Writing the Optimum Personal Statement for UCAS

Heather Judd
Careers Coordinator
Hadlow College and West Kent College, Tonbridge

The Aim of this presentation is to help you write the optimum personal statement

- This session includes hints and tips on how to write a personal statement and how to make the personal statement relevant to the subject you are applying for

- We will also cover some of the statement writing rules and technical details

What is a UCAS Personal Statement?

- To apply for a Fulltime Degree course or Higher Education programme in the UK you need to apply through UCAS: www.ucas.com

- Your personal statement is just one section of the UCAS application form, there are many others including your personal details and education

- Your Personal Statement is your written opportunity to tell the University all about you and your suitability for the course you are applying for and for the institution you are applying to

How to Prepare

- Each university reads the same Personal Statement, you can only write one - do your research to make sure you are applying for the right course.

- Check university prospectuses or websites as many publish details of skills or experiences they would like you to have

- Make a list or mind map of everything you want to include

What to Include

- Your enthusiasm and interest for the subject you are applying for
- How your previous education relates to the degree you are applying for or what skills has it given you that are relevant to your chosen degree
- Transferable skills developed outside of school or college for example your part time job, work experience or volunteering
- Any activities or hobbies you do that are relevant to the degree you are applying for or the university you are applying to.

How to Start

- Your Personal Statement should follow a standard essay format, i.e. it has a beginning, a middle and an end

- The beginning is your introduction, try to avoid cliches such as ‘ever since I was young…’ Your introduction needs to quickly demonstrate your enthusiasm for your subject – do not get paralysed by the fear of not knowing how to start, write your introduction last rather sitting in front of a blank screen or sheet of paper.

- The middle is your opportunity to demonstrate you have the skills necessary to be successful on your chosen degree. Structure this in the order that is most relevant – most recent first

How to finish

- The end is your conclusion. It summarises your enthusiasm for your subject, you suitability for university life and if you can, include how the degree will fit in with your career plans.

- Be aware of your grammar, spelling and punctuation. Be cautious of spellcheck and the thesaurus.

- Remember to ask for feedback and give yourself time to redraft.

How much do I write?

- Your Personal Statement is limited in size
- The maximum length is 47 lines or 4000 characters, the character count includes spaces and punctuation
- If you over-write you will not be able to save it in UCAS. Write it in another programme such as Word and then copy and paste it into your UCAS form
- Do not be tempted to copy from friends or the internet. UCAS uses plagiarism software and your application could be rejected.

Avoid the Stress

- Do not struggle alone with your statement, your school or college teachers or careers advisors will be able to help you
- Start drafting early and know when your deadlines are
- Each University will have hints and tips on their websites or prospectus and there is lots of information on www.ucas.com
- Goodluck with your application!