Personal statement and the UCAS process

Your personal statement is the centrepiece of your UCAS application. The UCAS process can be also difficult to understand. This Online Chat session aims to help you either get started or answer any questions to help you with creating a compelling personal statement and completing your UCAS application. The session will be run by our Recruitment team, giving you the opportunity to ask questions about writing your personal statement and applying to City, University of London in general. Please note: we are unable to read extracts of your personal statement in this chat and can only offer general advice. As this is a typed chat group session, you will be able to see the answers to questions asked by other applicants.

Thank you for joining us for today's Online Chat session. This is for students who are about to apply to City. This session runs from 16:00 -17:00 (GMT). This is an open chat session for you to ask any questions you have regarding your personal statement. During the session we may also share videos or useful information. Unfortunately we cannot read any personal statements in this chat or via email. We suggest contacting your school or college for further support.

To ask a question, please type it in the chat box. Your question will not post straight away: it will be sent to our moderators who will type an answer back. Once their answer is complete, it will be published with your question. You are also welcome to post just saying hi and introducing yourself.

I have decided to enrol into university in 2021 as I'll be taking a gap year for enrichment purposes after A-levels. How should I incorporate my gap year experience in my personal statement?

Not a problem at all - with these we love to see what skills you are looking to gain from your experience. Tell us what your plans are and the things that you want to do, what skills you will gain and how they relate to your future plans.

Also, what advices would you give to make my gap year more special? and perhaps improve my skills overall to become more prepared for university?
It's up to you really what you choose to do, try and find something constructive for your time and make the most of the opportunity.

I am applying for three different subjects and I am struggling to write a personal statement that wouldn't put anyone off as the subject are completely different.

If you’re applying for three really different courses, it may be worth considering whether you really should be applying for courses that different, as you only have the one UCAS application. If they are similar enough, you could talk about the course area and not specific titles, to cover everyone. If they are still too different, I recommend contacting university admissions departments to see if they’ll accept different ones by email instead of the one on UCAS, because otherwise you may put your application at risk by trying to make one statement match for all 3. Hope that helps!

I’d like to know what is the most important things we should write on

Hello! Your personal statement should highlight your interest in the programme and you should note any relevant experience that you have which makes you a suitable candidate. It is often good to note what you aim to do with the programme you have applied for, i.e. your career in the near future.

Hi, I wanted to ask say you’re applying for the course of sociology but you’re also applying for the course of media, communications and sociology as well, within your personal statement how would you make sure when the universities read it it still sounds like it is tailored for sociology as well as media comms but without sounding uninterested in sociology itself? if that makes sense

It does make sense! I would talk about the area of Sociology but have some areas that link to Media & Comms. A university offering Sociology wouldn’t find that odd as you’re talking about it from a Sociology angle, but the Media & Comms one(s) would see that you are also interested in Sociology combined with those aspects. Hope that helps!

Hi, I was looking on the UKIS website for information on writing a personal statement for UCAS, and it said that they’re written and not typed. Is that correct? I thought we would be attaching them on the UCAS website with our applications (sorry im from canada and we dont need to send personal statements).

They are typed and submitted with the rest of your UCAS application online. When it says written it just refers to the process of constructing it.

In which paragraph should I write my gap year experience?

Towards the end is fine :) Maybe just before the conclusion or as part of the conclusion.
Is it vital to include any reading I may have done on the subject in the personal statement or shall I leave that for the interview?

This is the exact stuff that would demonstrate your interest in the course area! We want to see what you've read and engaged with, what you found interesting and what you would like to learn from your experiences.

So it should be brief?

Brief is absolutely fine - we just need a brief reason as to why you're choosing to do a gap year.

Is there a specific order of construction for the personal statement?

There's no one-size-all solution to the personal statement, but it should have a logical flow and read well. Make sure to include your skills and experiences, as well as your motivation for study on the course.

What kind of things should I include for a personal statement for Diagnostic Radiography?

We really want to see examples of why you want to do radiography: is there anything specific that you would like to learn? What areas of radiography do you want to find out about? Have you got any experiences that have been useful? Relevant work experience is a big plus for this course, but even unrelated work experience can be useful e.g. have you had experience building rapport with people quickly (a skill useful for Radiography as you need to build quick relationships with people who may be worried etc). It's good to brainstorm the skills needed generally and make sure you have shown examples of where you have demonstrated those in your statement.

Can you give any tips for the introduction of the statement, like how to start it?

This is definitely the hardest part of the statement I think! My recommendation would be answer the question: "What do you find so exciting or interesting about this subject OR why is this area of work so important?" (It depends on the course as to which one would work). We are specifically interested in why you find this such an interesting area. That is what grabs our interest from the beginning.

Answer these questions
  • Why do you find this subject exciting/interesting or why is this area of work so important?
  • When did you become interested in this subject?
  • How will this degree help you progress?
Is the deadline for postgraduate applications the same as undergraduate applications?

If you’re looking at a Pre-Registration course then it will follow the Undergraduate UCAS process, if you’re looking at a Post-Registration course it won’t. Undergraduate courses have a deadline of 15th January. For postgraduate courses this will vary from across universities and within them depending on the course and you will need to check individually.

I’m wanting to take law, what experiences and skills should I list?

You need to think about the skills you need for Law and any examples of where you have shown these e.g. showing that you can cope with the amount of reading, confidence for public speaking for debating and mooting etc. Reading around the subject is a great addition to a Law personal statement. And also letting us know how your qualifications are useful for a Law degree.

Can you please suggest a structure to follow for Business Management personal statement please? Like what should I write about first. And also in Italy at the school where I am studying I don’t have business, marketing... lessons so in academic skills it would be fine if I write about what this school prepared for (follow deadlines, study a lot, be steady...)?

I would suggest the following paragraphs:

- Introduction
- Love of Subject Evidence
- Your Studies
- Work Experience
- Extra Activities
- Conclusion

It doesn’t have to be in that order, so long as it flows and reads well, but that generally works quite well.

As for your current studies that’s fine if they don’t directly relate to the course you are applying for. It’s still important that you talk about them though, so mention about the skills you have gained from them and how that would help you on your course or instances where you have gone above and beyond in your learning.
This might be a dumb question but within the personal statement when referring to the course/interest for it, do you focus more on what you’re looking forward to study, in terms of the units/modules or is it more of a thing of saying how what you study now relates to the course you want to do. Because like I understand that a uni would like a snapshot of you as a person and academia but do they find more interest in seeing how much you know now or your fascination/interest in what you will study? (Sorry for the long winded q)

It’s not dumb at all! We like to see both but it’s more of the how what you study now / work experience / extra things you do relate to the course you want to do. It’s a balance of letting us know you’re interested in the course but also that you can cope with it. You will need to find modules/areas across all 5 of your choices which are similar so you meet everyone’s needs.

Hi, how much of the personal statement should I dedicate to talking about relevant work experience?

You’ve hit the nail on the head with the word "relevant"! As long as it is relevant, it’s important to identify the skills that you have developed and show us the evidence, such as what you did as part of your work experience. From there then you can relate them back to your chosen course of study.

Hi, as an international student interested in pursuing an LLB, how much space should I dedicate in explaining why I want to study law in London? Would two sentences be enough?

That’s absolutely fine, but remember that you only write one personal statement for all five of your university choices so if you’re going to mention about studying in London in particular then all of choices should be for London universities.

All five universities are in London, so that will be perfect. Thank you!
one more question, how long it should be? I mean is there a word limit?

Undergraduate personal statement is 4000 characters including spaces.

Hi, I’m really struggling to fit things into my personal statement... I talked about the subject I study and the work experience and why I’m interested in the course but I don’t have enough room to include what my hobbies are and what I do outside of school... Do I have to include this?

Hi, the key is to tell us what you have gained from your experiences, what skills you have developed from what you have done. This is supposed to be a predominantly academic-focused piece of writing as well, so fit your hobbies in as well if you have space and if you can include relevant skills.

Hi, I wanted to ask how detailed do I have to be in regards to what I’ve learnt. Is it more important to talk about my interest and keep my knowledge to a minimum? And when referencing papers/articles how detailed should that be?

Hi, there should be a little about your interest in the introduction but not much beyond that. It’s really important to mention what you’ve learned and knowledge of the subject. This will convey your passion, the skills it has given you and why you want to develop your knowledge more. It’s great to mention wider reading you have done on the subject, but make sure you don’t just list it but say what you took away from it.

When it comes to what you’ve read around your subject/course, essentially in my case that is podcast listening, documentary viewing etc, do you embed that within the personal statement as like examples of interest within the paragraphs or is that meant to be like a separate block of text i.e a single paragraph dedicated to interests around the course and things like that.

There’s no perfect approach to this, these are things that are great to include. Your text should flow nicely and be readable and logical, but where exactly and how you embed them is up to you.
Thank you! and also, I’ve been told my introduction for my statement is boring... how do I make it interesting for nursing course.

Try and make it really specific to you and your interests. Are their any areas you really enjoy about nursing? Or why do you think they are so important? Try and avoid any cliches such as 'I've always wanted to be a nurse'.

With my reading, does it need to be whole books or just chapter or journal articles?

Whatever you think is relevant Hayley. It’s worth bearing in mind that you would have an interview - so make sure not to say you’ve read a whole book if you haven’t.

As I’m doing my first degree at the moment, and i wish to do the pre-registration course, will I need academic references? If so, how many?

You will definitely need at least one reference which would be best if done by one of your current academics who knows you well. You might also be asked for a additional character reference. I would recommend contacting our Health team at health@city.ac.uk to clarify fully.

How should I mention the books I read to understand the subject (Business Management)? By writing the title and briefly the concepts I learnt?

Yes this would be good! Don’t just summarise the book - let us know what you feel you gained from it and why you think this will be useful in preparation for the degree.

Would writing about books I’ve read or even documentaries or series which pertain to law be good to include?

Yes this would be great! But don’t just say you did them - let us know what you gained from them and how they are useful for the degree.

Can I write the personal statement without mentioning what subject it’s about as I am applying to different ones?

Ideally no - because if admissions can’t tell what course you want to it is concerning for us. It also means your statement is not as relevant to the course, it is just generally talking about skills rather than actually applying it to the course. As mentioned earlier it is probably best to approach universities to write individual ones for them for each course - though I do think you maybe need to re-consider to make sure you can’t narrow down your courses anymore.
Ok thanks but like for one of the books I have read few chapters about what I thought should be helpful and useful and not the whole book. How should I add this to my personal statement?

Most important thing is to tell us what you have read that is engaging. If that’s a particular paragraph then that’s fine, but make sure not to say you’ve read the whole thing if you haven’t.

Hi I want to apply to Finance or Accounting & Finance programs. Should my PS be specific on this (still hesitating) and what should I promote the most (the career I am looking for or what I have already achieved through trainees?)

Andy Cotterill
Hi those sound good. Yes you should focus on the course you are interested in and what you want to gain from it is always a nice part to include too.

Ok thanks can I say like ‘reading some parts...’?

You could always mention specific chapters that you found interesting.

And should I include the fact that I did MUN, And that I have been class president for the past 4 years?

These are great things to include, make sure to tell us all of the skills that you’ve developed doing these activities and how they relate to your future studies.

This chat session how has now ended. Thank you so much for all of your questions! If you have any further questions, please email onlineevents@city.ac.uk.