



Personal statements workbook

Having managed successfully to navigate through the 370,000 courses at over 370 providers across the UK, it is now time to make a start at drafting your personal statement. Students often find this the most daunting of tasks within the application process, so this helpful workbook is aimed at guiding you through putting together the statement that is going to help get you a place on your ideal course.

Knowing where to start and what to say to help you set out your reasons for applying and convincing the admissions tutor to offer you a place can be a challenge. Looking at examples of how other students have approached this can sometimes be helpful.

Example 1

"The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others." Mahatma Ghandi

From a young age this quote has inspired my chosen career path to become a children's nurse. Being one of many siblings I have the role of supporting my nieces and nephews when they become ill and providing comfort. Working with children in my family has motivated along this career path as it has taught me to take responsibility in life, become more organised and mature. I am currently undertaking a Health and Social Care course. This course has given me insight into the different aspects of health care and its overarching infrastructure. Caring for children and young people helped me gain an understanding of the risk that children and young people may be put in and the exploitative and abusive behaviour that they may encounter. We focused on the tragic case of Victoria Climbié. This brought home the significance of multi agency working. I am committed to ensuring that children and young people in my care are safe, healthy, enjoying and achieving, economic well being and putting in a

positive contribution. A core element of the course has been work placement, working with children. This came in very useful for me because it taught me how to deal with children at different ages and what I need to do in order to meet their needs. During this work experience I was responsible for supporting and maintaining the children's hygiene needs and encouraging them with their speech. I learnt different approaches to meeting the needs of children; for example I was taught to talk the children in a calm, but stern tone of voice when they misbehaved and to use very positive gestures and praise when children listened and kept to task. I consider myself as having very good communications skills I am able to reassure people positively in any circumstance, I am the committed to ensuring that children and young people in my care are safe and healthy and I am confident when dealing with both children and parents, For example when a child injured herself in the nursery I shadowed one of the senior staff while they administered first aid, it was then my responsibility to explain to the caregiver exactly what had occurred. I take part in many activities which are helping me to become independent and preparing me for my course that I want to take part in, in university; I presently volunteer in a nursery. I take part in planning and creating activities and I have a duty to observe the children throughout the day and then give feedback to the parents and carers. I have many qualities which will be ideal for my future career path I am honest, patient and a reflective individual, this is something that I feel is most important when dealing with children and adolescents. I have many hobbies that I carry out in my spare time. I have taken part in being a team leader to raise money for a charity that supports

children who have been abused because I believe strongly in the cause. We raised awareness, held a campaign, fundraising and protest. I also enjoy travel, I have visited countries such as Egypt, Eritrea, Holland, Germany and Italy - this has allowed me to explore the outside world and has given me a taste of different cultures and traditions; and ultimately giving me a better understanding of diversity. I would like to be given the opportunity to study at university because I believe it will be the perfect platform to launch my career. Having the chance to study Paediatric Nursing at university will allow me to fulfil my career path and make a change to my life as I will feel that I am achieving new things on a day to day basis with what I am able to offer children and young people when it comes to having a positive impact on their health. Being given the opportunity of Working in an environment with children daily would be my dream goal in life that I wish to achieve.

Consider the structure – what are your thoughts around this?

Think about spelling, grammar and punctuation – how does this fare?

What course do you think this personal statement may have been for?

Example 2

I am a hardworking, talented and motivated young woman looking forward to studying at degree level and taking an active part in university life.

I have a keen interest in the world around me, and enjoy taking part in a variety of activities for example: volunteering at my local brownies, volunteer marshal at Brighton Marathon; textile and weaving classes; completion of the Trinity Guildhall award at both Bronze and Silver level; and a Stand Up Paddle board instructor. These activities, coupled with part time work whilst at sixth form college, have not only been enjoyable but have also helped me to develop skills in communication, organisational, leadership and interpersonal skills.

Although having been accepted to start university in 2014 (Primary Education) I realised that I was not ready to fully commit to the course and took the decision to gain some real life experience and reflect on what I really want from university and my future career.

Since leaving sixth-form college I have been working full time as a waitress/ bar assistant at a local hotel, which has been hard but interesting work demanding stamina, patience and an open mind. I have also secured 3 weeks work at a trade exhibition in New York, where I will have the chance to attend networking dinner and I plan to go inter-railing across Europe in Summer 2015. As a result of these experiences I am more self-assured and resilient. I am ready to commit to full time study and have much to contribute to university life.

I realise that I am most interested in people, what makes them the people they are and how this manifests in their behaviour and opinions.

I enjoyed studying sociology at A level and gaining an insight into how the study of sociology helps us to understand how society works. This coupled with my recent experience in the hospitality world and observation of the behaviour of those who use and manage the service, has fuelled my desire to study Sociology in depth at degree level. I am completely fascinated by the behaviour of others and why we act the way we do. I believe that studying sociology at degree level will allow me to begin to explore and understand aspects of human social behaviour, including the social dynamics of small groups of people, large organisations, communities, institutions and entire societies.

I believe that the skills and knowledge that I will accrue whilst studying will be applicable to a wide variety of careers and that is why I have chosen to study the topic at degree level.

Thinking about the experiences gained from a gap year, how has this applicant drawn on these transferrable skills?

How does experience both in and outside the classroom environment relate to the chosen subject area?

Example 3

I was born in France, in 1985.

EDUCATION

From 7 to 12 years of age I attended school in France.
From 12 to 18 I attended high school, Up to the age of 18 both school were in France.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Qualification : Degree of Computer Software
Qualification: Commercial Management (2 years, unfinished)
Qualification: Computer Engineering (2 and half years, unfinished)

EMPLOYMENT IN France

Commercial Expert: Company of Dairy production
IT Department: France company for Car Manufacturing Company

RESIDENCE IN UK

Arrived 2013. I have been resident in London since this date. I started studying English in 2013 at local college. After this I attended a Hairdressing (Level 2) course College for one year.

SELF SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT

I started to work as a receptionist in a hair and beauty salon in London for the duration of four months.
After this, I worked as a hairdresser for two years.
After these two initial jobs I then started working for the restaurant business in London.

INTERESTS

I enjoy swimming, reading in my spare time and of course I enjoy working with computers especially as part of my working career where finance and administration play an important part. I have a passing interest at this stage in politics and international affairs.

GOALS

My strengths are listening carefully, analysing what has been said and clear interpretation.
I hope to become better informed about international affairs, politics and the legal aspects attached to these as a result of a course I wish to become part of.
My enduring enthusiasm is for the law and I wish this to become my profession for the future. Knowing about the influence of the in world affairs at present I consider I would be able to make a contribution in the relationship between Europe and the world.

With a maximum 4,000 characters allowance, consider information that may have been repeated in this section in relation to it being entered elsewhere on the application.

As a general guide, 75% of the application should relate to the course and 25% personal. What are your thoughts around the balance of content?

Example 4

Extracts of Introductions

Intro 1

Practical and theory based Physical Education and the mechanics of the body has always intrigued me. From a young age I have participated in many sports with my family and have also competed at clubs. Studying PE at sixth form has allowed me to develop an understanding of how the body responds to exercise. I feel that studying a sport science degree will allow me to further my understanding and interest, which will allow me to pursue a suitable career in this area.

Intro 2

Criminology is a subject area that interests me greatly. I have become fascinated by the extraordinary crimes that people commit within society today, and I always wondered about the reasons people commit these crimes and the consequences that they have on not only themselves but also society. A particular case which stood out for me was the horrific murder of James Bulger by John Venables and Robert Thompson in 1993. The pure shock of the public when this case emerged was based on the fact that two ten year old boys could commit such an appalling crime. I am interested in studying Criminology as I want to gain an in-depth understanding of the causes and consequences that crime has on society, and to explore the human mind further to assess the reasons behind criminal behaviour. With my open mind and critical thinking skills, I believe that Criminology is the route for me to take.

Intro 3

As I progress through life aspirations change and develop, however, I have always been motivated to go to University and maximise the opportunities I have been presented before setting off to establish a successful career. Throughout my life, my goals have altered but my focus has remained the same, and I will always strive to be enthusiastic, committed and conscientious in everything I do. The choices I made regarding my college course reflect my career interests, which I believe will prepare me for my future chosen profession.

If you put yourself in the shoes of an admissions tutor and these introductions were amongst 100 others that have been read that day, are they interesting and do they make you want to read on?

Example 5

Extract 1

Outside of college I hold down a part-time job in my local supermarket on the customer service desk which involves customer engagement, dealing with complaints and problem solving. Engagement with members of the public on a regular basis has made me more confident as an individual and able to find ways around problems that arise. Although the field is not directly related to Law it has given me experience in working with people and overcoming challenges both of which I feel are very valuable and transferrable to my studies and readiness to develop and pursue a career in this field.

Extract 2

I have a part time job in my high street bank on a Saturday morning and I did work experience over the summer with Earnest and Young, I hope to get a summer internship in Canary Warf too and get some further exposure to the field.

Consider both extracts together; what are your thoughts about how relevant each applicant has made this to the application? Which of the two do you consider being of more value in relation to the additional experiences they have gained and the relevance?

Consider if there may have been a sentence or two that extract 2 could have included relating it further to the business and finance sector and why it may be useful for university.

Having looked at some examples it is time to make a start on your own statement. Before you do, the Admissions Officers at St Mary's wanted to share this piece of advice.

Personal statements are not rocket science. Trying to be too clever or complex doesn't work. Keep it to the point and relevant. Make sure you always check the statement, preferably several times, and take time writing it. It is easy to spot the ones that are rushed or poorly structured; it jumps out a mile when you see them every day. Bad spelling and grammar is just inexcusable.

Starting with motivations and ending on a positive note usually ends the statement pretty well. It just needs to be clear and relevant to bring out the best in the applicant. Do some research and consider carefully what you say. Read it out loud and get other people to check it throughout the whole journey. There just isn't room for long garbled writing or going off on tangents with irrelevant information.

Gathering your own thoughts for content can be a useful exercise

Question	Example	Evidence
What sparked your initial interest in the subject?		
How do your school subjects relate to this subject/course?		
How are your interests/subjects expressed outside the classroom?		
How do you know it's the right course for you?		
What have you done to inform your career choices?		
Demonstrate that you are: —Hardworking —Well organised		
How will you make the most of your university career?		

The structure of your statement should have a clear introduction, middle and an end. Consider these sections to help pull your first draft together.

Paragraph 1: Grab our attention

Introduce yourself, and tell us why you want to study your chosen subject:

Paragraph 2: Educational background

Give a brief outline of the subjects you are studying and how they are relevant to your chosen subject area: (Avoid repeating information in the education section of your application!)

Paragraph 3: Your personal experiences

This may include a brief description of how you have reached this point in your educational development and, in particular, reasons why you wish to study this subject at university:

Paragraph 4: Achievements

Do you have any personal or educational achievements that you would like us to know about, for example, Duke of Edinburgh Award or voluntary work experience? Perhaps you have researched the career through meeting professionals already working in this field. Anything subject-related would be especially relevant:

Paragraph 5: Summary and conclusion

This paragraph will tie together all the information you have provided so far. The last few sentences should leave a lasting impression on the reader:

Good luck with your personal statement. Remember to double check your spelling, punctuation and grammar!