

UCAS

Personal Statement Process

Name: _____

Tutor Group: _____

Date Commenced: _____

Oxbridge/medical/dental/veterinary school deadline for submission of completed UCAS form is early October

All other UCAS forms deadline for submission of completed UCAS form is early November.

Draft Deadline: _____ Signed (tutor): _____

Finish Date: _____ Signed (tutor): _____

Introduction

You need to provide a brief but convincing explanation as to why you want to study your subject at university. What was the 'personal trigger' that got you interested in the subject? It may have been book, a museum trip, a documentary, a childhood experience, a teacher, work experience, etc. Go on to develop this line of thought with why this subject is important and inspiring to you. Discuss what it is that motivates you personally to study this discipline. Talk about why this subject is significant to society, perhaps by relating it to current affairs. Be specific – don't just say you love English or Maths, say why, and never, **never** say 'I always wanted to study.....'. You could also outline what you hope to get out of your university degree.

Having given a broad account of why you love your subject, focus on specific areas of interest within it. So, having written about the significance of Physics in your life, go on to analyse how the module on Astrophysics inspired you and in what way you hope your degree course will develop your passion further.

What was my personal trigger?

How does my subject relate to society or current affairs?

Which aspect of my subject am I really looking forward to studying in more detail?
Why?

Academic work

Your A levels will have given you the opportunity to study the subject in some detail. Which aspects did you enjoy? Why did you enjoy them and how does it relate to the course you want to embark on? If you are studying a completely new course that you have not studied at 'A' level, think about the skills you are learning in your current studies that will be transferable to a degree course, such as essay writing, critical analysis, research skills or logical reasoning skills.

Here is a list of some academic skills developed during 'A' levels. There may be others. Select those you can show as being relevant to you.

- Observation
- Critical analysis
- Editing
- Extracting relevant information, discarding irrelevant information
- Identifying bias
- Conducting a scientific investigation/experiment/titration
- Hand to eye co-ordination
- Ability to raise questions, see alternative views, interrogate established thinking
- Using statistical tests/awareness of sources of error
- Applying models
- Seeing in 3 dimensions
- Understanding abstract ideas/theories
- Awareness of current affairs/political thinking
- Developing cogent arguments
- Structuring writing
- Computational accuracy
- Deductive/inductive reasoning
- Verbal communication/presentation
- Using a wide variety of research sources

There are other related skills, sought by employers as well as universities which may be applicable, having been reinforced through A level studies:

- Self-reliance/resourcefulness/willingness to learn/inquisitiveness
- Ambition/assertiveness/persistence
- Problem solving /diplomacy
- Organisation/time management/meeting deadlines/ability to prioritise
- IT skills

Now use the table overleaf to structure your reasons for enjoying the subject, and outline the academic skills you have developed.

	A-Level One	A-Level Two	A-Level Three	A-Level Four
Elements most enjoyed.. Why..				
Skills developed...				

Personal statement language

Try using these phrases to avoid repeating yourself. Try not to use personal pronouns too much e.g. "I have... I can... I like..."

'Furthermore..' **'has enabled me to...'** 'In addition..'

'..used my initiative..' **'..thrive under pressure...'** ...'strengthen...'

'... explore my interests...'

'...enhanced...'

'...skills I have gained...'

'...the opportunity..'

'.....participated in...'

...as well as...'

'...I learned from....'

'...reinforced...'

'This has furthered my...'

'Moreover...'

'...commitment...'

'...taking part in...'

'...creatively..'

'...using my initiative...'

'I undertook...'

'In addition...'

'...responsibility...'

'...efficiently...'

'...conscientiously...'

'...benefit...'

'...my pursuits...'

'...broadening my interests...'

'I aspire to...'

'I particularly enjoyed...'

'This genuine interest in...'

'...REWARDING...'

'I continue to develop...'

'Combining ... with ... has taught me...'

'Through attending...'

'This has expanded my knowledge of...'

'I have acquired skills which...'

'I was determined to...'

'Involvement with...'

'...enriching...'

'...challenging...'

'...verbal and non-verbal communication skills...'

'..confidence..'

'...incorporated...'

'...motivation...'

'...stimulating...'

'...potential...'

'....opened my eyes...'

'.. academic skills/intellectual capacity/entrepreneurial drive/curiosity/strengths..'

Your First Draft

Now look back at all the tables you have filled in – it might not look like it but this is your first draft! The next step is to select the most important elements to include and then start turning your notes into well-written prose. Your personal statement should be three paragraphs long. Broadly, 2/3 should be on academic matters, 1/3 on extra-curricular matters.

Paragraph 1 is your introduction. Paragraph 2 is your 'A' level skills table. Paragraph 3 is your extra-curricular skills table. Use the following notes as an overview to remind you of what to focus on.

1. Why this subject/course? You need to explain your interest in the subject and give evidence of this interest. What first caught your attention: a lesson, a topic, a t.v. programme? You may have read a book or article, seen something in the news or heard a radio programme about the subject. Analyse it, say what was interesting about it, what you learned. Try to choose something outside the curriculum to show that you have an interest beyond school. Never begin with ...'I have always wanted to..'. You should also avoid suggesting that you are following in your parents' footsteps.

Universities want you to demonstrate that you understand what is involved in the course and give evidence supporting why you are suitable for the course. If you have undertaken work shadowing or work experience, what did you learn? If you are applying for a subject not covered by A levels e.g. medicine, physiotherapy, media studies etc., you must demonstrate that you know what is involved in these careers/courses.

When making links, avoid saying, 'I think this shows I have the skills needed...'. This is a judgement for the admissions tutors to make; they can infer qualities from your statement. You can say 'I enjoyed developing my interpersonal/teamwork/time management skills...' and leave the admissions tutors to interpret this.

The commonest reasons universities quote for rejecting candidates is that they do not emphasise their interest in the course, or show sufficient intellectual curiosity about the subject, so this section must glow!

2. What have you learned from your A levels? You must refer to your A levels; why did you choose them? What interests you in particular, and how do the subjects link to the course being applied to? What academic skills have you acquired (such as research, use of ICT, teamwork, critical analysis, separating relevant from irrelevant, mathematical) and how will these be useful in the course(s) to which you have applied?

3. Extra-curricular interests and achievements outside the classroom should be outlined. Many of you are involved in multiple relevant and worthy activities outside school so you may need to be a bit selective. Try to link learned skills (e.g. ICT, communication, organisational) or attributes (e.g. commitment) and experience to your chosen course. This can be from paid employment, sport or additional responsibilities undertaken in/out of school. The example below is from the UCAS website, where you can find further help. This advice is also on the school website (sixth form section).

'I enjoy badminton'

'I play badminton twice a week with a club that plays in local competitions and I play in both singles and doubles matches. Doubles matches require good team working, an ability to support your partner, to devise a game plan but be able to adapt it as required and fast reactions. I enjoy the social side of the club and take responsibility for organising the social activities and fundraising events. This gives me an opportunity to develop my organisational and planning skills. Fitting in all these activities while keeping up with my academic studies demands good time management and I think I do that very well.'

When you have made a first draft, give a copy to a subject specialist. When the academic section (paragraph 1 and perhaps paragraph 2) have been edited, give a copy to your tutor, asking their advice. Please don't expect them to correct your spelling and grammar.

Good luck!