**Personal Statements**

**Useful Information:**

University of Birmingham took 5500 students from 40000 applications. The University of Surrey took 2000 students from 25000 applications. Competition for certain courses is high, for example 2000 applicants for 120 places to study History.

Therefore your personal statement is an important part of the application and you must sell yourself! It’s like an electronic interview and can be your only opportunity to sell yourself to the university as many will not hold formal interviews for lots of their courses. An admissions tutor will spend approximately 90 seconds reading your personal statement. **Throughout this process you should consult with your mentor in your weekly meetings.**

Universities will put your applications into four piles:

* Reject
* Possible
* Probable
* Definite

Your personal statement must be persuasive and not informative. You need to stand out and be an individual. Do not copy any part of your personal statement from the internet, UCAS scan your application and statements to check that it is an original. If it is found to be copied or part copied then the universities are informed and it may lead to a rejected offer.

The advice from admission tutors is to be yourself, show what you have done and what you have learnt from it, write it in your own style (good English is a must) and try to come across as genuine.

The statement has a limit of 4000 characters and 47 lines which equates to around 500-600 words. 75% - 80% of the application (at least) should be focused on the “academic” i.e. on why you want to do the subject you are applying for and what makes you suitable for it. No more than 20% - 25% should be spent referring to your other interests.

**Simple Do’s and Don’ts:**

* **Don’t** repeat information.
* **Don’t** offer undeveloped lists or clichés.
* **Avoid** humour or ambiguity
* **Do** think about spelling, grammar and vocabulary
* **Do** add comments, views and explanations
* **Do** use your own experiences

**Where to start?**

* Initially the best thing to do is to write a list, create a spider diagram, mind map of all the things that you have done over the last 3 years. This can be within school, subject specific or extra-curricular.
* Highlight what you believe is the most relevant and important aspects to use within your personal statement.
* Remember your personal statement is about selling yourself, so you must show how these experiences have made you want to attend university or show what you have learnt from these experiences that would make you a good candidate for university.
* Use the layout below and show drafts to your mentor. You can also use <http://heathensixthform.co.uk/> for help

**The layout:**

**1st Paragraph - Introduction**

* What was your personal trigger? (Where did your interest start, what made you interested in the subject) Avoid using themes like from a young age I enjoyed studying … or I liked AS and I’m doing okay in my A2’s so thought I would study …
* How does your subject relate to society or current affairs?
* Which aspects of the course are you really looking forward to studying in more detail and why? (Needs to be relevant to all courses/choices that you will apply for, is there a common theme? If not then ignore this point)

**2nd Paragraph – Interest in the Subject**

* What is your interest in the subject chosen for university and show why you like the subject?
* What have you done in school to develop interest in the subject? (Remember to stand out by showing what you have done outside of the subject area, trips you have been on, books that you have read, wider reading etc.)
* Are you doing an EPQ? Does it fit with your university course, self-reflect on what you have learnt or why you believe the EPQ will give you the skills and experience that would suit university?
* What have you done outside of school that you can link to your subject? (Work experience, volunteering, part time job etc.)
* Do you have a career aspiration, if so what is it and why do you have the skills to help you enter this career. You can also show the dark side of careers or make the admission tutor show that you have really thought about the career by understanding that there can be certain negatives. E.g. I am aware that during a career in medicine there is often times where you can only do so much and ultimately dealing with death is part of the job.
* Is work experience a requirement for your course? Find out what counts as suitable experience if not clear. You must show self-reflection and don’t just list what you did. How has your experience helped inform your decision to want to go into X.

**3rd Paragraph – Wider Skills**

* This is where your list of what you have done over the last few years comes in handy.
* Use these skills to explain why you would suit higher education.
* Examples can include travel, work, work experience (if not mentioned above), Future Learn course, MOOK (online course via University of Southampton), volunteering, charity fundraising, position of responsibility in school or sports team, extracurricular activities.
* For each example you use, think about the following questions and ensure you answer them in this paragraph.
  + What did you learn?
  + Does it relate to your subject in some way?
  + What transferable skills did you gain?
  + Can they be useful to you in university life?
* Use this to help = **A**ctivity (what have you done), **B**enefit (skills it’s given you), **C**ourse (how it relates to the course)
* If you feel you don’t have enough experiences, start now, think about what you could do to improve your skills and your application. Use your initiative and get involved in what you love to do, go to public lectures, write a student magazine, you tube channel, blogs, creative writing, get articles published, start an enterprise or your own small business.

**4th Paragraph – Summary**

Finish with a one or two line summary recapping:

* Why you want to go to university and study the course?
* Why you deserve to be offered a place?

Some examples of summary statements include:

Overall, I am a hardworking active person and I am enthusiastic about achieving my goals and becoming a secondary school teacher. I am looking forward to university life both academically and socially.’

‘I am mature, confident and self-motivated, all qualities that I believe are critical; to a successful university experience. I relish the opportunity to study accounting and finance to degree level and hopefully beyond.’

‘I feel certain that this subject will provide me with the intellectual challenge best suited to my personality and ambition of pursuing an academic career in the social sciences.’

**Think you’ve finished?**

* Are my goals well-articulated?
* Have I explained why I want to do the course?
* Do I demonstrate knowledge about the course?
* Have I evidenced relevant skills and attributes that make me stand out?
* Does it read/flow well?
* Have I sought constructive feedback? (Get a friend to read it, does it sound like you, ensure your mentor has read it)