

UCAS: PERSONAL STATEMENT STRUCTURE: 2011

The personal statement is a short essay on the UCAS on-line application form in which you have the opportunity to explain why a university should pick you for a place on its course.

It needs to be built like an argument, the whole purpose of which is to persuade an admissions tutor that you are the right person for the course. In doing so you will also give a sense of your personality, and what makes your particular combination of character, skills, experience and enthusiasms a winning one.

The following is **one** pattern that has been found to be successful. There are other patterns, and you may discover one for yourself that suits you. You would do well to consider the content of what follows, however, and ensure that you have covered its ideas in one way or another.

This pattern is roughly divided into thirds, with, an optional extra short final section.

A. THE FIRST THIRD: THE COURSE & YOU

- You should focus on the course of study for which you are applying, explaining what it means to you and showing that you understand what is involved.
- Explain what, in particular, got you interested, and how it all began. A specific event? An observation? A meeting with someone? What motivates you, make this a necessary choice for you?
- Describe any practical work or other experiences that are related, and that have made the subject more real
- Explain how you see the future, and any career or life choices that might result from your intended study
- Check the requirements of the course that you are applying for and look in the "entry profiles" for that subject on UCAS websites; look for **key words** associated with the course. [For example, if you are interested in pure *Economics*, avoid referring to *Management* studies in your opening. This will, of course, always be a problem for joint or combined subject applications...]

B. THE SECOND THIRD: YOUR ACADEMIC STUDIES

- Explain how what you are now studying supports and prepares you for the subject you were talking about in the First Third
- Give real examples of what you are particularly enjoying at the moment [or last year] in your studies – mention actual texts, experiments, visits, experiences, topics etc. Let the enthusiasm come through
- Mention any related prizes or awards in your secondary career

C. THE THIRD THIRD: THE WIDER YOU

- You explain here your wider interests / experiences that complete the picture
- Mention any prizes or awards, showing your ability to be committed, skilled and focused
- Look for opportunities to show initiative, leadership, useful skills
- Give facts about what you do that interest you
- The admissions tutor will want to feel that you are the sort of person who will survive the rigours of living away from home, perhaps, and make the most of the wider opportunities at University
- You will, in short, be worth the investment / gamble

D. A BRIEF CONCLUSION

- You may already have reached a natural finish point in the previous section, focusing on your self and what you have to offer.
- If you haven't found a natural end, you may wish to return to a key idea of the opening section, linking in some way with the ambition you expressed, or the initial experience that set you going [e.g. *"I first became excited by Literature in reading Treasure Island... I now look forward to teaching the next generation all about Long John Silver, and the pirates of Treasure Island."*]