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 CityChat session. This is for students who are about to apply to City. This session runs from 11:00-12:00 (BST). 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.

Your moderators today are members of City’s Marketing Team and Admissions Office: Kat Knight, Danisha Mudalige, Zhuliyan Boyanova, Mai Teladia and Nick Chambers.

Hi! My name is X I work in the Schools Liaison team here at City with my colleague Nick. My role is to support students with applications to university, including advising on Personal Statements. I’m looking forward to answering your questions! We will reply as quickly as possible, so please don’t send your question twice, as we will be working on giving you as helpful answer as possible, which can a little bit of time! :)

Hi, I’m struggling with how to start my personal statement, any tips??

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?

Hi! What would you recommend for a student to include in their personal statement to raise their chances of being considered for a course if they don’t meet the grade requirements?
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. Use university course pages and websites like Which? University to brainstorm the skills needed for the course you’re applying for. Then give examples in your statement of where you have developed these skills, and why you think these skills are useful for the course you’re applying for.

It is also worth maybe approaching the university admissions office beforehand to make sure they would consider your application if you are quite a way below the entry requirements. They might do, but I think it’s worth checking to be really sure.

Hi, what type of things would you recommend to add into a personal statement that will make it stand out among others?

Definitely include what I call ‘love of subject evidence’ - this is anything that goes above your studies to show your love of the subject in your own time. You can do lots of things to show your love for the subject. For example, attend a university taster day or free lecture from an academic, do some extra reading around the subject, do a MOOC on websites like futurelearn.com, watching relevant documentaries or listen to podcasts etc.

Answer these questions
- What did the activity cover?
- What did you gain from it?
- How has it prepared you for the course you’re applying for?

Will this chat be available as a document after this chat finishes?

Yes! :) 2 days after the event you will be emailed the transcript, and it will be hosted on our website (we will send you a link).

The transcript is published here [https://www.city.ac.uk/study/visit-us/online-events](https://www.city.ac.uk/study/visit-us/online-events)

Online events

Interested in finding out more about City, University of London’s courses but unable to attend our open days? Register now for one of our online events.

Hi, looking forward to apply as an international student from Germany. In my home country, we don’t have to write a personal statement to apply to university. There are many people writing their personal statement in a very academic manner; since I don’t speak English as my mother tongue, I’m a little bit afraid that mine won’t be as good language wise….. Are there differences in how the applications of international students will be assessed in comparison to those from students living in the UK?
We will be able to see from the UCAS form that you are applying from another country, but as our degree courses are all taught in English we do need to see that you meet the necessary level of English for the programme. As much as possible, if you can ask your teachers at school to check over your statement so that other people have checked the English and grammar this would probably be useful. Mostly we are looking at the content - we just want to see why you are applying for the course and your experiences with your studies etc. Your English level seems really good from what you have written here so don't worry too much! :)

Thank you! I would like to apply for the MA psychology and health without a psych background. Do you have any specific tips? And how do I find out how many people will be accepted?

Hi, I would recommend talking about transferable skills you have gained from your previous experience and how you would be able to apply them to the course and going forward. In terms of numbers it is dependant on each year and there is no set number.

I have two possible career outcomes my course could lead me to and I haven't decided which one of the two I would like to pursue yet. Would you recommend I stick with mentioning one on my personal statement or should I mention both?

It's fine for you to say these are two possible career choices and you are looking forward to finding out more about both options whilst studying the degree, or that you are looking forward to working with the university's careers teams to discover more about the different career options available. We don't expect you to be 100% set on a career at this point, as you are applying for the degree not the job.

Hello! Can I ask my teacher for references first or should I wait until I complete writing the personal statement?

Hi! You can ask to see your teacher's reference, but I wouldn't wait to get started on your statement. You can work with one of your teachers on how to go about doing your statement and if there's anything you would like them to cover specifically in the reference.

Hi, how would you structure the personal statement?

I would suggest the following paragraphs: Introduction, Love of Subject Evidence, Your Studies, Work Experience, Extra Activities, Conclusion. Love of subject evidence is really important because it shows us what you do outside of sixth form that shows your interest in the subject. The amount you write will depend on each paragraph and your experience.

What are some common cliches we should avoid when writing our personal statement?

We recommend you don't include a quote - especially not as your first sentence! We want to hear your words. Also try and avoid anything clichéd - from a young age/ from an early age/ since the day I was born ... you won't have wanted to do this degree since you were born and that's fine! We would rather you were specific about your interest.

What do you mean love of subject? For example I'm applying for optometry what do you mean love of subject?
Any reading around the subject or research into Optometry would be ideal. We also really want to see examples of why you want to do optometry: is there anything specific that you would like to learn? What areas of the eye do you want to find out about? Have you got any experiences that have been useful? Relevant work experience is a big plus for Optometry, but even unrelated work experience can be useful e.g. have you had experience building rapport with people quickly (a skill useful for Optometry)?

Personal statements – Finding a formula

Would you recommend adding the a level courses you do now in your personal statement to show how they will help you in your future degree?

Yes definitely! When talking about your current A level courses you should answer these questions

• What have you learnt on your course that will help you on this degree?
• What skills have you gained that you could use on the degree e.g. teamwork, communication, leadership?
• Evidence of independent research or group work, or a lecture that particularly sparked your interest

good morning, Do you think that a personal statement longer than 1500 words could be detrimental? if so, what would be the suggested length?

Hi ! On UCAS it can't be longer than 4000 characters, which is 600 - 700 words. Unless you are applying for postgraduate?

Would mentioning the ways I "advocate the UN Sustainable Goals" be considered a cliche or somewhat unnecessary? I worry about that part of my statement (applying for a political science course)

I think that would be okay - I don't think it sounds cliche to say that, it’s just your stance on an area. We suggest backing t up by saying how you advocate it.

How long is the postgraduate length?

I think it depends on each department - best to email them directly to check before you apply.
yes, I’m applying for MSc in Management

I would recommend contacting the admissions team at cass-masters@city.ac.uk for a postgraduate statement.

And can I ask who actually assessed the personal statements and decides who gets in? Should we appeal to individual people?

For Postgraduate it will be the Course Office and Academic Staff. You don’t need to address it to anyone directly, just mentioning the department would be fine.

How would an introduction usually start like what’s included in it?

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 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?

And can I ask who actually assessed the personal statements and decides who gets in? Should we appeal to individual people?

You can ask the department this directly when you email them just to be sure :)

What things would you write in a personal statement for a conclusion?

In the conclusion we want to see you summarise your interest in the course or how a degree fits into your long term plans. Let us know what you’re most looking forward to about the degree to show your interest. Or you can take on a personal stance and find something personal to you which makes you stand out as a candidate— which is related to the degree you have applied.

What extra activities would you recommend students do to boost they’re personal statement?

Ideally things like taster days, attending lectures at universities, online courses, Duke of Edinburgh, NCS etc as these have good skills related to university. However general hobbies are good too! Think about if they give you any general skills useful to university life e.g. team work, communication etc. I would try where possible to relate it back to the course you are studying or to demonstrate any positive qualities you possess that would make you an asset on your chosen course.

Answer these questions:
- What did you do (this should be brief, and only highlight the best things that you did). Make it skills focused
- What understanding/skills did you gain?
- How has it prepared you for degree study?
What do you mean find something personal to you?

So talking about you as an individual, in your interests for example, things that set you apart that makes you a great applicant for the course

Hi! I’m doing three Science A levels but am considering a degree in Accountancy. Do I have to explain why I am switching from Science to Accounting? Thank you.

You may find it useful to explain this, but Science A levels have lots of relevant skills to Accounting and many universities don’t ask for specific A levels for Accounting so it’s fine that you’re changing your mind. Make sure in your statement that you are clear about why you want to do Accounting and how your Science A levels have helped you for this e.g. if there is any experience with Maths in them, or any other skills related to Accounting. If you can do some extra ‘love of subject evidence’ activities that are related to Accounting it would be a great addition.

Would it be cliche to say after having visiting your open day as the introduction

It’s important to remember that you’ll be using the same personal statement for all of your university submissions so you shouldn’t address a specific university as it should apply to all and not just one. I would consider talking about what peaked your interest in attending an open day for the subject in the first place.

I had my statement in 2018 can I still use my account this year or I have to pay again and register on UCAS?

If you want to only apply to one university directly you could approach them and see if they will consider a direct application (they won’t necessarily) - otherwise yes you will need a new one and will need to pay again.

How do you write a personal statement when you are applying to two different courses that aren’t related

Hi! In an ideal world you probably wouldn’t do this in one statement unless the courses are related e.g. Psychology and Sociology, so the information is similar. If they’re different it’s best not to try to do it. You may want to approach some of the universities and see if you can provide them with another one that they read in place of the one that is on UCAS. They may so no but always worth asking as some will accept another one or maybe an additional paragraph for that specific course.

Do you have support with people with Dyslexia?
Hi. Yes, of course. We have a learning success team that does this. Please visit the web page below to find out more [https://www.city.ac.uk/study/student-support/learning-support](https://www.city.ac.uk/study/student-support/learning-support)

**Learning Support**

City, University of London’s Learning Success team supports students with dyslexia and disabilities, provides mental health & wellbeing support, and helps all students to learn more effectively.

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