Personal Statements
What we will cover today…

• **Who** reads your application

• **Why** should you spend time on your personal statement

• **What** should you include and leave out

• **How** do you complete a successful personal statement
Who?
Who?

- **UCAS** (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is the centralized service that students use to apply to University.
- **UCAS aren’t involved in the decision making.** The applications are processed individually at each of the universities.
- Application Form and portfolios are sent to **Admissions Staff** at all five universities.
- Processing time varies from one applicant to another. You will be sent an application number and booklet.
- **Subject tutors** from each university will read your personal statements.
- **Remember:** it is a real-life person who is reading your application form and viewing your portfolio.
- They will be reading lots of personal statements and yours should **stand out** for the right reasons.
Why?
Why write a personal statement and create a portfolio?

• A personal statement is a compulsory part of the UCAS form
• Both personal statement and portfolio helps with your CV now and in the future for prospective jobs
• Helps you focus on what you really want
• Chance to stand out over other students with the same grades
• 450,000 applicants and 2.5 million applications to HE
• Competition is tough!
What?
What should I write about?

Personal Statements

Two-Thirds
Academic

- Why this course?
- What have you enjoyed from your studies?
- What skills have you developed?

One-Third
Non-Academic

- Relevant responsibilities
- Work or voluntary experience
- Interests and hobbies
What to write about…

• **Why you are applying** – your ambitions and what interests you about the subject and higher education in general.

• **What makes you suitable** – any relevant skills, experience or achievements gained from education, work or other activities.

• **Reference the work in your portfolio** – talk about what you have created in your own personal time as well as academic work. How does this relate to your chosen course?
Your opportunity to sell yourself...

• Ensure your personal statement has a *structure* and *organise* the material clearly
• Make the content *relevant and current*
• Show an awareness of your subject
• Write in an enthusiastic, concise and natural style – nothing too complex
• Make it *attention grabbing*!
• Only put in things you are prepared to talk about if called for interview
• Think about the impression you want to give
• Make it *individual* – all about you!
Expand upon your Interests and Experiences

• Talking about your experiences makes the statement more convincing
• Being specific makes it more personal
• Explain why an experience or activity makes you a good candidate
• Demonstrate your own interest
• Show how this experience makes you a good candidate for chosen courses
Applying to multiple courses

Remember that you only write one personal statement

Joint degree

Explain why you are interested in both subjects

Contrasting Subjects

Try and identify the common themes

e.g. Problem solving or Creativity
You will need to demonstrate your interest and commitment by:

- Reading
  - Scientific journals/magazines
  - Books
- Attending summer schools
- Taster days
- Public lectures
- TV documentaries e.g. BBC Horizon
- Work experience e.g. at a hospital
- Voluntary work e.g. in a care home or supporting people at a charity
  - Keep a diary to jot down your tasks, skills developed, challenges, things learnt.
- Entering academic competitions
- Sports/Clubs/Hobbies (particularly if relevant to your course)
Courses like nursing, midwifery and allied health professions can be competitive so here are a few tips:

• Do you have an insight into the role you are applying for?
• Explore health and social care roles at: [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles)
• Visit the relevant professional body website to get a deeper understanding of the profession e.g. the Nursing and Midwifery Council
• Show understanding of the NHS values, and briefly demonstrate that your own values reflect theirs: [https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/our-values](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about/our-values)
How
Personal Statement – The Basics

- 4000 characters
- 2/3 academic, 1/3 responsibilities/interests
- Make it positive
- Personal to you – reflect your interests, abilities, personality
- No templates
- One personal statement for all 5 choices
A suggested structure

1. Your reasons for this course
2. Your school or college experience
3. Work or voluntary experience
4. Sports, clubs, leadership
5. Activities and interests
6. Concluding statement
Writing Your Personal Statement

- Simple and concise language
- Spelling and grammar
- Be patient – lots of drafts needed
- Don’t state the obvious
- No jokes or threats!
- Use quotations carefully
- Get someone who knows you to read it
Examples of what you may like to include

• **Choice of course**
  — Why have you applied to study?
  — Why are you interested in this course?
  — Motivation - why this particular course?
  — Possible career aims/ ambitions

• **Work experience or voluntary work, and skills gained**
  — Communications, IT, numerical
  — Personal, e.g decision-making skills, working in a team
  — Voluntary work? Positions of responsibility?
Examples of what you may like to include

• **School / College experience**
  — What have you learnt about from your current studies? What skills have you developed?
  — Additional positions of responsibility?
  — How would you describe your college experience?

• **Sporting involvement**
  — Teams / clubs— what have you learned? What skills have you gained?
  — Have you recently participated in any events?
  — Any positions of responsibility? Any medals/awards?
Examples of what you may like to include

• **Out of school/college activities and interests**
  — Hobbies and interests; what skills have you gained from these? Any rewards or achievements?
  — How would you describe yourself? What are your strengths?
  — Holidays and travel

• **Concluding statement**
  — What are you looking forward to at University? What can your offer?
  — If you plan to defer entry, say what you plan to do and how you feel it will benefit you
Use examples

"Be specific from line one."

English Admissions Tutor

Reflect on your experiences

"Whatever environment you’ve been in, what did you spot or learn from what happens there, or what have you observed about how the qualities exhibited by professional staff helped them engage effectively with patients or service-users?"

Medicine Admissions Tutor

But try to be different!

"If I have to read about *Freakonomics* once more, I'll scream!"

Economics Admissions Tutor
Think of examples that demonstrate relevant **skills**…

“It doesn't have to be anything fancy!”

Archaeology Admissions Tutor

… like independent working, problem-solving, time management, leadership, organisation, communication.

“If you’re taking the EPQ, do talk about it, as it’s the kind of studying you’ll be doing at uni.”

Modern Languages Admissions Tutor

What are your long-term goals?

“Just saying you want to be a journalist isn’t exactly going to stand you out from the crowd.”

History Admissions Tutor
Examples
I would like to take this opportunity to express a great sense of desire, commitment and enthusiasm at having such a challenging and fulfilling chance to embark on a degree course at UEL, primarily for enhancing my career prospect and also for the sake of education as a whole. On joining university I shall be acquiring a great deal of enthusiasm for new ideas, new knowledge and new learning as well as the opportunity to excel in my chosen career. The university of my choice, is UEL (University of East London) because I’ve come to learn that is such a dynamic, forward-thinking and modern education provider with a high reputation for its standards of tuition and facilities as well as helpful staff.

As for my chosen subjects, my first choice of course is "Media & Advertising" (PPB3) mainly because it matches my existing employment background since I’ve gained good experience and skills within various research related industries (i.e. market research/call-centre/customer service) ranging from interviewing people at all levels, testing consumer reaction to new products, analysing market size and needs, evaluating the suitability of the market for proposed products and so on.

On being highly customer-focused with pro-active attitude and good self-motivation, I enjoy having an immediate, direct, straight-to-the point contact with the public at all levels, persuading people around to my point of view, analysing problems and achieve a solution in the best possible interest of customer satisfaction. Therefore, the above course broadly reflects my interest to boost skills associated with global communication and contemporary social environments and provides a range of opportunities to explore the techniques and significance of contemporary advertising and allied market areas.

On completion of the degree, I shall be aiming to leave well equipped to succeed in a wide range of appealing and fulfilling careers (e.g. Advertising, Media market research and related industries). Please note that the other 2 course codes included in section 3 (Media Studies & Communication Studies) are to be considered only as second alternatives.
Examples of what NOT to do:

• Using slang or colloquialisms (chatty language)
• Underestimating the skills you gain from part-time work
• Exaggerating
• Assuming that the reader knows about you
• Repeating information that is elsewhere on the form
  e.g. predicted grades/ subjects studied
• Trying to include too much
• Plagiarism!
Reasons for unsuccessful applications

• Your personal statement does not strongly support your desire to study your chosen degree

• Your personal statement did not show sufficient understanding, relevance or knowledge about the course you are applying for

• You failed to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and interest in the subject in your personal statement

• There is a lot of competition for places on this course and your personal statement and experience was not as strong as other applicants this year

• Application form (including personal statement, reference and predicted grades) does not evidence accurate understanding of or motivation for subject
Useful Websites and Information

- Middlesex University: mdx.ac.uk
- UCAS: ucas.co.uk
- UCAS TV: ucas.TV
- Student forum: studentroom.co.uk
- Uni stats: unistats.direct.gov.uk
- Student finance: studentfinance.direct.gov.uk
- University finances: studentcalculator.org.uk
- Taster courses: london.ac.uk/tasters
University application timeline

**Step 1:** Choosing Courses
- Websites
- Prospectuses
- Open Days
- 5 choices
- October - January

**Step 2:** Apply
- 5 Sept - 15 Jan
- Interview/Test
- Portfolio/Audition

**Step 3:** Offers
- University decision:
  - Conditional
  - Unconditional
  - Reject
  - UCAS EXTRA if no offers
- October - April

**Step 4:** Decisions
- Student decision:
  - Firm Accept
  - Insurance Accept
  - Decline
- April /May/June

**Step 5:** Results
- Confirm place UCAS
- Clearing
- July/August

**Step 6:** Start University
- October
Questions?