Lancaster University Undergraduate Admissions

Undergraduate Admissions Officers
Please note...

- The original presentation contained examples from personal statements. In this version, the key points have been summarised in place of the text.

- UCAS has a lot of general information relating to the whole application cycle for students, parents and teachers which we recommend you reading. [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

- This talk is specific to Lancaster University and the information may not apply to other institutions.
Personal statements

References

Adjustment and Clearing
Personal Statements
What are personal statements used for?

- Considering applications to university
- Providing the basis for interview questions
- Evidence of voluntary / work experience (if required)
- Considering ‘near-miss’ applications in the summer
What does a successful personal statement look like?

- Focused
- Well written
- Structured
- Unique
- Concise
- Personal

But most of all it should be PERSUASIVE
Writing a Personal Statement

Why are you applying?

Why do you want to go into Higher Education?

Why are you interested in that subject?

How does it relate to your current studies?

Demonstrate your understanding and enthusiasm for that subject
Why study? – key points

Opening paragraph showing why the student is applying for a particular subject:

• ‘My interest in xx began xx’
• ‘This fascination..’
• ‘most attracted to xx modules’
• ‘like to explore link between xx and xx’
• ‘desire’
Educational interests - key points

- Student attended lectures outside of current studies, they were then able to explain what they had learnt and discuss the influence on their decision to apply to their chosen subject.
- Independent Study e.g. MOOC
- Extra curricular reading including explanations behind what the book had taught them
- Submitted entry to essay competitions
- Extended Project qualification – linking the topic to interests, further study and degree course
Current Studies - key points

- All the A level subjects are mentioned but they are linked to the chosen degree subject, and not just listed
- Reading outside of A level syllabus
- Transferable skills from academic subjects
- Motivation and enthusiasm
Writing a Personal Statement

Work Experience and Hobbies and Interests - Examples

- Head Boy/Girl
- Prefect
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Sports Awards
- Music Awards
- Academic Awards
- Charity/Community Awards
- Mentor
- School Council Member
- Part time job

Examples:
- Writing a Personal Statement
Writing a Personal Statement

*Skills taken from extra-curricular activities*

**Top Tip:** Pick out the best examples of different skills and link them back to the course they want to study!
Skills and experiences - key points

- Students can draw from real-life scenarios and experiences gained through extra-curriculars, clubs and work experience to demonstrate skills that may be useful for future study and university life.
- Volunteering/work experience does not have to link to degree subject unless required e.g. Social Work or Medicine

- Key words:
  - Responsibility, commitment, teamwork, communication, time management, highly driven, determined, organised, independent learning, numerical and problem solving skills
Writing a Personal Statement

Concluding Statement

- Summarise the personal statement
- Mention any future goals or career plans
- Focus on the course – *why should you be offered a place?*

What can **you** offer the university?
Concluding statement – key points

• Summarise interest in the subject of choice, previous experience in the subject and how they are prepared to enter university.

• Statement of how the degree will equip them with the necessary skills to enable them to achieve their future goals.
Things to avoid when writing a personal statement

- Do not list every qualification
  
  SAVE THE SPACE! If the qualification section is filled in correctly, we know what students are studying and the course they’re applying to.

- Stated the name of a book they have read and their favourite character.
  
  Be sure to explain why - the why is key to a good personal statement, to demonstrate an ability to draw relevant connections.

- Use of i rather than I
  
  Watch the punctuation/grammar – it is careless!

- Very long sentence explaining extra curricular interest.
  
  Check, check and check your personal statement. If it doesn’t make sense to you - it won’t make sense to a university.
Things to avoid when writing a personal statement

- Use of HNS rather than NHS etc.
  
  Have others read over your personal statement it will help pick up tiny errors.

- Paragraph stating how UCAS is great and will be able to help them find the right university
  
  UCAS are great but have no swing/say over the outcome of your application!

- ‘vehemently believe’
  
  Avoid right click – synonyms. It can make a statement sound disjointed/wordy.
## Writing a Personal Statement

### Top Tips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tip</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t repeat information</td>
<td>Don’t just list achievements or skills</td>
<td>Write it in Microsoft Word first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read it out loud to family and friends</td>
<td>Do not be tempted to plagiarise</td>
<td>Use an appropriate email address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Could you discuss the topic in interview?</td>
<td>Think about spelling, grammar and vocabulary choices</td>
<td>Draft then re-draft until you are happy with it*</td>
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* But don’t sweat over it to much. Re-drafting the personal statement is a good idea, but it is not the be all and end all.
References
What should a reference do?

Be an informed assessment of:

- predicted academic performance in post-16 education
- potential for academic success in higher education
- suitability for the course they have chosen
- personal qualities which will benefit the applicant at university, such as skills, aptitude, enthusiasm
- what they can bring to the university, such as involvement in extra-curricular activities
Additional reference points

It can be helpful for referees to mention:

- exceptional achievements / ranking in class
- reasons behind any poor / ‘odd’ academic grades
- mitigating circumstances
- changes of educational direction (qualifications e.g. A Level to BTEC, subject changes, school/college)
- correct applicant details (names, qualifications)

References should also complement / support the personal statement
Predicted grades

Predicted grades should be:

- Honest
- Clear and unambiguous
- Consistent with past performance
- Consistent with the substance/tone of the reference

Remember to provide an explanation of inconsistencies
Writing a Reference

Closing Sentence

Recommend

Recommend highly

Recommend very highly

Recommend very highly and without reservation

Recommend very highly, for your most serious consideration, without reservation

Student should be made an offer

Deserves an offer

Should be made an offer

Deserves nothing less and will be an asset to the university
Supportive references – key points

- Promote the positive attributes of the student – talented, conscientious, enthusiastic and determined

- Success / expected success – excellent GCSE, AS levels, predicted A level grades? If you are expecting them to achieve an A* tell us how good they are, is there a module they excel in (perhaps linked to the course they are applying to)

- Suited to university study / life? – are you able to recommend them to university? Is the quality of their work up to standard to make the step up to university?
Poor performance explanation – key points for a reference

• Poor performance explanations – if a student performed poorly in previous qualifications but this was unexpected please take the time to state this in the reference. Was it uncharacteristic, was there a particular reason, what results would you have expected? Provide more information about the students ability to handle work in class and if they are capable of dealing with the concepts being taught etc.

• Any mitigating circumstances can be mentioned in a reference and you may wish to email to the university with more information to be attached to an application.
Students will have mentioned in their personal statement some of their extra-curricular activities which you may wish to expand upon or if you have spoken with the student there may be something in particular to focus on to highlight their strengths.

Both experiences within school and in the wider community enable students to demonstrate transferable skills. Feel free to comment on whether the student is able to balance their studies alongside their hobbies and/or employment.
Grade and subject knowledge – key points for a reference

• Students who are excelling in a particular subject area can be supported in a reference with additional information such as their position in class (top 3?)

• A short summary of the skills and knowledge acquired by the student in a particular subject area and their suitability for the studying it (or a similar subject) as a degree can be helpful.

• If the student is not currently studying the subject they are applying to, for most courses this does not matter, and you can sum up their progress in the subjects they are taking and mention their attitude towards studying etc.
Lancaster Admissions Myths

Work experience must be in the same area as degree

EPQ is an essential requirement

STEP and LNAT are essential

Family member at university is an advantage

No, unless explicitly stated, the majority of courses want to see transferable skills

EPQ, STEP and LNAT are not essential, however some courses make an alternative offer if being taken

Makes no difference to our decision
Lancaster Admissions Myths

Personal statements aren’t read by anyone

Predicted grades must match entry requirements

2 personal statements for 2 difference courses

Admissions Officers read all personal statements

Encourage students to apply to aspirational universities as conditional offers may still be made

A second, relevant, personal statement can be emailed to the university of your choice, with their prior agreement
Things you may not know:

- Dual offers are standard for our MSci, Study Abroad degrees
- EPQ not a requirement but for some courses we can make an alternative offer
- General Studies and Welsh Bacc can be taken into account alongside 3 academic A levels*
- Our website has the most up to date grade requirements
- Subject specific requirements and GCSE requirements important at time of application
- Changes to applications – inform UCAS

* For the majority of our courses
Question?
Adjustment and Clearing
• **Adjustment**

- student has **met and exceeded** the conditions of their **firm choice**. Keep original place while seek out places at other providers.
Clearing - no longer just for students without offers, students with a place also have the opportunity to enquire about places elsewhere
Possible reasons to ask to be released into Clearing

- Financial hardship
- Personal (e.g. death of a relative)
- Significant changes to the course at the UF provider
- Sponsorship or scholarship award
- Other
- Change of level of qualification
- Change of subject area to be studied
- Wish to defer
- Transfer to another provider
Adjustment and Clearing

Top Tips

• Open from 6am, can inform if place is confirmed at Lancaster University but cannot release grades

• Students can get multiple verbal offers before deciding to refer themselves to a university via clearing

• Grade requirements still apply but may be slightly lower, check the website before ringing to avoid disappointment
Adjustment and Clearing

Top Tips

• Parents can talk to university on behalf of student if they are the nominated person on application form, otherwise the student must always be present

• Tours of campus are offered so can receive verbal offer and then visit before making decision

• Make sure students are prepared even if they don’t think they will end up in clearing it is always good to be aware of process
Adjustment and Clearing

From 6am

• **Adjustment and Clearing hotline:**
  From landlines call free: **0800 298 9542**
  From mobiles call (national rate): **0300 500 8086**

From 8am

• **Schools hotline: 01524 595208** – ring on behalf of the student as long as they are present with you