

# Preparing and Writing an Impressive Personal Statement

## The Checklist

| Have You?   | Yes |
|---|-----|
| Made a list of destinations?  |     |
| Compared different Universities?  |     |
| Looked at different courses?  |     |
| Decided upon a course?  |     |
| Looked at where the courses you are looking at appear in the league tables? |     |
| Looked at the Trotman/Heap Guides?  |     |
| Developed a plan/structure?   |     |
| Had a Teacher look at it?   |     |
| Checked your academic examples with your subject teacher?                   |     |
| Come up with a good reason for doing the subject?                           |     |
| Made some notes from your work experience?                                  |     |
| Removed the Clichés?  |     |
| Cut down on irrelevant material?  |     |

*You will almost certainly talk to more than one person about your personal statement. You may get some conflicting advice, but you need to balance what you are told and make an informed judgement on what you are going to do. It will take time, it may take a number of drafts, but what you have written will be useful. This is perhaps the first time you will have to put yourself into characters.*

## What to write and how to write it!

|   |                                      | Some Specification Statements   | Writing Advice   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | <b>Why?</b>                          | a. There should be a clear statement about why the student wants to follow the particular course.<br>b. This should be reinforced by some supporting comments that are based upon either experience or interest. There may be an “interesting point” or topic mentioned.                                | You must make sure that you are sincere, and that you avoid using terms since “ <b>Ever since I was a child</b> ” and “ <b>Ever since a young age</b> ” Even if it’s true your decision must be based upon experiences within an adult context, mainly based upon your work experience and specific interesting facts.   |
| 2 | <b>Experience</b>                    | a. Make a simple statement about the work experience that you have had, or time spent observing a particular career or subject<br>b. Reflective and perceptive comments have been made about your experience, perhaps detailing attitudes you found challenging or how idea/perception changed          | You must make astute comments. Simply telling us what you did, and what you saw simply won’t make an impression. Admissions tutors are looking for you to be reflective on what you have observed. Describe something that you saw that maybe wasn’t brilliant! Tell us about how something made you change your mind or opinion and how this has changed your overall outlook.    |
| 3 | <b>Academic</b>                      | a. What’s interesting about particular subjects? Have they inspired you to study?<br>b. Discuss and comment on key events. What’s new? What’s happening? Who has discovered something? Significant People? When has this happened?  | “ <b>Chemistry gives me the ability to work precisely</b> ” is quite frankly an overused and dull. There are loads of statements that have become clichés, and have little impact. Find something that is less obvious to mention, something that is relevant but engaging. Please don’t mention the synthesis of Aspirin! Seen too often!   |
| 4 | <b>Skills<br/>Travel<br/>Hobbies</b> | a. A straightforward statement about what the student has done, achieved and the skills that have been developed<br>b. The student reflects upon their progression in their activities and successfully relates their abilities to their chosen subject.  | Everybody seems to do DoFE, play Hockey and Rugby at a “high level” and has “ <b>Team working skills</b> ” – Develop what you say, be specific and don’t make generalised statements. Most students have had an interesting experience abroad worth mentioning. Travel and cultural reflection seems to be an increasingly important selling point.                                |
| 5 | <b>Readability</b>                   | a. A grammatically correct statement with accurate spelling, punctuation & grammar. There should be a clear structure.<br>b. The statement should become flowing, and each section should link together. The pace and content should serve to engage the reader. It should be interesting and engaging. | Admissions tutors want to know about what really makes you tick. They want interesting and informed young people to work with in their Universities, and you need to sell yourself. Re read your statement, is it interesting? What are your key selling points? What can you offer that no other student can? Remember you will be doing this again in four years .....for a Job! |

## The UCAS Personal Statement Flow Chart – A Process of Engaging Your Reader

