



ASSOCIATED SIXTH FORM

ST AIDAN'S & ST JOHN FISHER, HARROGATE



# Personal Statement Preparation

Make sure your personal  
statement **stands out**

UCAS



The Quality in Careers Standard >>>>

# What is a Personal Statement..?



- Supports your UCAS application
- 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text
- An opportunity to demonstrate your skills, experience, ambitions and suitability for the course

# How are Personal Statements used..?

- To provide a basis for university interviews
- To enable universities to differentiate between applicants with the same predicted grades
- To consider:
  - borderline applicants
  - applicants for Adjustment
  - during Clearing



# What are admissions staff looking for..?



Evidence of your:

- ***understanding...***

...of the course content

- ***potential...***

...your academic profile together with your motivation and enthusiasm

- ***independence...***

...of thought, originality and your independent learning skills

- ***contribution...***

... to the undergraduate student body

# A suggested structure...

*Opening statement – 5%*

*Academic suitability – 70%*

*Extra-curricular activities – 20%*

*Concluding statement – 5%*



# Opening statement...



- Short, concise and to the point
- Outlines your interest in the course
- Grabs the readers attention
- Consider writing last

# Be original...

Most over-used opening sentences...

*1. From a young age I have always been interested in...*

1779

*2. For as long as I can remember...*

1451

*3. I am applying for this course because...*

1370

*4. I have always been interested in...*

927

*5. Throughout my life I have always enjoyed...*

310

(Number for 2016 UCAS cycle. Data provided by Lancaster University)



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# Opening statement example...

History and Politics Undergraduate

*“My **interest in** History and Politics was sparked by the study of World War Two and its causes. The ability of a populist party to gain political power, and then abolish the democratic system that helped them achieve it, is **fascinating**. This highlighted the link between the two subjects and **inspired my curiosity** in political history...”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants



# Opening statement example...

Geography Undergraduate

*“Reading... 'Prisoners of Geography', **sparked my interest...** I was **intrigued** by the connections he highlighted between the natural (physical) characteristics of the earth and how they can... impact the course of human history. While this book offers strong links between physical and human geography, **my fascination** has always been for the human dimension...”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

# Academic suitability...

- What do you enjoy about your studies and why?
- What have you learnt from super curricular activities?
- Critically evaluate work experience/volunteering in relation to subject
- Evidence of academic skills



# Super curricular activities...

## Chemistry Undergraduate

*“One aspect of Chemistry I have enjoyed... is physical chemistry. Attending a **public lecture** at The University of Leeds, 'Seeing is Believing', **highlighted how** changes in the arrangement of molecules affects the properties of a material, for example,... **Reading** 'The Laws of Thermodynamics' ...**further helped to expand my knowledge of physical chemistry through...**”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

# Super curricular activities...

Fine Art Undergraduate

*“I have worked hard to **develop my practice** over the past three years, and I have recently **completed the Young Creatives course** at Leeds Arts University. Here **I learned to** work with new media such as screen printing, mono printing, bookbinding and appliqué....”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

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# Work experience/volunteering...

Law Undergraduate

*“During work experience with a local firm of solicitors I deepened my **understanding of the intricacies of the legal system. I had practise in drafting some legal powers of attorney and I also sat in on both a mediation of a divorcing couple and the drafting of a will...**”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

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# Work experience/volunteering...

Secondary Teaching Undergraduate

*Volunteering as a brownie young leader... reinforced my teamwork and leadership skills as I have worked alongside other leaders to help deliver sessions... I have worked as a visitor assistant...has helped to build on my resilience and problem solving as well as my independence. This role has involved working under pressure...encouraging, motivating and teaching customers..."*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

# Academic skills...

Attention  
to Detail

Logic and  
Reasoning

SCIENCE

Patience

Analytical Skills

People Skills

Working Effectively  
Under Pressure

HEALTH

Multi-Tasking

Decision-Making

Creative Problem  
Solving

Writing Skills

MARKETING

Communication  
Skills

Digital/Social  
Media  
Experience

Persuasive  
Writing

Debating Skills

LAW

Public Speaking

Technical Language  
Experience

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# Academic skills...

Economics Undergraduate

*“Studying Mathematics has heightened my interest in **problem solving** and strengthened my **ability to utilise** different arithmetical variables.*

*This is beneficial when using **quantitative techniques** to **analyse** statistics and data, such as the calculus involved to find...”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

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# Academic skills...

## Fashion Design Undergraduate

*”Studying Applied Business means I have developed the ability to **apply business theory** as an entrepreneur. **Creating a viable model** of a sustainable boutique enabled me to sell profitable garments... I **understand profit and loss**, factors behind strategic buying and merchandising on a manufacturing level, why satisfying **consumer demands** is so crucial when **forecasting** styles and future **trends**....”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants



## Extra-curricular...

- Outlines key roles and responsibilities
- Refers to key achievements such as awards, events
- Highlights transferable skills developed
- Avoid lists, "less is more"

# Extra-curricular...

Chemistry Undergraduate

*“...I play hockey for my school team...and Rugby for Harrogate. I currently work in a shop and volunteer at a local charity which has developed my **interpersonal skills** and **team working**, as well as the **ability to adapt** to the various and rapidly changing scenarios of retail. My participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award has also developed my **leadership, time management and determination...**”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

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# Concluding statement...

- Reinforces enthusiasm for course
- Highlights what you can offer the university
- Could evidence future plans but you are applying for the *course*, not the *career*



# Concluding statement...

Business Undergraduate

*“Business is always changing and evolving and I **look forward to** the challenge of studying Business at university which will provide the **perfect environment** to **strengthen** and test my understanding...”*

Psychology Undergraduate

*“Understanding the mechanics of the body has always **intrigued me**, especially the brain... I want to **delve deeper** into this rapidly developing field... and to one day have a **career** in which I can **contribute to** it.”*

Source: 2019/20 applicants

# Top tips - use...



- Microsoft Word
  - Ariel font, size 12
  - Name in header
  - Space between paragraphs
  - 2.5cm margins
- Persuasive, positive phrasing
- Clear paragraphs with formal language
- Write in your 'voice'
- Use examples: A+B=C

**A**ction + **B**enefit = **C**ourse relevance

# Top tips - avoid...

- Clichés – "*I have always...*"
- Famous quotes – use the character count for your words, not someone else's
- Complicated vocabulary
- Negativity or humour
- Exaggeration
- Plagiarising



# Remember...



- Logical structure – beginning, middle and end
- Be selective and analytical - "*So what..?*"
- Do not exaggerate
- Read your statement aloud
- Ask for feedback
- Check, re-check then check again



# Positive phrasing...

I learnt from

*Commitment*

*Taking part in*

Enriched

Furthermore

***Self-motivated***

**Enabled**

Through attending

Reinforced

Improved

Combining ... with ... has

*This demonstrated my ability to*

I aspire to

*Strengthened*

**Participated in**

*Broadened my interest*

The opportunity to

I particularly enjoyed

Developed skills of

***Enhanced***

Facilitated

Expanded