

* Personal Statements

1. Intro & Structure



* Personal Statements Why are they so important?

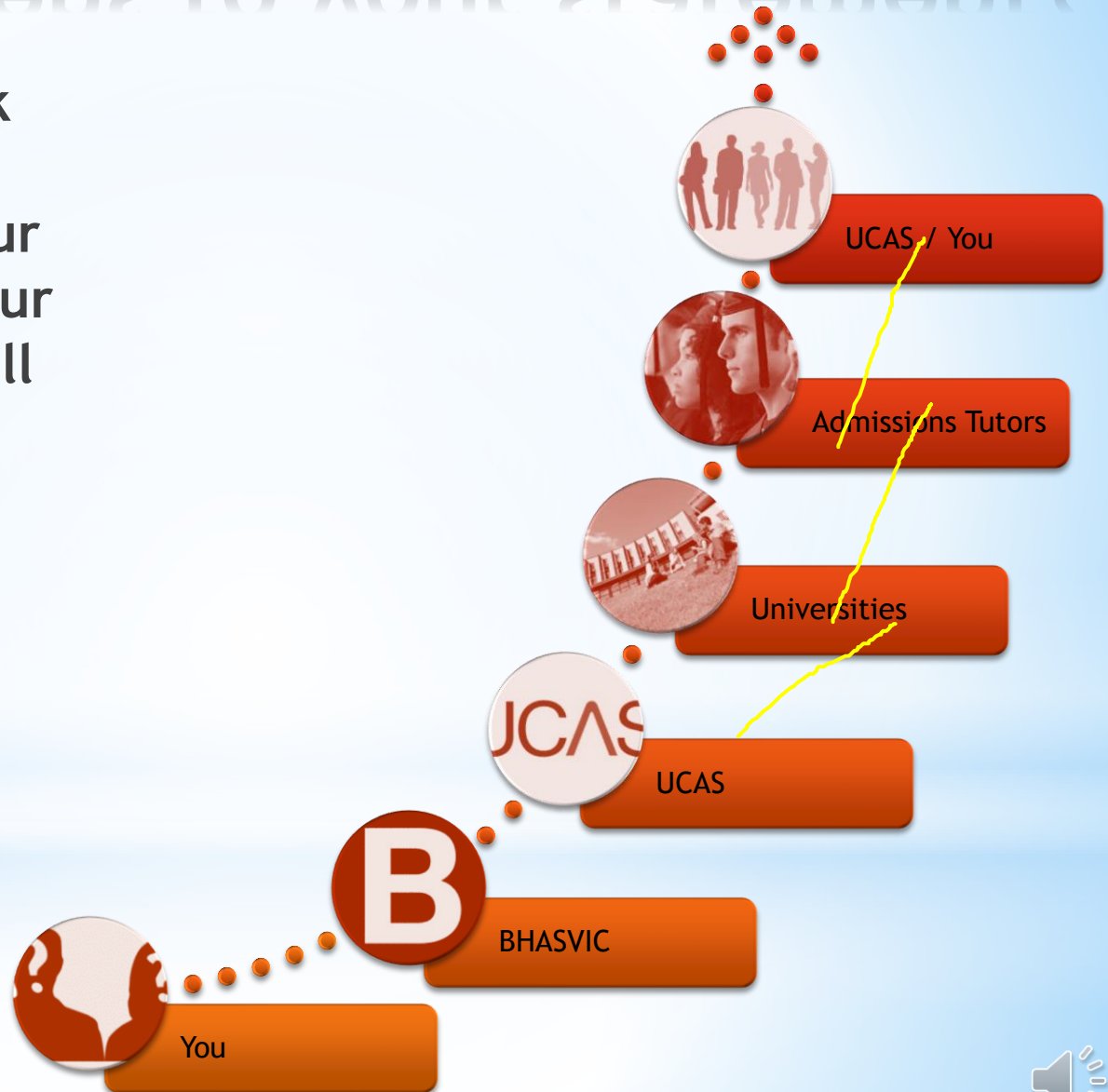
- * Important life skill
- * University places highly competitive
- * Your opportunity to sell yourself
- * Many courses do not interview
- * Better statement = more offers = more choice!



*What happens to your statement?

*Your tutor will check your statement and you will add it to your UCAS Apply form. Your college reference will be attached and we will send to UCAS.

* UCAS will send it to relevant universities to be considered by admissions tutors



* Personal Statements: Style and Appearance

- * This is a formal application
- * 4,000 characters (inc. spaces)/47 lines
- * Think about the structure
- * 5 / 6 paragraphs
- * Write the statement using word processing software and then paste this in to Apply
- * Make sure your spelling, grammar and punctuation are perfect!
- * Top tip - read it out loud to yourself



* Some common mistakes to watch out for

- * **Paragraph order** - it needs to make sense
- * **Too much time on hobbies/pastimes** - you are going to Uni to study and that should be the bulk of your statement
- * **Cliches** - 'love of science' interested since an early age....' etc.
- * **Not enough interest / motivation** for the subject
- * **DO NOT Plagiarise** - it has to reflect YOU. Sophisticated software will pick up plagiarism.
- * **Reasons for course unclear and not at the beginning**
- * **Transferable skills** -not enough evidence of skills gained - life and academic
- * **No reference to course specific requirements** (e.g. Physiotherapy requires work experience)



*Personal Statements

What universities are looking for

- * Have they chosen the **right subject** for the right reasons?
- * Can they **survive at university level** - are they mature enough?
- * Do they have a **range of interests** and aptitudes?
- * Does the personal statement confirm their **depth of interest** in the subject?
- * What has the candidate **studied independently**?



*Writing a Personal Statement DON'Ts!

- * Don't mention specific institutions
- * Don't go mad with a thesaurus
- * Don't include irrelevant information
- * Don't exaggerate or lie
- * Don't write in lists
- * Don't try to include everything
- * Don't repeat yourself



Anything that is unrelated
to elephants is irrelephant.

Try not to look
at too much
stuff online

...and leave the
first and last
lines 'til last -
they are the
hardest to
write.



*“I want to go to university because it has a good social life”

*“I think a university education would broaden my social and intellectual horizons”

Which one is better for a personal statement?



* **Appropriate Comments?**



*“I play in a band which I spend a lot of time doing”

*“For relaxation, I play guitar to a good standard”

Which one is better for a personal statement?



***Appropriate Comments?**



- * **Introduction** - General paragraph - why you want to study the course at Uni and why you are interested in the subject.
- * **Section 1** - Discuss academic experiences. Relevant subjects, how these inspire you and what you find interesting.
- * **Section 2** - Academic - interest in subject outside the classroom, summer schools/open days, books read or relevant experience.
- * **Section 3** - Discuss work experiences, relevant or otherwise, with focus on how experiences have helped you develop relevant skills for the course.
- * **Section 4** - Hobbies & extra-curricular activities - focus on skills. Sport, music and voluntary work show you are a diverse person outside the classroom.
- * **Conclusion** - The conclusion should be brief (1-2 sentences) but should summarise and reiterate your interest in the subject and your aptitude and skill for it.

* **Section by section**



- * We will look at the sections of a personal statement in small groups.
- * You will identify strengths and weaknesses and feed back to the whole group

* Group Activity



Introduction - General paragraph - why you want to study the course at Uni and why you are interested in the subject. You don't need to demonstrate skills or list experiences at this stage.

I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- Does attempt to start with a reason about the choice of degree
- Each sentence tries to offer a different point

Suggested Weaknesses

- A more insightful reason might be used to explain the choice of course
- Could state what the student wants out of the degree
- Could mention which areas of history are of interest
- Words such as history are used twice in one sentence



Section 1 - *Discuss academic experiences. Relevant subjects, how these inspire you and what you find interesting. Give specific examples of things you enjoyed studying. You don't need to discuss every subject & don't need to list subjects you're studying - these are elsewhere in your application.*

Aside from studying History at A level, I also take French and Politics. I have benefitted from studying politics alongside history, and feel it will benefit me throughout higher education. I am also undertaking an Extended Project which has focussed and improved my research skills.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- It a good start to relate study from other subjects to the main subject
- Has begun to think about how A level study can benefit Higher Education study

Suggested Weaknesses

- How does studying politics benefit history?
- Any benefits also of studying French?
- What is the area of Extended Project study? Relevant to the degree?
- How does it link to studying at a Higher Education level?



Section 2 - Academic - interest in subject outside the classroom, summer schools/open days, books read or relevant experience. Specific details of what you did and how this makes you a better/more motivated candidate are good. When discussing books avoid name dropping & discuss aspects of the book. What particular ideas raised in the book / lecture you found particularly interesting, and why.

Outside college, Art has always been a large part of my life. I recently visited an exhibition at the Photographer's Gallery on early colour photography in Russia. I also saw the Disobedient Objects exhibition at the V&A, demonstrating perfectly how art and design can instigate revolution. I also have a part-time job in a vintage clothing store which I enjoy.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- Student is presenting themselves as a well-rounded and diverse individual
- Passion for art and visiting an exhibition clearly showing real interest
- Mentions a specific exhibition

Suggested Weaknesses

- So how did the student find the photography exhibition?
- Was the photography experience interesting / influential / inspiring?
- Relate more the part-time job to skills and interests?



Section 3 - *Discuss work experiences, relevant or otherwise, with focus on how experiences have helped you develop relevant skills for the course. Opportunity to show appreciation of skills course requires.*

For my work experience, I worked in various museums and galleries in Brighton & Hove. This was very relevant to my historical studies as I was able to understand more about how people lived in the past and their surroundings.

I did relate to this in my Extended Project and history coursework.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- Begins to relate to how work experience has benefitted their studies.
- Does relate work experience to study which is helpful.

Suggested Weaknesses

- It sounds like a varied and interesting work experience - perhaps an example of where - a museum or gallery would be helpful.
- How else relevant to studies?
- Specific examples of what was particularly interesting or relevant?



Section 4 - *Hobbies & extra-curricular activities - focus on skills. Sport, music and voluntary work show you are a diverse person outside the classroom. Avoid mundane hobbies like socialising with friends, playing computer games. This should be quite short section to make room for more academic sections.*

As a student union member, I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending college functions, delivering speeches to the college body, being an active member of the college student union, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- Being in a position of responsibility is useful to mention (i.e. School prefect)
- Examples are provided about the prefect duties
- Provides an image of a student with varied interests, e.g., music

Suggested Weaknesses

- No mention of the skills gained from being a school prefect
- Omit the reference to year nine as it seems that the experience was too long ago to be relevant given the more recent responsibilities and experiences
- Has learning the piano really sold the student?



Conclusion - *The conclusion should be brief (1-2 sentences) but should summarise and reiterate your interest in the subject and your aptitude and skill for it. This is also a good place to discuss any future career aspirations, but if you don't have any then you don't need to mention it.*

I'm passionate about History at higher level because it will broaden my horizons, help me secure my vocation to work in the museum sector, and stretch skills I am developing from my present studies. I plan to defer my place and take a gap year so I am refreshed and ready to begin my studies once it's over.

Strengths? Weaknesses?

Suggested Strengths

- Begins to say why they want to study the course at university
- Gives several clear examples for why they want to study the course
- Mentions clearing deferring and taking a gap year

Suggested Weaknesses

- Doesn't explain what they are doing in their gap year?
- And why they are deferring and taking a gap year?
- No mention of what they will gain from the general University experience?



- * It will help you to think of a clear structure
- * Include everything you need to
- * Keep it relevant and appropriate
- * Remember that alongside job applications, this is one of the most important pieces of writing you will write in your life so take your time and check it carefully


* Conclusion



- * **Introduction** - General paragraph - why you want to study the course at Uni and why you are interested in the subject. You don't need to demonstrate skills or list experiences at this stage.
- * **Section 1** - Discuss academic experiences. Relevant subjects, how these inspire you and what you find interesting. Give specific examples of things you enjoyed studying. You don't need to discuss every subject & don't need to list subjects you're studying - these are elsewhere in your application.
- * **Section 2** - Academic - interest in subject outside the classroom, summer schools/open days, books read or relevant experience. Specific details of what you did and how this makes you a better/more motivated candidate are good. When discussing books avoid name dropping & discuss aspects of the book. What particular ideas raised in the book / lecture you found particularly interesting, and why.
- * **Section 3** - Discuss work experiences, relevant or otherwise, with focus on how experiences have helped you develop relevant skills for the course. Opportunity to show appreciation of skills course requires.
- * **Section 4** - Hobbies & extra-curricular activities - focus on skills. Sport, music and voluntary work show you are a diverse person outside the classroom. Avoid mundane hobbies like socialising with friends, playing computer games. This should be quite short section to make room for more academic sections.
- * **Conclusion** - The conclusion should be brief (1-2 sentences) but should summarise and reiterate your interest in the subject and your aptitude and skill for it. This is also a good place to discuss any future career aspirations, but if you don't have any then you don't need to mention it.

* **Section by section** (student reference)

- * **Introduction** - I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness.
- * **Section 1** - Aside from studying History at A level, I also take French and Politics. I have benefitted from studying politics alongside history, and feel it will benefit me throughout higher education. I am also undertaking an Extended Project which has focussed and improved my research skills.
- * **Section 2** - Outside college, Art has always been a large part of my life. I recently visited an exhibition at the Photographer's Gallery on early colour photography in Russia. I also saw the Disobedient Objects exhibition at the V&A, demonstrating perfectly how art and design can instigate revolution. I also have a part-time job in a vintage clothing store which I enjoy.
- * **Section 3** - For my work experience, I worked in various museums and galleries in Brighton & Hove. This was very relevant to my historical studies as I was able to understand more about how people lived in the past and their surroundings. I did relate to this in my Extended Project and history coursework.
- * **Section 4** - As a student union member, I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending college functions, delivering speeches to the college body, being an active member of the college student union, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons.
- * **Conclusion** - I'm passionate about History at higher level because it will broaden my horizons, help me secure my vocation to work in the museum sector, and stretch skills I am developing from my present studies. I plan to defer my place and take a gap year so I am refreshed and ready to begin my studies once it's over.

 **Example**

- *Suggest groups of 2 or 3

- *6 different sections

- *5-10 minutes on each one before feeding back to whole group

- *Photocopy slides 23-28 x 3

- ***Group activity sheets**

Introduction - General paragraph - why you want to study the course at Uni and why you are interested in the subject. You don't need to demonstrate skills or list experiences at this stage.

I enjoy History lessons so I have decided to pursue the subject at degree level. At university I look forward to examining a range of historical sources. I am particularly interested in French history and trips to France have broadened my historical awareness.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Section 1 - *Discuss academic experiences. Relevant subjects, how these inspire you and what you find interesting. Give specific examples of things you enjoyed studying. You don't need to discuss every subject & don't need to list subjects you're studying - these are elsewhere in your application.*

Aside from studying History at A level, I also take French and Politics. I have benefitted from studying politics alongside history, and feel it will benefit me throughout higher education. I am also undertaking an Extended Project which has focussed and improved my research skills.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Section 2 - *Academic - interest in subject outside the classroom, summer schools/open days, books read or relevant experience. Specific details of what you did and how this makes you a better/more motivated candidate are good. When discussing books avoid name dropping & discuss aspects of the book. What particular ideas raised in the book / lecture you found particularly interesting, and why.*

Outside college, Art has always been a large part of my life. I recently visited an exhibition at the Photographer's Gallery on early colour photography in Russia. I also saw the Disobedient Objects exhibition at the V&A, demonstrating perfectly how art and design can instigate revolution. I also have a part-time job in a vintage clothing store which I enjoy.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Section 3 - *Discuss work experiences, relevant or otherwise, with focus on how experiences have helped you develop relevant skills for the course. Opportunity to show appreciation of skills course requires.*

For my work experience, I worked in various museums and galleries in Brighton & Hove. This was very relevant to my historical studies as I was able to understand more about how people lived in the past and their surroundings.

I did relate to this in my Extended Project and history coursework.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Section 4 - *Hobbies & extra-curricular activities - focus on skills. Sport, music and voluntary work show you are a diverse person outside the classroom. Avoid mundane hobbies like socialising with friends, playing computer games. This should be quite short section to make room for more academic sections.*

As a student union member, I hold many responsibilities: organising and attending college functions, delivering speeches to the college body, being an active member of the college student union, working effectively with other students. Having played in school concerts with the keyboard orchestra when I was in year nine, I have recently taken up piano lessons.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Conclusion - *The conclusion should be brief (1-2 sentences) but should summarise and reiterate your interest in the subject and your aptitude and skill for it. This is also a good place to discuss any future career aspirations, but if you don't have any then you don't need to mention it.*

I'm passionate about History at higher level because it will broaden my horizons, help me secure my vocation to work in the museum sector, and stretch skills I am developing from my present studies. I plan to defer my place and take a gap year so I am refreshed and ready to begin my studies once it's over.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?