

Bournemouth & Poole College



UCAS Personal Statement Guide 2009

You have chosen your degree and university, so the only thing you have to do is to convince an admissions tutor to offer you a place. Your Personal Statement can make, or break your application, so take great care when writing it.

Do your research!

By understanding **why** you want to study a particular subject you will be in a better position to start your statement.

There must be a reason you decided to study Astrophysics or Sociology, so delve deep and consider what those reasons are? These will be personal to you so will individualise your opening paragraph.

A good place to start is to use techniques like flash backs and turning points in your life. With this in mind, it is usually worth brainstorming, make a note of anything and everything you can think of that might be related to why you wish to study your topic.

- Who has influenced you to study your subject?
- How have you learnt about your subject?
- What experiences and qualifications do you hold ?
- Your future intentions and goals?

Perhaps it is a particular element of a degree course or the fact it has a large practical element, whatever the reason, make sure your passion and enthusiasm come across to the admissions tutor.

Don't just **tell** the admissions tutor that you **like** something, **show** them. **What** is it that interests you specifically about Astrophysics? **Why** does it interest you? What have you **done** to pursue that interest? **How** have you expanded your knowledge of the subject? If it helps, think about the admissions tutor sitting in their office on a Friday afternoon with 50 UCAS forms to read. What is going to make your UCAS form grab their attention and take notice?

As with everything in your personal statement you must **show you have the skills and qualities** that the admissions tutor is looking for.

Example:

Instead of saying: "I play football therefore I have good team work skills." say:

"I am an active member of my local football team and an excellent motivator when things aren't going well. I like to organise the team according to the particular strengths of all the players to make sure we play as a unit".

Whenever you talk about your skills give concrete examples of when you have demonstrated those skills.

Before you start your personal statement, make notes relating to the criteria the admissions tutors will be looking for. There are general criteria for writing personal statements and also degree specific criteria that will require additional research.

General Criteria	What is your evidence?
Why have you chosen to study this course? Can you relate it to a flashback or turning point that could be mentioned?	
Are there any aspects of the course content that you are really interested in?	
What do you hope to gain from this degree? eg will it provide you with certain skills you insight wish to gain?	
What do you enjoy about your current studies and why? What skills have you learnt which will be useful to your degree?	
Do you have a career goal that this degree will help you achieve?	
What relevant work experience or volunteer work do you have? What skills has this given you?	
Have you had any extra responsibilities whilst you were at college which demonstrate skills useful for this degree?	
Evidence how you will cope with the demands of the course academically (relate yr level 3 subjects to the degree)	

Considers your concluding sentence. Bring it back to why you wish to do the degree and why you will be a great student.	
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If applying for any degree that is job specific eg nursing, social work or dietician read career information before writing your statement to ensure that you understand the nature of the work, the skills required and the demands of the job and course

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpwithyourcareer/jobprofiles/> or www.prospects.ac.uk

Course Specific Criteria <i>Find this by checking Ucas site, Brian Heap, talk with Admissions Tutors</i>	Evidence
Example: Midwifery Degree Requires applicants to show awareness of current debates affecting midwifery Also reflective practice (learning from experience)	Read national press and relevant journal articles and identify some issues here. Comment on these in Persona Statement Visit professional bodies websites

More Hints and Tips

- **Research, Research, Research.** Courses with similar names will vary in content. Course content may be different from your understanding of the title. Look on university websites and find information about the course modules. Can you tell what the modules will include? Find out if there is a more detailed course booklet available that provides an overview of what the modules will cover; otherwise ask the admissions tutors what you can expect to cover in each module.
- Find out whether courses you are applying for are **competitive**? If there are 900 applicants chasing 40 places then you will need to know what additional things you can do to make your application stand out. The Brian **Heap** book entitled '**Degree Course Offers**' held in the college library provides information on the number of applicants per place for many courses. Sometimes course marketing information will indicate numbers in the prospectus or on the website or you could ring the university and ask.
- Establish what particular course tutor will be looking for in a strong candidate and evidence this in your Personal Statement. Remember many universities put information on what they expect to see in a Personal Statement on the UCAS site so **follow the advice**.
- Degree Course Offers by Brian Heap also provides information on what to include in Personal Statements according to subject along with examples of questions asked by universities at interview.
- **Sell yourself!** Use positive language. In many cases, your personal statement will be the only way your chosen universities will have to assess you as an applicant. Don't fail at the first hurdle.
- Take care if applying for multiple courses in different areas. Remember **universities cannot see your other choices** and are not allowed to ask where you have applied but you may reveal that their course is not your first choice by what you say in your statement.
- Relate everything back to your course area. Why is the information you are giving **relevant**? What skills does it show you have? Think about whether these are skills which match your course choices. If it is not too late, do volunteer work or work experience, which you could mention that you have arranged or reflect on in the statement.
- If you are the first person in your family to go to university, mention this in your personal statement.
- Have a sensible **email address**, which sounds professional.
- **Check** your personal statement for accuracy; it does not look good to have grammatical or spelling errors.