

The importance of the Personal Statement

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Task 1 – How do these numbers relate to personal statements?

Discuss with the person next to you...

4,000

148

47

5

1,779

5: Maximum number of course choices

- Same personal statement for all five choices
- Personal statement needs to reflect each course
- For combined courses the personal statement should address each subject
- Avoid expressing preference for one university
- One course either at Oxford or Cambridge
- Medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine: 4 choices and 1 other

47/4000: Personal statement can be no longer than 47 lines/4000 characters

- Full use of space, but with correct punctuation
- Avoid repetition of information contained in the UCAS form
- Clear, logical structure
- Good command of English
- Error free
- Avoid jargon, abbreviations or non-standard English

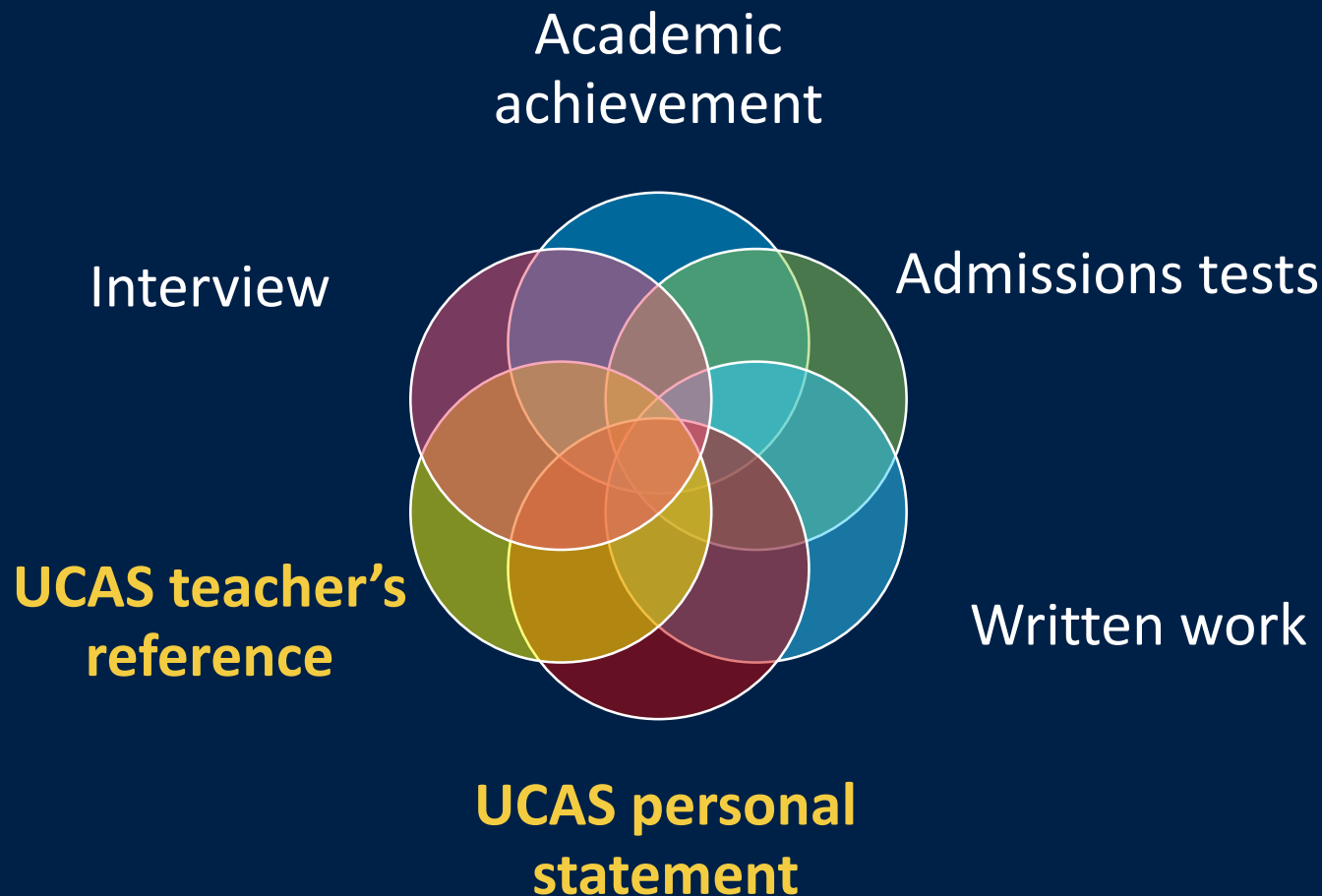
1,779: 'From a young age I have always been...'

148: Number of applicants who used a Nelson Mandela quote



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

Personal Statements in Context



Value and Use

Value

- Allows students to discover if they truly love the subject
- Show motivation and commitment
- Make a good first impression
- Allows students to sell themselves

LSE use

- A key part of our holistic assessment process
- Provides an insight into candidate's motivation and enthusiasm
- Can be used to reject applicants

Oxford use

- May be assessed for shortlisting
- May provide content for discussion at interviews
- May be assessed for offer making

Structure and Style

80%

Academic

including
super-curricular

20%

extra-curricular

- Why do they want to study this course?
 - current studies
 - outside reading

- Super-curricular:
 - what have they read, listened to, watched, visited
 - how do these things support and compliment the course they are applying for?

- Extra-curricular:
 - should try and focus on transferable skills

- Encourage them to be reflective:
 - critically engage with any reading materials
 - be honest
 - check spelling and grammar

Supporting students

- Encourage students to use their own insights and personal experiences to stand out
- Does each section back up the applicant's claims that they wish to pursue their chosen course at university?
- Allow Personal Statement to breathe...print it over two pages so it is easier to edit, read, think, and re-read – is it balanced?
- Ask the student to interrogate the draft: What does this tell me? Is it redundant? Is the evidence too brief...are opportunities being missed? Is it overwritten?
- If it doesn't relate to being a successful university student: **cut it**. Don't be afraid to be brutal!

Supporting students

The personal statement could include:

- Previous/current studies
- Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)
- Academic interests and activities
- Free online courses
- Reading and attendance at lectures
- Museum/gallery visits
- Work experience placements or internships
- Paid or unpaid work
- Volunteering activities
- Clubs and societies
- Skills related activities
- Hobbies

Common Pitfalls

**Using
generalisations
and clichés**

My passion has been history for as long as I can remember.

**Not
developing
and analysing**

Books I have read such as 'A Brief History of Time' and 'The Universe in a Nutshell' by Stephen Hawking and 'Quantum Theory Cannot Hurt You' by Marcus Chown have confirmed my belief that Physics is the right course for me.

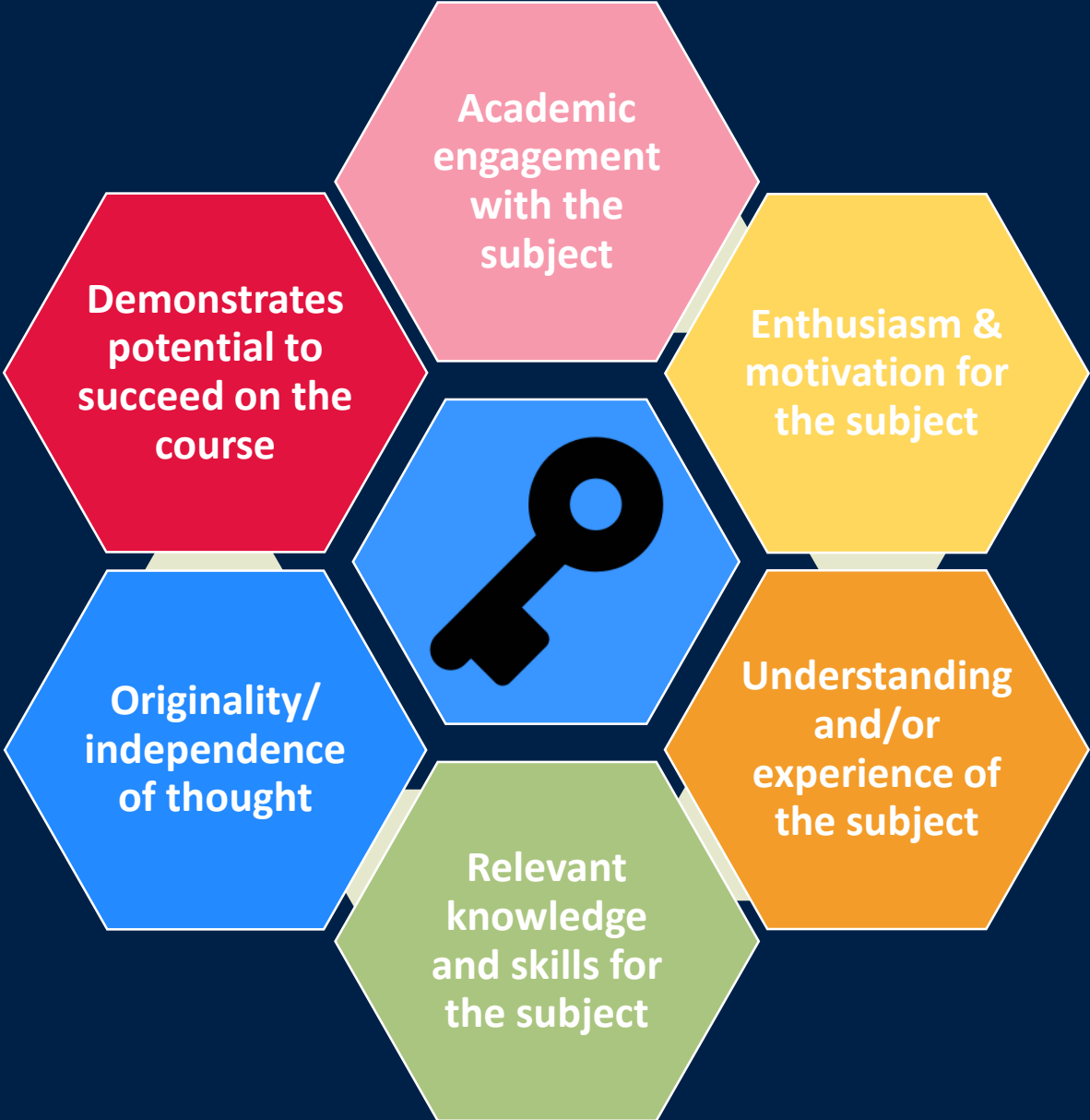
Common Pitfalls

**Over emphasis
on extra-
curricular
activities**

I have taken private lessons and played the double bass in the school orchestra for seven years, played in a symphony-sponsored all-bass group for five years, and played in an orchestra for two years.

**Use of
unnecessary
language**

While my academic interests focus on the past, I plan to apply the knowledge and experience I gain at university to the present and future.



Task 2 – Personal Statement Examples

What feedback would you give a student with this personal statement?

What have they done well?

What can they improve on?

Task 3 – Going further

Question 1

How has the applicant conveyed their motivation and academic interest in the subject?

Question 2

How has the applicant demonstrated a clear understanding of the subject they've applied for?

Question 3

How has the applicant attempted to distinguish themselves from other applicants?

Question 4

What evidence has the applicant provided to suggest they have been reflective?

Question 5

Give examples of how the applicant's personal statement could be strengthened.

Question 6

How has the applicant demonstrated super-curricular activities?



Questions?