

Giving students the competitive edge



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Aims of the session



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- Choosing the right subject and degree for the individual
- Why Personal Statements are important
- The structure of the Personal Statement
- How pre-application activities can enhance the statement
- What universities look for in a personal statement
- Examples of statements
- Supporting students to make the right choice

An insight into the sector



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- Medicine
 - Number of places for medicine is increasing
 - 2019 entry Medicine applications up 12% (22,340)
 - Number of A Level Chemistry students decreasing
- Unconditional offers
 - Data report in December – number of unconditional offers per institution
 - End of unconditional offers? – University of Chichester and St Mary's University Twickenham
- Selective/Recruiting courses
 - Selective: receives more applications than there are places
 - Recruiting: receives fewer applications than there are places
 - Still competitive – could be more niche; Archaeology, Oceanography
- Personal Statements still matter.

Making subject choices for Y11



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- Why is it important to choose the right A Levels/Qualifications?
 - Some university degrees have specific requirements
 - Career specific
 - Competitive universities/courses
 - Keeping your options open - 'Facilitating Subjects'

Keep university in mind when encouraging Y11...

- Working towards required GCSE Grades i.e. Medicine
 - Maths and English
- Choosing what to study after GCSE & applying to 6th Form/College
- Inspire to get involved in extra curricular activities and explore

Making degree choices



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- Where does the student's interests lie?
- Research through subject investigation
- Preparation is key for investigating a degree and enhancing the application – giving them a competitive edge
- Check entry requirements and specific subject choices needed

Why are Personal Statements important?



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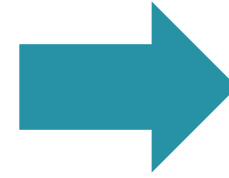
- Allows students to actually think about why they want to do a particular course
- Only piece of work that is completed by the student that universities will see
- Universities are looking for key qualities and attributes that the student is able to demonstrate
- Still competitive
- For borderline students it can be crucial and on results day!
- Prepares students well for interview

True or False?
(an example of
a student
activity)

- Opening sentence needs to be an “attention-grabbing” line
False
- Ensure you list all of your activities that you have been involved in to show the variety of interests you have
False
- Your statement needs to showcase your personality
False
- Provide detail for your examples/activities
True
- An exceptional personal statement will help if your grades are much lower than required to gain a place
False
- You can write a different statement for each of your choices
False

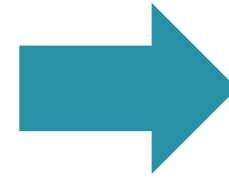
The structure of a Personal Statement

1. Your **main reasons** for wanting to study a particular course



'To the point' start:
Why do you want to study the course?

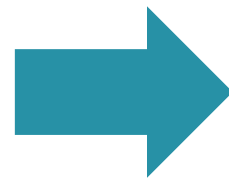
2. Analysis of a **specific area of interest**, related to the course



Chunky main section: Evidence of your skills, why you are suited to the course

3. Analysis of **academic activities** (e.g. work experience, masterclasses and summer schools)

4. Relevant **extra-curricular activities**



End bit: Personal touch, showcase additional skills

University perspective



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A strong application includes:

- Academic ability and potential (as shown in GCSEs and A-Levels or equivalent)
- The context of your achievement
- Strong reasons for choosing the course and motivation to study a particular discipline
- Related work or voluntary experience showing commitment to a chosen careers – this is particularly important for courses with a vocational focus
- Critical engagement with issues that are relevant to your subject of interest, through wider reading and related activities – top tip: make connections between the two!

Detail and
evidence of a
subject
interest



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An example:

I am especially fascinated by all aspects of human rights law and am passionate about bringing justice to people who are not able to represent themselves. Human rights are a key part in making society fair and this part of the law shows how it can be a glue that holds society together.

Detail and evidence of a subject interest



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Another example:

I have developed an interest in human rights law and read up on the recent case of two women who were challenging the new law that immigrants wished to join their spouses had to pass a "pre-entry" English language test. One of the main legal issues centred on whether the new policy breached the appellants' right to a family life. I was struck by the level of uncertainty in the wording of the final judgement. Although the appeal failed, the judges stated that a "significant number" of future cases, for example, those in which immigrants had learning difficulties, would be likely to breach human rights. My research led me to reflect on the fact that the application of specific laws depends on very subtle differences in the circumstances of different cases.

Subject investigation



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Work experience

- shadowing
- volunteering

Careers and jobs search

- professional and career websites

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- lectures
- taster days
- open days
- competitions

(Informal) Research and Analysis

- iTunesU
- trade/industry press
- academic websites
- additional reading

(Formal) Research

- EPQ; MOOCs

Your own thing . . .

travel; follow the news on a foreign language website; blog; sit in on a magistrates' court; create a business plan;...

Top tips



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- Ensure the statement is unique to the individual
- Avoid clichés and defining the subject area
- Provide detail and evidence of wider reading and super-curricular activities
- Arrange relevant work experience (some courses have a minimum requirement)
- Explain the insight, don't just claim it!
- Showcase and demonstrate skills gained (try not to be repetitive of the same skills)
- Be reflective of experiences and skills
- Don't make the statement specific to one institution/course (up to 5 uni's will be reading the same statement!)
- Spell check – draft and re-draft
- Appropriate email address

Advancing Access resources – Strand Two

ADVANCING ACCESS / Student resources

This worksheet will help you develop your personal statement. For the next **15 minutes** think about the subject area you are planning to apply for and answer the following questions.

Why are you interested in this subject?

Are there any particular aspects of this subject that you enjoy more than others?

What have you learned about the subject that has inspired you to take it to university level?

What subject are you applying for?

Write down something interesting about the subject that may have been in the news or you have read about.

What course modules particularly interest you, and why?

Are there any aspects of your current studies that relate to the subject you have chosen?

What are your future career plans?

What skills do you have that will help you in this subject?

Personal statements in different ways.
between an offer and rejection for highly

into the student's motivations
in the application where
want to know that the
subject. They want students
or even longer.

tical errors can imply
attention.

e application.
that is relevant to the