



University of Essex

HOW TO WRITE YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT: THE BIG DOS AND DON'TS

Make your personal statement stand out

It's often hard to know where to start when it comes to writing your personal statement, so we got together with our Admissions Selectors (the people who make the decisions) and created this booklet full of useful tips and advice to help you.

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.

The basics

- 1** 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.

2

You only get one personal statement, so if you're applying for joint honours, or more than one subject, you should make sure it covers them both.

3

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

questions:

Why?

Why do you want to study that subject?

Be specific. 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?

Singing your own praises 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?

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? This is your chance to shine 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?

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

Note the word 'relevant' – try and ensure that everything you write in your personal statement relates back to the main point – why you want to study that subject and why we should offer you a place.

How would the course help you achieve your future goals?

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 strong 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.

**THERE ARE,
HOWEVER,
SOME THINGS
IT'S PROBABLY
BEST
TO AVOID...**

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-used 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.

Long words and confusing sentences

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 if you're asked to attend an 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.

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.

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

**COME ON.
SHOW US WHAT
YOU'VE GOT.**

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