



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

# Personal Statements: A brief guide



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# Research

## Research chosen course(s) and key skills required

**University  
prospectuses, course  
leaflets, websites**

**Higher Education  
Exhibitions**

**Work experience/  
shadowing**

**Open Days**

**Careers library**

**Email universities with  
questions if necessary**



# Entry requirements

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Check entry requirements carefully...

Minimum requirements:

- Minimum grades (by end of S5 or S4-S6)
- Any specific subjects?

Level of competition? ('Standard' offer level?)

Work experience? Additional tests or interviews?

If in doubt – **check with universities directly before applying**



# The UCAS system

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## Apply to:

- Universities
- Some college courses
- Conservatoires

## One application, 5 choices

- Maximum 4 for medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine
- Back up choices

## UCAS Deadlines:

**15 October 2024 18:00**

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Veterinary medicine
- Oxford/Cambridge

**29 January 2025 18:00**

- All other courses

**Follow your school's deadlines!**





# The UCAS application

Information required:

Personal information – name, address, email

Year of entry

Educational history and qualifications

Employment history

Subject & university choices

Personal statement

School reference



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# UCAS: The next steps

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- UCAS distributes applications to universities
- Monitor progress of application through ‘UCAS Track’
- The University response:
  - Conditional offer
  - Unconditional offer
  - Unsuccessful application
- Only have to respond after all offers have been made
- Hold a maximum of 2 conditional offers (Firm or Insurance)
- Much thought required before responding to offers – insurance choice should be realistic



# Personal statement: **Why is it important?**

- Growing applicant numbers
- Competition for places
- Most options won't interview
- Your opportunity to tell us why you would be a great student

**A good personal statement can be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful application.**





# Personal statement:

## **Before you start – be aware**

- One personal statement for five choices
- Aim for all choices to have a common theme (avoid 50:50 statements)
- Max 4,000 characters or 47 lines – stay focused and relevant
- Limit includes punctuation, spaces and blank lines
- Plagiarism check (Copyscape) and beware of chat GPT





# Personal statement: What are universities looking for?

## Why did you make this choice?

Show us:

- Motivation, commitment, enthusiasm
- Research and preparation
  - understanding of the subject
  - understanding of the profession



# Personal statement:

## **Work or voluntary experience**

Any work or voluntary experience can be relevant

- What did you gain?
  - Knowledge
  - Skills
  - Understanding
  - Experience



# Personal statement: **Qualities and Achievements**

How will you contribute to university life?

- Include:
  - Additional achievements
  - Awards gained
  - Positions of leadership and responsibility
- Relate back to your application





# Personal statement:

## Quick recap!

- Do your research first – be clear about motivation for study
- One statement for up to five choices
- Avoid lists
- Try to relate achievements and experiences back to your application
- Make sure it reads well (Draft and redraft!)
- Use the support your school offers
- Write the first line last





# Personal statements - 2026 entry

**Format is changing for 2026 entry – so framed around 3 questions, not free text**

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

- Motivation for choosing this course / Knowledge of subject area

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

- How are your current and previous studies relevant to your chosen course?
- What transferable/core skills do you have?

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

- Work experience/volunteering/ employment plus personal experiences/achievements





# Questions?

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[ucas.com](https://ucas.com)



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[ed.ac.uk](https://ed.ac.uk)



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