

Personal Statement Reform Good Practice

Personal Statement reform

Following extensive research and consultation the personal statement is changing for 2026 entry. In our commitment to equity and inclusion, we believe that every student deserves a fair chance to articulate their unique journey, aspirations, and potential. Scaffolding questions level the playing field, providing clear guidance and structure for all applicants, regardless of their background or prior experience with essay writing.

Scaffolding questions offer students a roadmap, breaking them down into manageable parts. By providing specific prompts, students gain clarity on what to address, fostering focus and coherence in their writing. This ensures that each aspect of their experiences and goals is thoughtfully explored and articulated.

There is a high level of interest in this from both students and advisers, and we anticipate that they will be looking to you for support and guidance on the new format from this September. This could be on your website, at open days, or from recruitment and outreach sessions in schools - it is important that this is presented in a consistent manner across your institution. We have produced this guidance to help you think about what steps you may need to take to embed this across your institution and ask that you think specifically about these points:

- Do you need to update and change internal policies, processes, training materials and scoring/assessment frameworks?
- Who needs to know about the changes? Map your stakeholders
- When, and how will you update stakeholders?
- What does your website need to say, and when?
- Are external presentations and materials up to date?
- Are your systems ready to receive the new structure?

Good Practice

- How your institution uses the personal statement in the admissions process and what you are looking for should be clearly outlined and easily accessible; this supports fair and transparent admissions as detailed in the UCAS Admissions Principles and the Fair Admissions Code of Practice. This could include whether it is scored as formal part of the offer process, read but not formally scored, only considered in specific circumstances, not considered etc.
- All teams, emails, website pages etc. within your institution need to be updated on what is required from the new format so that there is a consistent messaging and practice across the institution. We recognise that many institutions may have different requirements across courses; these should be clearly defined as above.
- Any additional information or personal statement should only be requested if it is critical to decision-making or required for professional courses – an example of this might be if an applicant is applying for a different subject area through Extra.
- Requests for additional information need to be specific about what is required and why and have a reasonable deadline as outlined in point 6 of the UCAS Admissions Principles. Requests such as “Provide a satisfactory personal statement” should not be made as part of the offer conditions as this does not support point 5 of the UCAS Admissions Principles.
- As the Personal Statement reform is embedded, we expect providers to be flexible and not penalise applicants if a piece of information is presented in an unexpected section of the personal statement. It is expected that some experiences may be relevant to more than one section of the personal statement, and that applicants will be using their best judgement in deciding where to include relevant information, for example attending an online lecture may be included in motivation for study in Section 1 or as a super-curricular activity in Section 3. You should also be conscious that some courses or providers may have specific requirements for the personal statement, which students will be trying to meet.

Example personal statement guidance

These have been taken from a variety of provider websites, which in most cases also contain more detailed information about what they would like to see in the personal statement. We have included these to help you as a starting point.

The quality of an applicant's personal statement is very important at UCAS University. The university does not interview for places so this is an applicant's only opportunity to demonstrate they are a good fit for the course. Applicants should consult the advice here, as well as advice from UCAS when preparing to complete this section of their application. Please note that writing a personal statement following the guidelines below does not guarantee an offer of admission. Personal statements are looked at on a comparative basis and there is a great deal of competition for places at UCAS University. UCAS University does not accept additional or supplementary personal statements. We can only consider the personal statement submitted via UCAS.

In addition to academic qualifications, when selecting candidates we may also take into account information provided within the Personal Statement and Reference. We may refer to Personal Statements where we have to choose between candidates with the same or similar predicated or achieved grades, and where we have a limited number of remaining offers or places. In these cases, we will consider favourably statements which demonstrate strong motivation for the proposed subject of study, evidence of extension reading or activities relating to it and those whose academic and all-round achievement outperform the context. Extra-curricular achievements will not usually confer any special weight or advantage in the admissions process.

It is not necessary to write an additional personal statement, however we have a tool just for UCAS University applicants which allows you to submit a substitute personal statement if the course you're applying to is very different to the one in your UCAS personal statement. For example, if you applied to four Chemistry courses but you also applied to our Natural Sciences course, or perhaps you have applied to Medicine at four other universities but chose Anthropology as your fifth choice with us.

Your personal statement needs to create a strong impression for your university application. It's your opportunity to say why you want to study your chosen course, and what skills, experiences and qualifications you have that will make you a successful student. A member of the Admissions team will read your personal statement and use it as part of the process to decide who they can offer a place to.

Medicine applicants are considered for interview based on relevant academic qualifications alone. We do not currently consider personal statements or work experience when selecting for interview.

The personal statement is a key aspect of the selection process for Nursing and Midwifery; it's your opportunity to explain to us why you want to do the course you have chosen, what has inspired you to choose that role, and to demonstrate the skills and qualities you have that suit that role. There are five key themes we look for in personal statements. Ensuring you've clearly covered and addressed these in your personal statement will further strengthen and improve your application and hopefully secure an invitation to interview.

How our selection process works

Once we receive your application from UCAS, here's what happens next:

- An admissions officer within our central Admissions team will read your application first. They will check that your application meets the minimum entry requirements for your chosen course(s).
- Applications that meet the required standard are passed to admissions teams in the relevant academic department.
- In the department, your application will be evaluated by experienced admissions tutors who will consider your application in a holistic manner.
- Departmental admissions tutors won't just look at your grades; they will also consider other aspects of your application – including your reference and your personal statement. If you have been asked to sit an admissions test as part of the process, they will also consider these scores.
- If you are invited for an interview/admissions day, this will form part of your entire application which the department will consider.