



**MAESTRO
CAREER**
we design your career journey



Writing a UCAS Personal Statement

Piece together your Personal Statement

What is a Personal Statement?

Unlike most education systems we're used to, where admissions into top universities are contingent on the achievement of great scores and a stellar entrance examination result, the UK has one more component in the mix – a statement of purpose. A statement of purpose (SOP) is a critical piece in the admissions process which tells your chosen universities who you are as a student, what your areas of interest are and how you plan to use your education if given a chance to study in your dream college. So, it carries an immense amount of importance in your application journey! (No pressure, right?) 😊

Your SOP is a reflection of your academic personality, delving into your intellectual capabilities, interest areas and technical skills. It is meant to facilitate colleges in determining your fit for their college community. The UK admissions process highly prioritises intellectual vitality and academic expertise in your chosen discipline, thus making it essential for your SOP to reflect these skills and knowledge.



Getting Started

The first step is always the hardest. One way to approach it is by breaking it down into little chunks. Here's a method you can follow: a well-crafted Personal Statement will have the following Five Ps as core elements of writing.

PURPOSE

PLAN

PERSONALITY

PARAMETERS

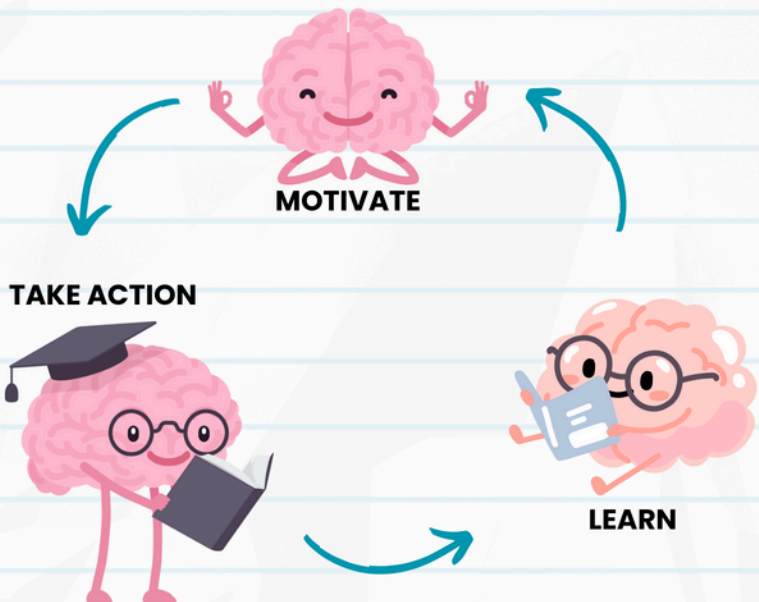
PROOF-READ



Purpose

It is vital to identify the purpose of your personal statement by mapping a growth curve. That is, ascertain your subject interest and chart a timeline highlighting key moments in your life that defined your interest. To demonstrate your commitment to the subject, share your academic and curricular experiences, particularly focusing on learning outcomes. For instance, attending a pottery workshop would have acquainted you with knowledge of hand-building techniques, wheel throwing, and perhaps glazing.

Did that experience inspire you to delve deeper into the world of ceramics?



Plan

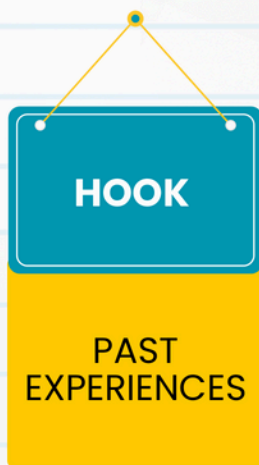


Now, let's move on to making some rough notes and getting an outline in place. This process will ensure that we have a skeletal idea of the essay's flow. The theme represents the single most important goal you are pursuing or aiming to achieve through your undergraduate education. Attach the questions in the circle to your motivating factor, and there you have the first layer of the outline. Follow it up with specific personal reasons for choosing a particular activity. For instance, was there anyone who inspired you to pursue something in life? Or do you have a fond memory attached to a specific task? Your personal account is what makes your essay unique – that's your hook!

But, be careful not to get carried away in the personal account of your interest in the subject! The UK SOP is meant to be an academic essay outlining your technical expertise in your chosen discipline – any variation from this format can distract from the purpose of the essay. Keep the personal details limited to setting the stage for your SOP and providing context for your interest in a discipline; do not let it dominate your essay.



Plan



Plan

Example 1

"The world was in a state of shock and pandemonium when the COVID pandemic hit, but my family endeavoured to help those in need.

My father utilised his IT skills to help local grocery stores in our area to go online as everyone looked to order their groceries from the safety of their homes. We were involved in organising ambulances and meal packages for those in need. After this experience, I wanted to discern the fundamental idea of social responsibility in a business."

Example 2

"For me, balance is imperative. I want to work with financial institutions like Price Waterhouse Coopers or Deloitte but also work in an NGO that helps with skilling labour or micro-financing.

With the values enshrined in me by my family, doing social and entrepreneurial work will come naturally to me. I want to further my knowledge, and in due course, want to pursue"

Personality

This segment requires you to introspect about your choices, activities, and background, as these will add another layer of authenticity to tie your story together. Remember to keep it relevant, though, as it would be a little absurd to mention that you love gulab jamun with ice cream when applying for aerospace engineering. Mind you, it's not wrong to describe that food combination, but it would be more fitting in a culinary sciences essay.

In essence, write about your learning experiences in detail, as the university will provide opportunities for immersive learning, and your ability to reflect on teachings speaks volumes about the kind of addition you will be to the university.



Personality

Furthermore, you must research the various course modules and tailor this section of the essay to include specific details about the course. We suggest that you comb through the websites of the universities that interest you and talk about opportunities that you are keen on pursuing once there.



Academic Background

Subjects, Research, Work Experience, Exploration



Cultural Background

Origins, Lifestyle, Practices, Legacy



Extra-Curricular Background

Sports, Oration, Social Engagements

Personality

Example 1

"I simulated various oscillators using Python at Imperial Global Summer School (July 2022). I found arrangements like the coupled oscillator challenging to deal with because I had to simplify two second-order differential equations. This experience taught me how to organise data and code well and persist with problems that I initially found difficult. My interest in machine learning soared as the result of the 12-week research paper I wrote, mentored by Samuel Showalter, a PhD student at UC Irvine. Focusing on a single tool in Markov Chains helped me visualise machine learning and the importance of probabilities holistically. Using the retro game 'Snake', I built a chain of data to create three pieces of AI I tested on the game. Going through this process took commitment, and I acquired the skill of debugging and using online resources to my advantage."



Personality

Example 2

"My academic interest in History began with the Classical period of Indian History when Hinduism developed into its modern form and most of the legends of Hindu mythology were composed. The Mahabharata, in my opinion, created modern Indian culture, by cementing the values and religious norms followed today. One of the most interesting takes on the Mahabharata is by Dr. Pradip Bhattacharya who postulates that during her stripping, Draupadi was only protected by Krishna once she stopped resisting and put her faith in him. I believe that this incident subconsciously implanted the concept of blindly trusting gods in Indian society and why India has submitted to so many foreign invasions. This complacent attitude is why there has never been mass revolt against the imposition of Islam in many parts of India."



Personality

Example 3

"Along with academics I have taken up many extracurricular activities both related and not related to History and Politics. Hockey is a sport which I have taken to a high level, and was the captain of my school team for a brief period until the 2020 lockdown brought inter-school competitions to a halt. I have entered the Julia Wood and John Locke essay competitions this year (can insert ab JW if i get anything). I have also participated in many school writing competitions (will get back to you after looking at school records). I have involved myself with my school's library and have undertaken a reorganisation of books to aid the research activities of both students and teachers."



Parameters

Once you have your outline ready, review the parameters specified by the university in terms of font size, style, word count, and, most importantly, the prompt. Writing within this framework is a minor detail but reflects how mindful you are of the writing process



Document Specifications

Font, Margins, Spacing



Essay Specifications

Word Count, Character Count, Pages



Writing Specifications

Prompt

The much-feared first draft

You must have read numerous perfect drafts before landing on this document—drafts that clearly communicate the goals and aspirations of that particular individual. Before reaching that stage, your draft, or maybe drafts, will undergo a lot of scribbles and deletes. Sometimes, even re-ideation! Deep dive into your first draft with all your gathered resources and allow it to be messy. Be kind to yourself; the purpose of writing a first draft is only to get started and not to finalise.



Proof-Read

Polish Polish Polish!

Well, we have already established that the first draft was not the final one. Distance yourself from the draft for a day or two; let it marinate. Revisit the draft on the third day and read it objectively. This time, you will learn a lot about yourself and your writing. Critically analysing your content will give you clarity. If you find it difficult, request your friend or family to read it for you and suggest edits that you can incorporate for improved quality. We suggest that you revise the content as many times as required till you feel that the essay accurately narrates your story.

DRAFT 1



OUTLINE

DRAFT 2



ELABORATE

DRAFT 3



FINETUNE

Few points to Remember

1

Personal Statement should be **90% academic** and **10% non-academic**

2

Cohesively written by tying lessons from **extracurriculars & academics**

3

Keep the **language simple**. Flowery language and creative expressions are not required or appreciated.

4

Lastly, **enjoy the process!**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



What is the purpose of the Personal Statement in the UCAS application process?

The SOP provides you with an opportunity to showcase your motivation, academic background, relevant experiences, and future aspirations to the admissions committee.



Should I include my achievements outside academics in the SOP?

Yes, one must include relevant achievements, extracurricular activities, and any experiences that demonstrate skills and qualities. This will provide a comprehensive picture of you as an applicant.



How long should my UCAS SOP be?

Usually a personal statement should be limited to 4000 characters. However, read the guidelines carefully.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Does the personal statement have to be purely academic?

No, the personal statement should be a fine balance between academic, and co curricular activities.



Are there any key points that I should remember while writing a personal statement for university applications?

Certainly! Writing a UCAS personal statement is a critical part of your university application.



Penn



COLUMBIA



HARVARD



Dartmouth



Yale



Cornell



BROWN



PRINCETON

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

- Showcase your passion
- Focus on your academic achievements
- Include relevant extracurricular activities
- Support your statements with concrete eg.
- Proofread thoroughly
- Maintain formal tone
- Be your authentic self

Don'ts

- Don't plagiarise or use template statements
- Don't exaggerate or make false claims
- Don't include irrelevant information
- Don't be overly informal or casual
- Don't write a generic statement
- Don't wait until the last minute
- Don't disregard word limits

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