

Personal Statements



Personal Statement

- This one of the **most important** elements of your UCAS application to UK universities.
- It needs to be no more than **4000 characters** (including spaces), which is about a side of A4.

VIDEO:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPoJK8gFMiY>

Research

- However, before you write a single word of your personal statement, you **MUST** have made a careful decision about what course(s) you want to study, backed up by detailed research.
- Look at the **UCAS website**, as well as at specific university websites (they will give lots of details about course content and structure), to get an idea of what you **REALLY** want to study.

Website links:

- UCAS - <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started>
- UK National Careers Service - <http://social.nationalcareersservice.org.uk/>
- Advice for students, written by students (A Level choices, University degrees, Gap yearsetc) - <http://www.studential.com>
- Advice on University Choices - <http://university.which.co.uk/advice/gcse-choices-careers-work-experience>
- Information on different types of jobs - http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm

Questions



- What do you want to spend **three** or **four** years of your life studying?
- Do you really like one of your **A-level subjects**, and would like to continue studying it at university level?

- Is there an **academic subject** which appeals to you that you haven't yet had the option of studying (e.g. Politics, International Relations, Philosophy)? If you are interested in any of these, you **MUST** do lots of research and thinking about whether they would really be the right choice for you.
- Are you keen to study a more **vocationally orientated course** like Business Management or Marketing? Be aware of the differences in how these types of courses are perceived by UK and Spanish employers.

REMEMBER:

- In the UK, most students at good universities do not study a course which will directly lead to a particular job or professional career.
- You can study Geography and then go on work as a management consultant.
- You can study English Literature and go on to do a Law conversion course.
- You can study Languages and go on to work in banking.

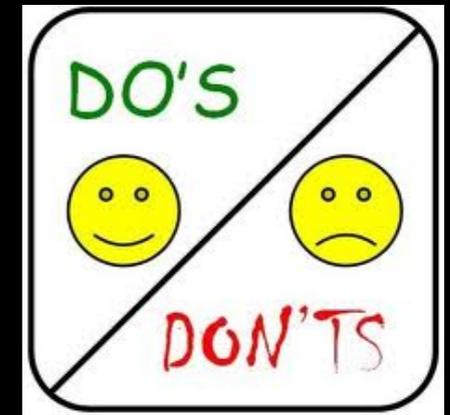
Structure



The personal statement should:

1. Say why you have chosen a particular course to study
2. Demonstrate your suitability for the course (particularly by discussing your A-levels)
3. Show evidence of your interest / passion for a subject (through wider reading, etc)
4. Make clear what kind of person you are, and what skills you have (extra-curricular activities, etc)

Key advice



- **Brainstorm** ideas for each section before you begin writing!
- **Don't exaggerate** (or lie!), and try to sound like an enthusiastic, intelligent 17 or 18 year-old.
- **Don't** start with a quote you got from Google!
- Use **appropriate language** and **register**.
- **Instead**, try to sound knowledgeable and engaged. Don't overuse the word 'passion', however!

Here's an example of the first paragraph
from someone who applied for
Business Management:

The world is still feeling the effects of the 2007 financial crisis. Given the challenging economic situation it is no wonder that 80% of start-ups fail. Having a more detailed understanding of complex markets and global events is something I believe will be pivotal to my success as an undergraduate and in the business world. **I am enthusiastic about studying Business as a course as it will provide me with in-depth understanding of the world surrounding me, both economically and socially.** Reading 'The Economist' has also shown me how wide-ranging and politically significant the issues surrounding business can be, and I look forward to developing my understanding of the subject at university.

And from someone who applied for **European Studies:**

It may seem ironic to study a course about Europe in a country that in a year might leave the EU. However, I sincerely hope the British people vote to stay in the European Union, as I am convinced that together we are economically, geopolitically and culturally stronger. Europe is fascinatingly diverse in the history of its languages and institutions, and I am excited about extending my knowledge of them at university.

THEN move on to talk about your A-level studies, and what you have enjoyed. Be specific, and make relevant links to your chosen course.

The human part of the Geography course, including topics like Globalisation, Global Networks and Unequal Spaces, for example, have allowed me to become aware of various problems which modern and developing societies are facing. **The subject itself has helped me to analyse data, explore trends and construct an argument.** I think that the skills learnt in this subject will definitely help me study Business at university. **In June, I had to create a geography documentary with the aim of highlighting the increasing risks of water conflict in different parts of the world.** I had to arrange interviews, invent questionnaires, conduct secondary research, and record footage to complete my documentary. Not only did I enjoy this project but it expanded the skills which will be extremely useful during my future studies.

The Maths A-Level, especially Statistics 1&2 and topics such as probability have provided me with some of the key abilities that will certainly be vital when studying Business. **My mathematical capabilities will be useful when applying my knowledge to different aspects of the course such as Accounting and Mathematical and Statistical methods.** English Literature has given me the ability to craft my own point of view, analyse literary texts and shape arguments and opinions, which is a crucial skill, not only for business, but also for the professional world. The subject has also developed my essay writing and presentational skills.

OR

The study of France's cultural, social and political aspects has stoked my interest in European politics, especially due to my concern about Le Front National and its increasing influence and power. Concurrently, the investigation of the enormous increase in France's immigrant population over the past 60 years has augmented my interest in educational and health management and how this varies throughout Europe. In addition, the linguistic confidence and fluency I have obtained helped me to explore contemporary environmental problems and solutions in my French AS oral, which has led me to delve into the dilemma of nuclear energy in Europe in this year's course.

OR

I discovered my interest in geopolitical issues through my A-Level Geography course, which developed my understanding of the role of the EU in shaping the world with its policies and international economic influence, while examining graphs and trends has underlined my analytical and interpretative skills. English Literature has strongly reinforced these skills by contrasting readers' responses to texts in different eras due to their varying social and cultural positions. **Crafting arguments and structuring ideas while keeping in mind contextual information is an ability that English Literature has taught me and is, in my opinion, key for this course.** I have further assessed Spanish politics and political change since 2008. In response to the crisis, different political parties have arisen, particularly Podemos and Ciudadanos, which have proven to be influential despite Spain's traditionally 'two-party' system.

THEN show evidence of 'super-curricular'
wider reading, relevant work experience,
projects, etc.

I have immersed myself in the world of European politics and economy for three years now after routinely reading 'The Economist', 'The Guardian' and 'Le Monde' online, which have pushed me to find out even more about the importance of the EU for the different member countries and especially how European nations can work collaboratively to address issues. By also reading 'El Mundo', I have shaped an even more objective perspective on the European political and economic scene thanks to the differing political points of view of the media.

Geology...

I was fascinated and enthralled when **I read 'Earth: The Power of the Planet' written by Iain Stewart**, based on a breathtaking six-part documentary, presented also by this geologist. He focused on the physical aspects of Geology, revealing key features of this subject, as well as many rarities spread across the five continents and oceans. I am particularly interested in these physical aspects, and yet I have also looked into the social impacts of natural forces on the ancient world and its inhabitants, as explored in the **documentary series: 'Journeys from the Centre of the Earth'**. By dipping into textbooks such as 'The Nature of the Environment' by Andrew Goudie, I hope to achieve as much knowledge about this discipline before embarking on university.

- The personal statement should be about **70%** focused on academic suitability and interests. No more than **30%** should discuss your extra-curricular activities – both at school and outside.
- This section could include **sport, volunteering, music, clubs.**
- Don't forget that you are **bilingual!** It makes you interesting and impressive!

I am a person who loves sport. Outside school I have practised, trained and competed at a regional level in many different sports such as golf, football, and padel. In all of these I have been part of a team, as well as being the captain of the football team, **which has definitely helped me grow a sense of both leadership and teamwork that would help in any university project, and in future professional environments.** I am keen to continue my participation in sports at university.

Being part of the school's Student Council and being the event organiser has definitely made me more responsible and mature, especially when organising different events such as football tournaments, bake sales, and having to deal with the money that was then donated to the different charities the school raises money for. I have also helped at a Spanish charity called 'Prodis' which has made me more aware of the socio-economic difficulties some people face. Moreover, in my spare time I tutor younger students in Maths and English and help them with their homework, something that is **extending my empathy and awareness of learning strategies.**

FINALLY, try to conclude in an interesting, memorable way, continuing to show your personality, knowledge, interest and engagement.

As a Spanish person studying in a British school, I have always been aware of the vital significance of cross-national communication and understanding. The growth of Eurosceptic parties like that of Geert Wilders' and Beppe Grillo's 5-Star Movement show how contested the nature of Europe and the EU is in 2015, and how important it will be to understand our continent in the future. I hope to further that understanding as an undergraduate.

Suggested Reading

- Oxford University's list of suggested reading and resources.
- King's College Cambridge reading lists

Final points

- You may only show your draft personal statement to **2 members of staff:**
 - the person writing your reference
 - ONE other teacher
- You may not produce draft after draft after draft and expect detailed feedback!
- Proof-read to check there are absolutely no errors in your spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Deadlines

- 1st Deadline for Oxbridge and Medical School - **15th October**
- 2nd Deadline for nearly everyone else - **15th November**
- 3rd Deadline for the final few (who have struggled to decide what to study) - **15th December**