

BHASVIC

PERSONAL STATEMENT STUDENT WORKBOOK

2018-19



Name _____ Tutor _____

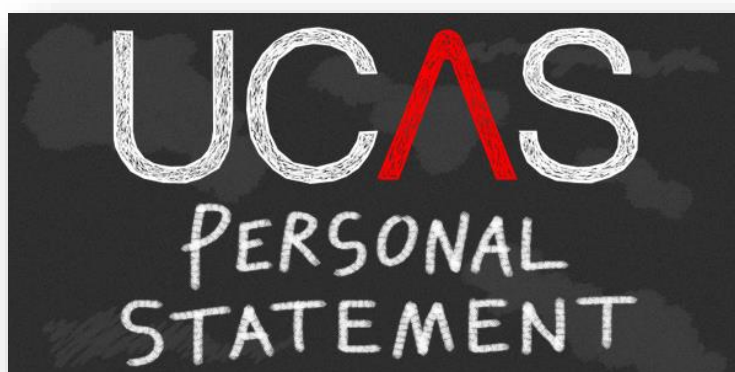
Session 1	Intro and process
Session 2	Paragraph by Paragraph – what to include
Session 3	Transferable Skills from other subjects
Session 4	Draft and Editing

Suggested Format:

- * There is no formal structure for a personal statement, but generally...
- * 70/30 academic/skills qualities

Example structure:

- * **Intro:** Subject intro, how I made my decision and my interests in the subject
- * **S1:** Academic subjects. studies and how they relate to choice of course
- * **S2:** Academic subjects – experience and wider interest outside the classroom
- * **S3:** What other related activities I've done and my career aspirations
- * **S4:** Other information about my interests, hobbies etc. related to subject and skills
- * **S5:** Conclusion. Sum up what I have to offer and why I should be chosen



Session 1 - Intro and process

Can you think of key areas / mentions that make a successful Personal Statement?

Add your ideas here

How to evidence:

- * Don't just state facts, elaborate on them to explain why they make you a **fantastic candidate**
- * Even better – if you can relate this back to the course



Session 2 - Paragraph by Paragraph – what to include

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.

Start well

Write a strong opening sentence, making it clear why you have applied to study a particular course.

Lee Hennessy | Deputy Head Of Recruitment - Admissions At University Of Bath

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.

Remember to mention all your subjects and what skills you have gained.

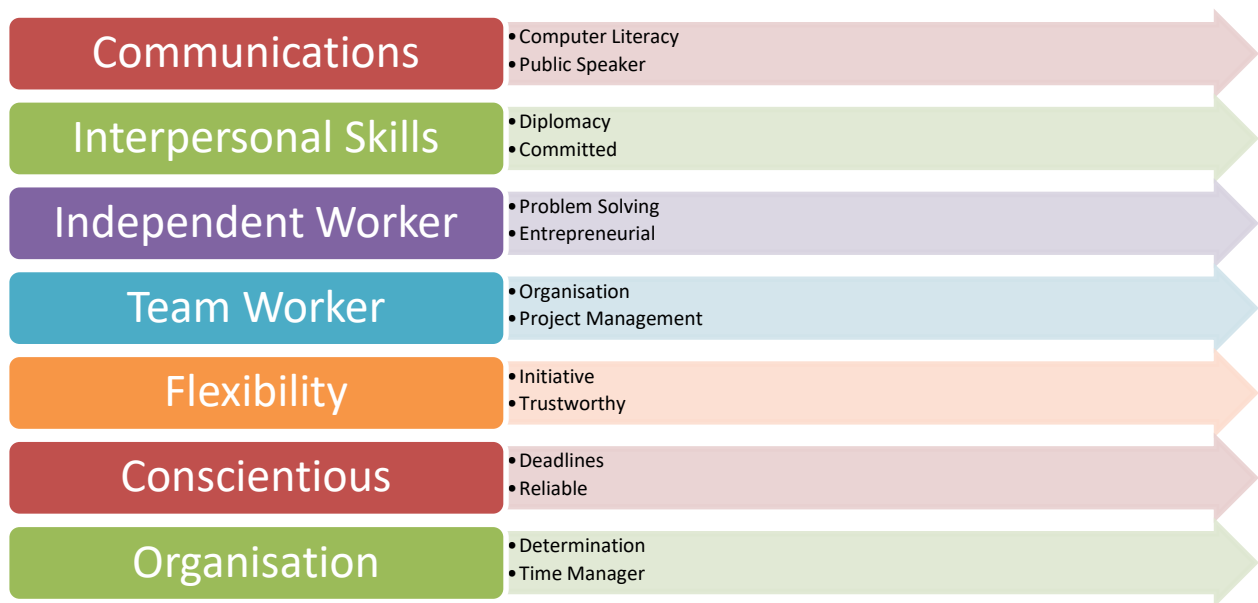
Make it easy to read

Don't write it in one long paragraph! Write well-structured paragraphs, so that experience, additional qualification, aspirations etc are clearly-defined.

Karen Pichlmann / Head Of Admissions - Bournemouth University



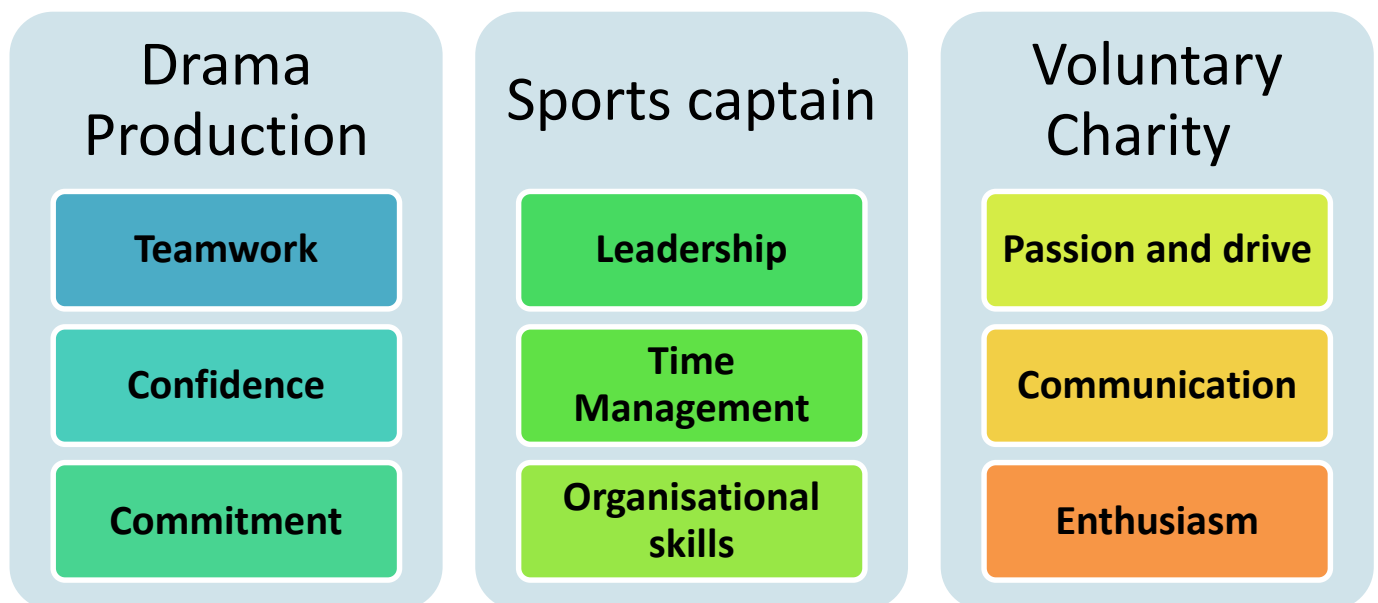
Transferable Skills



Use examples

When you are talking about your strengths and qualities, make sure you use examples to highlight your claims whenever appropriate. ***Graham Hackney / Senior Student Recruitment Officer – Uclan***

Experience & Skills



Let your personality in

Personal statements should be original, not just in terms of using your own words and avoiding plagiarising someone else's work, but to make sure that what you write reflects who you are as an individual. ***Andrew Hood / Admissions Manager At University Of South Wales***

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.

Don't let someone else write or rewrite it

Write it yourself – and ensure that it reflects your own personality. By all means ask others to proof read it or critique it, but make sure that you are the one to make any changes. Over-editing just results in any individuality being lost. **Angela Milln | Director Of Student Recruitment - University Of Bristol**

Section 3 - Discuss work experiences, relevant or otherwise.

**Focus on how experiences have helped you develop relevant skills for the course.
Opportunity to show appreciation of skills course requires.**

Don't lose sight of the task at hand

Always remember to answer the question 'why should we give you a place on the course?' rather than just writing about yourself – every bit of the personal statement should be answering this question. ***Fran Bonner | Community Outreach Team - Nottingham Trent University***

Value-added skills and learning

Emphasise what you have been doing to develop your awareness and understanding of your chosen subject above and beyond the requirements of your A-level, BTEC or International Baccalaureate course. ***Mike Nicholson | Director Of Undergraduate Admissions - University Of Oxford***

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.

Value-added skills and learning

Emphasise what you have been doing to develop your awareness and understanding of your chosen subject above and beyond the requirements of your A-level, BTEC or International Baccalaureate course. ***Mike Nicholson / Director Of Undergraduate Admissions - University Of Oxford***

Relevant work experience – and what you learned

If you are applying for a strictly vocational degree like veterinary medicine, the importance of reflecting on your work experience can't be stressed highly enough. ***Jim Cannon / Widening Participation Development Officer - Royal Veterinary College***

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.

Write naturally

Use your own voice. Students often lack the confidence to say things the way they naturally would and end up writing a bunch of bland clichés. Reveal your personality and your own opinions in the statement, not what you think we want to read. **Chris Fuller | Schools And Colleges Liaison Officer - University Of Southampton**

Remember – explain the Action, the Benefit, and relevance to the Course

Ensure that you follow the ABC rule and keep it course-related and relevant. **Claire Little | Home/eu Student Recruitment Officer - University Of Surrey**

Draft and Editing

- * You have limited space when writing your personal statement and you should have a lot to write!
- * You can write up to 4,000 characters of text that shows you'd make a great student – it may take a few redrafts until you're happy with it.
- * Cutting out those extra words is important and does take thought.
- * Don't forget others can check it for you – don't be afraid to ask.



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?

Common Mistakes - check

- * **Length** – draft may be extremely long or too short
- * **Paragraph order** – it needs to make sense
- * **Too much time spent on hobbies/pastimes** – you are going to Uni to study and that should be the bulk of your statement
- * **Spelling, punctuation and grammar**
- * Not enough **interest / motivation** for the subject
- * Reasons for **course unclear** and **not at the beginning**
- * **Transferable skills** from other academic courses not highlighted e.g. essay writing skills, data handling skills, organisation, research
- * No reference to **course specific requirements** (e.g. Physiotherapy requires work experience)
- * Lots of **competition** and personal statement not as strong as others

Don't

- * 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
- *

Have you included?

- * What course do you want to study?
- * What interests you about it?
- * How well suited are you to the subject?
- * How are your current studies related to the course?
- * Are you conscientious, hardworking and committed?
- * How will you show enthusiasm for the course?
- * What hobbies, Do you have any career plans that are related?
- * Experiences and interests do you have and how are they related?

Have you asked yourself?

Which element of the subject do you enjoy the most and why?	What would you say has been your biggest achievement and why?	Has anyone/anything motivated you? If so, who/what and why?	Do you have a favourite book, movie, hobby? How have they influenced you?
Have you had to overcome any particular barriers?	Have you worked hard for something and finally achieved your goal?	Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?	What would your friends/family say if they were writing your statement?

Plagiarism – beware!

- Plagiarism – Google “help with my UCAS statement” and you get over 100 000 hits.
- UCAS are aware of this and now use plagiarism software to detect such things e.g. the 233 medicine applicants whose “love of science” began when as a child they had all burned a hole in their pyjamas.
- If the UCAS software picks out suspected plagiarism your application is automatically rejected and you will be informed of this.

Avoid

1. Quotations

It's your voice they want to hear - not Coco Chanel, Einstein, Paul Britton, Martin Luther King, David Attenborough, Descartes or Napoleon's. So don't put a quote in unless it's really necessary to make a critical point. It's a waste of your word count. 'So many people use the same quotes and the worst scenario is when it comes right at the start of the statement with no explanation.' Or as a sport admissions tutor said: 'I'm totally fed up of Muhammad Ali quotes!'



2. Random lists

Avoid giving a list of all the books you've read, countries you've visited, work experience placements you've done, positions you've held. For starters, it's boring to read. It's not what you've done, it's what you think about it or learned from it that matters. See our guide to writing about experience in your personal statement to make it really count. A dentistry admissions tutor sums it up: 'I would much rather read about what you learned from observing one filling than a list of all the procedures you observed.'

3. Over-used clichés

Avoid 'from a young age', 'since I was a child', 'I've always been fascinated by', 'I have a thirst for knowledge', 'the world we live in today'... You get the idea. They constantly recur in hundreds of personal statements and don't really say an awful lot.

4. Bigging yourself up with sweeping statements or unproven claims

More phrases to avoid: 'I genuinely believe I'm a highly motivated person' or 'My achievements are vast'. Instead give specific examples that provide concrete evidence. Show, don't tell!

5. Limit your use of the word 'passion'

'The word 'passion' (or 'passionate') is incredibly over-used.' 'Try to convey your passion without using the word 'passion'.'

6. Stilted vocabulary

Frequent use of words or phrases like 'fuelled my desire', 'I was enthralled by' or 'that world-renowned author Jane Austen' make you sound, well, a bit fake (or like you've been over-using the thesaurus). If you wouldn't say something in a day-to-day discussion, don't say it in your statement. It's even worse if you get it slightly wrong, like 'I was encapsulated by the bibliography of Tony Blair' or 'it was in Year 10 that my love for chemistry came forth' (or, worse still, 'came fourth').

7. Plagiarism, lies or exaggeration

UCAS uses stringent similarity and plagiarism software and your universities will be told if you copy anything from another source. And as for exaggeration, don't say you've read a book when you've only read a chapter - you never know when it might catch you out. 'If you didn't do it, read it or see it, don't claim it.'

8. Trying to be funny

Humour, informality or quirkiness can be effective in the right setting but it's a big risk, so be careful. 'It can be spectacularly good - or spectacularly bad.' An admissions tutor is not guaranteed to have your sense of humour. 'Weird is not a selling point.'

9. Negative comments or excuses

It can be difficult to 'sell yourself' in your personal statement, but don't talk about why you haven't done something, or why you dropped an AS level. Focus on the positives!

10. Irrelevant personal facts

Before you write about playing badminton or a school trip you went on in year nine, apply the 'so what?' rule. Does it make a useful contribution and help explain why you should be given a place on the course? If not, scrap it.

BHASVIC Uni ASVIC Higher Education Application Timeline for 2019 entry. (*Items in italics are tutorial activities*)

Autumn Term 2017 A1	<i>My future plans.</i> Introducing progression options including university, apprenticeships, foundation courses, employment
Spring Term 2018 A1	<i>A1-A2 transfer support</i> Higher Education/specialist applications evenings for parents/carers Careers staff available UCAS Apply online service opens 24 th May
Summer Term 2018 A1	<i>Research skills/university focus</i> <i>Introduction to personal statements</i> <i>Help me write your reference</i> <i>Specialist tutorials for Oxbridge/Medics/Visual Arts begin</i> Open days Careers Enrichment Day Careers staff available
Autumn Term 2018 A2	<i>How to complete your UCAS form</i> <i>Personal statement writing and support</i> <i>Life skills</i> UCAS Apply sessions at BHASVIC College internal deadline for Oxbridge/Medics 24 th September External UCAS deadline for Oxbridge/Medics 15 th October College internal deadline for all UCAS applications - end of November
Spring Term 2019 A2	<i>Focus on accommodation/finance/independent living</i> Final external UCAS deadline 15 th January UCAS Extra opens 25 th February Final external UCAS deadline for art/design foundation courses - 24 th March (check individual institutions) Universities make offers and students decide
Summer Term 2019 A2	<i>Help with offers and decision-making</i> <i>Help with UCAS Clearing and UCAS Extra</i> Deadline period for university offers and student decisions Last date to apply using UCAS Extra – 4 th July UCAS Clearing opens – 5 th July
Results Day August 2019 A2	Results day 2019 – BHASVIC helpdesk open UCAS Adjustment opens. Ends 31 st August Final deadline for 2019 entry applications – 20 th September 2019

Notes

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