed. Those in power are often faced with many dilemmas on issues of applied ethics, those that I enjoy discussing the most include abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment. In my reading of *The Politics Book* (Kelly, Ed.) I have realised how ideas of philosophy shaped ideas of governance held by philosophers such as Confucius, Plato and Aristotle. Reading *Prisoners of Geography* (Marshall) gave me an excellent overview of global politics and how factors such as history, economics and geography have come together to shape the world we now live in.

I completed three days of work experience at a university economic policy centre during which I furthered my knowledge of economics. Although having never studied Economics at school my work experience proved to me that I would cope if I chose to study it at university level as I managed to fulfil all tasks asked of me which included analysing data, proof reading reports and organising data with Microsoft Excel. Due to these tasks I have a greater knowledge of economic vocabulary and a greater understanding of the subject in general. Finally, this experience showed to me that a career in economic or political research would be particularly interesting.

In school this year I will serve as a prefect and this will involve the responsibilities of carrying out duties and helping at school events. This will be my third year as a member of the school's Christian Union committee and this year I will be secretary. During this time, I have taken on many responsibilities of leadership including helping plan and organise our annual weekend away and summer barbecue. I have also proven to be a confident public speaker having led and spoken from the front on several occasions. As a member of the committee I have shown commitment in attending extra weekly planning meetings. Inside and outside of school I have achieved Grade 4 in both the flute and piano. To achieve these required a lot of hard work and perseverance given I am not particularly naturally musically talented. This would appear to bode well for future study at university given I am unlikely to give up if I find topics challenging and will instead approach them with my usual hard working and determined style. I have been a member of two summer teams that

involved working with disadvantaged young people, firstly to Moldova in 2018 and to Romania in 2019. These taught me to be organised and reliable when it came to fundraising for a deadline. They also taught me to have a flexible mind-set in order to cope best when things do not go to plan or when faced with new or challenging situations and this will undoubtedly be of use when attending university.

Economics

From Brexit to US-China trade disputes, economic issues always feature heavily in news headlines and are prominent in political discourse. The significant role that economic research often plays in informing policymaking further highlights the importance of the subject. Moreover, the broad range of skills involved in its study, from critical thinking to mathematical ability, presents an exciting challenge that I look forward to facing. Overall, this breadth in terms of the skills required, combined with the subject's incredible relevance to current affairs, has drawn me to Economics.

After repeatedly hearing certain politicians, economists and journalists laud the benefits of free markets, I decided to read Ha-Joon Chang's book: '23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism.' It provided convincing criticisms of some arguments used by advocates of free-market capitalism; Chang's arguments that implementing free-market policies in developing countries is ineffective and probably harmful and that there is no strong link between formal education and economic growth were thought-provoking and encouraged me to think more about how growth could be stimulated in developing countries.

The Economics resources on the HE+ website exposed me to new areas of economic theory that I had not previously studied. The introduction to behavioural economics was particularly interesting as it highlighted the existence of heuristics and biases in human decision-making, which challenges the assumption of rationality made in many economic models. After doing further reading on the subject, I was struck by the extent to which decisions are influenced by these biases and heuristics, rather than logic. The section on game theory was equally fascinating; it allowed me to extend my knowledge beyond the well-known prisoner's dilemma and learn how game theory could be used to model the behaviour of interdependent firms in an oligopolistic market.

I watched an undergraduate Economics lecture on uncertainty after my reading on the limits of human rationality sparked an interest in how humans make decisions. I found it fascinating that the principle of diminishing marginal utility could be used to explain why people exhibit the trait of risk aversion and that the shape of a person's utility function is directly linked to their attitude to risk. I believe this general idea could be used to argue that most executive pay structures, in which success is rewarded financially but failure is not meaningfully punished, causes executives to take excessive risks.

I became interested in international trade due to its prominence in news headlines. I recently read an article by Gregory Mankiw on the significance of trade deficits. I was intrigued and persuaded by Mankiw's argument that bilateral trade deficits are

largely insignificant, especially given President Trump's repeated references to them as a problem that must be rectified. I have also listened to a few episodes of Trade Talks, a podcast on trade policy. One episode involved a discussion with Paul Krugman, whose theory that trade happens because there are inherent advantages to producing goods in large quantities surprised me as it somewhat contradicts the traditional theory that specialisation is the main reason for trade.

My involvement in extra-curricular activities at school, such as African-Caribbean Society, which I co-founded, 1st XI Football, 2nd XI Hockey, Chapel Choir, Model United Nations and charity fundraising, in addition to my role as Head Boy, has equipped me with skills that will be useful at university. Playing sports has helped me improve my communication and ability to work in a team. Furthermore, in juggling these commitments with my academic work, I have developed strong organisation and time management skills.

Languages and Middle Eastern Studies

In studying Russian and Arabic, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of two of the most complex and misunderstood languages and cultures in the world with a particular interest in how each is presented in the western world and the reasoning behind this. While I have visited Eastern Europe multiple times, I have plans to visit Russia for the first time next summer and put my knowledge of the language into practice. I have established contacts within the Middle East from countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to get an idea of what life in the Arabian world is like. My family has an apartment in Turkey where we spend at least 2 months in each year, which is where my interest in Islamic history and subsequently the Arabian language began as we frequently take trips to the likes of Gallipoli and Istanbul.

Over the summer, I read 'Understanding Islam' by Gordon. This book really has prompted me to reflect on Islam and its role in Arabic culture. The chapter on women in Islam particularly intrigued me, given the prevalence of feminism in and how it influenced the Western world today. I began to look into the role of women in Islam and received differing opinions from my contacts in the Middle East, coupled with the many differing opinions regarding Islamic culture in the media. I read 'Questioning Islam' by Townsend and I found it to be quite balanced, given that he sources directly from the Qu'ran, hadiths and biographies of the Prophet Muhammad. Part of my desire to learn Arabic is to better understand the original wording of the Qu'ran and create my own opinions from that, rather than rely on translations and influence from polarising opinions of others, which I find are extremely commonplace in Northern Irish religious and social politics. To develop my knowledge of Arabic, I use Duolingo and have read 'Gateway to Arabic' and I am starting Arabic language and culture classes in my school.

Studying Pushkin's 'The Queen of Spades' in class inspired me to further look into Russian history beyond Revolution. In my opinion, the knowledge of Russian history helps me better understand the Russian psyche in general and the current political

situation in Russian society. I believe that linguistic fluency will enable me to develop my knowledge and to better understand Russia's rich history and culture. I am currently reading 'Natasha's Dance' by Figes. He discussed relatively modern aspects of Russian history that still affect the Russian mentality to this day, such as the question of what it means to be Russian. This in particular captivated me as I was able to draw a comparison with the question of identity in Northern Ireland. Figes also highlights how the relative isolation of Russia up until the eighteenth century has been a major factor in the West's misconceptions of Russia and her people. Last year I visited an exhibition at the British Library about the Russian Revolution and the history of Tsarism really interested me. It prompted me to watch a Russian documentary series on the whole Romanov dynasty and I was hooked!

I was fortunate enough to do a work placement in an international law firm in June, which highlighted the need for people to be able to communicate with each other, especially in times of uncertainty. Being exposed to people from all walks of life from volunteering at my mum's work again makes it clear to me that communication is vital for us to avoid past mistakes and I believe that this is especially true for Russian and Arabic.

Natural Sciences

I firmly believe interdisciplinary study within and beyond the realm of natural science is crucial to the way we consider the world around us. Early in my study of A-Level Chemistry, I realised pursuing many of the questions the course raised (such as on the shape of atomic orbitals) would require an understanding of quantum mechanics; a suspicion confirmed by J. Carey in 'The Faber Book of Science', stating, "all chemistry and biology are covered by this theory". Whilst attending the Cambridge Northern Ireland Summer School, participating academics armed me with a lot of enthusiasm and alien vocabulary, which I have since been attempting to explore via the Feynman Lectures on Physics and chapters of Carey's work. Expanding upon my appreciation of the mathematics beneath chemistry, I found I. Stewart's 'The Great Mathematical Problems' wonderfully insightful into the Kepler Conjecture, holding an appealing relevance to chemical models. More generally, I appreciated Stewart's running commentary on how connecting seemingly unrelated scientific topics often proves key to unlocking 'great' conundrums; I found a recent analysis by Princeton University of a common, hidden order between prime numbers and crystal-like materials fascinating for this reason. The 'HE+' programme allowed me to elaborate upon points of interest raised by the Chemistry course. A lecture on the properties of 'ordinary' versus 'heavy' water, mentioning the former is slightly blue whilst the latter is colourless, related to my interest in the mechanism underlying chemical observations and trends of colour. Both the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge paper (in which I gained a Silver award) and its online counterpart proved a great opportunity for the problem-solving that drives my enthusiasm for chemistry. Participating in a biological essay competition on the topic of phantom pain syndrome was an invaluable opportunity to explore an unfamiliar area of human biology. Though much of my research lay in concepts such as neuroplasticity, technically beyond my level of understanding, I relished the growing insight and thrill of piecing together new knowledge. Attending a medical physics lecture concerning

the therapeutic effect of plasma on cellular and DNA structure was very exciting, particularly as it related to my work experience in experimental treatments of pre-eclampsia, where I cultured cell lines in a university laboratory and shadowed researchers. In these situations, it was fantastic to apply the cell biology I had studied in school to new contexts, alongside familiar areas of chemistry and physics. I derived a similar satisfaction from reading M. Ridley's 'Genome'; which, in its discussion of not only the technicalities of the human genome but also the social implications of genetic study, reflected my personal affinity for interdisciplinary thought. Similarly, attending 'How Science Got Women Wrong', a talk by A. Saini, was conducive to considering the intimate relation of natural and social science, expanding upon how the innate social biases of scientists can affect what we consider to be impartial research. Deepening my capacity for analytical thought, I have participated in the All-Ireland Linguistics Olympiad, twice reaching its national round. This involvement has emphasised to me the importance of patience and persistence in problem-solving; I strive to instill this quality in younger pupils, whom I tutor in GCSE Mathematics and Science as part of my role as a school prefect. Beyond academia, I play tenor horn in a solo, ensemble and band capacity, and I am working towards my ABRSM Grade 8. Feeling a part of the brass-playing community is extremely uplifting, and I look forward to continuing this in my future endeavours. Additionally, I hugely enjoy painting and, much to the amusement of my friends (but to my joy), am a member of a Bulgarian folk dancing group.

Law

After attending open days at two law firms in Belfast (Baker McKenzie and A&L Goodbody) and having the chance to shadow experienced barristers and solicitors at the Belfast City Council, I have decided that pursuing a career in Law is definitely what I want to do. Ever since I had the opportunity to witness these dynamic and professional environments first-hand, my appreciation for Law has grown. I particularly enjoyed listening to the litigation lawyers at these two firms explaining how they handle the thousands of cases that come through their firms every year and how they try to achieve the best outcome for their clients. I was given the chance to visit the courts in Belfast through the Belfast City Council which included the Royal Courts of Justice where I watched a high profile murder case unfold before my very eyes - this is something I will not ever forget. Reading Tom Bingham's book on the Rule of Law helped increase my appreciation for Law as well as I realised just how important a legal system is in helping to regulate and provide order in societies and to protect the rights and liberty of those who live in them. An example of this is the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission losing a Supreme Court appeal over the legality of Northern Ireland's abortion law - this ruling affects every woman living in Northern Ireland. I believe it to be a fascinating and multi-faceted subject in itself which is why I think it will be so interesting to study.

I take an active role in my school and represent the college at both cricket and football. I was a member of the team that achieved Senior Honours in cricket by winning the School's Cup for the first time in our school's history. I believe that being a part of this team, and the football team, has helped greatly in improving my communication and teamwork skills. I have been selected as a Sixth Form Prefect

and have enjoyed the additional responsibilities that come with this position. It has helped me develop my interpersonal skills by communicating with pupils of all ages and other teachers. I am a member of the Christian Union committee and responsible for organising and carrying out games every week which is a responsibility that I have really enjoyed. I am a keen guitar player, mostly self-taught, but I was part of a traditional group at the Crescent Arts Centre for a year. This has helped me to work on my perseverance and determination when I am trying to master a song or that one tricky chord. I know that studying Law will require much work so I believe these would be important attributes to have. I was fortunate enough to travel to Uganda last summer with a team from my church in conjunction with 'Fields of Life' who promote educational and social development in East Africa. There I helped lead various activities and teach classrooms full of eager young children. This really helped me work on my resourcefulness and my ability to communicate effectively with those around me, whether it was the kids, teachers or other team members.

I work as a waiter at the busy Holohans restaurants in Belfast which has helped develop my confidence by talking to customers and improved my attention to detail as a result of setting tables, taking orders, managing diary bookings and operating the till system. While I was in Australia I attained my Bronze Medallion in swimming which I still enjoy doing in my spare time. Although I expect to find the course of study demanding, I believe that the Law will ultimately be a stimulating and interesting field for me to work in and a career that I will thoroughly enjoy. I truly believe that I have the determination and motivation to succeed and the character to be a real asset to the life of your university.

Your personal statement goals

From the personal statements you have just read through, you should have gathered the following guidelines:

- State clearly what subjects you want to study at university in your first sentence.
- Don't sound arrogant and pretentious.
- Try not to quote books, magazines or publications in a way that makes it sound like you've only read them to put them on your statement.
- Do not lie, state the truth.
- Don't try to be funny or make jokes in your statement.
- Don't start every sentence with I.
- Don't use vocabulary you don't normally use and just looked up in a dictionary.
- Don't use famous quotes in your statement unless you back them up with information on how and why this person's quote influenced you. Dropping them in

just for the sake of it makes you look silly and that you haven't given serious thought to your personal statement.

- Don't repeat things already on your UCAS form, e.g. predicted exam grades.
- Don't include clichés or colloquial phrases
- Don't take any political or religious viewpoints.

Language

From looking at example personal statements you have probably found some language that you like or think works well.

The first thing to remember is: do not directly copy any of it! The reason is, **copying statements is plagiarism**, and if an admissions tutor sees a statement they recognise they will probably reject you instantly.

It is ok to find a sentence or paragraph that says what you want to say, but make sure you adapt it yourself and don't just copy it.

You need to use language that makes you sound enthusiastic about your courses and portrays you as a capable learner.

University prospectuses are also a good place to look - find your course, see how it is described and see if you can work anything similar into your personal statement.

Write down a list of words or sentences you would like to use like this:

- to gain greater understanding of the world around me
- this prompted me to research further on/to reflect on
- this encouraged me to problem solve
- I reflected on how economics/ history/engineering impacts our daily lives
- a challenging and diverse discipline
- develops analytical skills, quantitative skills, research skills
- recently in Geography class we have covered the topic of I found it relevant to

Don't copy the sentences you find outright - change them or write your own sentence in a similar style. If you can't find any sentences you like, try and write your own - it is a personal statement after all.

Structure

UCAS personal statements are written in an essay format, not in bullet points. You could also use headings to your paragraphs. Do not write your statement as one large block of text. Even though you can fit more words in, this just makes it hard to read.

a) A good starting guideline is to spend half the statement talking about the course and why you want to take it, and spend the other half writing about yourself and your own abilities.

b) Another approach is to split up your statement into 4 paragraphs.

- **Paragraph 1: Course choice.** The subject you wish to study, the subject's specific aspects you're interested in and why. Relevant academic conferences, courses, summer schools you attended and how they impacted your learning. Books/articles you read to develop your knowledge of the subject and your academic skills.
- **Paragraph 2: Work experience.** It does not matter if your work experience is related or unrelated to your course choice. The main idea is **to evaluate it. What you learnt/gained from it. What skills the work experience helped you develop and their beneficial impact on your future studies at university.**
- **Paragraphs 3 Activities inside school-** your participation in Trips/Language Exchanges, HE classes, Salter Stirling Project, First Aid, Prefect Activities, Sports Events and Competitions, College Clubs, Open Nights, etc. Evaluate their impact on your academic and life skills.

Paragraph 4: Your interests outside of school, particularly those that show you are a responsible and reliable person, that you can manage time, keep to deadlines, work under pressure, work independently and in teams, lead and listen, problem solve, remain positive regardless of challenges, compromise, follow the instructions and act productively on advice given.

A short conclusion stating why you want to go to university or what you want to do afterwards is advisable but not necessary. Once again, a personal statement should always be personal to you.

In the College, we are asking you to use the template on the following website:
<https://www.unifrog.org>

Drafting application materials



- 1 Why this subject 2 Your suitability 3 Other interests

Section 1: Why do you want to study this subject?

This part should make up 30% of the total statement

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Examples of what you may want to write about:

- 1. Your knowledge of the subject area
- 2. Why this subject area interests you
- 3. What interests you the most about the subject area?
- 4. Where your studies could lead
- Personal Statement Dos
- Personal Statement Don'ts



Current Version

Your entries are saved automatically

Why do you want to study
this subject?

Enter text here...

0 of 1200 characters

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Section 2: What have you done in the past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject?

◀ Back

This part should make up 60% of the total statement

Examples of what you may want to write about:

- ✦ 1. Your academic studies related to this subject
- ✦ 2. Particular project work you've done in your studies
- ✦ 3. Things you have learnt online, and from books, newspapers, TV
- ✦ 4. Your hobbies and interests
- ✦ 5. Experiences in your year out (if you are having one)
- ✦ 6. Any relevant work experience (especially for vocational courses)
- ✦ 7. Any voluntary work
- ✦ Personal Statement Dos
- ✦ Personal Statement Don'ts



Current Version

Your entries are saved automatically

What have you done in the past that makes you particularly suitable to study the subject?

Enter text here...

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1 Why this subject

2 Your suitability

3 Other interests

Section 3: What else have you done that would contribute to the university community?

← Back

This part should make up 10% of the total statement

Examples of what you may want to write about:

- ✦ 1. Your hobbies, leisure activities
- ✦ 2. Sports / music / drama you participate in
- ✦ 3. Other sorts of extra-curricular activities
- ✦ 4. Significant responsibilities you hold, at home, school, or in clubs or societies
- ✦ 5. Special achievements
- ✦ 6. What you've learned if you have a job
- ✦ 7. Conclusion
- ✦ Personal Statement Dos
- ✦ Personal Statement Don'ts



Current Version

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What else have you done that would contribute to the university community?

Enter text here...

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I've written the first draft of my personal statement - now what?

Read through what you've written slowly and try to read it from someone else's point of view. Make sure it's easy to read and not confusing. If you are confused by reading your own personal statement, it is likely anyone else reading it will be too, including the admissions tutors. Get other people to read it. Ask your family, friends, subject teachers and especially your MCB UCAS Career Tutor to give you a good opinion. They will be able to tell you if they think there are some things you may have missed out. Keep making changes, showing people your statement, and making more changes. On average, MCB students produce around 5 drafts before they are completely happy with their statement.

Using UCAS Apply

Firstly, remember, there is a character limit (4,000 characters including spaces) and a line limit (47). Both of these must be satisfied to allow you to save your personal statement. No formatting of any type is allowed in your personal statement, except using capital letters - so any bold, italic, or underlined words will disappear in the preview. Tabs and multiple spaces will be condensed to a single space, so it is no longer possible to indent lines. Single spaces at the beginning of lines will also be removed. You have a very limited set of 'special characters' to use along with all the upper and lowercase letter and numbers. Common symbols not allowed are €, long dashes (—) and the special quote characters “ ” which will simply be removed from your statement. Backslashes (\) are also not allowed but will be replaced with forward slashes (/) and curly brackets will be replaced with normal ones.

Remember, a good personal statement is the one that gives you the best chance of being accepted. Good Luck!

MCB CAREERS SERVICE