What is a personal statement?
Your UCAS personal statement is your opportunity to impress us with your enthusiasm for your chosen subject, your previous experiences, and to explain why you’re so keen to study on the course.

We recommend that two thirds of your personal statement is about your subject. Within this you can include extra reading you’ve done around the subject. The final third should be about any relevant work or voluntary experience you might have, and any extra-curricular activities, such as sport, music and leadership positions.

Know your deadlines. Give yourself plenty of time to plan, revise, redraft and proofread.

Why do you want to study that subject?
Tell us what interests you about your chosen subject – your excitement for the subject should shine through your personal statement.

Why would you be a great candidate?
Blowing your own trumpet might not be something that you’re used to but we want to know why we should have you on our course. Here at Essex we’re after people who aren’t afraid to push boundaries, challenge conventions, and think for themselves. Think you’ve got what it takes? Put it on paper.

What makes you stand out?
Think about what makes you special. This can sometimes be pretty difficult, so if you’re struggling, why not ask a member of your family or a friend what they think? The competition is tough so don’t be shy.

What are your best achievements?
Remember that mentioning a couple of your finest achievements and explaining them in some detail has much more impact than a long list of everything you’ve done since you started school (your ten metre swimming badge probably won’t impress the admissions selectors).

How has your previous experience brought you to this decision, and how is it relevant to the course?

How would you argue that you have what it takes to succeed on the course?
If you know exactly what you want to do after university, you might decide to include it in your personal statement. It’ll show us you’ve thought carefully about the logical steps to achieve your ambition.

You’ll need a killer opening sentence and a powerful closing line to leave your readers wowed. Our admissions selectors will be going through hundreds of applications so it’s important to be bold, let your personality shine through and stand out from the crowd.
COME ON. SHOW US WHAT YOU’VE GOT.

Jokes
You might be eager to demonstrate your razor-sharp wit, but what you find hilarious, our admissions selectors may not. So, to avoid any awkward tumbleweed moments, it’s probably best to wait until you’ve joined the Comedy Society to unleash the wise cracks.

Cheese
Clichéd words like ‘passionate’ and ‘team player’ are so over-rated they’ve almost lost their meaning. Instead, find examples of times when you’ve demonstrated your ‘passion’ and ‘teamwork’ – they’ll have much more impact.

Spelling mistakes
This goes without saying but punctuation and spelling mistakes create an impression of carelessness. Leave yourself plenty of time to edit. Make sure you check, double check and triple check your personal statement and even get someone else to proofread it for you just to be extra safe.

Stick to language you’re comfortable with – it stands out like a sore thumb if you don’t, and often the focus of your writing gets lost – plus, you’ve only got 4,000 characters on your UCAS form so use them wisely.

Fibs
It’s an obvious one, but if you stretch the truth, you may get caught out at your interview. We can’t think of many things more awkward than that. Replicating your friend’s statement or copying and pasting from the internet won’t go unnoticed either – the software that processes your personal statement checks for plagiarism so make sure everything you write is completely original.

Get even more advice on writing your personal statement by downloading our detailed personal statement writing guide here: www.essex.ac.uk/outreach/documents/personal-statement-writing-guide.pdf

Want even more top advice?