



Carshalton High School for Girls

CHSG

Community | Harmony | Success | Growth



Applying to University

Information Pack for the UCAS process

Websites

UCAS

The complete university guide

Which? University

Unistats

Russell Group: Our Universities

Student Finance.gov.co.uk

Russell Group Universities

Cambridge	York	Nottingham
Oxford	Southampton	Sheffield
LSE	Birmingham	Kings College London
Durham	Bristol	Manchester
Imperial College	Newcastle	Glasgow
Warwick	Edinburgh	Liverpool
UCL	Cardiff	Queens, Belfast
Exeter	Leeds	Queen Mary

The UCAS student journey

THREE STEPS TO APPLYING



Types of courses available

Pick the course to suits you...

- **Single:** study one subject
- **Joint honours degree:** divide your time 50:50 between two subjects.
- **Major/Minor:** study two subjects, normally at a 75%:25% rate.
- **Combined honours programme:** study between two to four subjects, specialising in just two subjects in years two and three.
- **Modular courses:** build a personalised course by choosing the modules you're interested in.
- **Sandwich courses:** vocational courses, often involve one year in industry.
- **Foundation year (year 0):** if you don't have the right qualifications some unis offer this to help students prepare and enter higher education.

Timetable of events

May – July 2018: Personal statements. **First draft** to be completed and handed in/mailed to your tutor/PD teacher.

You need to go on Open Days. Start booking now!

July 2018: UCAS online (June 13th, 14th & 15th). You will need to sign up during one of your non contact periods.

August 2018: Students to update application. Ensure you do a second/third draft of your personal statement over the summer holidays.

Are you using your tracking forms?

September 2018: Students to complete application and liaise with referee (you will be told who your referee is in September).

Do you know our predicted grades?

October 2018: by half term all applications to be completed. Referees to start writing references.

Get someone other than your tutor to read over your draft statement

Writing a Personal Statement

Writing a personal statement is probably one of the most difficult parts of the UCAS application form.

This pack has been designed to help you on writing a personal statement.

Just read through it, follow the steps, and you should soon have a rough first draft in place. This needs to be completed before the summer holidays.

Next...

What is a Personal Statement...

The UCAS personal statement is a 47 line (or 4000 characters) piece of writing that allows you to tell the universities and colleges you are applying to why they should offer you a place on the course.

In order to do this successfully, you need to convey your passion and enthusiasm for the subject to the admissions tutors, as well as demonstrate your suitability to the course.

Before you start remember this is a 'personal' statement, i.e. it's about YOU.

Writing guide contents

Here is an outline of how you should get started:

1. UCAS advice - read what UCAS have to say first to get a general overview.
2. Aims of the personal statement - so what actually is the point of a personal statement? What should it do for my application?
3. Notes about yourself - Make notes about what you might put in your personal statement before you start.
4. You and your subject - Why do you want to take this subject?
5. Read example personal statements - Read statements written by previous applicants to give you some ideas.
6. Goals of your personal statement - What do you think should be included to make your statement sound good?
7. Language of your personal statement - How to make your statement read well.
8. Structure of your personal statement - How are you going to layout and write your statement?
9. Writing your personal statement - A few last minute tips before you begin.
10. I've written my first draft - now what? - What to do after completing your first draft.
11. UCAS online day – this will be in July. You will need to sign up with LB and use one of your non-contact periods. This will take place in the Sixth Form work room.
12. Dos and Don'ts.

1. UCAS Advice

In the 'Your personal statement' section at the UCAS website, you are given a brief introduction to personal statements, and then a list of links to other sections to help you write your statement.

<http://www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/>

2. Aims of the Personal Statement

Many universities don't interview applicants, so the only information they have about you is on your UCAS form.

A majority of the UCAS form contains your details - the bits the universities are interested in are your grades, your references and your personal statement.

The personal statement is the only part you really have full control over, so this is your chance to present a good image to the admissions tutor, even if your grades don't really seem to reflect this.

If you are applying to an oversubscribed university course, e.g. physiotherapy, medicine, midwifery etc and everyone applying is likely to have good grades, the personal statement is the only thing that will set you apart from other applicants, so you want to try and make yours as good as possible.

When the admissions and subject tutors look at your personal statement, they are likely to be asking two main questions:

1. Do we want this student on this course?
2. Do we want this student at this university?

These questions can then be broken up further to make it easier to answer them thoroughly:

- Is the student suited to the course that they are applying for?
- Does the student have the necessary qualifications and qualities for the course?
- Is the student conscientious, hardworking and unlikely to drop out?
- Will the student do their best and cope with the demands of the course?
- Can the student work under pressure?
- Will the student be able to adjust to their new environment at university?
- What are their communication skills like?
- Are they dedicated to this course and have they researched it well? How have they shown this dedication.**

3. Notes about yourself

These are the sorts of questions you need to answer in your personal statement.

Now you have some idea of why you're writing a personal statement, you need to think about what you're going to put in it.

You don't need to start thinking about the wording or structure yet - the first thing to do is get down some ideas on what you could include.

The best way to do this is to use a set of headings and write bullet points about how you relate to these headings. Here are some example headings you may wish to think about.

What you want to study at university and why

- Specific aspects of the courses that interest you
- Examples of coursework you have completed
- Practical work you have enjoyed
- Books, articles, etc. you have read related to the subject area
- Work experience or voluntary work in this area
- Conferences you have attended
- Personal experiences that lead to the decision to take this subject
- Where you hope a degree in this subject will take you in the future
- Experiences that show you are a reliable and responsible person
- Part-time job
- Business enterprise
- Community and charity work
- Sixth form committee
- Helping out at school events and open days
- World Challenge.

Your interests and skills

- What you like to do in your free time
- Sport and leisure activities
- Subjects you study that are not examined
- Musical instrument(s) you play
- Languages you speak
- Prizes you have won or positions achieved in your interests

You should now have lots of bullet points about yourself, all of which will be useful in preparing your personal statement.

Notes about yourself

4. You and your subject

Saying why you want to take your course is possibly the most important part of your personal statement.

You can have perfect grades, great extra-curricular activities and be a really wonderful person, but if admissions tutors feel you aren't committed to your course, you won't get a place.

Hopefully the notes you have written in section 3 have already given you a good idea of what to write about why you want to take your course.

If not then you should at least be sure you want to take that subject - writing a personal statement is a lot of work, and you don't really want to get to the end of it and decide you want to study a different subject. So before you go much further be sure you have chosen the right subject for you.

As mentioned earlier, if you're still not sure about your choice of course, check out UCAS webpage on **Choosing Courses** to help you make a final decision.

Remember you don't actually have to choose the course you want to take yet, just have a rough idea of the subject area (or areas) you might be interested in.

Now you need to think about exactly why you want to take this subject. Even if you are 100% sure that this is the course for you, you still need to get this across to the admissions tutors.

If they accept you, you are going to be studying this course for at least the next three years, and you need to convince them that you are committed to it.

Have a think about exactly why the subject appeals to you, and write down as much as you can about it.

It doesn't matter if you only scribble a few notes - you can modify them before you write the statement, and the important thing is you can be sure of the key reasons why you want to take the subject.

Write down as many as you can, and if you end up with quite a few, you can always just pick the best. Remember - if you can't think of any good reasons - should you really be taking that subject?

Course possibilities:

Key reasons:

What if I want to do a joint degree?

There are two options you can use to tailor your personal statement to joint degrees (a degree where you take two subjects e.g. Economics and Politics).

You can talk about the subject you feel is most important, and not mention the other.

This has the advantage that you can apply for two different joint degrees and only talk about the common element e.g. for Economics and Politics and Law and Politics, you would only talk about politics.

If you decide to do this, make sure you talk about the qualities you have which show you are suitable for the other half of your joint degree.

Alternatively you can just talk about why you want to do both subjects, although the approach you choose will probably depend on how closely related your subjects are.

What if I want to apply for different subjects?

There is no easy way to write a personal statement for two unrelated subjects.

If the subjects are similar, such as Maths and Statistics, or Accounting and Business Studies, you may find you can write a general personal statement that applies equally to both courses.

If this is the case you may not want to mention either of the subjects by name, and instead talk about the related work that you've already done and why you have enjoyed it.

If your subjects are totally unrelated there is no way you want write a personal statement that will cover all of them.

Instead you need to come up with a statement that gives you the best chance of being accepted.

For example, if you are applying for one subject at four of your university choices and another subject at the other two, you may just want to write a statement related to the subject you chose to study at four universities and either forget about, or change the course, at your other two choices.

You also want to consider your predicted grades in relation to the universities you are applying to.

Universities that normally make lower offers are less likely to be concerned about a badly targeted personal statement, whereas for universities that make high offers, the personal statement will be much more important.

Try and alter your personal statement so it is more specific to the universities asking for higher grades, as this will give you the best chance of being offered places at all your choices.

There will probably be some cases where there is nothing you can do, for example, if you are applying for three totally unrelated subjects, each at two different universities.

There is no advice that will help in a situation like this, except just to consider whether this is really what you want to do, and that you may be seriously reducing your chances of being offered a place on your chosen courses.

Even if you do apply for three different courses, you will only be able to study one of them, so it helps if you try to limit your choices to similar subjects.

5. Read example personal statements

Even though you now know what you're going to put in your statement, do you know how to make it read well?

The best way to get an idea of how to go about producing your personal statement is to look at some other people's statements.

This gives you a chance to see the sort of structure and language other people use, how they explained why they wanted to study their chosen course, as well as their own interests and abilities.

When you read through sample personal statements, have your own notes from the section above ready. If you find anything you've done but haven't already thought about, make a note of it.

Reading through lots of personal statements will allow you to judge which ones you think are good or bad, and find parts of statements you really like or dislike.

Turn over the page and have a look through the examples included in this booklet!

6. Goals of your personal statement

Now you've looked at some example personal statements, you may have some idea of how you might put your own together.

However, even if you're still stuck, you should have seen lots of statements you like, as well as a few that you don't.

Use this knowledge to decide how you are going to write your personal statement.

From the personal statements you have just read through, you may have gathered the following guidelines:

- Don't sound arrogant and pretentious
- Try to have an interesting phrase or paragraph to start and finish on
- Try not to quote books, magazines or publications in a way that makes it sound like you've only read them to put them on your statement.
- Do not lie outright and stay as close to the truth as possible
- Don't try to be funny or make jokes in your statement
- Don't start every sentence with I
- Don't include your hobbies and interests unless they are relevant
- Don't use vocabulary you don't normally use and just looked up in a dictionary
- Don't use famous quotes in your statement unless you back them up with information on how and why this person's quote influenced you. Dropping them in just for the sake of it makes you look silly and that you haven't given serious thought to your personal statement.
- Don't repeat things already on your UCAS form, e.g. predicted exam grades.
- With the exception of a gap year, don't make claims you are going to do something before you come to university
- Don't include clichés
- Don't take any political or religious viewpoints

Guidelines like these should give you an idea of what to focus on and think about when writing your own personal statement.

They also stop your statement from looking too much like one of the examples that you might have copied bits from.

7. Language of your personal statement

From looking at example personal statements you have probably found some language that you like or think works well.

The first thing to remember is: do not directly copy any of it! not even a single sentence! The reason is, copying statements is plagiarism, and if an admissions tutor sees a statement they recognise they will probably reject you instantly.

You should also not copy single sentences for the same reason - sentences that stick out in your mind may stick out in the admission tutors also.

It is ok to find a sentence or paragraph that says what you want to say, but make sure you adapt it yourself and don't just copy it.

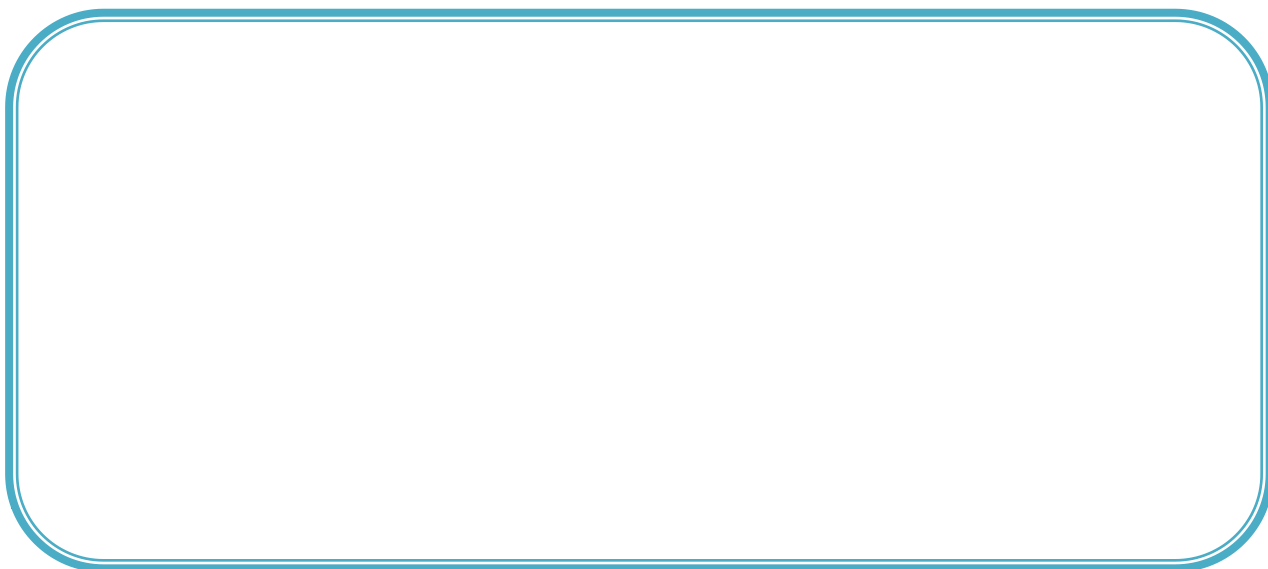
You need to use language that makes you sound enthusiastic about your courses and portrays you as an interesting person.

University prospectuses are a good place to look - find your course, see how it is described and see if you can work anything similar into your personal statement. Write down a list of words or sentences you would like to use like this:

- to gain greater understanding of the world around you.
- sends a signal to prospective employers and graduate schools
- students of economics become problem-solvers.
- the fact is economics affects our daily lives.
- a challenging and diverse discipline
- develops analytical skills, quantitative skills, research skills
- it is interesting and relevant

Don't copy the sentences you find outright - change them or write your own sentence in a similar style.

If you can't find any sentences you like, try and write your own - it is a personal statement after all.



8. Structure of your personal statement

Now it's time to think about the structure of your personal statement - you should have read lots of examples by now and may have a fair idea about how yours is going to look, but this section should clarify things a bit if you don't.

Most statements are written in an essay format, but you don't have to do yours like this. We don't recommend you write it as one large block of text. Even though you can fit more words in, this just makes it hard to read.

You could however use headings rather than write in an essay style. Not many personal statements are written like this but if you think yours would work better like this, then go ahead.

A starting guideline is to simply spend half the statement talking about the course and why you want to take it, and spend the other half writing about yourself and your own abilities, though once you get into it this can be easily changed.

Another approach is to **split up your notes into a few categories** and write a paragraph on each category. For example:

- Paragraph 1:** Introduction to the subject, the aspects you're interested in and why
- Paragraph 2:** What you have done related to the subject that isn't already on your UCAS form
- Paragraphs 3 and 4:** Work experience placements and relevant activities at school
- Paragraph 5:** Your interests outside of school, particularly those that show you are a responsible and reliable person
- Paragraph 6:** Your goal of attending university and a memorable closing comment

Again, this is only a guideline - depending on yourself and your course you may want to change things.

The last option is to simply find a statement you like and use it as a template. Please note, we say template - not copy and paste!

You can write the first draft of your personal statement using the same structure, being careful that you don't use any of the exact language.

Spend most of your time on the start and finish of the personal statement.

A good opening will grab the readers' attention and cause them to read the statement properly, rather than just scanning it.

A good conclusion will mean the reader remembers what you wrote, and hopefully will recommend you.

In our opinion it's best to start with why you want to take your subject, and finish with why you want to go to university or what you want to do afterwards.

Paragraph 1:

Paragraph 2:

Paragraph 3:

Paragraph 4:

Paragraph 5:

Paragraph 6:

9. Writing your personal statement

Hopefully you now have all your notes ready - you've thought about the language you want to use, as well as the structure and the goals of your statement.

You are almost ready to start writing your personal statement, but here are a few things to bear in mind first.

Remember the aims of a personal statement. You need to show the admissions tutor why you should be accepted on your chosen course at your chosen university.

In addition to what you say in your personal statement, the language you use and the way it is laid out will be judged as well.

Also remember you only have a limited amount of space (47 lines, or 4000 characters), but don't let this put you off too much.

A long personal statement can be easily trimmed down. It's harder to increase the length of a short personal statement, but if yours is too short to begin with, don't worry.

There is no requirement that you fill the entire space, but it's better to have a short and well written personal statement than a long and irrelevant one.

Be positive and interesting - if there is something you are unhappy about, try to portray it in an attractive light, or failing that, remove reference to it altogether.

Before you begin, take a look at the **websites and prospectuses** of the universities you are applying to, and see if they say anything about writing personal statements.

This information would probably be written by the admissions tutors, and would give you a much better idea of the sort of things you should put down!

10. I've written the first draft of my personal statement – now what?

First of all, read through what you've written slowly and try to read it from someone else's point of view.

Make sure it's easy to read and not confusing. Have you said everything you want to say without under or over-selling yourself?

If you are confused by reading your own personal statement, it is likely anyone else reading it will be too (including the admissions tutors!).

Next - get other people to read it. Ask your family, friends, teachers and anyone else who you think will be able to give you a good opinion. Your first draft **must** be handed into your tutor and corrected before the summer holidays!

As well as checking for spelling and grammar mistakes, they will be able to tell you if they think there are some things you may have missed out.

11. Online applications using UCAS Apply

Although you only have 47 lines in which to write your personal statement, there are still little tricks to squeeze more words in. However, you should take care using them, as they will only clear you through the automatic preview – you can't tell how it will appear to the admissions tutors.

Word, character and line limits

Firstly remember, there is no word limit – instead you're concentrating on a character limit (4000 characters including spaces) and a line limit (47). Both of these must be satisfied to allow you to save your personal statement.

Checking you're within the character limit is easy - just use the 'word count' tool on your word processor, which should show you how many characters you have used.

The line limit is more difficult, as the length of the lines is predetermined - any lines longer than 93 characters (including spaces) are wrapped onto the next line. You can check you don't go over the line limit using a word processor that shows the cursor

position (the upright bar showing where you're typing) and creating a new line after you've typed 93 characters – if you're doing this make sure your word processor doesn't wrap lines automatically before this.

Other things to remember

No formatting of any type is allowed in your personal statement, except using capital letters - so any bold, italic, or underlined words will disappear in the preview.

Tabs and multiple spaces will be condensed to a single space, so it is no longer possible to indent lines. Single spaces at the beginning of lines will also be removed.

You have a very limited set of 'special characters' to use along with all the upper and lowercase letter and numbers. You can use the following symbols:

!"£\$%^&*()_+' | / , . : ' @ # ~ [] ? * - =

Common symbols not allowed are €, long dashes (—) and the special quote characters “ ‘ ’ ” which will simply be removed from your statement. So remember to replace long dashes with - and quotes with "and '. Some of these problems stem from Microsoft Word's auto format feature, so you might want to turn it off before starting your personal statement.

Backslashes (\) are also not allowed but will be replaced with forward slashes (/) and curly brackets will be replaced with normal ones.

Examples of personal statements

Maths Personal Statement

The idea of proof has always held a real fascination for me. The process of starting from a simple set of axioms and deriving almost any mathematical truth (putting Godel to one side) is what truly separates Mathematics from any other subject. It is the closest we can ever get to absolute truth, and therein lies its sheer beauty and the reason it is the only subject for me. Of course, it's also a good deal of fun.

I have tried to extend my Maths as much as possible beyond the classroom, and whenever I do so I uncover either some completely new and intriguing area of Mathematics or a very neat trick I hadn't thought of in more familiar territory. One example of this is my attendance at weekly lectures given by the department of Mathematics at Bristol University, covering topics from the Mathematics of juggling to quantum mechanics, although some of my favourites have been those on the less exotic "inequalities", which taught me a lot about thinking about problems creatively. I also attended a summer school run by the National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth at the University of Durham, where I spent two weeks being introduced to various approachable first year undergraduate topics such as proof by induction, Markov chains and using Maple. This experience not only allowed me to discover areas of Mathematics I would not otherwise have encountered, but also gave me a small taste of university life, as there was a large number of us living in one of the colleges. I am also involved in the UKMT mentoring scheme, whereby each month I am given a sheet of questions in areas not touched on at A level, such as geometry and number theory, giving me a good opportunity to explore new mathematical ideas myself, and gain a much deeper appreciation of the interconnections within Mathematics and the creation of proofs. I am a member of the school's Maths team and we are regularly successful in competing against teams from other schools in the area. I also attend STEP sessions at local schools when available, as I find the questions much more interesting than the standard A level ones, and thinking about how to solve them has greatly improved my rigour in approaching problems.

Among the mathematical books I have read, I enjoyed "Godel, Escher, Bach", which gives a good grounding in axiomatic reasoning and formal systems, whilst at the same time pointing out their major flaw. I also liked "To infinity and beyond" by Eli Maor, which deals with the concept of infinity, its implications and its paradoxes, both in Maths and elsewhere.

I particularly enjoy the pure side of the A level syllabus, especially trigonometry and calculus, as they involve a certain degree of proof and introduce new concepts. I believe my other academic subjects all complement Mathematics as they are about finding ways of describing reality, be it through language in French or through equations and models in Physics and Chemistry. I find Critical Thinking especially relevant as it is

about the construction of sound logical arguments, an art lying at the heart of Mathematics in proof. I have achieved an A grade in all modules across all my subjects.

In my spare time, I practise kickboxing, and have competed in various local competitions. As a volunteer, I am involved in a year seven Maths mentoring scheme and help at a homeless shelter. I enjoy travelling, and will be going to Nicaragua for a month after my A levels to help in a small village, explore the local jungles and volcanoes and practise my Spanish. I lived in France from the ages of 9 to 12, and learnt to adapt to a new language and culture.

I very much look forward to exploring the new ideas of University level Mathematics, and playing a full part in University life.

Examples of personal statements

Government Personal Statement

On a vacation to the Krak des Chevaliers and Palmyra in the Syrian Desert, I witnessed the rich culture of the Middle Eastern people. This region is generally perceived by western democracies as a constant source of political and social turmoil. This may be true for the most part; however, many areas in the region are as modern and peaceful as any western nation. Further to being raised in a multi-cultural family with a Beirut-born father of Palestinian, Syrian and Armenian heritage and a Maltese mother, I have developed a strong interest in foreign cultures. Therefore, I believe that Political Science will be the most appropriate and applicable course to pursue given both my personal background and interests.

As one of Canada's most cosmopolitan cities, my native Toronto attracts many foreigners: some are looking for better living conditions and job opportunities; others are on exchange to learn English and benefit from higher education. As a child growing up in this vibrant city, I would look forward to my family housing exchange students. This rewarding experience prompted me to volunteer at summer camps, where I taught ESL to students from 6 to 18 years of age. My many encounters and experiences with foreign cultures have nourished my passion for travel. This was fostered by my parents who, three years ago, decided to move our family to the Turks and Caicos Islands, a small but rapidly developing country in the Northern Caribbean. Many deprived nations in the region, such as Haiti, have seen their people immigrate to the TCI, whose economic stability has been underpinned by many of these immigrants who have undertaken most of the menial work necessary for a flourishing economy. However, I have too often witnessed many of these workers being the victims of exploitation and discrimination. During an internship at the Magistrate's Court in the summer of 2008, I personally marshalled the Court Magistrate and took a particular interest in Immigration Law and the consequences of working in a country illegally. Further to working at the courts, I interned at a law firm, where I was given the opportunity to shadow lawyers at the Labour Tribunal and see, first-hand, the exploitation of workers, and their employers' disregard for labour laws.

After successfully completing my IGCSE's, I have enjoyed the challenge of Advanced level studies in Geography, History, Business Studies and English Literature. As a young Geographer, I have attended local conferences, such as the symposium, "Fostering a Green Culture", with former US vice-president, Al Gore, as the main speaker on the contentious topic of climate change. My perception of how environmental issues affect all aspects of human welfare was reinforced when I was selected to spend a day with the Minister of Natural Resources. Last September, I was able to further develop my knowledge of local environmental issues, as I witnessed the impact of hurricane Ike on the welfare of residents and the economy. At school, I eagerly participate in many social activities. I particularly enjoy being a mentor to younger students, whom I advise and tutor whenever needed. I have been able to

further develop both my leadership and communication skills, as I was selected as Deputy Head Boy by the Principal and elected House Captain by my peers. Being a team player is vital to me. I have tried to do so by being an active member of the Yorkland swim team, trumpeter in the school orchestral band, Senior Editor of the yearbook and the Current Events Editor of the school newspaper. As a result, my enthusiasm and dependability within the school were rewarded when I received the "Top Student in Year 12" award, an achievement that I hope to repeat in my final year of A-Levels.

I hope this presents to you a well-rounded student, equipped with the skills necessary to succeed at university. I look forward to being introduced to new academic and social challenges as well as experiencing European culture.

Examples of personal statements

Economics Personal Statement

Examination of any quality newspaper will probably demonstrate that more of the headlines address economic problems than any other topic. The importance and relevance of economic related disciplines to the modern world have led me to want to pursue the study of the subject at a higher level. I am particularly interested in the behaviour of firms and organisations from an economic point of view and I have based my A-level coursework in this field. During my study, I have come across many real life complexities and while attempting to explain these theories, I have developed a keen interest in analysing and understanding how the world of business is influenced by economics.

I have created an economics revision website for A-level and GCSE students. It is primarily intended to help younger students gain an understanding of core economic principles but has also helped me improve my own computer and presentational skills. I regularly read newspapers and economic publications to keep up to date with economic developments and I am able to use my mathematical and analytical skills to apply different economic theories to a range of real-life economic situations.

Last year, I took part in an economics and business project called Young Enterprise in which I set up a small company and sold products to students at our school. I enjoyed the chance to put some of my business economic theory into practice and was able to enhance my management and communication skills. I also gained a distinction in the associated exam.

To gain practical experience in the workplace, I worked for two weeks at a small software company specialising in financial software. I currently have a part time job and this has taught me much about teamwork, responsibility and time management in the workplace.

In my spare time, I enjoy reading, swimming, sketching and solving puzzles and logic problems. I have redesigned and been responsible for the maintenance of my school's website.

I believe that I will gain a highly marketable set of skills from the study of economics at university. I have found economics to be a challenging and diverse discipline and I am interested in both macro and micro economics. It is this variation of perspective, combined with its real world importance that makes economics an appealing subject to study at university.

Examples of personal statements

Veterinary Science Personal statement

Since my grandmother's cat was treated for a cancerous tumour in its leg when I was seven, my ambition has been to become a vet. This has strengthened over time, as has my fascination with animal biology and the genetic and chemical complexities of life. My appetite for the intellectual challenge and depth of knowledge required to be able to treat animals has been strengthened by exploring the field through veterinary texts and scientific books such as 'Molecules of Murder', 'Animal biology and Care' and 'Genes: The fight for life' which address concepts such as the rejection of the non-self at unicellular level,.

As my sense of veterinary medicine as a vocation has grown, I have made the best use of my free time and work experience placements to further my knowledge and experience. In June 2007, I spent two weeks working at my local veterinary practice. I gained a vital insight into the realities of daily life at a vet's practice, from paperwork to hygiene, to routine animal care and life saving surgical procedures such as the removal of a foreign body from the small intestines of a dog and the caesarean delivery of puppies. Crucially, I observed at first hand that a vet's professional life requires the mastery of complex scientific knowledge combined with a facility with animals and the ability to engage honestly yet empathetically with owners.

I have since worked regularly as a Saturday kennel assistant at this surgery. During this time I have become familiar with the preparation of animals for surgery though to the aftercare and such common ailments as cat flu, the parvovirus, diabetes etc. I have improved my handling skills of domestic animals and learnt basic techniques such as connecting and removing a drip and raising a vein to administer injections. I have also encountered the emotional challenges of assisting in the euthanasia of animals and the disposal of bodies, and understood how owners are best supported with tactful yet honest communication. Working closely with people appeals to me and I am confident that I can communicate effectively and remain in control under pressure.

Feeling that I lacked experience with large animals, in August 2008 I arranged two weeks work experience at a local stables where I acquired basic horse handling skills and learned about their dietary requirements, and in August 2009 I spent a week on a dairy farm in Kent where I came to understand the different stages of calving and the subsequent behaviour of the mother. I learnt how to milk cows using a mechanised parlour and about the causes, effects and treatments of common ailments such as mastitis, lameness and infertility. This has helped me to understand issues faced by the farming community when I read about them in the 'Farmers' Weekly'.

In June 2009 I gained experience of exotic animals on a two week placement at Chessington Zoo. There I worked with lemurs, coatis and tigers and farm animals, and participated in routines to stimulate monkeys and big cats with a variety of smells and toys to simulate the wild. I assisted in feeding reptiles, rays and sharks and learnt how to prevent snakes from striking when cleaning out the Sri Lankan pythons. The whole experience was a wonderful opportunity to encounter the range in veterinary practice.

Apart from my passion for veterinary medicine, I have many interests. My Bronze and Silver D of E Awards gave me experience in co-operating with people by working with the elderly in a home, and in a children's woodcraft group. As a Senior Prefect this year, I have had an active role in leadership of the school and practised public speaking skills and working as part of a team. I play the piano and am currently a member of the school choir, regularly performing in classical concerts and church services.

12. Dos and Don'ts

Dos and don'ts when writing your personal statement

Do create a list of your ideas before attempting to write the real thing.

Do expect to produce several drafts before being totally happy.

Do ask people you trust for their feedback.

Do check university and college prospectuses, websites and [Entry Profiles](#), as they usually tell you the criteria and qualities that they want their students to demonstrate.

Do use your best English/Welsh and **don't** let spelling and grammatical errors spoil your statement.

Do be enthusiastic - if you show your interest in the course, it may help you get a place.

Don't feel that you need to use elaborate language. If you try too hard to impress with long words that you are not confident using, the focus of your writing may be lost.

Don't say too much about things that are not relevant - if you think that you are starting to, take a break and come back to your statement when you feel more focused.

Don't lie - if you exaggerate you may get caught out at interview when asked to elaborate on an interesting achievement.

Don't rely on a spellchecker as it will not pick up everything - proof read as many times as possible.

Don't leave it to the last minute - your statement will seem rushed and important information could be left out.

Don't expect to be able to write your personal statement whilst watching TV or surfing the internet - this is your future, so make the most of the opportunity to succeed.

