

Lancaster  
University



Your guide to the  
Personal Statement



# *The* format

Your Personal Statement will be three distinct pieces of text, each in response to a different question. Each question has been designed to provide focus and structure to your statement. The overall character limit is 4000, including spaces, and each answer has a minimum character count of 350.



# *Writing* the personal statement

## **What is a personal statement?**

The personal statement is your opportunity to impress your chosen universities and to share your passion and enthusiasm for the course/subject you're applying for. It's a chance for universities to learn about you and for you to say why you would be a great fit for their course/subject.

## **Why is it so important?**

Universities receive thousands of applications every year. Writing a successful personal statement is one way to really make yourself stand out from the crowd and demonstrate your relevant skills and experiences. It can really make a difference to your application: as well as providing a sense of you as an applicant, personal statements can also help universities to make offers to students if their grades are borderline. They may also be used as a basis for interview questions.

## **Who reads it and what are they looking for?**

University admissions tutors will be looking for keen and enthusiastic students, with a genuine interest and understanding of the course/subject they're applying for.





# The personal statement *questions*

## Question 1

### **Why do you want to study this course or subject?**

This is your opportunity to showcase passion and knowledge of your chosen subject area and demonstrate why it's a good fit for you and your future goals.

Examples of what you might include here are:

- Why does the course/subject interest you?
- What are your specific areas of interest?
- Your future career aspirations and how this subject/course will help you to achieve these.

## Question 2

### **How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?**

This is your chance to shout about the relevant or transferable skills you've gained from your formal education and highlight how they will help you to succeed on your chosen course/subject.

Examples of what you might talk about here are:

- What have you done in school/college to develop your interest in your chosen subject area?
- What strengths and skills have you got that will help you to succeed on your chosen course?
- Do you have any relevant educational achievements that you're proud of?

## Question 3

### **What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

Here, you have the opportunity to share any other activities you've undertaken outside of your formal education that further demonstrate your suitability for the chosen course/subject.

Examples of what you might include here are:

- Have you gained any in-person or virtual work experience? If so, how has this benefitted you?
- Have you faced any personal life experiences or responsibilities which have helped you to develop essential qualities for your chosen course/subject?
- Think about your hobbies and extra-curricular activities — these are also a great way to showcase why you would make a great student!





# *Super-curricular* activities

Activities which demonstrate that you've gone above and beyond the curriculum in the classroom.

What super-curricular activities have you been involved in/undertaken?

- Podcasts, videos, TED talks
- MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses)
- Public lectures and taster sessions
- Work experience
- Books or articles – look at [www.theconversation.com](http://www.theconversation.com)
- Academic competitions or challenges
- Museums, theatre & galleries

**What super-curricular activities have you been involved in?**

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# *Extra-curricular* activities

Activities which demonstrate relevant transferable skills via hobbies and interests undertaken outside of school/college .

What extra-curricular activities have you been involved in?

- Duke of Edinburgh
- Music/Performing Arts activities and qualifications
- Academic teams, clubs and societies
- Part-time work
- Sports teams, competitions and awards
- Student Council / Representative
- Volunteering

**What extra-curricular activities have you been involved in?**

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# Writing techniques

There are many ways to start your answers and talk about your different skills. However, the key is to demonstrate what you know and what you've learnt by providing evidence.

## THE A.B.C rule

### Activity

This is something you've done.

### Benefit

This is what you gained or learnt from the experience.

### Course

This is how it relates to the course/subject you're applying for.

## Example

I am a student ambassador for my college.

From this, I have developed excellent communication and team-working skills.

This is relevant to studying Social Work as being able to communicate effectively is important when talking to service users and other colleagues.

## Have a go yourself:

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# STAR techniques

The STAR format is another popular writing technique used to articulate activities you've done, which demonstrate the skills and qualities you wish to showcase to your chosen universities.

Customer service	Example
<b>Situation</b> Describe the circumstances in which you used the skill or quality and gained the experience.	I dealt with a customer who was upset.
<b>Task</b> Highlight what your role was.	My task was to ensure the customer's issue was addressed.
<b>Actions</b> Explain what you did and how you did it.	I apologised for the delay and offered an alternative.
<b>Result</b> What did you achieve? What was the result and how does it relate to the course/subject you're applying for?	The customer left satisfied.

Have a go yourself:

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**Do** write what comes naturally, using vocabulary that you feel comfortable with.

**Do** read it aloud to friends and family.

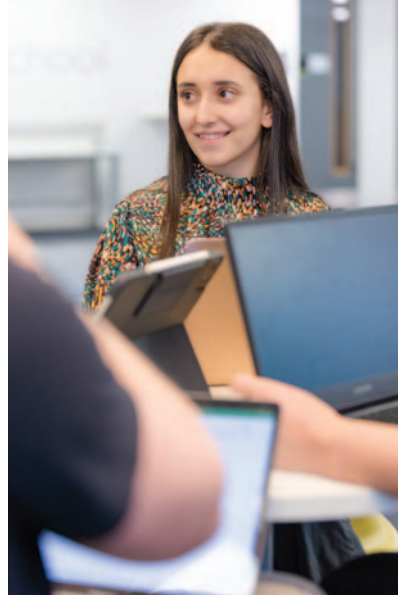
**Do** check spelling and grammar.



**Don't** include lists in your writing.

**Don't** mention a specific institution, as your application will be received by up to 5 different universities.

**Don't** plagiarise.



## Clichés to avoid for your opening sentence



*I am applying for this course because...*

*I have always been interested in...*

*For as long as I remember I have always been...*

*From a young age I have always been interested in...*

*Throughout my life I have always enjoyed...*



# Personal Statement Checklist

While you don't have to include everything listed here, use this checklist to tick off what you have included in your personal statement:



**My motivations and reasons as to why I've chosen my subject/course**



**Skills and experiences I've developed outside my academic studies**



**My work experience and volunteering experiences**



Find out more

[lancaster.ac.uk/study/tell-me-more](https://lancaster.ac.uk/study/tell-me-more)

