Tackling Personal Statements

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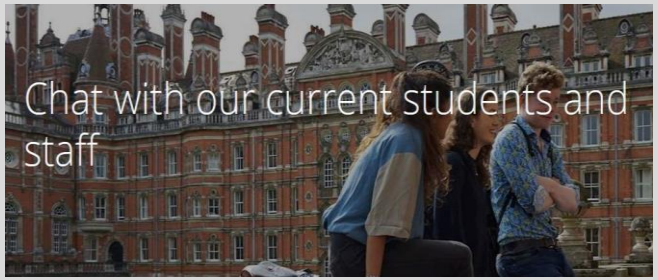


Want to know more?



Take a look around campus –

www.royalholloway.ac.uk/virtual-experience



Ask questions to current students –

www.royalholloway.ac.uk/chat/



Personal Statement Review Service –

https://bit.ly/PSreviewservice

Today's session

A. To understand what a personal statement is and why it is important.

B. To highlight what you should include and how to structure your personal statement .

C. To highlight some top tips on how to get started writing your personal statement.



Resources

Resources	Additional Resources	Useful websites
1. Student Pack (this document)	1. Personal Statement Template	UCAS Personal Statement Tool—https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement
2. Personal Statement Presentation	2. Personal Statement Quiz	
3. Personal Statements in 60 seconds video.	3. Personal Statement—how do you structure—video.	
4. Personal Statements 10 minute video	4. Personal Statements—what should I write—video.	
5. Personal Statement Narrated PowerPoint.	5. Pandemic Blog—living in halls during lockdown.	
	6. Pandemic Blog—Exams and Coursework during the pandemic.	
	7. Pandemic Blog—Returning to university in the pandemic.	

What is a Personal Statement?

What is a personal statement?



- A reflective essay about why you are the best candidate for the course.
- Allows universities to get to know the person behind the grades.
- Use examples of your knowledge, skills and experience that show your passion for your chosen field.
- Strict limits:

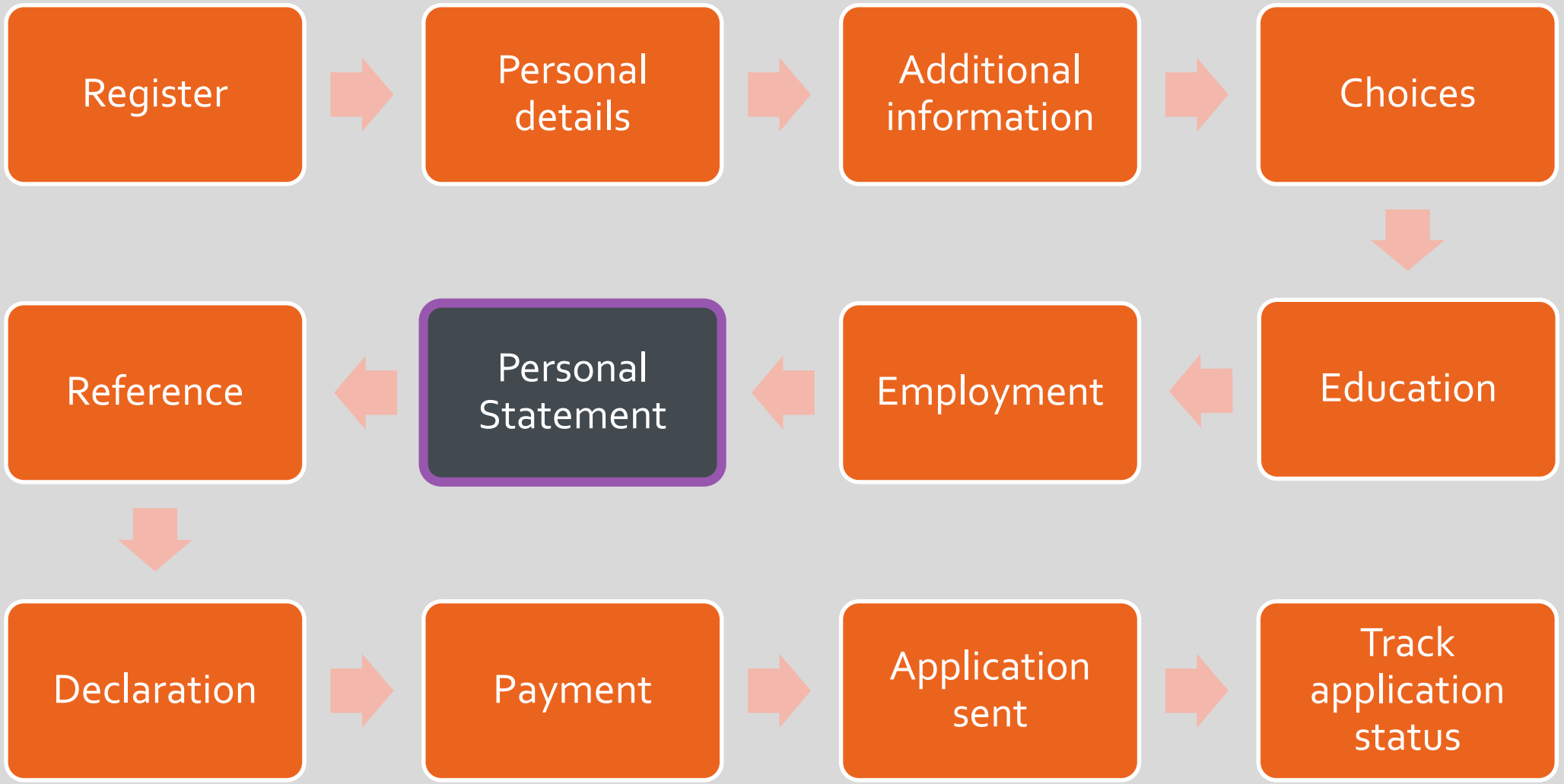
  — 4,000 characters **OR** 47 lines
- You only get **1** personal statement for your 5 choices. Make sure you do not mention any universities or courses by name.

Why are Personal Statements important?

- Let's universities know who is behind the grades.
- Opportunity to demonstrate skills, experiences and thoughts.
- Allows you to stand out from the crowd.
- Brings colour to you UCAS application.



The UCAS process



Make sure you know…

- Why do you want to study further?
- Why do you want to study a particular subject further?
- What type of course do you want to study?
- What subject do you want to study?
- Are looking at courses making you excited?





What should you include in your personal statement?

Being the admissions specialist

The criteria admissions specialists are looking for



ABLE TO STUDY INDEPENDENTLY



CAN CONTRIBUTE TO UNIVERSITY LIFE



MOTIVATED AND HIGH ACHIEVING



INTELLECTUALLY CAPABLE



POTENTIAL TO SUCCEED



SIGNIFICANT SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE



INTEREST IN STUDYING SUBJECT

Depending on the university, the person reading your personal statement may teach you on your degree, so they are looking for students who they will want to teach.

What could you include in a Personal Statement?

Activity

Take a minute to think what examples you could include in a Personal Statement…



Extra reading and research

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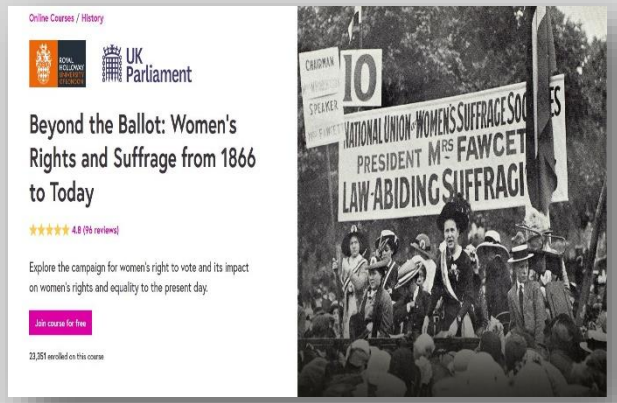
An important way of demonstrating your interest in and knowledge of your subject is by completing extra reading and research then talking about this in your statement.



Wider reading



Journal Articles



MOOCs



Taster Days

TED

Podcasts

Extracurricular activities

- For courses such as medicine and Veterinary Science, **work experience is really important to make your application as strong as possible.**
- Every UCAS application will benefit from wider interests outside your A levels.
- It also shows that you can work outside your school environment, and have developed your transferable skills.
- Research online and contact local businesses for relevant shadowing or work placement schemes.



Music



Hobbies



Sports



Travel



Work & Volunteering

Think outside the box

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The most common opening sentences for personal statements:

1. From a young age I have (always) been [interested in/fascinated by]…
2. For as long as I can remember I have…
3. I am applying for this course because…
4. I have always been interested in…
5. Throughout my life I have always enjoyed…
6. Reflecting on my educational experiences…
7. Nursing is a very challenging and demanding [career/profession/course]…
8. Academically, I have always been…
9. I have always wanted to pursue a career in…
10. I have always been passionate about…
11. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world…
12. *Edgy/cool quote*

How do you structure your personal statement?

Finding the balance…

70%

Academic: Focused on your chosen course(s):

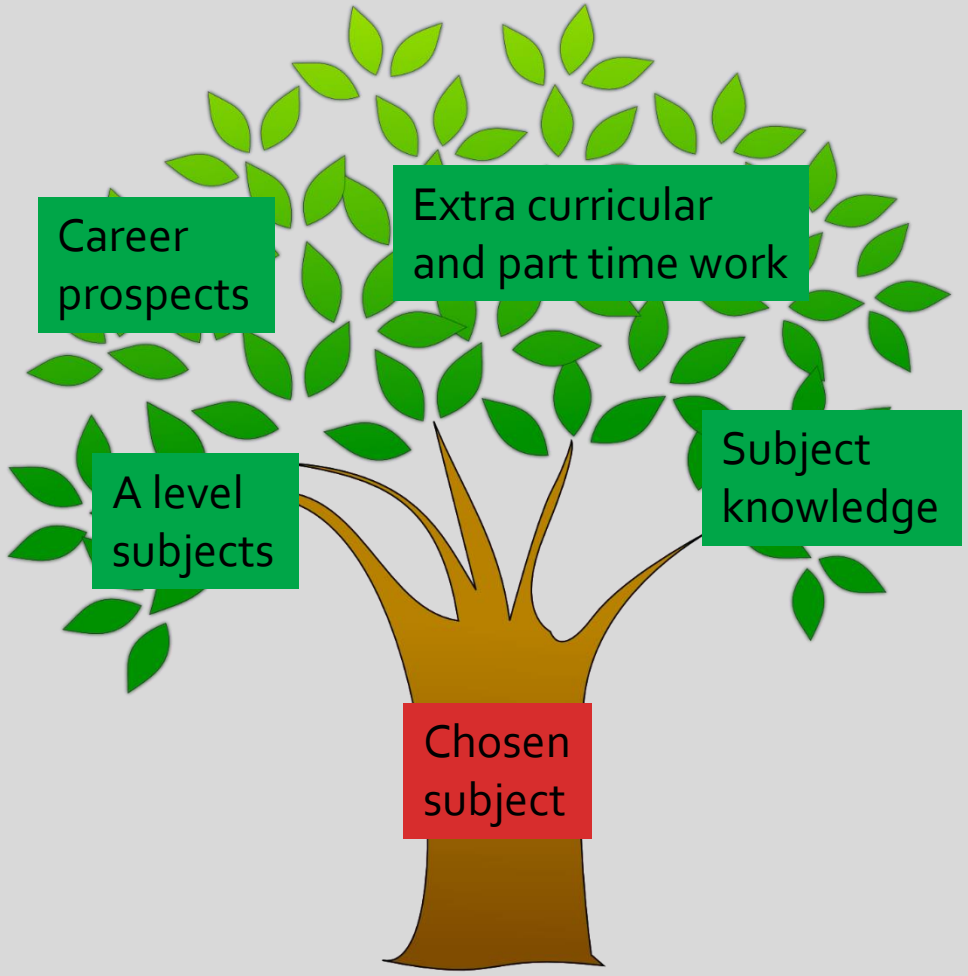
- Why have you chosen this subject?
- What particularly interests you about this subject?
- Where has this interest come from?
- What independent reading or research have you done?

30%

Extracurricular: What other skills and experience do you have?

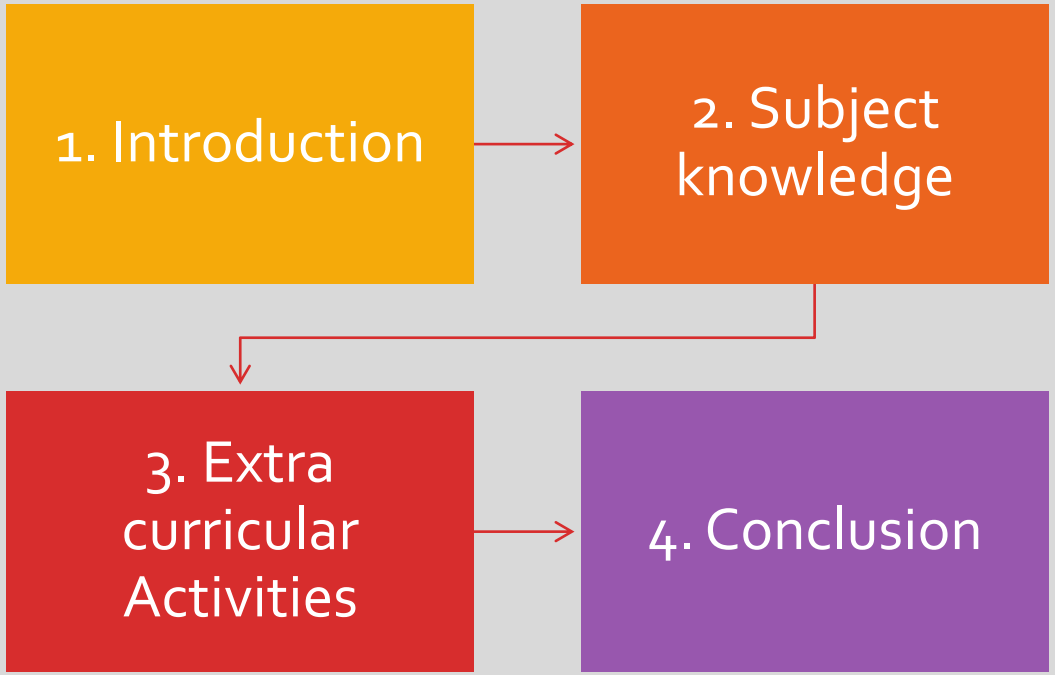
- Work experience
- Extra curricular activities
- Career aspirations
- Unrelated activities

Structure 1 – The Tree Structure



- The main stream, your chosen subject, runs right through the statement.
- Each section will relate directly to how & why you would be great for this subject.
- Each paragraph will 'branch out' from the main concept.
- This is a slightly more time consuming structure but gives a clear and coherent structure.

Structure 2 – Flow Structure



- The four boxes are different paragraphs.
- Your introduction introduces the course.
- The subject knowledge will provide evidence of why you'll be good at the subject.
- Any extra curricular activities that are relevant to your studies
- Conclude with why you want to study to degree level
- Easier to lay out, but also easier to go off track.

Structure 2 – Flow Structure

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Part 1

- **Introduction**
- Why are you interested in this course? Why do you want to study it at degree level?

Part 2

- **Discuss your subject academically**
- How do your A-Levels link to your chosen course? What independent reading or research have you done? What other course-related activities have you taken part in?

70%

Part 3

- **Extra-curricular activities**
- What additional activities do you take part in? How could these show skills that are relevant for studying at university level?

30%

Part 4

- **Conclusion**
- Including career ambitions

S.T.A.R. Technique

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This is a really handy way of ensuring you are fully explaining your point.

Situation

"We first studied "Goblin Market" by Christina Rosetti as part of my A Level in English Literature."

Task

"I was very interested in her writing and set out to enjoy more of her writing and find more about her background in my own time."

Action

"I conducted research on Rosetti and her work, reading books such as "*Learning Not to be First*" by Kathleen Jones", a biography of Rosetti."

Result

"This has greatly enhanced my knowledge of Gothic literature, a key area of English Literature and I am excited to pursue this interest further at undergraduate level"

S.T.A.R. Technique

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Situation

"As a result of my interest in paediatric medicine, I decided to try to gain work experience in this area."

Task

"I shadowed a consultant at Cambridge University Hospital for 1 week in August 2019."

Action

"This involved the observation of ward rounds and patient care and assisting with diagnostic processes."

Result

"This experience has developed my knowledge of this area of medicine and led to my interest in paediatric surgery as an area of specialism."

So what? test

- An alternative to the STAR technique is the 'So what?' test:
  - "At the weekends I play football and I am the captain of my local team" So what?
  - "This has enabled me to develop skills in coaching, leadership and communication." So what?
  - "All of the skills will be useful as an undergraduate student, and I am keen to continue playing football at university."



UCAS personal statement rules

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Character / line limit

- UCAS has a limit of 4000 characters and 47 lines.
- The character limit includes apostrophes, spaces and other special characters.
- The line limit includes blank paragraphs.
- Anything over this limit is lost.
- It is possible to write a great personal statement within these limits- it is good practice for university and eliminates waffle.

Plagiarism

- UCAS is very strict on plagiarism using a particular software to make sure your personal statement is unique
- If plagiarism is detected, this information is passed to universities.
- In 2007, plagiarism detectors found 234 personal statements for medicine contained a story about a dramatic incident involving "burning a hole in pyjamas at age eight". This was because the applicants had all used the same online example statement.

Tips for checking your personal statement:

- Try reading it aloud
- Utilise teachers / friends / family members
- Use spellcheck… but don't trust it completely!
- Make sure you check names, dates and technical language.
- Keep checking even when you are sick of it! You will thank yourself when you get your dream university place.



Your spelling, grammar and punctuation need to be perfect!

Top tips from Royal Holloway Admissions Specialists

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"**It's not what you've done, it's how relevant you can make it**. So, don't just tell me that you were captain of the school rugby team; explain **how** this activity has given you the leadership skills and drive to study here for three years."

"In personal statements we look for **potential**, and **enthusiasm for the subject** ranks high in our decisions on whether to make a student an offer."

"I always look for something that throws light on applicants **as individuals, who have thought about why they want to study a subject and what they hope to get out of it**. Anything that looks like it has been dictated or copied, wholly or in part, is an instant turn-off."

Personal Statement Top Tips

Personal Statement Top Tips

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1. Explain why you want to study the course
2. Explain why you're right for the course
3. Say what you've done outside the classroom & why it's relevant.
4. How is your chosen career related to you course?
5. Make it easy to read
6. Start strong
7. Let your personality in
8. Write naturally
9. Remember STAR
10. PERSONAL & STATEMENT!









Thank you for listening!

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Stay in touch

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Upcoming events

Open Days:

Friday 19 June 2020 (now online)
Saturday 20 June 2020 (now online)
Saturday 26 September 2020.
Saturday 17 October 2020.
Sunday 18 October 2020.



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