

Writing an effective Personal Statement

You've chosen your course, you've made your university choices, so what's next? It's time to apply to university. You will apply through UCAS, submitting an online form which will include a section for your personal statement. This guide will help you prepare your personal statement.



What is a personal statement?

- Your personal statement outlines why you want to study a particular course at university and is an opportunity for you to demonstrate you have the skills, knowledge and experience to succeed on this course.
- Your personal statement forms part of your UCAS application to university. It is submitted online, and can be a maximum of 47 lines or 4000 characters long, whichever comes first.
- It is an opportunity for the admissions tutor (see below) to find out more about you, your academic achievements, your interests and your motivation(s) for studying at Higher Education level.

Who reads my personal statement?

- Admissions tutors are members of university staff who set the entry criteria for the course. They will assess your application, read your personal statement and decide whether you will receive an offer.

What are admissions tutors looking for?

- Admissions tutors are looking for evidence that you have the skills required to be an undergraduate student on the course you are applying to and will contribute more widely to university life.
- You can find out the specific skills a potential student needs to demonstrate by referring to the UCAS course fact files or by contacting the relevant university department.

TOP TIP

Although you complete the UCAS application form online, draft your personal statement using word processing software first.

"Writing a clear and compelling personal statement is an essential part of your application. With many highly qualified students applying to University, the personal statement is crucial in helping us identify students with the greatest merit and aptitude for our courses."

Bernard Strutt
Head of UK/EU Student Recruitment

The University of Manchester perspective.

At The University of Manchester, we are looking for students who can demonstrate academic potential, understanding of the course, independent learning and a willingness to contribute to the University.

Where places are limited they are offered to those eligible applicants who best meet our selection criteria, and whom our admissions staff judge to have most potential to benefit from their chosen course and to contribute both to the Academic School and the University.

Getting started

Before you start thinking about the structure of your personal statement, you need to reflect on the skills you have developed through your academic achievements and extra-curricular activities.

Which skills on the right are relevant for your course? How can you demonstrate evidence of these skills in your personal statement? Can you think of any more skills?

Creativity **Logical Thinking**
Writing Skills **Leadership**
Presentation Skills **Organisation**
Self Discipline **Communication**
Critical Thinking **Teamwork**
Initiative **Problem Solving**
Time Management **Research Skills**
Analytical Abilities **Motivation**
Enthusiasm **Dedication**
Independent Working

TOP TIP

Do your research! You can only make an informed choice and show a real understanding of the course and subject area, if you have researched thoroughly.

How to write about skills in your personal statement: The ABC method

Listing your experiences is not enough. It is also important to highlight the skills you have developed and how they are relevant to the course. The ABC method is a way of writing about these experiences in more detail.

Activity: What have you done?

Benefit: What skills have you gained?

Course: How will this prepare you for the course?

Why not try for yourself? We have given an example to help. The student below is applying for Business Studies.

Activity eg *I am the school captain of the football team.*

Benefit eg *This shows I have good communication and team working skills.*

Course eg *This is relevant to Business Studies as being able to communicate effectively is an important skill when working on group projects.*

A

B

C

A

B

C

A

B

C

TOP TIP

It's important that you provide evidence for any skill that you mention in your personal statement.

Writing your Personal Statement

We recommend you follow a structure like the one below to ensure you give priority to the sections that showcase relevant skills and experiences to the admissions tutor. Remember, that extra-curricular activities and work experience are valuable too.

Try completing the sections now to start writing your personal statement and don't forget to use the ABC method.

Introduction – *Why do you want to study the course? What interests you about the subject area? What aspirations do you have, further to university study?*

Academic achievements/subjects studied at level 3 (AS and A2 levels, BTECs etc.) – *Write about your academic achievements. What academic skills and knowledge do you have that will prepare you to succeed in your chosen subject?*

TOP TIP

It's great to talk about your aspirations but remember you are applying for a course at university, not for the career that you hope university will lead to.

Work experience/employment/volunteering – *Write about any skills that you have gained from work experience, employment and/or volunteering opportunities and how these experiences prepare you for university study.*

TOP TIP

This section will be bigger if you are applying to a course that requires work experience such as Dentistry, Medicine or Veterinary Science.

Extra-Curricular activities/awards (e.g. a First Aid course or Duke of Edinburgh award) – *Mention any other achievements or extra-curricular activities that demonstrate you have the relevant skills for the course you are applying to.*

Conclusion – *Finish with a brief summary. Why should you be offered a place? Remember what the admissions tutors are looking for and leave them with a good impression.*



Your Checklist

Preparing to write your personal statement

- Have you decided what to study at university?
- Have you done thorough research into your course and subject area?
- Have you made a list of relevant achievements?
- Have you done sufficient work experience? (If relevant).

Writing your personal statement

- Have you used the ABC structure?
- Have you used the personal statement structure?
- Have you related all skills and activities back to the course you are applying for?
- Have you provided evidence for all the skills you have mentioned?

Checking your personal statement

- Have you checked your spelling and grammar?
- Has your tutor/parent/carer or friend also checked your personal statement?
- Have you spell checked your personal statement (again)?

TOP TIP

Spell check, spell check, spell check! No matter how enthusiastic you sound in your personal statement, if you have grammar or spelling mistakes it gives the impression that you haven't taken the time to read it through before submitting. Always check your work (and try to get other people to check it too).

Plagiarism

UCAS check every personal statement using Copyscape similarity detection software. If your personal statement is found to have been plagiarised, this could mean serious consequences for your whole university application.

Please ensure that your personal statement is your own work, and has not been copied from a friend or a website. A personal statement should be an original piece of writing.

Where to find out more:

The University of Manchester

For information on how to apply and courses offered
www.manchester.ac.uk

UMASS University of Manchester Aspiring Students' Society personal statement advice
www.umass.manchester.ac.uk

UCAS Course search function and advice on writing and submitting UCAS application www.ucas.com

UniStats

For official statistics on universities and courses
<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>