



University of  
Central Lancashire  
UCLan

# Applying to university

A practical guide to writing  
your personal statement

Where opportunity  
creates success



# Mastering your personal statement

As part of the UCAS application process you are asked to complete a personal statement. This is your opportunity to 'sell' yourself to universities and show how and why you are a good candidate for your chosen course. A well written application may convince a university to make you an offer, or invite you to an interview.

Many people find it difficult to write about themselves, particularly their own strengths, so don't worry if you're struggling for ideas. You can use this guide to help ensure you write a great personal statement.

## Aim

Your personal statement may well be the only chance you have to 'speak' directly to an Admissions Tutor so it's important you get it right.

You need to convey your enthusiasm for the subject and highlight how your experience, skills and personal qualities meet the specific requirements the university or course are looking for. Many courses are highly competitive, so you need to convince the Admissions Tutor to make you an offer. Other candidates will have similar grades so your personal statement is a way to make sure you stand out.

## The application cycle

September - January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete online UCAS application</li><li>• Submit form to college - reference added</li><li>• Form sent to UCAS</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>October 16</b> - Deadline for applications to Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses and to Oxford and Cambridge</li><li>• <b>January 31</b> - Main application deadline (Some Art and Design courses have a March deadline, please check UCAS for details)</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UCAS send acknowledgement to applicant</li><li>• UCAS send a copy of the application to chosen institutions</li></ul>
September - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Institutions make decisions</li><li>• UCAS informs you of the decisions</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend interviews/auditions/applicant days if invited</li><li>• Submit additional choices via UCAS Extra* if eligible</li><li>• Some courses and late applications may not receive responses until later in the cycle</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants accept offers</li><li>• 1st Choice - FIRM    2nd Choice - INSURANCE</li></ul>
July - August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Await results</li><li>• Clearing (Unplaced applicants matched with course vacancies)</li></ul>
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enroll!</li></ul>

# Getting started

**It's never too early to start work on your personal statement.  
In fact, we'd recommend you give yourself as much time as possible.**

Before you begin it's important you have an idea of the course or subject area you want to study. Your personal statement needs to be specific so knowing what course you're interested in will make it easier to start writing. It's a good idea to check out the course descriptions in university prospectuses or on their website, to find out the skills and experience that you'll need. You can then reflect on how these relate to your own interests and qualities.

## The first steps towards your career

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**What subject are you applying for?**

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2

**Why do you want to study this subject?  
Do you have a future career in mind?**

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3

**What experience do you have that's relevant to your chosen course?**

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4

**What are you likely to study on this course and what skills will you gain?**

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# Your personal statement

The great thing about a personal statement is that it's exactly that - personal. This is your chance to stand out from the crowd and explain why you're the right choice for your chosen course.

It's important that the statement reflects you, so you need to write in your own individual style. However, there are certain facts Admissions Tutors will be expecting to see and it is important that you include these to ensure you give the best account of yourself, your skills and your experience.

## What to include

### Why you want to study the course

We recommend you start by explaining why you have chosen the course you are applying for. You need to show that you have a genuine interest in the subject area and the motivation to immerse yourself in it. You can do this by highlighting your knowledge of the subject and by talking about what it is in particular that appeals to you. If you are choosing a course because you know it will help you on your way to your desired career, mention this too.

### What makes you suitable?

You also need to tell the Admissions Tutor why they should offer you a place. This is your chance to show how your experiences have prepared you to meet the demands of the course. You should talk about your academic studies to highlight how you have the right background, but this is also your chance to tell the university how any extracurricular activities you have undertaken have prepared you for the course. You could mention any voluntary work you have done, work experience or a significant project you have completed which relates to your subject area.

### What makes you stand out?

Your personal statement also gives you the opportunity to celebrate your individuality and highlight how you're different to other applicants. Think about what you can offer outside of the lecture theatre and how you will contribute to the university community as a whole. It doesn't matter what you've done, as long as you can highlight the skills you have learnt and how they have prepared you for university life. You could mention a part-time job, a sports team you've been part of or a society you are a member of. And if you've held a position of responsibility, this is a great time to mention that.

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## Remember:

- Each university is different so it's worthwhile asking at open days what each Admissions Team feels is most important in a personal statement.
  - Everything that you write should be relevant and linked to the course(s) you are applying for. Whilst you will only submit one personal statement it will be seen multiple times by all the universities and courses you have applied for.
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# Structure

## The beginning

- ✓ Start with an engaging and positive introductory sentence which makes the Admissions Tutor want to read on.
- ✓ Make it different. The most overused opening phrases are: "From a young age I have always been interested in..." and "For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with..."
- ✓ State your reasons for applying to your chosen course and what it is that motivates you.

## The middle

- ✓ Each paragraph should highlight a new skill, achievement or experience that either relates to your course or shows how you are able to meet the demands of it.
- ✓ Structure your statement so that you mention the most relevant points first.
- ✓ Make sure you explain the reasoning behind what you have written. For example: Don't just say you were captain of a sports team, explain why you were chosen and what attributes you brought to the role.

## The end

- ✓ You should conclude by summarising everything you have already mentioned. Try to finish on a high note, to reinforce your commitment and desire to study and succeed on your course.

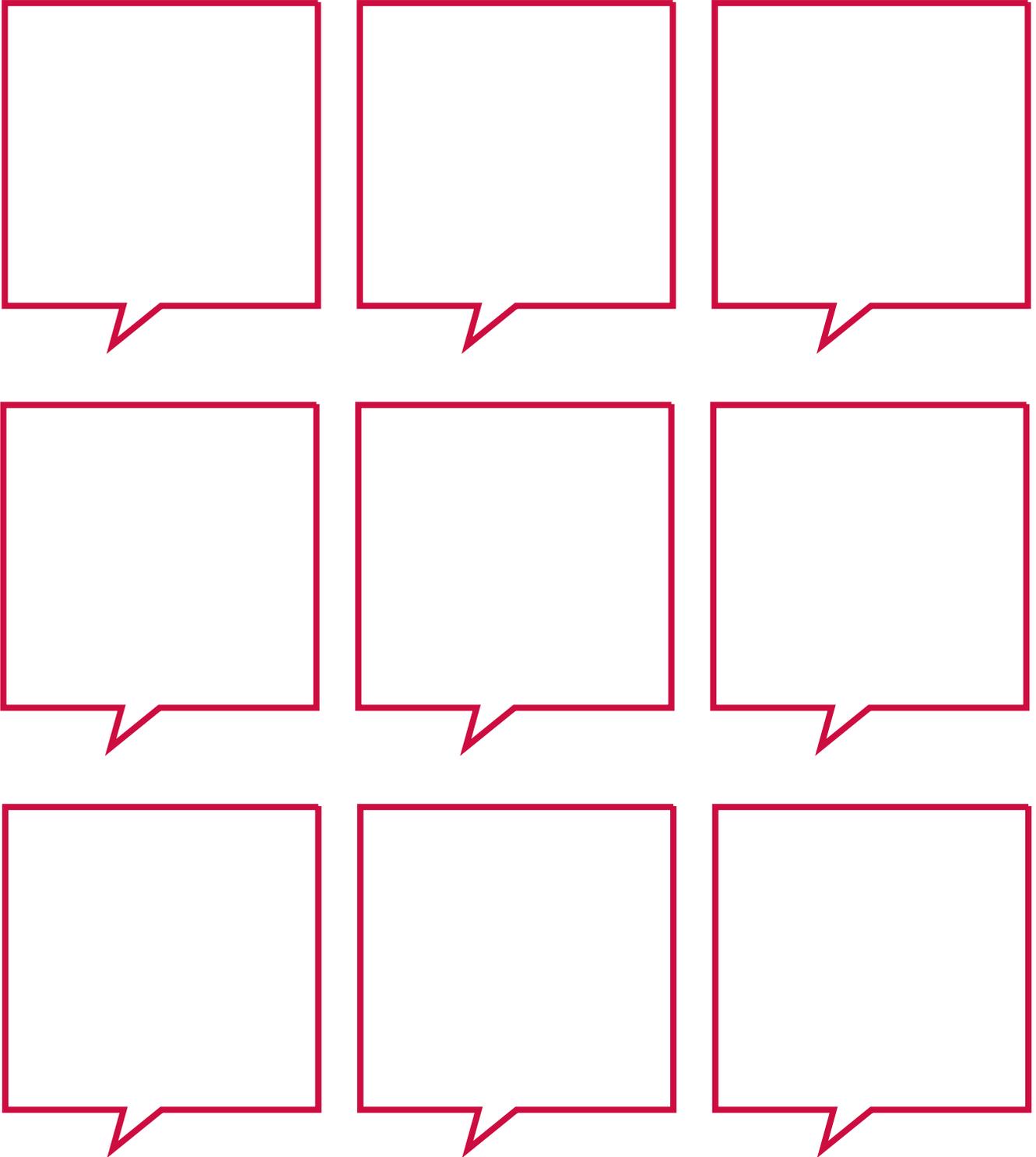
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## Style and structure tips

- **Make sure you sound interested in the course.** Admissions Tutors will recognise applicants who aren't totally committed.
- **Don't use bullet points.** A personal statement is a chance to show how you can make a reasoned argument in continuous writing.
- **Avoid repetition.**
- **You need to show rather than tell the Admissions Tutor that you are a good candidate.** So don't just list all your skills and achievements. Pick the most relevant, explain them carefully and provide examples.
- **Check your statement for spelling and grammar.** And then check again.
- Ask your parents, friends and/or teachers to read through your finished statement to make sure it flows and that you've not forgotten anything.

## Getting started...

Start thinking about everything and anything that relates to why you've chosen your course or subject area - your skills, abilities, interests or hobbies. You can remove anything later on but just start with some initial ideas using our handy brainstorm bubbles.



The image contains a 3x3 grid of nine empty red speech bubble outlines. Each bubble is rectangular with a pointed tail at the bottom center, designed for users to write their initial thoughts and ideas.



# Your skills and experience

What skills, experience or interests do you have already which show dedication or commitment to your chosen course?

## Academic ability

- What aspect of your current course have you enjoyed or excelled in?
- What are you looking forward to studying most at university?
- Have you used any speciality equipment in your chosen field?

Subject	What I've learnt	Relevance to course
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

## Outside interests

- What are your hobbies or interests?
- What are you passionate about?
- Have you developed any skills that would be useful in your course?

Hobbies	Skills I've gained	Relevance to course
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## Relevant experience

- Have you completed any work experience or volunteering work (paid or unpaid)?
- Have you taken on additional responsibilities at school or college?
- What skills have you learnt? Have you won any awards?

Work experience	What I've learnt	Relevance to course
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## Dos and don'ts

### DO:

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- Write your personal statement out first and then copy and paste it into the UCAS online application form.
  - Check it's all there - UCAS has a limit of 4000 characters or 47 lines of text, including spaces and blank lines.
  - Practice. You should be prepared to write several drafts - the average is six.
  - Read it out loud. This will help you spot sentences which aren't worded correctly.
  - Make sure you know the deadline date with your school or college for your UCAS application - and don't miss it!
  - Be prepared to talk at length about everything written in your personal statement. This is critical if you're invited to interview.

### DON'T:

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- Overcomplicate it. Keep your statement concise and write in your natural style.
  - Try too hard to stand out. Jokes and quotations can be misinterpreted by Admissions Tutors who don't know you or your sense of humour.
  - Copy or paraphrase from your friend's work or online resources. UCAS use sophisticated software and check every personal statement for plagiarism.
  - Include irrelevant facts. Apply the 'so what' rule. If you can't explain how a point relates to your course, leave it out.
  - Be negative. Focus on what you have done, not what you haven't.
  - Over-elaborate or lie. If you can't be honest about why you are a good candidate, then you may be applying for the wrong course.







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# Join us at one of our Open Days

**Dates of our latest events are  
available at [uclan.ac.uk/opendays](https://uclan.ac.uk/opendays)**

## Useful Resources:

[ucas.com/personalstatements](https://ucas.com/personalstatements)

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Preston, PR1 2HE**

 **OfficialUCLan**

 **UCLan**

 **UCLanUni**

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